Newcomer Educational Programming: in response to increasing social-emotional needs of adolescent newcomer refugee students

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NEWCOMER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING: IN RESPONSE TO INCREASING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT NEWCOMER REFUGEE STUDENTS

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Northern Illinois University, 2019
Lindsay N. Harris, Director

This research study sought to understand how newcomer teachers address the social-emotional needs of their students in conjunction with English language and academic needs by using a qualitative approach. Literature thus far about newcomer education has focused on the language and academic needs of newcomer students, omitting the need to also address social-emotional learning. The study included interviews with four newcomer teachers from across the United States and found that for every teacher, social-emotional learning was the foundation for how they approached their students and made decisions about curriculum in their classroom. Despite the variation of program structure and level of support for newcomer students, these teachers identified similar perspectives on how to support social-emotional needs in their classrooms. The findings from this study demonstrate that these newcomer teachers emphasize social-emotional learning in their practices, even though it is not included in formalized curriculum and standards.

Keywords: secondary education, refugees, social-emotional learning
NEWCOMER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING: IN RESPONSE TO INCREASING
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT NEWCOMER REFUGEE
STUDENTS

BY

RACHEL LOUISE WIXSON GILBERTSON
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND
FOUNDATIONS

Thesis Director:
Lindsay N. Harris
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Education Psychology Department at Northern Illinois University, which provided me an enriching and thought-provoking higher education that I do not believe I could have gained anywhere else. In particular, I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Lindsay Harris, without whom I would not have made it this far. Her patience and kindness as she advised me through my course of study made this thesis work possible.

A huge thank you to all of my family and friends who helped edit my writing. In particular, thank you to my mother-in-law, Barb Gilbertson, who was always willing to give my writing a look over, even when she had read it three or four times already. To my mother, Emily Wixson, who read everything in detail and corrected all of my grammar, and to my friends who helped me ensure that my writing made sense. And to my fellow track coach, Adrianne Robertson, who graciously conducted my practices as I attended night classes once a week for the past four years.

Next, I would like to thank my husband, Matt Gilbertson, who supported me throughout this journey by serving as a sounding board to all of my ideas. You provided valuable insight and feedback for all of my presentations while also keeping the dog entertained as I focused on writing.

Finally, I want to thank my students and teaching partner Melissa Lawson for beginning this journey into becoming a better teacher and building a passion for working with newcomer students. I am blessed to wake up every day excited to go to work with these wonderful students and amazing teaching par
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Chapter 1: Introduction

On August 17, 2016, as the school bell rang, I looked around my classroom with my teaching partner at the twenty or so students we had assembled in front of us. It was the beginning of our first year as newcomer English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, and we had no curriculum, no guidance, and no idea what to do, but we did have our intuition, a combined 25 years of teaching experience, and heart. We started with introductions, carefully learning all of the students’ names and what countries they were from. We worked hard to pronounce each name correctly, stumbling over consonant combinations we had never heard in English, and laughing with the students when we got it horribly wrong. By the end of our first three-day week, we had shown this group that we respected them, their cultures and languages, and that we were going to make learning fun.

In the months that followed, we learned vital information about each student that, had we known earlier, would have changed the ways in which we taught this ever-growing group of students. We learned that one of our students only went through the 5th grade in his country, and had only basic literacy in his first language. We learned that another student was not allowed to go to school because his mom was worried that the government would institutionalize him for a cognitive disability, so for most of his 19 years of life his job had been to take care of the cows. We also learned that another student graduated high school in her country but, at 19 years old, was frustrated that she had to start back in 9th grade because no one told her to bring transcripts from her country. Every time we learned something new was an “ah ha” moment, a “now I’m going to teach this student differently” moment, and a reflection back to that first day of the year that we should have had all this information then, instead of learning it now.
Context for English Language Learners in the United States

World-wide, there is a growing number of refugees and displaced people due to political and social violence. People become refugees because of suffering from persecution, genocide, economic depression, and political involvement, among other reasons. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that as of 2015, there are 65.3 million forcibly displaced people, 21.3 million of whom are refugees living outside their country of origin, with half of the refugees under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2018a). In the 2015 fiscal year, the United States accepted 69,933 refugees, with the top four countries of origin being Burma (18,318), Iraq (12,608), Somalia (8,852), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (7,853) (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2015). Globally, the United States ranked in the top five countries for resettlement in 2015, along with Canada, Australia, Norway, and the United Kingdom (UNHCR, 2015).

Refugees have distinct experiences from immigrants, who emigrate as a choice to seek different opportunities, because of social instability and loss of control over planning for their future. They are also exposed to more traumatic events throughout the immigration process and experience socioeconomic adversity because of poverty and discrimination (Hart, 2009). While immigrants might have the option of returning to their countries of origin, refugees must face the difficult reality that they might never see their homelands again.

All over the world, there has been a gradual shift in the kind of refugees that countries are admitting. E.F Kunz termed this new wave of refugees as acute refugees. Acute refugees arrive in greater numbers than previous waves and are lacking in education, job skills, and finances, usually due to their extended time fleeing violence and/or living in refugee camps (McBrien, 2005). In schools, these children and adolescents are labeled “SLIFE,” which means “students with limited or interrupted formal education.” Some students might have attended school before
conflict broke out, or they attended school intermittently in their countries of first asylum, but many, like the ones I have seen in my own classroom, have gone years without any academic instruction (Hos, 2016). Yet, it is the job of the schools to “catch students up” academically while teaching them English and, more broadly, the culture of their new host country.

On top of the enormous challenge of acquiring language skills and academic content area knowledge, a vast number of refugee children and adolescents are still dealing with trauma they experienced prior to resettlement and anxiety, depression, and discrimination in their host country. Refugees have experienced war and political violence, traumatic loss, sexual assault, forced displacement, and/or emotional abuse (Betancourt et al., 2012). As a result of these experiences, many students exhibit social-emotional needs, which are defined not only as mental and emotional needs but also include identity development, self-esteem, forming trusting and healthy relationships with peers and adults, and other interpersonal skills. As the point of first contact for many refugees, schools must work with communities and families to provide support and mental health treatment for children and adolescents and explicit instruction on how to improve their self-image through a social-emotional learning curriculum.

Guidelines for English Language Programs

The United States Department of Education offers a Newcomer Tool Kit for state and local education agencies (LEA) to guide their development and implementation of newcomer ESL programs. Federal law requires state and local education agencies to identify English learners (ELs) by using a home language survey (National Center for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2016b). While there is great variation in the home language survey, it typically includes “questions about what language(s) the student first learned, understands, uses, and hears, and in what contexts” (NCELA, 2016b, p. 1). LEAs then use this information to
administer a “valid and reliable assessment to determine if they are indeed ELs” (NCELA, 2016b, p. 3). This assessment evaluates the student’s English proficiency in the four language domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In the second chapter of the Newcomer Tool Kit, the National Center for English Language Acquisition (2016a) offers guidelines for the provision of language assistance programs. These guidelines are as follows:

- EL services and programs must be educationally sound in theory and effective in practice.
- EL programs must be designed to enable ELs to attain both English proficiency and parity of participation in the standard instructional program within a reasonable length of time.
- LEAs must offer EL services and programs, until ELs are proficient in English and can participate meaningfully in educational programs without EL support.
- Additionally, LEAs must provide appropriate special education services to ELs with disabilities who are found to be eligible for special education and related services.

(p. 1)

The vagueness of these guideline allows SEAs and LEAs to choose a program that best fits their population and local resources. The Tool Kit proposes that the most common EL programs are: English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD), Structured English Immersion (SEI), Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or Early-Exit Bilingual Education, and Dual Language or Two-Way Immersion (NCELA, 2016b). See Appendix H for a more detailed description of these program options. In addition, LEAs with large populations of newly arrived students and students with interrupted formal education may implement short-term newcomer programs that “help students acclimate to U.S. schools, develop foundational skills in content areas, […] and prepare them for the program options above” (NCELA 2016b, p. 2). The chapter concludes that effective EL programs are ones that see ELs as an asset to their district, not a hindrance, and places EL education as a priority in the district. This is an ideal situation,
whereas the reality is that not all LEAs and SEAs approach EL education from this perspective. Despite the flexibility found in the guidelines, social-emotional needs, though central to learning, are not specifically identified.

Every state and every district have different interpretations of how the Department of Education suggestions of best practice apply to their specific goals, resources, and populations. Therefore, implementation of these guidelines varies immensely. Many states refer to the WiDA Consortium to address the needs of their ELs. This is a non-profit organization that provides educational standards and “can-do descriptors” to guide instruction, a norm-referenced assessment of English language proficiency, research-based best practices and other professional development for educators. In addition to the federal regulations, WiDA proposes that there are seven factors that influence students’ academic achievement, linguistic development, and response to instruction and intervention (WiDA Consortium, 2013). These seven factors are: learning environment, academic instruction, oral language and literacy, family and personal dynamics, physical and psychological well-being, previous schooling history, and cross-cultural differences. WiDA emphasizes the need to view ELs holistically, understanding their previous background and language development through the present. It also includes a recognition of the importance of addressing social-emotional needs when working with newcomer ELs or SLIFE. The federal guidelines, on the other hand, only consider English language proficiency level upon arrival to the US and do not address these specific needs of newcomer ELs with deficiencies in literacy development and education. Educators and school districts, WiDA argues, should collect descriptive information in these seven domains to better develop appropriate instruction, interventions and assessments (WiDA Consortium, 2013).
Problem

In the last five years, the world refugee population has increased by about 65% (UNHCR, 2016). With an increasing number of newcomer students and students with limited or interrupted formal education in our school systems, many school districts are creating newcomer programs for the first time. While they comply with the federal regulations and state laws for newcomer and ESL programs, many of these school districts do not fully comprehend the extent of services that this type of student needs. Federal and state guidelines focus on English language proficiency and academic achievement, but they ignore the social-emotional needs that these students have. While research demonstrates the importance of providing social and emotional support, many school districts do not have a plan for implementing this support in their EL programs and schools.

Existing Research of Effective Newcomer Programs

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is a nonprofit organization that conducts research, gathers resources and influences policy analysis that promotes language learning and cultural understanding (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2014). Located in Washington, DC, this organization conducts a range of research on educational practices for language learning, including the education of ELs and especially newcomer refugees. Researchers at CAL designed and performed a nationwide review of effective secondary newcomer programs to address four research questions:

1. Which newcomer programs lead to academic success for students new to U.S. schools and new to the English language? What evidence of success do they have?
2. What pathways and transition strategies have been enacted at exemplary programs to support newcomer students moving from middle school to high school and from high school to a postsecondary option, such as employment or further academic studies?
3. What designs are in place to link the newcomer school programs with the social services agencies and how are the practices implemented?
4. What barriers restrict students’ access to social services or postsecondary options? (Short & Boyson, 2012, p. 5)

To answer these research questions, CAL administered a national survey of middle and high school programs, created a public online and searchable database with program profiles, conducted 10 case studies, and analyzed their data. They sent out surveys for completion in 2008-2009 and then again in 2011 to update the database. They analyzed their data in two ways: to create a broad picture of newcomer practices nation-wide and to use the case studies to identify effective strategies for language and academic development. One of the important findings was that all the programs identified literacy skills as the greatest area of need that should be addressed as soon as possible. They also agreed that cross-cultural orientation is an important part of the newcomer program but had varying approaches to academic content areas. It is important to note that the survey did not include any information about how these highly effective programs address ELs’ social-emotional needs, so these were not discussed in their findings. Out of the 63 programs that responded, only one school included social-emotional learning in their newcomer program. Therefore, there is a gap in information about how newcomer programs address this important need. The authors of the study identified “student experience with trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder” as an issue that was raised by this study as an area of need for further research (Short & Boyson, 2012, p. 71). I will seek to fill this gap with my study about how different newcomer programs across the United States identify and address the social-emotional needs of newcomer students.

Research Questions

1. How do newcomer teachers describe the language, academic and social-emotional needs of secondary newcomer students?
2. How do newcomer teachers address social-emotional needs of secondary newcomer students in their classrooms?

**Theoretical Framework**

As this study seeks to understand how schools respond to the varied needs of adolescent refugees, it lends itself to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the ecology of human development encompasses the interactions between human organisms and their environments as mediated by the relationships of the immediate settings and larger social contexts. In other words, Bronfenbrenner proposed that there are a multitude of factors that influence the individual, in what he termed as systems. This perspective is especially applicable to newcomer refugee students, as they have undergone incredible changes in their environments from their country of origin, to their country of first asylum, during the refugee transition time, and finally to their country of resettlement. Bronfenbrenner’s theory looks to the interactions between the individual and the changing environment, offering a unique perspective on how those changes affect the individual.

Through the ecological framework lens, we view individual students, along with their past and current experiences, at the center interacting with the forces around them. The first level of interaction, the *microsystem*, is “the complex relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). For the purpose of this research, the microsystem comprises support, changing parental roles and power dynamics, and housing and neighborhood safety. It also encompasses the new school environment, especially interactions with refugee students’ teachers and peers, including their
experiences with bullying and acceptance. The social-emotional needs of refugee students are individual and personal at this level.

The next level of interaction is the mesosystem, the “interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). The mesosystem in this case comprises the broader experience of poverty and acculturation or assimilation that the developing individual experiences in relation one’s most immediate environment. This impacts the social-emotional needs of refugee students in that it shapes the experiences the refugees have that contribute to their mental health.

Even farther away from the individual, but still acting upon him or her, is the exosystem. The exosystem factors “do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). For this research, the exosystem includes government aid to refugees, navigation of the legal system, including asylum and refugee status, permanent residence and the path to citizenship, and changing governmental immigration and international assistance policies toward refugees.

These first three levels of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological development are focused on the daily and overarching interactions that directly affect the individual, which impact refugee students’ well-being.

In addition to settings that affect the individual at a concrete level, Bronfenbrenner also recognized broader cultures and stereotypes that are the “blueprints” for ideologies and customs as the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). The macrosystem’s overarching institutional patterns in our case follows the global trend of rising nationalism and mistrust of “others.” It also includes discrimination and religious intolerance.
Finally, the *chronosystem* “extends the environment into a third dimension” by “encompass[ing] change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). Especially pertinent to the dramatic changes for adolescent refugees, this last system demonstrates how factors have affected the individual in their country of origin, in their country of first asylum, and in their country of resettlement.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems framework reiterates the great need to view SLIFE and newcomer refugee students as a whole, rather than only focusing solely on English language proficiency. These students are greatly impacted by their changing environments, and educators need to take into account how those environments affect a student’s development while they plan for and implement effective instruction.

**Definitions**

- **Country of first asylum:** This is the country that a refugee flees to first. It is usually a neighboring country that has a UN refugee camp.
- **Host country:** This is a developed country that accepts refugees and asylum seekers to live permanently in their borders.
- **Immigrant:** A person who has left one’s country of origin because of choice.
- **LEP:** Limited English Proficient. This is another term for students who are learning English.
- **Newcomer:** Someone who has recently arrived to a host country, within the past year.
- **Pre-resettlement:** A term used to describe refugees’ experiences before moving to their resettlement host country.
- **Post-resettlement:** A term used to describe refugees’ experiences after moving to their resettlement host country.
• Refugee: A person who has fled one’s country of origin due to conflict or persecution.

• Sheltered instruction: A program that teachers both academic content and English language congruently. This applies to core content areas (e.g., Sheltered Algebra, Sheltered World Geography, Sheltered Chemistry, etc…).

• SLIFE: Students with limited or interrupted formal education. This term is used to describe students who have limited literacy skills in their first language and have had periods of time without formal education.

• Social-emotional needs: An umbrella term to describe needs related to mental health, like depression, PTSD and anxiety, identity formation, relationships with others, and goals for the future.

• Social-emotional learning: Curriculum of instruction that teachers use to help students develop both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Important to understanding how schools should respond to social-emotional needs of refugee students is understanding the experiences and background of each student as he or she arrive in the newcomer classroom. Refugees are broadly defined as people who have been “forced out of their native countries, often in violent circumstances such as civil war” (McBrien, 2005, p. 334). Every refugee has unique experiences and circumstances, but all are characterized by “chaos-generating physical and emotional universals: deprivation, upheaval, fear, uncertainty and loss” (Lerner, 2012, p. 9). Refugees live with great uncertainty of the future after having their lives and cultural environments upended. Contemporary conflicts that affect refugees today are more destructive than previous conflicts, demolishing civilian infrastructure including schools and hospitals (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). These conditions, which are detrimental to children’s health and educational development, create the rising need for people to flee their countries of origin against their wishes. Most refugees have the intention to return to their homes, yet the average duration of exile for refugees is 17 years (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

We can distinguish between two types of refugees: anticipatory and acute (McBrien, 2005). Anticipatory refugees are able to plan their flight from their country of origin. Typically, they have higher levels of education and skills, are financially more secure, and have a support network on which they can rely. Acute refugees, on the other hand, are lacking in education, work skills and finances. They are not able to plan their flight from their country of origin and because of that, often seek shelter and social support in refugee camps. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) provides “physical, political, and social protection of refugees with
the delivery of humanitarian assistance such as food, shelter, and water, and also with the provision of education” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 135). Without such mandates of protection, many refugees would not survive.

The UNHCR requires that countries of first asylum provide access to education to refugees. This access, however, is uneven among the countries of first asylum due to their “already over-stretched education systems and often fragile political and economic institutions,” because they usually are neighboring countries that are often undeveloped themselves (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 135). As a result, only 50% of refugees have access to primary education, with that number decreasing to 25% for access to secondary education. When refugees do have access to education, they often “spend a disproportionate amount of time learning languages while falling behind in age-appropriate academic content” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 142). Students are commonly placed with younger children instead of with their peers as they are learning basic literacy and numeracy. In addition, these schools typically use a teacher-centered pedagogy, valuing students’ rote memorization and recitation of information. This is in stark contrast with the teaching pedagogy implemented in Westernized countries where most refugees are resettled and is jarring for students to adjust to after they are resettled.

Psychological Effects of the Refugee Experience Both Pre- and Post-Resettlement

First and foremost, researchers and educators need to understand that refugee trauma is not limited to past experiences. Adolescents, in fact, experience prolonged and sustained exposure to repeated stressors, which can lead to mental and emotional trauma (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). Traumatic experiences of refugees can greatly affect and even impede adolescents’ progress through developmental phases, especially when compounded with mistrust, self-doubt, and sense of inferiority (Lerner, 2012). Refugees are a heterogeneous group with
varied backgrounds, yet there are some common experiences that can be traumatic. Many researchers have shown that refugees experience trauma in different phases: pre- and post resettlement (Felsman et al., 1990; Hart, 2009; Lustig et al., 2004). No matter when traumatic events occur, they are detrimental to the social-emotional well-being of a student.

**Pre-resettlement factors of trauma.** Before flight from their country of origin, refugees might witness violence, feel threatened, and/or experience increased chaos and social upheaval. In a study done of 12- to 13-year-old Khmer refugees living in a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border, researchers identified startlingly high incidences of traumatic violence in their country of origin (Berthold, 2000). Researchers found that out of 182 adolescents, half of them had experienced bomb shelling, 18% had been close to death, 15% had suffered severe beatings, and 11% had seen family members killed or injured. These numbers are only a snapshot of the pre-resettlement traumas that adolescent refugees experience.

Many refugees experience high levels of discrimination in their country of origin, which can cause parents and children to be wary of institutions, including schools (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Pre-resettlement schooling is particularly problematic for adolescent refugees. Because of the effects of war on their country of origin and country of first asylum, many adolescents never attended school in their native language (Hos, 2016). Without this foundation of literacy and academic knowledge, students will struggle to acquire another language and develop strong literacy and numeracy skills.

Due to their continuing development, adolescent and children refugees have a unique experience of trauma. During this time of their life, adolescents are undergoing developmental changes in their identity formation. Their personality, sexual identity, and social skills are in flux as they adapt to their ever-changing environment (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007, p. 142). Mace et
al. 2014 argues that such traumatic experiences at this time put children and adolescents “at risk for physical health problems, cognitive impairment, developmental delay, and psychological and behavioral issues” (p. 986). While some children and adolescents display emotional and behavioral problems, many others are resilient to their traumatic experiences.

**Post-resettlement factors of trauma.** Globally, less than 1% of refugees access resettlement to a developed and stable country (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, 132). After arrival in their host country, refugees live in crowded, low-income accommodations in neighborhoods with high crime rates, adjust to a new culture and family roles, and face racism. Adolescent refugees continue to experience traumatic events in their new academic and community settings, where they experience violence, discrimination, assimilation, and changing family dynamic risk factors. Hart (2009) quoted Webster and Robertson (p. 158, 2007) to summarize these traumatic experiences: “Most asylum seekers and refugees have escaped conditions of discrimination, domination and exploitation in their home countries, only to confront similar experiences in their host country” (p. 355).

**Educational risk factors.** When SLIFE refugees arrive in their country of resettlement, they “have fallen years behind in content mastery not related to their abilities, but due to the continual shifting of language of instruction and resulting lack of exposure to subject-matter content” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 142). Other refugees who had been enrolled in school and were in advanced courses are discouraged when they are placed in low-level classes. Many schools place students solely on their level of English language development, which discourages these adolescents’ high ambitions and capabilities. Furthermore, in Western schools, adolescents “find themselves tested over and over again and in tracked curricula that emphasizes the deficits they are perceived to have, rather than the interests and aspirations that they might pursue”
Without individualization in their academic plans, adolescent refugees lose their identity and sense of self-worth, which contributes to their mental health issues. Cultural dissonance between academic experiences pre-resettlement and post-resettlement also contributes to poor social-emotional well-being. Newly arrived refugees often “continue to employ the tools of resilience they used to promote and protect themselves prior to and during migration to seek advancement once settled” (Sarr & Mosselson, 2010, p. 561).

While survival skills learned in the camps were adaptive, in their post-resettlement educational setting, these skills can be perceived as behavior problems. Cultural dissonance also manifests itself in the pedagogical differences between countries of first asylum and Western education. In the Western classroom, teachers interpret students’ silence or difficulty with self-direction as problematic disobedience, even though those skills were never expected in their previous environment (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Adolescent refugees often feel confused and alienated when they are unable to understand classroom behavioral expectations, teacher discourse styles and Western modes of thinking and learning (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

Finally, adolescent refugees may have difficulty with learning (lack of concentration, slow academic progress and classroom behavior) due to past physical and psychological trauma (Weekes et al., 2011). In her study with Khmer refugees, Berthold (2000) found that 25% of the 76 adolescent refugees partially or fully met the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) criteria, while 63% had symptoms indicative of major depression. PTSD often has comorbid psychiatric disorders and symptoms associated with it, such as depression, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, suicidality, difficulties with memory and concentration, truancy, and many more (Berthold, 2000). Unfortunately, due to barriers such as language, transportation, cultural attitudes, and stigma, many adolescents are not able to independently access mental health
services (Betancourt et al., 2012). Therefore, the educational setting becomes the gateway to mental health services via special classes, school counselors, psychologists or social workers.

**Community violence and discrimination risk factors.** Immigrants and refugees are often resettled using government funding into affordable housing, typically located in “highly segregated areas where poverty prevails” (Hos, 2016, p.482). These low-socio-economic areas typically have high rates of violence and crime, which exacerbates refugees’ issues in adjusting to their new life (Berthold, 2000; Betancourt et al., 2012). One study on Khmer refugees found that respondents had greater amounts of violence in the U.S. than in their pre-resettlement experiences (Berthold, 2000, p. 33). On top of the effects of living in poverty, many refugees face discrimination and prejudice from their country of resettlement. While discrimination is not necessarily a new experience for most refugees, it hinders their social-emotional development.

**Assimilation risk factors.** Assimilation is a complex and multi-dimensional process by which refugees adapt to life in their country of resettlement (McBrien, 2005). It can take many different forms, such as rejecting their original culture in favor of the new culture, creating a new identity in both cultures, or retaining their original culture while rejecting the new culture. In diverse societies like the U.S. that have many different subcultures, the group into which immigrants assimilate is the best predictor of their adaptation (Sarr & Mosselson, 2010). Assimilation into repressed and marginalized groups can result in the adoption of negative attitudes toward the country of resettlement, which may lead to increased risk taking and limited academic engagement (Sarr & Mosselson, 2010). As adolescent refugees typically live in low-socio-economic neighborhoods with high violence and crime rates, they are at greater risk of negative outcomes of assimilation.
Changing family dynamics risk factors. While adolescent refugees are adjusting to their new social and academic environments, adults often experience their own distress, grief and economic struggles. McBrien (2005) explains, “Because adults are anxious about finding jobs and housing and managing their own grief and cultural adjustment, they are often ill-equipped to provide their children with needed emotional support” (p. 346). Adolescents and children often are able to acquire language skills at a faster rate than their parents, resulting in a role reversal that confuses traditional power dynamics and creates conflict between the generations (McBrien, 2005, p. 330). Children must assist adults with daily tasks and take on more responsibility as the spokespersons for their parents. This role reversal can affect their social-emotional development as adolescents realize that their parents are unable to support and help them as much. Adolescents, believing that they have to find their own way in the world, therefore make riskier decisions that add to their identity instability.

Recommendations for Refugee Education

With the extensive research on the mental health and social-emotional development of adolescent refugees, many researchers have provided education practitioners with recommendations of how to improve their curriculum, learning environment and outside assistance in newcomer ESL programs. These recommendations come from peer-reviewed articles that range in different methodological approaches from meta analyses of existing literature or data sets, to collection of data in case studies or ethnographies.

Pedagogical recommendations from research. The UNHCR reports that “education is not only a fundamental human right, but also an essential component of refugee children’s rehabilitation” (McBrien, 2005, p. 330). Schools serve as key environments to facilitate the socialization and assimilation of refugee students to their country of resettlement. Many SLIFE
adolescents have high motivation for gaining education, as it is “the one thing that cannot be left behind” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 144). As their lives have been in transitional upheaval and they have had to leave friends, family members and possessions behind, many refugees acknowledge that education can never be taken away from them. Educators should build on this positive attitude and motivation for learning to encourage students to set high expectations for their academic achievement.

When adolescent refugees enter school systems with diverse needs, researchers suggest that schools must first meet the social-emotional needs of the students in order for them to attempt academic success. McBrien (2005) summarized these needs as: “a sense of safety, a sense of self, and an adjustment to the cultural expectations of a new country while maintaining a connection to their heritage” (p. 339). Nilsson and Bunar (2016) reiterate this assertion by quoting from Hek (2005), saying “educational progress and emotional well-being are mutually dependent” (p. 400). Finally, Kugler and Acosta Price (2009) quote from the National Alliance for Mental Illness that “mental health is essential to learning as well as to social and emotional development” (p. 49). Schools with newcomer refugee students should develop early identification, referral and counseling services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to address these needs. This should be a comprehensive systems approach that “provides a range of treatment options and address[es] common disorders such as anxiety and depression” (Betancourt et al., 2012, p. 688). Schools should also collaborate with families and communities to educate them about the emotional and behavioral needs in order to ensure that students receive the continued care that they need (Kugler & Acosta Price, 2009).

The Short and Boyson (2012) study for the Center for Applied Linguistics confirmed that newcomer programs view language acquisition as the highest need for adolescent refugees.
Cummins (1981) was the first researcher to articulate the different types and rates of language that students acquire. He proposed that social language, coined basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), is the quickest to develop fully in 1-3 years because people use these skills to survive in their daily life. Cognitive/academic language proficiency skills (CALP), on the other hand, are likely to develop after years of study because they deal with the details of language such as decontextualized academic language. Cummins hypothesized that these skills take seven to nine years to develop. Additionally, the native language of a person is linked to the development of CALP skills in that people are able to transfer literacy skills and academic content knowledge from their first language to their second language (Cummins, 1981).

Cummins warned that teachers interpret BICS as language acquisition without understanding the need to develop the academic register of language skills. In the case of SLIFE adolescents who have limited formal education in their first language, the development of CALP skills is an even longer process due to limited first-language literacy. One way to build CALP skills is to start with building oral language skills and use that as a basis for literacy development (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). By combining oral and written modes, students are able to develop higher registers for language production. Finally, ESL teachers not only have to teach language but also explicitly teach “the new ways of academic thinking and the types of school-based tasks found on such assessments, providing practice in so doing by initially using familiar language and subject matter” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015, p. 399). Students need to practice taking new forms of assessment, especially when their future academic success is based on their results from standardized language assessments.

Providing a positive social-emotional environment. School must provide positive learning environments to help adolescent refugees to re-establish their lives through establishing
a feeling of interconnectedness (Hos, 2016). Strong relationships between educators and students and the classroom and home environments support assimilation and social-emotional well-being (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Teacher empathy is the building block for providing a supportive and nurturing environment for adolescent refugee students. Sarr and Mosselson (2010) advise schools that “pan-ethnic labels are detrimental to refugee students as they often mask the identities and needs for individualized learning assistance” (p. 556). Teachers, staff and administrators should develop their own cultural competence by becoming knowledgeable about refugees’ backgrounds (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Common recommendations to teachers from DeCapua and Marshall (2015), Hos (2016), and Sarr and Mosselson (2010) include creating environments in which students feel supported by teachers and other students, psychologically safe, valued, respected, encouraged to achieve academically, encouraged to express their ideas without judgment, and where their previous experiences are affirmed and incorporated into the classroom.

**Other social-emotional considerations.** In acknowledgement of the limited resources of schools, some researchers suggest supplementing the social-emotional support of refugee students with a volunteer mentoring program. Mentors can take on different roles in the classroom, but by working one on one or in small groups, they are able to provide personalized attention that makes the students feel special (Weekes et al., 2011). The researchers found that “mentoring of young people from refugee backgrounds has been found to have benefits including increasing confidence, improving career opportunities, reducing risk-taking behaviors and alleviating isolation” (p. 312). By developing this personal connection, schools can effectively combat the negative effects of trauma.
Another consideration when looking at the school environment is the extent to which refugee students interact with the dominant-culture students. Interactions with native English speakers can provide necessary social integration into the mainstream culture, as well as important social language skills, such as the acquisition of slang words. It is of equal importance that the dominant culture students interact with and have opportunities to learn about their refugee peers to combat discrimination and prejudice.

In summary, research implications for the education of refugee students emphasizes the desperate need of social-emotional support and mental health services. While schools should use a “holistic view of student resources and capacities,” they often are limited to the “organizational demands, long-standing routines, or ad hoc solutions” to address the multifaceted needs of students (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016, p.411). The following discussion will address the gap between best practices as laid out by researchers and the actual practices in schools with newcomer refugee students.

**Current International Educational Practices for Newcomer Students**

The following review establishes an understanding of the current practices and challenges different countries have when educating newly arrived students. Since the United States is not the only country that accepts refugees, it is potentially beneficial to research other countries and understand how they approach educating newcomers. Australia, Canada and Sweden, along with the United States, ranked in the top five destinations for refugee resettlement in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018b). This review seeks to explore whether and how social-emotional needs are being addressed in peer countries to the United States and to outline those countries’ approaches to language and academics in refugee education.
Australia. In 2015, Australia accepted 9,321 submissions for resettlement and is one of nineteen countries that participate in the resettlement program of the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015). Australia’s New Arrivals Program (NAP) focuses on three main post-resettlement issues: accommodation, labor market entry, and health services (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012). NAP funding is used to hire ESL teachers, run NAP schools and Intensive English or English Language Centers (IEC’s), and fund “transition to work” programs. The federal government provides financial aid to state and territory departments, who then determine the allocation of funds for education. As Australia has been receiving more acute refugees with severe academic and financial needs, the funding does not adequately meet “the long-term, complex educational needs of most students with refugee background” (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012). Funding and policies that were created in reaction to anticipatory refugees are not sufficient for the increasingly acute population.

NAP programs vary by school as there is “no uniform approach to educational support of children and families with refugee backgrounds” (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012, p. 151). At the secondary level, most refugee students attend a separate intensive English center for up to one year and then are integrated into mainstream classrooms. Therefore, many students are pushed into mainstream classrooms without adequate academic English language development. This limited-time practice goes in direct conflict with language acquisition research that shows that academic skills take a much longer time to develop than the surface interpersonal communication skills. Consequently, students struggle to navigate complex learning environments and are at risk of failure once they exit the intensive English center (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012).
Education in the intensive English centers focuses on language instruction and cultural orientation. Centers also provide transition programs to mainstream schools that have some level of continuing ESL support. Principals are responsible for the “effective management and operation of the ESL programs in their schools” (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012, p. 153). Since principals have differing levels of knowledge of language acquisition theory and best practices for refugee education, the implementation of these ESL programs can vary greatly from school to school. Similar to the programs studied in the United States, the emphasis is first and foremost on language development and not supporting social-emotional well-being. Especially detrimental to refugees is exiting them into a new school without appropriate supports in place to ensure their continued success. This practice definitely does not support social-emotional development.

**Canada.** Canada is second to the United States in the number of refugees it accepts. In 2015, Canada accepted 22,886 refugee applications (UNHCR, 2015). Similar to Australia, the federal government provides funding for refugee education, but the Constitution dictates that “education is a provincial responsibility” (Rossiter & Derwing, 2012, p. 91). Therefore, the provincial governments are responsible for allocating funds, developing curriculum and assessment, and making policy decisions about ESL programming. Also similar to Australia, Canada has seen a shift in the demographics of its refugee populations. General policies concerning refugee education have been slow to respond to the increasing needs of refugees, especially in the area of training teachers to work with refugee populations (Rossiter & Derwing, 2012). One of these policies that harms SLIFE adolescents is the schooling age cap at 20 years old. It is estimated that 10% – 30% of refugee students are forced out of school because of age. Because of their long periods of transition and gaps in formal education, many refugees enter
Canadian schools too far behind their age peers in academic content knowledge to be able to complete diplomas on time.

The positive side of provincial control of refugee education is that provinces are able to experiment with innovative programs. In response to the needs of older refugee students, aged 17-21, one school board in Alberta has piloted a program called Project Youth: Integration and Education (Rossiter & Derwing, 2012). This career and life management curriculum seeks to focus on basic life management skills, education planning, employment skills development, and career goal setting. Another school board has recommended but not yet implemented a K-12 transition center for refugee children to develop language skills and provide social-emotional support. While these school boards have worked to identify and address the complex needs of their refugee students, the lack of systematic programming and coordination overall will result in social costs of unemployment and risk-taking behaviors (Rossiter & Derwing, 2012). From this small glimpse into newcomer educational programming, it is evident that some Canadian schools are attempting to assist positive social-emotional development, especially with a focus on future planning and the acquisition of employment skills.

**Sweden.** In smaller numbers than Australia and Canada, Sweden accepted 1,900 refugees in 2016 (Government of Sweden, 2016). As a mostly homogeneous and smaller society, Sweden’s methods for assimilating refugees into society is interesting as it shows how educating refugees is addressed on a smaller scale. Similar to Australia and Canada, there are “no national regulations stipulating how the education of newly arrived students should be organized and conducted” (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). This creates a problem of equity and equality in education regardless of a student’s background. Adolescent refugees and immigrants are at higher risk for dropping out of school than their Swedish-born peers (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016).
There are four main programs of instruction for refugee students that are used throughout Sweden (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). First, transitional classes provide a separate environment for newly arrived youth to acquire a basic knowledge of Swedish, math and English. Students are transitioned to mainstream classes at the discretion of the teacher. This method has been criticized in Sweden because students lose valuable time in their educational path because of learning Swedish in isolation from content matter. The second method of instruction is direct immersion. Newly arrived youth are placed directly into mainstream classes where they “sink or swim.” The third method is called “landing.” This method provides a 4-10-week period of adjustment for refugee youth and their families where they assimilate to Swedish culture and language. Social workers and bilingual staff support the families in their transition. The fourth method is a separate school exclusively for newcomers. The Swedish government has advised against this method because it does not allow for interaction between refugee youth and mainstream students, thereby limiting their socialization and assimilation. None of these programs address social-emotional needs as the students develop over time in Sweden. They appear to be short-sighted in their understanding of language acquisition and the importance of having a good foundation of social-emotional well-being.

To summarize, by reflecting on these three country snapshots, it is apparent that other countries struggle with how to address the needs of acute refugees. There is a lack of national guidance in the education of refugees that results in programs with varying outcomes. Finally, in the reviews of these three countries, addressing social-emotional needs was secondary to the language acquisition goals. This is in conflict with the research findings that social-emotional needs are equal to language acquisition needs (Betancourt et al., 2012; Kugler & Acosta Price,
Some local school districts, however, are working to develop social-emotional skills, as they have witnessed an increasing need for them.

**U.S. Educational Practices for Newcomer Students**

Similar to the previously discussed countries, the United States has no uniform program design for ESL and newcomer programs because our Constitution leaves educational decisions up to individual states. Each state has its own requirements for funding and guidelines for the implementation of ESL programs. Special newcomer programs are not required by states. While there are no laws regarding the education of ESL students, the U.S. Department of Education has published a Newcomer Tool Kit (NECLA, 2016a) to guide SEAs and LEAs in the education of newcomer ELLs. The tool kit covers topics such as identifying newcomer students, welcoming them into schools, methods for providing a high-quality education, supporting emotional needs, and establishing community-school partnerships. The section concerning the development of emotional needs lays out pedagogy and tools that school districts and teachers can employ to cultivate protective factors to social-emotional needs. The chapter includes a wealth of information that prepares teachers to understand the stressors newcomers feel, lays out social emotional skills information and development, and ways that staff can support newcomers’ social-emotional well-being (NCELA, 2016a). Despite this in-depth document, many school districts and schools do not have the resources to implement the government’s suggestions.

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is an organization that is involved in the development of ESL and newcomer programs in the United States. It defines a newcomer program as “one that places recent immigrant students, who have limited English proficiency and often low or limited educational experience in their native countries, in a special academic environment separate from native English-speaking students for a limited time” (Hos, 2016, p.
Newcomer programs are anywhere from six months to two years. The goal of these programs is to transition students into mainstream classes by providing academic content paired with language support. CAL has identified three main models of this in action: programs within a school, separate-site programs, or whole-school programs. Each program has its own unique curriculum, staffing and structure that benefit its specific population.

In the report published by Short and Boyson (2012) for the CAL, the authors reviewed 63 newcomer programs across the United States to help understand what schools were actually doing to support their newcomer ESL students. As part of the survey, program administrators were asked to provide the demographics of their student population and information about funding, instruction, assessment, student transition and monitoring methods, and other services provided. They found that 96% of newcomer programs serve some percentage of SLIFE adolescents, one-third of all EL students are SLIFE, and 90% are on free and reduced lunch programs.

A highlight from the data concerning instruction is that literacy, including instruction in the Roman alphabet and English phonemes, was common to all 63 programs (Short & Boyson, 2012). Programs also integrate the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening, as research has shown that teaching these skills in combination, rather than in isolation, is the most beneficial (Short & Boyson, 2012). Other salient features of the programs surveyed were that 68% had instruction in cross-cultural issues or orientation to the United States, 56% had direct instruction of school study skills, and 83% offered tutoring or academic instruction (Short & Boyson, 2012).

The survey did not directly ask about how programs serve the social-emotional needs of refugees. While many researchers have shown that “doing well is not the same as being well,”
this aspect of newcomer development was not included in the research (Morland, 2007). In the Short and Boyson (2012) report, however, there was information about the health concerns of students. It reported that “school nurses and school clinics are first responders to health concerns and also have a role in teaching newcomers about hygiene [and] nutrition” (Short & Boyson, 2012, p. 72). Sixty percent of the newcomer programs connect families to health counseling services, but that referral relies on the staff to identify PTSD and other mental health issues (Short & Boyson, 2012). Some newcomer programs have social workers, but most do not exclusively work with newcomer students. Therefore, referrals of this sort are difficult to achieve.

The Short and Boyson (2012) report contains an incredible amount of data about newcomer programs that covers a broad range of variables. It shows how different school districts are and the implications for newcomer ELL education. It is interesting, however, that they excluded social-emotional needs from the direct survey, leading one to ask if these programs are serving social-emotional needs and how they do so.

**Conclusion**

As this literature review has shown, there is a gap in researchers’ recommendations for best practices for educating ELs and the actual practices that have been studied. One consequence of ignoring social-emotional needs is graduation rates. Students, EL or not, who lack positive social and emotional skills, future and goal development and self-efficacy are at a higher risk of dropping out of high school. This is demonstrated by the graduation rate of EL students, which lags behind those of native-English-speaking peers. In the 2012-2013 school year, the national average for ELL graduation was 61.1%, whereas the total graduation rate was 81.4% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Even more concerning is the huge
variability in EL graduation rates state by state, from West Virginia at 83% to Arizona at 20%. It is clear that our current national and local educational practices are not meeting the needs of our newcomer students.

In this research, I seek to understand the role that social-emotional development is given in instructional practices, both formally and informally, to address the social-emotional needs of newcomer ESL students. Research tells us that schools, as the point of first contact between families and resettlement country institutions, are the best place to address the trauma and emotional needs of newcomer students, yet surveys of these programs do not report the integration of social-emotional development in their programs. By pursuing this research, I hoped to understand if and how newcomer classroom teachers address social-emotional needs to support their newcomer students, with the goal of providing some recommendations for newcomer education.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

In pursuit of understanding how newcomer teachers describe and approach instruction for language, academic and social-emotional needs, I used a qualitative approach to gather my data in semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research is an academic research tool and can be used effectively to advance the understanding of classroom experiences of newcomer teachers as they address students’ language, academic, and social-emotional needs because it seeks to uncover details about how teachers operate in their classrooms. Erickson (1986) wrote that the qualitative approach is fundamentally different from quantitative because it does not seek to find cause and effects, but rather to understand the whole of the situation. This approach “presumes that microcultures will differ from one classroom to the next, no matter what degree of similarity in general demographic features obtains between the two rooms” (Erickson, 1986). In my research with newcomer classroom and social-emotional learning, I am seeking to understand the culture that each teacher has created in his or her classroom to support social-emotional development and to find some aspects of universality among different teachers. Therefore, this research design is well suited to the collection of detailed anecdotes and perspectives from newcomer teachers about their current practices and beliefs in their classrooms.

My research questions were:

1. How do newcomer teachers describe the language, academic and social-emotional needs of secondary newcomer students?

2. How do newcomer teachers address social-emotional needs of newcomer students in their classrooms?
These questions lent themselves to a qualitative approach because they sought to understand what teachers are doing in their classrooms, rather than to find a correlation between variables. By answering these questions, I developed an understanding of what teachers in newcomer programs do to support student social-emotional development.

**Researcher Role**

Prior to starting this research, it was important to recognize my own background and interest in the topic and acknowledge that I have biases that I need to be aware of. First and foremost, I am a member of the group that I am interviewing because I am in my third year as a newcomer teacher. My interest in researching this topic of social-emotional needs stemmed from challenges I encountered with my own students. Social-emotional learning was not included in my teacher preparation program ten years ago, aside from a lecture on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. My education also excluded the further application of Maslow’s theory to refugee students. Therefore, I have experimented with social-emotional interventions in my classroom with ideas and strategies I have learned from conferences that I attended. My experience with implementing many social-emotional strategies in my own classroom have led me to believe that it is an integral part of newcomer education. It was from this perspective that I reached out to other newcomer teachers to help me explore the issues of social-emotional needs in newcomer classrooms. I approached this research with a desire to find new and improved ways to address what I have come to understand as a vital part of newcomer education. My enthusiasm for understanding and addressing social-emotional needs in the classroom, however, has the potential for creating bias in my interviews. Other teachers might not see these issues in their classrooms, and I worked to uncover their perspectives during the interviews, not impose mine by talking about my own experiences.
Aside from my professional role as a teacher, I also need to acknowledge my perspective as a White female teacher working with a highly diverse population. The participants in this study were also teachers who shared the experience of being American cultural ambassadors in their classrooms. My gender and race could impact the way in which participants interact with me, making them act more like a confidant because we are similar or more guarded because they want to avoid judgment. Developing a relationship based on common experiences was the first part of the interview process to encourage the participants to share more freely with me.

**Study Design and Data Collection Tools**

This research took place in three phases: recruitment with a demographic survey, data collection using semi-structured interviews, and data analysis. By using this approach, I was able to take a broad field of potential participants and, using the survey results, narrow it down to a smaller number that represented different program types that served different populations. In addition to the survey and interviews, I also wrote reflective memos following each interview and each time I transcribed the interviews. Reviewing these memos assisted me in drawing out common themes and helped design follow-up questions. In addition, to assist with triangulation of data, I requested documents from interview participants about the social-emotional strategies they used in their classrooms. In the end, only one participant was able to send me a curriculum for social-emotional learning, and two participants provided social-emotional learning standards. The other two participants did not have anything that they could provide related to social-emotional learning; all of their strategies were informal and therefore without documentation.

First, I created a demographic survey to gather information about the respondents and their newcomer program using Qualtrics (Appendix C). I used the Short and Boyson (2012) survey as a resource to design questions about the newcomer program. In addition to questions
about the teacher’s background, the multiple-choice and open-ended survey included questions about the program’s size, demographics and length of time students spend in the program. The purpose was not to replicate the CAL study, but rather to gather a baseline of demographic data that allowed me to effectively identify interview participants. The first page was an informed consent page (Appendix A) and the survey took participants between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. The last question asked if the respondent would be willing to be interviewed about his or her program’s response to students’ social-emotional needs. If someone responded with yes, then the survey presented the final question that gathered contact information; if the answer was no, then the survey ended.

Second, I wrote open-ended interview questions designed to “gather descriptive data in the subject’s own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). As this was a semi-structured design, I used the questions to guide the conversation but also followed up in the moment on what the participants talked about. The questions started broadly with the three most important aspects of a newcomer program that were identified in the literature review section “Recommendations for Refugee Education.” Those three areas are language, academics, and social-emotional needs. I started by asking how they view these different needs and then narrowed my questions down explicitly to social-emotional needs. Participants elaborated on their views of social-emotional needs of their students and provided examples of how they integrated addressing social-emotional needs throughout their interactions with students. Follow-up interviews were conducted after reviewing transcripts from the initial interviews and focused on additional program description and reviewed some of the emerging themes for authenticity from the first rounds of interviews.
**Sampling**

Sampling for this study was done in two parts to find willing participants who represented a variety of programs and teaching backgrounds. In my previous exploration of the topic of social-emotional needs, I found that teachers often addressed these needs in the small moments of their classroom, such as in response to something a student has shared or in a side conversation. While principals and district administrators understand the data and structure of a newcomer classroom, they are not present for those “in-between” times and are therefore not the best participants for this study. I focused exclusively on how classroom teachers view social-emotional needs in relationship to their language and academic goals for their students.

During the recruitment phase of the study, I accessed the CAL database of exemplary newcomer programs from their public database (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2014). CAL created the database with the intent that people could reach out to these exemplary newcomer programs with questions for requests for assistance in their own newcomer programs. From that list, I used convenience sampling by reaching out to as many people as possible from the list, requesting participation in the survey. In addition to the programs on the CAL list, I reached out to previous schools that I had worked in, contacts I made at conferences, and even teachers who were in the news for their service to the teaching profession for potential participants. Table 1 summarizes the response rate from the initial contacts and the Qualtrics survey. The variation in the number of people who were initially contacted and the number of people contacted for the Qualtrics survey is because some of the initial contacts responded with other people to contact, to whom I sent an introduction email and survey link.
Table 1  
*Phase 1 Response Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Contact</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of people contacted</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people who responded</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualtrics Survey</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of people contacted</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete surveys</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed surveys</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sampling for the interview followed a purposive sampling method that relied on the information from the demographic survey to identify interview participants. My intent was to choose participants who represented a wide breadth of teaching experiences and a variety of programs. Although this research focused on refugee students, I found a respondent who worked with Central American immigrants, many of whom fled violence in their home countries and were unaccompanied minors in the United States. Even though these students were not technically refugees, I learned through conversations with their teacher they had similar background experiences and current issues as refugee students. Therefore, the participant was included in the interview phase. The complete list of survey results is listed in Appendix F. Table 2 summarizes the response rate from the requests to interview.

Table 2  
*Phase 2 Response Rates*

| Number of people contacted     | 6        |
| Number of people who responded| 4        |
| Response Rate                  | 67%      |

The participants who ultimately were included in the interview portion of the study represented three different newcomer program structures, came from different regions of the
United States, had different newcomer populations and ranged in their number of years teaching from six to twenty years of general teaching experience and three to eight years of working with newcomer programs. All participants were female and one represented an ethnic minority. The final interview sample was small but nonetheless represented a broad variety of programs and teachers.

**Recruitment of Interview Participants**

After updating and confirming contacts from the CAL database through internet searches on district and school websites, I contacted potential participants primarily by email. I did call some schools to leave messages for principals, but they were never returned. If the contact person listed was a school administrator or district coordinator, I asked them to pass along the contact information of a teacher in their newcomer program. This only was successful in one case; in many others I was asked to apply for permission to conduct research in the school district, or my email was never responded to. I was more successful when I was able to directly contact teachers. For many of the contacts, I looked through the publicly available staff directory to find newcomer teachers’ contact information, often finding a different person than who was listed in 2011. Because the emphasis of this study is on current practices around social-emotional learning, it was not important that the contact’s name was different from the CAL database.

I sent out an initial email to all contacts I could find explaining who I was, what I was studying and what the survey would require of them. The use of an introductory email was also to mitigate nonresponse rate due to a request from an unknown source, which often can lead to variable results (Fowler, 2014). After my initial emails, I sent out the Qualtrics survey through an anonymous link in an additional email. I allowed participants three weeks to complete the survey, with follow-up reminder emails every week; a total number of eight teachers took the
survey during this period. After the third week, I received no additional responses to my emails or surveys, so I continued on to the next phase. Of the eight survey respondents, two teachers, after initial interest, did not respond to any of the follow-up emails and two teachers did not complete the entire survey, despite reminders. Two teachers responded that they would not be willing to be interviewed and I contacted the other six for interviews. Of those six, four of them ultimately agreed to do interviews and I was able to talk with them multiple times. The results from the demographic survey can be found in Appendix F.

**Data Collection**

Following the surveys, I chose four participants to interview following the previously described population sampling method. Table 3 outlines the relevant information for the interview participants, including their contact pseudonyms, that will be referenced throughout the findings chapter.

Prior to the interview, I emailed the informed consent (Appendix B), which included a separate signature line for consent for audio recording, to the participants to sign and send back to me. I contacted participants to set up a phone, online or in-person interview, depending on the participant’s location and preference. One teacher agreed to use FaceTime for our interview, two were conducted simply on the phone and one was in-person. The format for the interview depended on the preference of the participants. Three of the four interviews took place at school, and the two phone interviews were directly after school let out, so teachers were both talking to me on the phone and also grading and getting errands done. While at first it might seem inappropriate that they were multi-tasking, it gave the interview an informal and casual vibe that
### Table 3
*Relevant Interviewee Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Pseudonym</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Newcomer Program Structure</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>East Coast</td>
<td>Whole school</td>
<td>Newcomer Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn</td>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Self-contained program in a whole school</td>
<td>Students have mostly self-contained classes with other newcomer students, with the exception of gym and lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Self-contained program in a whole school</td>
<td>Students have mostly self-contained classes with other newcomer students, with the exception of gym and lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Integrated into a high school</td>
<td>ESL class and integrated into grade-level classes based on age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
made it easier to establish a collegial rapport with the participants and also allowed them to speak their mind. The initial interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and the follow-up interviews were 20-30 minutes long.

I audio recorded and transcribed all the interviews for data analysis. Meanwhile, I also made reflective memos to organize my thoughts about what I had heard and note themes that came up during conversations. These led me to conduct follow-up interviews to confirm the themes that had emerged throughout the initial rounds of interviews and to obtain more student and program information. There were not any monetary incentives for participants, but they all seemed to have a general interest and concern about students’ social-emotional needs and were internally motivated to talk about what they do in the classroom to address those needs. One participant told me how interesting it was to hear about how other newcomer programs work and expressed a desire to read my research upon completion.

One challenge I anticipated in this procedure was developing rapport with interview participants when our interviews were over the phone or online; however, we instantly bonded over teaching newcomers and working with our refugee students. I started each initial interview with information about myself, why I was doing this research and about my program. That was all it took to get teachers engaged in the conversation. The hardest part for me was to remind myself that it was an interview and not a conversation, as there were many times I felt the urge to jump in and give an anecdote about my own classroom. More than once when a teacher finished answering a question I had to collect my thoughts and focus back on my questions rather than start talking about other topics that they had just brought up. Overall, I believe I was able to develop a mutual trust and respect with all participants and was able to get rich, detailed information from my interviewees.
Data Analysis

Upon completing an interview, I transcribed it and also wrote reflective memos. I aimed to complete the transcriptions within a week of the interview, but sometimes it took me longer based on my schedule. Data analysis consisted of coding the interview transcripts for patterns and themes that developed around the topic of social-emotional needs. I used an open coding approach, which consisted of reviewing interview transcripts line by line to identify key ideas, themes or issues. This inductive approach does not seek to confirm hypotheses, but rather to find “key linkages” that connect many items of data (Erickson, 1986). According to the suggestions from Bogdan and Biklen (2007), I developed a coding system from searching my data for regularities and used frequently repeated words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. I kept a list of the codes I wrote down for each interview, a page for each person. After the first reading, I reorganized the codes by coding families, which allowed me to find which codes merged together and which were important to keep separate (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). During my second cycle of coding, I compared and contrasted the list of codes from each interview, condensing codes that were related to one another and in some cases eliminating codes. As suggested by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) I wrote reflective memos with speculation about patterns and hypotheses for my research questions after coding each piece, which helped me to take a step back from the data. Follow-up interviews were important to clarify responses and gain feedback for my developing hypotheses. Finally, I used the memos and codes to identify larger themes and patterns from the data.

I used a similar inductive approach while viewing the documentation participants provided me concerning their students’ social-emotional learning. The documents consisted of a calendar for the advisory time social-emotional learning, state learning standards and other
teacher-created resources for addressing social-emotional needs. These documents helped me to triangulate my data and validate my conclusions.
Chapter 4: Findings

Findings from this qualitative study provided newcomer student demographic and program information of the participants, overarching themes related to social-emotional perspectives, and interventions that teachers employed to address social-emotional needs.

Newcomer Program Descriptions

From the four interviews that I did, three different newcomer program structures emerged: whole school, self-contained program within a school, and integrated into a school. The following descriptions will include student and school demographics and information about courses. These are important to understanding the context within which these teachers operated.

Whole School. Sarah on the East Coast represented the whole-school program model. In her community there was one high school that was divided into career academies. Students entered into a career academy and were able to take classes based on those career interests. Newcomers, although technically part of the high school, had their own Newcomer Academy that operated separately from the other academies. Started four years ago, they had their own principal, dean of students, teachers, bell schedule, discipline practices, and for all intents and purposes, “[operated] in a completely different world,” according to Sarah’s first interview. The Newcomer Academy was designed for 14- to 16-year-old students new to the United States. The majority of the students spoke Spanish and came from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico or Central America. A small number of students came from Haiti and spoke Haitian Creole. Although they were not technically refugee students, many fled gang violence and economic depression and had similar experiences to refugee students of trauma and resettlement from other countries. Therefore, they were also included in this research.
The Newcomer Academy enrolled approximately 200-250 students a year and was divided into two cohorts: Year 1 and Year 2. In order to exit the Newcomer Academy to the general education academies, students needed to demonstrate a level 3 English on the ACCESS test for ELLs. To achieve this goal, all classes focused on both language and content development, with ESL classes co-taught and math classes with both a teacher and an aide. A typical day in the Newcomer Academy started at 8am with a 30-minute advisory period. Advisory was a time when students practiced mindfulness, did community-building activities, had time for academic reflection, and addressed social-emotional needs in a circle format. Following this time was 30 minutes of intervention. Students were assigned an academic intervention to attend, such as content support, survival English, self-management skills, and vocabulary development. The advisory teacher, who functioned like a caseworker, recommended the interventions that each student attended based on their needs. After intervention, students had one period each of world studies (civics), biology, algebra, ESL and an elective that was either yoga and wellness or STEM. The elective classes were each a full semester in length, allowing students to attend both over the course of an academic year.

The yoga and wellness class was developed as part of a $5,000 grant that the school received to build on the current social-emotional learning practices. The grant also helped finance the curriculum development of the advisory period and train all of the teachers in restorative justice practices. An alternative to traditional discipline consequences, restorative justice practices focus on students’ reflection on their behavior and how it affects others and themselves. Instead of a discipline office, the Newcomer Academy utilized a restorative lab that contained meditation cushions and a calm environment for students to process what occurred with the dean of students by talking one-on-one or in a circle format with other students. I will
elaborate more in detail about this important feature at the Newcomer Academy later on in my findings.

**Self-contained program within a school.** Marilyn on the West Coast and Michelle in the Midwest both worked in newcomer programs that were self-contained in a regular high school. Marilyn described her role: “My students come from all across the world, and I am their first teacher when they arrive in the United States. It’s a truly profound experience.” These programs followed the same bell schedule as the general education students and spent five periods a day in newcomer classes, while the other periods were elective classes. In Marilyn’s program, students stayed in the newcomer program for a semester and up to a year, whereas Michelle’s program students could stay up to two years. Marilyn reported that she had anywhere from five to twenty-five students at a time in the program, while Michelle’s program fluctuated the past few years, growing from twelve to as many as sixty at one time.

At Marilyn’s school, newcomers started their day with a first-hour computer skills class. Second hour focused on reading and writing, and third and fourth hours were English language development. Finally, fifth and sixth hours were English for math. The students had lunch in the cafeteria with other students and often participated in lunch sports, like playing basketball. At Michelle’s school, newcomers were divided into two cohorts, low English and high English, which typically also divided the students who were SLIFE into the lower group and students with more previous academic experience into the higher group. This allowed the two newcomer teachers in the program to differentiate lessons and skills more effectively. Newcomer students spent two periods on English language arts and a period each for math, science and social studies (a class that covers social-emotional learning, American culture, survival English and civics). Newcomer students also take gym and a music class, either choir or piano, and have lunch either
in the cafeteria or in the newcomer classroom if they need to finish assignments or want to work
on the phonics computer software.

Both Marilyn and Michelle viewed their newcomer classrooms as a home base for
students to feel safe when they were in the program and also, when they exited, to stop by and
say hello.

**Integrated into a school.** Sandra from the Southern United States represented the third
type of newcomer services: integration. These newcomer students did not have separate classes
from other students and were not grouped together in classes, but rather were integrated into
grade-level classes based on their age. Sandra explained, “My school is different because our
newcomer population is kind of integrated into our ESL 1 and ESL 2 because our ESL
population at this school is very small and very transient.” While students thrived in their ESL
classes, there was more of a “sink or swim” mentality with all other content-area classes. In her
state, newcomer students had to complete all the same requirements as general education
students, which was very difficult for them. Sandra, as the only ESL teacher at her school,
became what she called their “cheerleader.” She threw herself into encouraging her students as
much as possible, supporting them in their content-area classes by working with other teachers
and allowing them to work in her classroom on assignments. Like Marilyn and Michelle,
Sandra’s ESL classroom was a safe home base for her students to both vent their frustrations and
relax with their peers.

At Sandra’s school, she had anywhere between 10 and 20 newcomers at a time. She
described this: “I get to teach pretty much any and every country you could think of.” The school
as a whole was approximately 50% African American, 20% Hispanic and then “a whole bunch of
Korean, Asians, it’s all over the place.” Newcomers started first hour in ESL 1, but the rest of the
day they attended grade-level general education classes. The school had a unique bell schedule in that on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays they had 45-minute classes, while on Tuesdays and Wednesdays they had 90-minute block classes, which also included an advisory time. That meant that students had half of their classes on Tuesday and half of their classes on Wednesday, so newcomer students had ESL on Tuesday but did not see Sandra again until Thursday.

These three program descriptions accurately illustrate how each district made choices about how to provide services to newcomer students based on their district resources, priorities and population. Despite the differences in services, all four of the teachers identified similar social-emotional needs, but the way in which they approached these needs varied depending on their curriculum flexibility and time resources. Table 4 summarizes the major themes and subtopics that emerged from the thematic analysis of newcomer teacher interviews. A comprehensive list of all the codes from each participant is included in Appendix G. The following section will explore each of these areas and provide evidence from data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Data Analysis Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Themes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subtopics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Emotional Learning is the Foundation</td>
<td>Student background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-emotional student issues and assimilation struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Academic and Language Needs Come After Social-Emotional Needs Are Addressed</td>
<td>Teacher’s choice to reach out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Making Connections</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creating a Safe Space</td>
<td>Acceptance of home language and culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching respect for others</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Social-Emotional Learning in the Curriculum</td>
<td>Expectations, not rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-emotional learning strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social-Emotional Learning Is the Foundation

Social-emotional learning is the foundation. It’s everything. I don’t believe that [social-emotional skills] are separate. I don’t think you can have content and curriculum if you don’t have social-emotional learning happening. (Michelle)

Michelle summarized what each of my participants said about social-emotional learning. Without hesitation, all of my participants told me that social-emotional needs came before any academic learning could happen. In Marilyn’s words, “We understand that learning can only happen when we know our students and think of our students first in every decision we make in our classroom. We understand that content is important, but relationships are paramount.” These teachers know in their core that if they ignore the social-emotional needs of their students, the students will not be “open to learning” (Michelle). Sandra described the interaction of academic, language and social-emotional needs as “[making] the whole person.” Sarah explained from her experience “What we saw was that if students were not at a place where they felt like their basic needs were getting met, our program was not going to be successful at all.” All four teachers, even with different levels of newcomer support for their programs, acknowledged that first and foremost their job as newcomer teachers was to address social-emotional needs. After that, the class could proceed to academic learning.

Newcomer teachers attributed the need for social-emotional learning to the pre-resettlement and post-resettlement experiences that students underwent. The newcomer programs represented different refugee populations from around the world, ranging from different regions in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, as well as immigrants from Central and South America, Asia and Europe. Even with these differences in student backgrounds, teachers discussed similar social-emotional needs. Table 5 summarizes the student background risk factors for trauma and
the social-emotional needs that emerged from the interviews and will be elaborated on throughout this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newcomer Student Background Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk Factors for Trauma</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited or interrupted formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing family dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Newcomer teachers identified educational risk factors for trauma because of limited or interrupted formal education. Many refugee students went through extended periods of time when they were not in an academic setting, which was also true for the Central American immigrants at Sarah’s school. Many of those students left school to avoid gang violence or needed to work to help support their families, doing jobs such as picking and selling fruit or auto mechanic work. Additionally, teachers described students who experienced trauma due to community violence and changing family dynamics. Sandra described examples of these two types of trauma that her students presented. She explained that students would tell her “this person was shot in front of me or killed in front of me” or “my momma forced me to come here and I can’t go back home because my family said I’m stuck here.” Sarah echoed this second form of trauma, describing that many of her students were living with different family members for the first time in their lives while they had to leave their other family members back in their country. Whatever the cause of the trauma, it was clear to these teachers that the newcomer classroom became a safe place that students sought out “to be able to experience their emotions and have it be positive and in a very safe environment” (Marilyn). Michelle explained the
enormous task of addressing social-emotional needs: “Teaching in a high school, some of those scars have lasted for 14 years, whether they remember or not.” She asked, “How can we get these kids to learn? How can we get them to be successful adults when we have them in high school for four years? They have scars that are bigger than us.” By listening to these teachers talk about the trauma and backgrounds of their students, I heard their struggle and the empathy they demonstrated as they sought to understand the unique and challenging life experiences students brought to the classroom.

My interview questions aligned to my first research question asked teachers to describe the needs that their students exhibited in the different areas of academic, language and social-emotional development. In the area of social-emotional development, teachers brought up many of the same issues relating to behavior, coping with emotions, feeling accepted and welcomed, and cultural assimilation. First, teachers talked about working with students on how to act in school, behavioral expectations, and school skills. While some students had transferable skills from previous academic experiences, many SLIFE came to high school without a basic understanding of how to sit, listen and talk in a classroom environment. Marilyn, Michelle and Sarah all discussed explicit instruction of positive school behaviors as an important part of their role as a newcomer teacher. After classroom behavior, the next issue that came up was coping with emotions. All four teachers gave examples of students having anger management issues, homesickness, and depression. Michelle provided an example of a male African student who was having trouble expressing his anger. She described:

He’s harboring a lot of anger, probably some resentment, a lot of shame and just the avoidance of eye contact, not saying too much, mumbling. His behavior speaks volumes. So he’s got issues that need to be met before he’s ever going to be successful.
Sandra gave another example of a male Central American student dealing with social-emotional issues. She explained, “He’s had moments where he’s been in class and he gets immediately depressed when he knows that we’re talking too fast or that we’re asking him to do something in English.”Identifying and expressing emotions in a healthy and positive way were skills that many students, especially those who learned to mask their faces to protect themselves from being emotionally vulnerable in a dangerous environment, have a difficult time doing. These teachers believed that when a student expressed a social-emotional need, teachers should not ignore it and barrel on with content instruction. Instead, teachers should seek out ways in which to help that student, either in the classroom or using other resources that they have at hand.

The last two social-emotional issues that came up in discussions with these teachers were the feeling of acceptance by peers and school staff and assimilation to a new culture. Particularly in Sandra’s narrative, students expressed a lot of concern with being able to use their home language and feeling welcomed into general education classes. Because she only had newcomers for one hour a day, she explained that students struggled most with “[feeling] accepted by a teacher. There’s always been that one teacher that does not care if a kid is ESL or not; they are going to do their [teaching] thing their way.” In response to this common issue, Sandra often had to talk to other teachers about their attitudes toward newcomer students and bring in administration to support her in advocating for the needs of her students. Michelle also had to take on the role of advocate for her students, especially when supporting students who exited from the newcomer program and were in some general education classes. Michelle described situations when she had to confront other general education teachers in her building who came to her about taking an EL student out of their classes. She did this respectfully, however, and would
spend time out of her own free periods to work with the teachers to understand appropriate accommodations for ELs in their classes.

Working in a whole school of ESL teachers, Sarah did not describe student social-emotional issues with feeling accepted in the school. For her newcomer students, assimilation was more of an issue as they adapted to a new learning environment with different peers. Sarah described this: “I think that as students are assimilating, we see that those [inappropriate] behaviors are amplifying out of anxiety or out of fear or out of just pure exhaustion from doing this really hard thing of speaking English all day.” The Newcomer Academy evolved to address inappropriate classroom behaviors in a different way that starts from the understanding that misbehaviors often stem from social-emotional issues. Michelle also discussed behavior management in her room that is grounded in the understanding that different cultures have different classroom and social norms. Therefore, she set up a behavior management system that utilizes both positive and negative reinforcement to train students to behave appropriately in the classroom environment. Whether students were dealing with social-emotional issues of depression, anxiety, or anger or did not have prior experiences to learn appropriate school behaviors, these newcomer teachers sought to address these issues head on, rather than hoping the students would simply catch on.

The teachers included in this study demonstrated an aptitude toward social-emotional skills through their identification and response to student social-emotional issues, starting from a place of love and welcoming. From the first day, Sandra communicated to her students that “we are not here to take away from your culture; we are here to add to it.” With this message, she hoped to make it clear to students that she does not want students to lose their home languages and cultures, but she was there to give them tools to be successful in the United States. Michelle
believed that teachers could go a long way in helping students by educating themselves by reading books and news stories about the students’ home countries and languages. With some background knowledge, teachers were able to anticipate social-emotional needs. One example she provided was anticipating issues with Arabic-speaking students and gender roles. By taking steps to ease students into appropriate behavior when working with someone of the opposite gender, something that is not familiar to Middle Eastern students who often have only experienced all-male or all-female learning environments, Michelle was able to mitigate the behavior issues associated with feelings of unease and nervousness, like laughing and task avoidance. Newcomer teachers perceived the stress associated with assimilation and approached situations from a culturally conscious lens. This shifted the focus away from discipline and towards cultivating positive behaviors.

**Academic and Language Needs.** My findings showed that across all four interviews, teachers said that academic and language needs could not be addressed successfully until students felt safe and comfortable in their environment. Consequently, even in a course like Sarah’s algebra foundations, social-emotional learning came first. She said, “Every single day last year the very first question would be ‘how are you feeling today?’ or ‘what is something you want me to know today?’ and then after that first question there would be a question on the content.” By structuring her questions this way, she communicated to her students that her first priority was their well-being.

After meeting basic social-emotional needs, teachers identified survival English skills as the next priority. These are English skills that help the students navigate in the community and communicate their basic needs. Michelle gave the example of students learning how to say and spell their full name, address and phone number as a priority during the first month or two of her
newcomer language arts class. During intervention time at Sarah’s Newcomer Academy, survival English could be as basic as colors, shapes and numbers or more advanced as describing symptoms for being sick. In Sandra’s school, where she followed an ESL curriculum, survival English looked like understanding directions for an assignment and being able to conjugate verbs correctly. Depending on the background of their students, survival English included different content, but all teachers articulated it as a language priority.

Content knowledge of different academic subjects entered the hierarchy of needs of newcomer students along with survival English. Michelle’s program was the only newcomer program that included a science class, while math academic knowledge was a priority to all programs. Marilyn’s language of math class was a two-period block, while math skills were also covered in algebra class and as an option during intervention time at Sarah’s Newcomer Academy. For Sandra, supporting the students in their content classes usually happened outside of her ESL time, but she helped students with content-area assignments and gave them a space, and sometimes a tutor, to help them through their classes. Science was the hardest content area for her students because of the high vocabulary demands and the focus on reading comprehension, while math was more or less successful for most. Michelle anticipated that when her students exit the newcomer program, courses will become much more content driven because of testing and district benchmarks, and time for social-emotional and language development will be put aside. Despite the academic and language development concerns that these teachers had, it was still apparent to them that none of that learning could happen without social-emotional needs being met first. Marilyn reiterated her opinion of how these three facets of education fit together by saying, “Knowledge is important, but it is meaningless without the ability to communicate,
actively listen and adjust to new environments and new people.” To that end, these four teachers took many steps to improve the social-emotional skills of their newcomer students.

**How Newcomer Teachers Address and Develop Social-Emotional Skills**

My second research question involved asking teachers about how they approach social-emotional needs in their classrooms. From my conversations with them, three major themes emerged to answer this question: making connections, creating a safe space, and social-emotional learning in the curriculum. I will discuss each of these themes and their subtopics and how they manifested in the different newcomer programs that the teachers represent. Table 6 outlines the different approaches to social-emotional learning, teacher rationales and examples that emerged during data analysis. This will be described in detail throughout this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social-Emotional Approach</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td>To build trust and understanding in a supportive network of students and staff.</td>
<td>- Restorative circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Collaboration with general education students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Attending extracurricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a safe space</td>
<td>Allow newcomer students time and a place to express and process emotions; build confidence in students.</td>
<td>- Share love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Have a classroom that reflects the cultures of the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Respectful interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Listening one-on-one to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional learning in the curriculum</td>
<td>Develop social-emotional skills and encourage buy in from students for language and academic tasks.</td>
<td>- Partner and group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Curriculum materials that reflect student backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Behavior management systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making Connections.

I wanted to make sure that they understood that, no, I may not understand your language but that doesn’t mean I don’t like you. It just means that I don’t know your language.  

(Sandra)

All four of the newcomer teachers started talking about making connections with students as the first step to addressing social-emotional needs. With that connection came trust and respect, which all students needed to start working on their social-emotional issues. At the Newcomer Academy, Sarah described that every school day started with advisory time by design so that students and teachers could build connections with each other and learn how to trust and open up. The circle time that teachers did with the students provided a “touch point to then know how to interact with students when [teachers were] seeing a behavior.” Throughout the day, as social-emotional issues arose, whether with peers or with classroom behavior, all of the classrooms had the same reflection questions to help students process their feelings. Additionally, all of the teachers were trained in how to approach behavior issues from a restorative justice perspective. This might include pulling students to the side or outside of the classroom to practice some “I feel…when…’’ statements or to simply calm down and take some meditative breaths. If the situation escalated too much, teachers sent students to the restorative lab to process what happened with the dean of students. With consistency throughout all classrooms in the Newcomer Academy, making connections with students in order to help social-emotional issues happened seamlessly and at every opportunity.

In the self-contained newcomer program model, Michelle and Marilyn talked about making connections in a network of support around students. Marilyn described this: “We all seek connection and these important connections, which help build stronger, safer, communities, begin in our schools and more specifically in our classrooms.” For Marilyn, this meant bringing
in a general education class to work with her students, which served the dual purpose of helping the newcomers improve their English skills and build empathy among the general education students for refugee and immigrant students their own age. For Michelle, making connections took the form of utilizing the family support specialists in her building to work with students of the same cultural and linguistic background. Inside the classroom, making connections meant providing opportunities for students to interact in positive ways and share about themselves. Marilyn said, “Not only do I work to get to know my kids inside and out, but I work so that they know each other inside and out.” This took the form of group work and one-on-one chats with the teacher and student. Michelle frequently had students in her classroom throughout their lunchtime, and she would sit with them and chat about whatever they were looking at on their phone or asked about their activities outside of school. By showing interest in what they were doing, she opened the door to make connections.

Sandra focused a lot of our conversation on making connections with students as a priority for social-emotional learning. As the only ESL teacher in her building, she became her students’ “cheerleader,” supporting them in both academic and extracurricular pursuits. Sports were the easiest way for her to connect with her students because she loves all different kinds of sports. She attended soccer games and “[bought] soccer gear left and right for these babies.” For her, the first step was to “find something that you can latch onto that you know they are interested in as well and go with that.” From there, she built her academic lessons so that whatever she was teaching, the students could make a connection with the curriculum. She wanted them above all else “to understand that they aren’t alone in this.”

Making connections, however, was not easy for everyone. Michelle pointed this out by saying, “[Our students] are not ready to share their story, they are not ready to open up, so that
makes our job that much harder.” By this she meant that for many of her refugee students, they neither had the linguistic ability to explain what they went through in their home countries nor were emotionally stable enough to reach out to adults to process their past trauma. Therefore, it was up to the teacher to reach out, not to open up traumatic memories, but to show love and provide an opportunity for the students to make connections some way. Both Sarah and Marilyn talked about approaching students to view the current assets and skills that they had, rather than focusing at their skill deficits. Sarah made this point very clear in our conversations, saying:

Successful teachers have a desire to know [students] and a desire to know the whole child, and not just the behavior that is being presented or their deficits. To find strengths is like the big thing because a lot of our students come in with negative perceptions of school or having missed a lot of school, so school is hard for them. So if teachers stop at the face value of what they see, what academic skills they might see, then I think they are missing a lot and they might miss a lot of opportunities to build a deeper connection with students over things like, maybe they had a job in their home country, maybe they worked before school, maybe they worked on the farm every morning with their family, or maybe they speak three indigenous languages from Central America.

Because of the populations all of these teachers worked with, either refugees or immigrants, it was imperative to make connections beyond what students presented in the classroom, to dig deeper into who they were, as much as possible, to find both strengths and gaps in knowledge. With this all-encompassing view of the student, newcomer teachers were able to develop their positive social-emotional skills, such as building confidence and expressing and coping with emotions.

Sandra, working in an integrated program, emphasized that it was a teacher’s choice to open up to students and have connections, but not every teacher made that choice. It was her perception that some general education teachers did not want to make the effort to get to know newcomer students because it required more energy and effort, and they wanted to keep on following their curriculum. For her students, this lack of empathy from other teachers was hard
to deal with and contributed to their emotional and academic distress. Her job as their advocate was sometimes to intervene on their behalf and open up other teachers to making connections with students. It was the fight that she confronted on a daily basis.

Creating a safe space.

We don’t speak the same language. The only thing you can do is give them space and put your arm around them and tell them it is going to be okay. (Marilyn)

All of the newcomer teachers emphasized how important creating a safe space in their classroom was, especially to allow the students time to experience and process their emotions. As Marilyn said in the above quote, newcomer students often were unable to explain what they were feeling or why they were feeling it, but the teachers needed to read the body language and signs from the students and react appropriately. Newcomer students often started their time in the United States with masks on their faces to protect themselves from feeling vulnerable. However, by creating a safe space in the classroom, students were able to feel safe enough that “if they [were] having a really hard day, they [could] have that moment where they [were] crying or putting their head down, or being angry, or whatever” (Marilyn). In this section, I will discuss the four ways in which the newcomer teachers talked about how they create a safe place in their classroom: building a community, accepting their home language and culture, teaching respect for others, and “just sitting down and talking” (Michelle).

Building a community. The teachers at the Newcomer Academy developed a schedule and program that centered on the idea of community. Students were divided into advisory classes, and they had classes with those same students throughout most of the day. They became a form of family through their social-emotional learning, community-building activities, and problem solving together. Keeping in mind that many of these students left behind family
members and might be living with family members who are basically strangers to them, the advisories and Newcomer Academy as a whole became their support system. Sarah described this goal: “I think one of the things that we help the students to address is building a strong community at our school so that even if they are missing parts of home and missing their parts of their community, they can build a new community with us.” In other words, the school became their new home and place for security.

For Michelle, in her self-contained model, the idea of creating a family in her classroom was paramount. In her opinion, “You can share love in any language, and we try to create a family made of friendship, love and safety.” To do this, she built relationships not only with the students, but also with support staff in the building, such as the counselor, literacy coach, librarian, nurse, gym teacher, music teacher, and family support specialists. The family support specialists played an important role in her classroom because each one of them spoke the home language of her students: Swahili, Arabic, and Karen. They worked with families, in some cases even living in the same neighborhood as the newcomer families, and she invited them into her classroom to build relationships with the students, be positive role models, and support their language development. With all these staff members surrounding the students with love, by “listening, watching and keeping our eyes out for them,” Michelle hoped that the students were then able to reveal both their strengths and weaknesses. By being vulnerable, she hoped that the family they created could then help students to open up and “transform weaknesses into workable strengths.”

In Marilyn’s classroom, she expressed the idea of love in the terms of being culturally responsive and welcoming. She wanted her students to feel that “this [was] their home away from home” by ensuring that “every single thing we [did] in the class, down to the language that
we learn, [was] wrapped within this whole idea of being welcomed.” For her, creating a community included learning about each other and having meaningful interactions with each other, which then lead to more connections and understanding. Like Michelle, she placed importance on listening and being heard as key skills to prevent conflict in the classroom. Both Marilyn and Michelle wrapped love and support around their students all day, giving them space to explore their skills and time to process feelings. Their common goal was to make students emotionally stable and available for learning English and other academics.

The structure of Sandra’s integrated newcomer program, of having the students only for ESL class for one period, made her an even fiercer defender of a safe space. In the face of sinking or swimming in other content areas, Sandra set up her classroom to be the island where students could find refuge from the difficult experiences that they had in the rest of the school. She described this as:

> The number one thing is that I tell the kids that this is a safe space. If they ever feel like they can’t do something in their class because maybe they have an issue with their teacher, or maybe they just don’t understand something, they come to my class and I can give them the help they need.

Sandra helped her students in many ways, such as providing an extra desk for them to complete work from other classes in and also in building community by connecting former students with newcomers. She created her own mentoring program within the community of students that she had so that the students who have been there longer could help the new arrivals to understand that “it is okay to fail but it’s not okay to give up.” One example that she gave of this is when she had a young man from Nicaragua who was placed in 11th grade who needed to fulfill all graduation requirements to get a high school diploma in a condensed amount of time before aging out of school. When Sandra saw how disillusioned he started to become, wanting to quit
because it felt like too much work, she asked a former student to come and mentor him. The former student, from Puerto Rico, had experienced similar issues when she started at the high school but was able to push through it. With the two of them paired up, the young man had someone to lean on, to help him get through his classes and focus on the end goal of graduation. Sandra said, “With her help, it’s been a little bit easier for him to deal with it. It hasn’t been the best, but it is getting better.” Sandra felt that the community that she built in her classroom was essential to protecting the newcomers from the difficulties of completing high school on time. She connected the students with help, often providing her own time to tutor students in other subjects, and generally was a home base for her students. While her community was not the same as that of Michelle, Marilyn or Sarah, all four of them viewed their classroom community as a family, a place of love and support, where students sought help, broke down emotionally, and had the space and tools to recover.

Accepting their home language and culture. Another aspect of creating a safe space for students that the newcomer teachers expressed was being accepting of the students’ home language and culture. This meant allowing students to access their home language when they were learning and creating a culturally responsive space where students could have pride about their cultural identities. At Sarah’s Newcomer Academy, where a high percentage of the student population spoke Spanish, teachers often used Spanish as a tool to help students work through social-emotional issues. Many of the staff members spoke Spanish, and although the academic work was in English, using Spanish to work through difficult situations was beneficial to the students. For the other programs, there were too many different languages to be able to have interpreters for all of them. Sandra had the least amount of language support, having to rely on Google Translate and older students to understand what a newcomer was saying. It was not
always easy for her to accept the students using their home language. She said, “I used to get upset because I was always paranoid about, ‘Are they saying something bad about me?’” This fear was shared by her colleagues teaching other content-area courses. Sandra, however, had a change of heart when she realized that allowing students to speak in their home language “[was] not about me, [it was] about them feeling comfortable.” She reflected that as she allowed the students to express themselves more in their own language, she started receiving more work and at a higher quality from students. She attributed this to, “I let them be who they are and I [didn’t] judge them for it.” No matter if they could use their language or simply make cultural connections and feel pride about where they came from, demonstrating acceptance of students’ home languages and cultures went a long way to creating a safe space for learning for these students.

**Teaching respect for others.** With the mingling of many different cultures in one classroom, sometimes there was conflict over issues of respect. While the teachers showed acceptance of the students’ home cultures, there were times when they had to override student cultural norms and demand that all students respect each other in order to maintain a safe space. Sandra best described this: “We will not make this an unsafe space because you feel some type of way because of your culture.” For her, this was best illustrated in an example from her classroom when she had a gay male Hispanic student and some Middle Eastern students. Because homosexuality is not acceptable in their religion, the Middle Eastern students bullied and provoked anger in the Hispanic student. Sandra said that the conflict came to a head one day and she had to stop the whole class to keep a fight from breaking out. She took the Middle Eastern students to the side and fervently explained, “It’s fine if you don’t like something cause I’m not going to force you to do something that you don’t want to do, but what you will do is respect
everybody because the one thing you all have in common in here is that you are trying to learn something that you don’t know.” To end the conflict, she kept the boys separate and did not force them to work together and appealed to their common goal of learning English to focus the bullies on what was really important in that classroom. By redirecting their attention back to the community and connections that they shared, Sandra was able to restore peace in her classroom.

Both Sarah and Michelle centered their conversation of respect in their classrooms on teaching behaviors and language that showed respect. In Michelle’s class, teaching respect was teaching and modeling healthy interactions and healthy dialogues among students and staff. Additionally, she believed in providing consequences for students who were not upholding the values of the classroom or being respectful to others. With the behavioral corrections, she hoped to show students how important the treatment of others is to success in school. At the Newcomer Academy, Sarah explained that the entire staff worked on respectful behaviors. When they did circle time, students and staff upheld the value of turn taking during conversation. Teachers focused on “the basic language of how to respectfully disagree and how to respectfully share a solution if you don’t agree” when solving conflicts. The expectation in the entire school was that it was not okay to use disrespectful language with each other, no matter the situation. To improve this, teachers had respectful sentence frames posted in all of the classrooms, ensuring that even in the heat of the moment, students had the language tools they needed to maintain a level of respect.

“Just sitting down and talking.” Finally, the last theme that came up when talking about how newcomer teachers create a safe space for their students was the simple act of taking time out of their busy day or lesson to sit down and talk with a student one-on-one. As responsive teachers, the newcomer teachers I interviewed gave many anecdotes about specific students that
they had conversations with. While this was about teachers making connections with students, I included this section in creating a safe space because without the previous work on building a community, demonstrating acceptance of their language and culture, and teaching respect, teachers could not make meaningful connections with students. When all the preparation to create a safe space was in place, students were ready for one-on-one conversations about their strengths and weaknesses. For Michelle, this was about noticing students and finding how to put them in situations where they would be successful. She explained, “When you sit down and you talk to the kids and you listen to them and you watch their behavior and you can finally figure out how to match them with the right situation, the right time, that could turn out to be a life-long career.” For her, nothing symbolized this more than her anecdote of a student named Chance.

Chance came to her classroom with little English, presenting as very closed off and unwilling to try new tasks. Through her observations of Chance, Michelle noticed her insecurities and deduced that she had limited formal education, which caused her to have low confidence when doing academic tasks. When a younger student joined the class, Michelle saw that Chance started opening up and guiding him through the classroom and being protective of him, like a big sister. She started smiling, happy that she could help someone else. In response, Michelle sat down and talked to her about how she had a big heart and was so helpful to other students and continued to pair Chance up with the younger students. Chance gained confidence and started to participate more in class, showing the other students how to complete the activities. And as a result of her participation, she learned more, finally grasping the letters of the alphabet and starting to understand how to sound them out. Addressing her social-emotional needs of needing to feel helpful and building up her confidence allowed Chance to then start working on her language and academic needs.
In the Newcomer Academy, Sarah explained that one-on-one conversations were important for teachers to model healthy self-awareness for students. She explained, “We teach staff to say things like, ‘I notice that we both need to take a breath right now and a little space, so let’s give each other space before we have this conversation.’” Using respectful and positive language in conversations with students was important to supporting the expectations of community and respect that were essential to building a safe space. One-on-one conversations were also used to help students identify the emotions that they were feeling and to build on strategies to work through them. Sarah gave an example of how a teacher approached a conversation such as this:

I think things like teaching kids self-awareness around, okay, maybe you are really sad and depressed, and maybe you are really depressed because you’re homesick. And helping them to make those connections of, maybe you don’t have motivation right now because of x, y, z or because you are missing your family and that makes it harder to focus in school.

By talking students through how they were feeling and taking the time to dig deeper, teachers helped students develop the social-emotional skills they needed to be successful.

Throughout the day, the newcomer teachers explained, they assessed the body language of their students for signs of social-emotional turmoil and responded by wrapping love and support around them. This could have been in the form of creating time for connections to their home language and culture to affirm their identity or pulling a student aside to talk about his or her emotions or build up his or her confidence. Above all, the newcomer teachers expressed the importance of having a safe community in their classrooms to address the social-emotional needs of their students.
Social-emotional learning in the curriculum. My final line of inquiry into understanding how teachers address social-emotional needs was to understand how much of these strategies were teacher initiated or if they had guidance from outside sources such as a curriculum and standards. From my interviews, I found that social-emotional learning had minimal external standards-driven influences, but teachers incorporated social-emotional learning in the internal structure of their classroom. Only two teachers, Sarah and Michelle, could provide social-emotional learning standards, but they were teacher-chosen, not imposed by an external directive. In Sarah’s case, the teachers in the Newcomer Academy adapted the state social-emotional standards for specific use at their school. For Michelle, she used the standards to validate the focus on social-emotional learning in her social studies class and cited the standards when applying for field trips. For her, the standards were a way of legitimizing what she was already doing in her classroom, not guiding instruction as they did in Sarah’s program. The two sets of standards covered the same topics, but Michelle’s were written broadly for early elementary to late high school and Sarah’s were specific to 9th grade. The topics covered in both sets of standards were self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and decision making. Self-awareness and self-management concerned understanding one’s self, emotions and goals, which related to how teachers make connections with students, seeking to understand who they are as individuals. Social awareness and relationship skills played a big role in creating a safe space, with students learning how to relate to one another, show respect for each other, and use appropriate language. Decision making was absent from the interviews with newcomer teachers. The standards included goal making and career choices, but newcomer teachers did not discuss helping newcomers frame their future but instead focused on how to help students in the present. When I asked Sandra about social-emotional learning standards, she
thought she had some as part of the ESL standards, but ultimately could not find any. Marilyn likewise did not have any standards to point to about social-emotional learning. For Sandra, Marilyn and Michelle, all social-emotional work was done from their innate understanding of what the newcomer students needed.

Addressing social-emotional learning during instruction took various forms depending on the program. At the Newcomer Academy, Sarah explained that each quarter included a social-emotional learning competency that was addressed during advisory time and throughout the units of academic study. For example, the first quarter of the school year focused on self-awareness and self-management skills, so students reflected on the idea of “Identity: understanding myself and my place in the world” during their studies in biology, algebra, ESL and world studies. As part of this reflection, units of study included identity and immigration in ESL class and refugee stories in world studies. Even the algebra class that studied relationships between quantities and reasoning with equations, which while not focusing on the individual, did emphasize the importance of relationships even in the mathematical world. For the Newcomer Academy, the social-emotional learning standards guided the units of study and how the teachers framed the learning so as to develop social-emotional skills along-side academic and language skills.

Integral to this focus on social-emotional learning was the start of the school day with an advisory period at the Newcomer Academy. The thirty-minute class followed the same format of starting with a greeting, then a “get to know you” question, and finally an activity of some kind. All of the teachers in the school had the same slideshow they showed their advisory classes, so the entire school started the day off doing the same work. Mindful Mondays taught students self-management skills that they used throughout the day to regulate their emotions. Advisory time was also used to build community and unity among students, such as making a flag to represent
their class and presenting it to the school. Activities like these supported the goal of making connections and creating a safe space for students to express themselves.

Sandra and Marilyn also worked in schools that had advisory periods. For Sandra, this was during their block days and for Marilyn it was one day a week. In both situations, advisory was like a homeroom, time for organizing standardized testing information, getting information about certain school events or policies, and addressing social-emotional needs. Sandra provided examples of the topics covered as respect and suicide awareness. Unlike Sarah’s school, the whole student body participated in these advisory periods, so they were not designed to address the specific needs of newcomer or EL students. The advisory curriculum was something that the newcomer teachers had to follow, but it did not impact the social-emotional learning of their students, often because it was difficult to understand in a different language and cultural context. Sandra gave the example of an advisory topic on mental health issues, which might be taboo or not even recognized in other cultures. Therefore, a lesson on depression and suicide brought up more questions about cultural understanding than social-emotional learning.

At the Newcomer Academy, social-emotional learning laid the foundation for other curriculum work, but in the other program types, social-emotional learning was present in the materials and strategies that were used on a daily basis. Marilyn and Michelle talked about providing culturally responsive materials in their reading groups, and Sandra, with the biggest time constraints, found places in her curriculum that she could adjust to make connections with the students. Despite their differences in program structure, two themes developed on how these teachers integrated social-emotional learning into their curricula and classroom structures: social-emotional learning strategies and expectations, not rules.
Social-emotional learning strategies. During the lesson, newcomer teachers built in time for students to use their emerging language skills to work with each other and share their thoughts and opinions. When I asked Marilyn how she helped the students make connections with each other, she replied simply, “I just make sure that they have opportunities to interact and to work with each other every single day.” Michelle described this same idea in her classroom: “Allowing time to practice the skill of working with a partner and working with a group. Giving them different ways to practice the skill of dialogue and conversations and being respectful.” In her classroom, as in the other teachers’ classrooms, this took the form of using strategies like turn and talk, playing games, explaining together, and Socratic circles. Sarah designed her classes to start each day with a greeting and a share out. Circle work practiced “I statements” such as, “Today I feel _____ because _____” or “If I could describe my feelings as the weather, I would be ____.” Her goals with using this to start the class were two-fold. First, “to send the message to the students that your voice is important, and how you feel is important.” Second, Sarah hoped to build vulnerability in the students to share and be a part of a community. In both these program structures, time for sharing with and relating to one another was provided throughout the lesson and instructional day.

Sandra, who had more time constraints in her 45-minute lesson with her ESL1 class, did not always have time for all students to share their feelings, but she did find other ways to integrate social-emotional learning into her curriculum. She did journaling activities with her students and allowed them to write either in their home language or in English. When they chose to write in their home language, she used Google Translate or another student to help them communicate the message in English. Additionally, Sandra sought out resources for her class that her students could make connections with. One example of this is using rap in her English
lessons. From making connections with her students, Sandra knew that many of her students liked to listen to rap music, either in English or in their home language. So when she taught parts of speech, instead of having them work on diagramming sentences like the traditional style of teaching, she incorporated English rap, like Tupac, to get her students engaged in the lesson. By using a format that connected to her students, Sandra was able to motivate her students to participate in the lesson and thereby learn the skills required by her curriculum.

Social-emotional learning strategies took many different forms in the classrooms that these four teachers represented. It could be intentional and frame the lesson, like in Sarah’s classroom; it could guide the types of learning activities that the teacher employ; or it could lead to decisions of what materials to use that were most connected with the students. Each of these strategies helped build social-emotional skills and open the students up for learning, whether they knew it or not.

**Expectations, not rules.** The second way in which social-emotional learning was incorporated into the curriculum was the way in which these newcomer teachers viewed discipline. The title for this section came from a quote from Sandra, who said, “I don’t set rules, I set expectations. Rules are meant to be broken, but expectations are meant to be followed.” She, like the other newcomer teachers, believed that as new arrivals in the United States, the newcomer students needed to be met with some flexibility when it came to discipline but also to be explicitly taught the correct behaviors. Sandra explained:

> In ESL, you’re still learning the language. There are some things in American culture that you may not know, so I’m not going to kill you if you don’t do something the right way the first time. But if I expect you to do something, that means I want you to reach up to my expectations as much as you can, and when you don’t, we can fix it until you do!
Sandra’s perspective on discipline did not mean ignoring misbehaviors, but rather showing students the appropriate way to act in an American classroom. It focused on growth for the student rather than punishment. In Michelle’s classroom, behavior expectations meant giving students the opportunity to change their behavior before they have a consequence, but still providing consequences if the behavior did not change. Michelle, focused on a positive method of behavior management by using a system of rewards to reinforce positive behaviors with tickets and prizes, such as raising their hands, cleaning up their workspaces, and using respectful language in the classroom. For each positive behavior that they displayed, students were given tickets they turned in to a weekly drawing for small prizes. While a behavior management system such as this might not seem developmentally appropriate at the high school level, her method trained students to have appropriate school behaviors that might not have been part of their prior academic experiences. This approach celebrates, rather than punishes, the students, leading to a more positive social-emotional environment.

At the Newcomer Academy, the staff started the 2018-2019 school year with a new behavior system called restorative justice. This development came after teachers felt the need for a behavior management system that was more flexible and included more conversation with the students. With the help of a $5,000 SEL Innovation Award, the staff was trained in restorative justice practices. Unlike the previous system that was based on demerits and warnings, the “restorative conversations try to help students understand what just happened, why did I ask you to go into the hallway for a minute and what was the impact of what you did and how did that affect the classroom” (Sarah). The goal was to create self-awareness around behaviors that were not acceptable in American schools, such as yelling out in the classroom or laughing at inappropriate times. The results were a decrease in referrals and fights, with the first fight of the
year happening in October rather than in the first week of school. Restorative practices required more time from teachers on the front end, but by building social-emotional skills, teachers hoped that it prevented more serious problems.

As part of this new behavior system at the Newcomer Academy, the dean of students met with students to do restorative circles about their behavior, rather than calling them in for discipline meetings. One example that Sarah gave was for the students involved in the October fight. Under the previous discipline plan, those students would have received five to ten days of out-of-school suspension for their actions, but under this new system, they stayed in class and met with the dean of students during advisory time to work on a restorative circle every morning. Not only did this keep students in class for learning, but it also taught them conflict resolution skills and how to move past arguments and disagreements. The dean also conducted a SLIFE restorative circle once a week for students who were having a particularly hard time adjusting to life and school in the United States. Recommended by teachers, these students had the opportunities to “talk about how this school system is different than their home country and how that creates obstacles for them and how they can move on through that.” Again, the work in restorative practices was proactive, with the end goal of decreasing the severity of problems in the future by providing the students with social-emotional skills to handle future issues.

Throughout the conversations with these four newcomer teachers about how they integrated social-emotional learning into their curriculum, it became clear that for most of them, they used social-emotional strategies naturally. The teachers at the Newcomer Academy organically designed a curriculum and behavior management system that worked for their population and needs in response to their observations in the classroom. For Michelle and Marilyn, social-emotional learning was in how they related to students, how they set up activities
for students to work with one another and how they showed their love and support. For Sandra, social-emotional learning was in the ways she taught her curriculum, the messages of a safe space in her room and her willingness to fight for her students. From the perspective of these teachers, social-emotional learning happened throughout the lesson and school day, not limited to the curriculum. It was even more effective in the small moments when they noticed students struggling, in need of a warm hug or a smile.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the themes that arose from my conversations with four newcomer teachers in three very different programs. What was most salient from these findings was how each teacher described the importance of identifying social-emotional newcomer student needs and the core necessity of addressing this fundamental element in a variety of ways. Despite the resources and program structures that they had, each teacher worked to make connections, create a safe space, and include social-emotional learning strategies in her curriculum to address the needs of her students. This work was largely done out of their own intuitive knowledge of how to work with their newcomer students, rather than a district curriculum mandating specific standards. For all of these teachers, the belief that social-emotional needs have to be met in addition to, and sometimes before, academic and language needs guided every decision that they made in the classroom. All of these teachers operated out of a profound love for their students and a desire to provide the most amount of supports that they can muster around their students to succeed. Marilyn summarized this in a speech she made to a group of teachers by saying:

> It is my job as the teacher to assess my students’ needs and find the right way to help them reach their goals, academic and social-emotional. And this changes every single semester. That is what all of us are doing in our classrooms, every day. […] The common
denominator amongst every teacher in this room is that we unabashedly put our students first.

For her, and for all of the teachers I interviewed, putting students’ needs first was at the heart of why they were teachers. And for them, social-emotional learning had to come first to allow for all other learning to happen.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Following the conclusion of my research study I reflected on how my research began and what I learned from both the process and the study. Now at the end of my research endeavor, I spent time reflecting on how I started this research and what I have learned. I’ve thought about the students I described in the first chapter who initially inspired this research and, three years later, have changed. The first student who only had a 5th grade education ended up dropping out of school later that year. He was 19 years old and started harassing girls and being disruptive. As I write this conclusion, he is now married with a child on the way and helps his father manage their Halal butcher shop. The second student who worked with cows back in his country is still in school, impressing all of his teachers with his dance skills and push-ups. Despite years of concerned staff fighting for additional services, he hasn’t received any special education resources; however, staff in our building continue to advocate for him. And that third student who had a low morale after being put back into 9th grade? She graduated from an American high school last year and is now continuing her studies at the local community college. And while now I might make different decisions in supporting their academic success, I know that our newcomer teachers and support staff contributed to the growth of each of these students by creating a safe environment, surrounding them with love, sometimes making hard decisions like advising them to leave studies, or advocating for them to have transcripts accepted for graduation requirements. Through the teachers I interviewed, I learned that the newcomer teacher is not just an academic teacher, but many more things that students need during their transition to life in America. In the populations that were included in this research study and despite the differences in home countries and even refugee versus immigrant status, teachers observed and responded to similar social-emotional needs within the structure of their program. In this chapter, I will
discuss the conclusions to my research questions, make connections from the conclusions to both
the literature about trauma and refugee students and to the theoretical framework. Finally, I will
address the limitations of this study and opportunities for further research.

**Conclusions to Research Questions**

My first research question sought to understand how newcomer teachers viewed the
language, academic and social-emotional needs of their secondary newcomer students. There
was overwhelming agreement from the participants that social-emotional needs had to be
addressed first and foremost before students would be “open to” acquiring more language and
academic skills. That said, the study participants also made clear that they were not there as
mental health counselors to help students solve all of their previous social-emotional issues, but
rather their role was to provide love and support to students so that they could start to be
vulnerable again. Michelle described this difference by saying that many of her newcomer
students were not ready to tell the story of their past experiences, so her job as their teacher was
to help them to focus on success in the present. For her and all the other newcomer teachers, this
included focusing on student assets and growth, rather than on deficits. Teachers built up
confidence in students by celebrating their successes and wrapping support and love around them
when they came up short. From the perspective of these teachers, language and academic
learning required risk taking, and risk taking required knowing that if you failed, there was
someone who would help you back up. That was the crucial role of social-emotional learning in
the newcomer class setting. My study found that teachers perceived that addressing social-
emotional needs first allowed students to take bigger risks because the students trusted teachers
to support them whether they succeeded or failed.
My second research question asked teachers to reflect on how they approached addressing social-emotional needs because of their importance to the newcomer classroom. My interviews with these teachers were rich in detail about both broad overarching strategies directed to their whole class and uniquely designed individual interventions for specific students. Through their in-depth conversation about this topic, it was evident that addressing social-emotional needs was not an afterthought, added on to all that they do, but was the driving force behind the decisions of what and how to do things in their classrooms. From the limited newcomer setting in Sandra’s school to the all-encompassing program at Sarah’s school, social-emotional needs were incorporated into all aspects of time spent with students.

For all of these teachers, social-emotional learning started by making connections with students to demonstrate that the teacher saw them as individuals and cared for them no matter what. This came in the form of learning about their countries and creating a culturally responsive classroom, as in the case of Marilyn, to learning about what they like to do and supporting them in their pursuits, like Sandra’s soccer connection. Teachers made connections with students by reaching out and listening to their students and finding ways to include their cultural identities in the classroom and the curriculum.

The second fundamental strategy participating newcomer teachers employed to address social-emotional needs was to make the classroom a safe space for students. This was done by building a community, and even more so, a family away from home. Both Sarah and Michelle emphasized how the students and teachers all made up one big family. The safe space also meant that as the students became more vulnerable, they could express their feelings. Those feelings could be positive, sharing stories of success, or negative, sharing stories of anger, rejection, sadness and loneliness. But no matter what, someone would listen to them. Newcomer teachers
set up classrooms where students both felt respected and demonstrated respect to others by learning about each other and learning to trust one another. Finally, students knew that the newcomer classroom was a safe space because their teachers advocated for them in times of need. Sandra listened to students share stories of rejection from other teachers and actively worked to change the culture in her school by talking with those teachers and giving those teachers strategies to differentiate their instruction for newcomer students. Across all participating program types, newcomer student learning was enabled by the connections the teachers developed with their students in the safe space classrooms that teachers had intentionally created.

Finally, newcomer teachers used their connections and knowledge of their students to make decisions about curriculum, in the case of the Newcomer Academy, decisions about the program’s structural organization. Instead of repeating lessons from year to year, these teachers worked to adjust their curriculum and instruction to the needs of current students. This included choosing different literature that was culturally responsive or addressed topics the students needed at that time or making new academic goals that were responsive to the students’ academic levels they came in with. For these teachers, each year they taught included different ways of connecting with students in response to their students’ expressed needs.

Social-emotional learning was a topic these newcomer teachers were eager to discuss because of its importance to their pedagogy. Newcomer education is unique in the United States in that, unlike core content areas that follow national standards and guidelines, it is often teacher created and teacher directed. This means that the teachers are the ones who make decisions on what and how they want to teach. For the participants in this study, the guiding factor to making those decisions was the social-emotional needs of their students. By focusing on social-
emotional skills, teachers gained knowledge about the academic and language needs of their students and combined all of the information together to create a curriculum that addressed all three facets of learning. Marilyn best expressed this approach with social-emotional needs first: “If students feel represented, if they feel welcomed, if they feel like they matter and they have a voice, they have agency and autonomy and control over their life going forward, including their education, then they’re going to feel confident and able to learn.” By making the effort to learn about student social-emotional needs, newcomer teachers could move to the language and academic skills students need to continue on in their education.

Taking into consideration these findings, I would like to present some recommendations for policy makers who are involved in developing and structuring newcomer programs. While there are many factors to making decisions about newcomer programs, including financial resources, I believe that the social-emotional component of newcomer education cannot be overlooked.

- Provide space in the newcomer curriculum to explicitly teach social-emotional skills such as building a community, coping with emotions and developing interpersonal relationships.
- Understand that students need to learn behavior expectations before they are disciplined. These need to be taught and reinforced using a positive behavior management system or with models such as restorative justice.
- Be flexible in the pacing of newcomer curricula. Each newcomer student comes with a unique pre-resettlement experience that influences their academic, language and social-emotional skills during resettlement. Students should be given appropriate accommodations and flexibility during their newcomer
education to have time to acquire the skills needed for transition to other learning environments.

By following these recommendations, newcomer programs will create a more stable foundation for students to acquire language and academic knowledge, which they need to be successful in secondary and post-secondary options.

**Study Findings in Relation to Current Literature**

In the newcomer classroom, teachers often observed the continued experience of trauma as described in the “Psychological Effects of the Refugee Experience” in Chapter 2. That section outlined the various risk factors for trauma, dividing them up into pre-resettlement and post-resettlement experiences (Felsman et al., 1990; Hart, 2009; Lustig et al., 2004). Teachers in this study acknowledged and considered the potential pre-settlement trauma that students experienced but focused on supporting students through their post-settlement experiences because students were often not ready or willing to discuss their prior experiences. Educational risk factors were most salient in conversations with these newcomer teachers (Hos, 2016). Many expressed concerns over interruptions and lack of prior formal schooling, which impacted both the educational knowledge and behaviors of students. In both Michelle and Sarah’s programs, SLIFE students often repeated the newcomer year and were in a different cohort from students who had a background of continuous educational experiences. By focusing in particular on these students, teachers were able to support their adjustment back into education and help the students to make connections as to how education would positively impact their future.

Another factor that was present throughout discussions with newcomer teachers was addressing issues of cultural dissonance. Students struggled with the differences in expectations and rules from the schools and cultures of their home countries and of those in the United States.
(DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Sarr & Mosselson, 2010). All of the newcomer teachers addressed these differences as part of their behavior management and discipline systems. Teachers actively instructed students on positive school behaviors and worked in many ways to help students understand and follow the new rules. At Sarah’s school, students who continued to have issues with cultural dissonance participated in restorative circles with the dean of students to address those needs. Michelle collaborated with family support specialists to educate families and students about school norms and expectations. In conjunction with cultural dissonance in an academic setting, many teachers also discussed the issues of assimilation to a new culture in general. McBrien (2005) and Sarr and Mosselson (2010) found the process of assimilation to be complex and unique to individuals. All four of the newcomer teachers worked to address assimilation conflicts in their students by validating and accepting the students’ home cultures and languages. They sought to show students that assimilation did not have to be the rejection of their home identity, but rather the addition of a new language and behaviors that would enable them to be successful in the United States. All of the teachers demonstrated to their students the importance of maintaining connections with their home languages and cultures by creating a welcoming environment where those language skills were accepted and incorporated into learning.

Finally, the last educational risk factor for post-settlement trauma that was discussed by the newcomer teachers was academic placement. Similar to the findings of Dryden-Peterson (2016), Sandra, in particular, saw the effects of this type of trauma in her students who were placed by age into specific classes. She described students placed in upper level science and math classes because of their age regardless of their language proficiency level, who then struggled with depression and thoughts of quitting school. That caused her to create a mentoring
program with students who had been in the United States longer to help the newer arrivals keep up their morale, which is in line with the pedagogical recommendations of Weekes et al. (2011). In the more flexible programs, such as Marilyn’s and Sarah’s schools, newcomer students had time to acquire basic language skills in the content areas before being placed in content courses. This had consequences as well, as Michelle described issues of students aging out before completing graduation requirements. Ultimately, academic progress towards graduation was seen by both teachers and students as a factor of post-settlement trauma across all the studied programs.

In addition to reflecting the trauma issues that were present in literature, the newcomer teachers in this study also incorporated many of the recommendations for refugee education that the literature suggested. The most significant of these were recommendations to make social-emotional learning a priority in refugee education (Kugler & Acosta Price, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). Current literature suggested that newcomer programs provided a positive social-emotional environment where students are able to express themselves, be listened to, and feel that their previous experiences are validated. All of these were present in the teachers’ discussions of how they addressed social-emotional needs.

Finally, included in the literature review is a broad view of how different countries approach the education of newcomer refugee students. The review outlined the successes and struggles for educating newcomer students that the United States and other countries experienced, and these were also apparent in the discussions with newcomer teachers. Similar to the reviews of newcomer programing in other countries, in this study the programs demonstrated diverse structures and levels of support that were possible for newcomer programs (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Rossiter & Derwing, 2012). The programs in this study
were structured in response to the district resources, so for Sarah’s program, where the district allocated a greater amount of financial resources to create the newcomer program, the students had a high level of support. But in the case of Sandra’s district, where they had a small number of newcomer students, there was no district support specifically to address their needs, so they were integrated into the ESL and general education courses. This resulted in an overall lower level of support. As the United States Constitution gives rights to individual states to determine educational policies, there will never be a uniform approach to newcomer education. Despite the different programs that the teachers in this study came from, they identified and responded to similar social-emotional needs. Teachers, therefore, when given the opportunity to make decisions for their classrooms and students, might make similar decisions to prioritize social-emotional learning in newcomer education regardless of financial supports available.

**Revisiting the Theoretical Framework**

To frame this research, I used Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Framework (1977) to view newcomer students within their personal contexts and experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed his theory based on the idea that there are many factors influencing individuals’ development at any given point. These “systems” range from the immediate interactions surrounding the individual to broader cultural and historic setting that affect an individual. This framework was well suited to my research because the teachers expressed their awareness of these systems in their desire to make connections with students and learn about their home cultures. By seeking to understand the factors influencing their students, teachers would be able to see them as whole people. From the perspective of these teachers, newcomer education was highly personalized to meet the diverse needs of the students. Therefore, taking into consideration the interactions among the students, environment, and broader cultural and
historical contexts is appropriate and applicable. Teachers placed themselves at the *microsystem* level of their students, working to develop their students’ social-emotional, language and academic skills in the face of forces from the *mesosystem*, such as poverty and district resources. The *exosystem* forces were present in conversations about the changing demographics of newcomer programs in relation to U.S. immigration policies. Across programs, size fluctuation affected availability and allocation of resources for newcomer programs. Finally, the newcomer teachers touched on the effects the *macrosystem* has on their students, particularly that of discrimination and fear of others. This was especially present in Sandra’s discussion of the lack of empathy in teachers for her newcomer students and how she had to champion their specific classroom needs. Michelle and Marilyn also discussed how they sought to create experiences for newcomer and general education students to get to know one another. By making connections with each other, students of all backgrounds could build empathy and understanding and chip away at prejudices they had of one another. Marilyn described this: “The wider and more varied our experiences, the less likely we are to fear people we don’t know or who are different from us.” Included in all of the layers of instructional and social-emotional needs that these newcomer teachers thought about was also the understanding that it was their job to help break down discrimination in others by welcoming general education students into their newcomer classrooms. Throughout conversations with these newcomer teachers, the acknowledgment of the interactions and influences of different ecological systems was apparent, whether they were actively applying the theory or not.

**Areas for Further Research**

In light of a more national focus on addressing social-emotional needs of students in schools and classrooms, there are further areas of research on this topic as applied to newcomer
students. Including more teachers and programs in this study would be beneficial to gain an understanding of how newcomer teachers incorporate social-emotional needs in their classroom. The Short and Boyson (2012) study included as many as 63 programs, and an expansion of this research to that scale could produce guidelines and strategies for newcomer programs in regards to social-emotional learning. I worked with a biased sample of teachers who responded to my request for participation, in part because of their own innate interest in social-emotional learning. Two of the four participants were recognized in their communities for their focus on social-emotional learning with their newcomer students. As I think back on the participants who answered my survey but did not want to participant in the interviews, I wonder if they perceive social-emotional needs in a different way than those who were willing to do an interview. It is possible that use of an incentive would have expanded the pool of participants to teachers with different perspectives on social-emotional learning.

Another direction for research following this study would be to explore similarities and differences of social-emotional needs of newcomer and general education students. In many educational settings, general education students also have risk factors for trauma, so research comparing and contrasting their social-emotional needs with those of newcomer students would be beneficial to inform whole-school implementation of social-emotional learning. Three of the four programs represented in this study had an advisory time built into their schedule to address social-emotional needs on the whole-school level, but for Marilyn and Sandra’s programs, these topics were not accessible to newcomer students. If research were conducted to understand the convergence of newcomer and general education students’ needs, then the advisory curriculum could be restructured to meet both of those populations.
Continuation of research on social-emotional needs of newcomer students would be beneficial to build on the limited conclusions that I was able to make in this study. Additionally, understanding more about how programs and teachers can address trauma and help students to adapt to life in their country of resettlement will help make educators who work with refugees more effective in helping their students succeed both in and outside of school. This, of course, is the goal of both resettlement agencies and educators: to see refugee students lead healthy and productive lives.
References


WiDA Consortium. (2013). *Developing a culturally and linguistically responsive approach to response to instruction and intervention (RtI2) for English language learners*. Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.
APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR THE QUALTRICS SURVEY
Consent form for the Qualtrics Survey

I agree to participate in the research project titled “Newcomer Program Demographics” being conducted by Rachel Gilbertson, a student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to examine how newcomer programs address the social emotional issues of students.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: complete a brief survey that asks about your experiences and impressions of various aspects of social emotional learning. This survey should take about 10 minutes of my time.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Rachel Gilbertson at 612-839-4333. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include increased insight on how newcomer teachers use social emotional learning in their classrooms, potentially leading to improvements in newcomer programing curriculum.

I have been informed that there are no expected risks and/or discomforts that I should experience during this study. I understand that all information gathered during this survey will be confidential and secure.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

If you agree to participate in this survey, click on the “Agree” button below.
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR THE INTERVIEW
Consent form for the Interview

I agree to participate in the research project titled “Newcomer Program Demographics” being conducted by Rachel Gilbertson, a student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to examine how newcomer programs address the social emotional issues of students.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: participate in an interview that will take between 30-45 minutes.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Rachel Gilbertson at 612-839-4333. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include increased insight on how newcomer teachers use social emotional learning in their classrooms, potentially leading to improvements in newcomer programing curriculum.

I have been informed that there are no expected risks and/or discomforts that I should experience during this study. I understand that all information gathered during this survey will be confidential and secure.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Name: ________________________________ Date: ________

Signature: ______________________________

I consent to the use of audio recording equipment during my interview.

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ________
APPENDIX C

QUALITRICS DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
**Qualtrics Demographic Survey**

First, I'd like to gather some information about you. Please answer the following questions yourself:

1) Please write your name and position at your school.
2) Please write your school location.
3) How many years have you been teaching?
   - Less than 2 years
   - 2-5 years
   - 6-10
   - 11-20
   - More than 20 years
4) How many years have you been involved in the newcomer program?
   - Less than 2 years
   - 2-5 years
   - 6-10
   - 11-20
   - More than 20 years
5) What positions/subjects in the newcomer program have you taught?
   Please check all that best apply to your newcomer program.
6) Site Model
   - Whole school (e.g., Grades 6–8 or 9–12)
   - Program within a school
   - Separate site from home school

7) Length of Instructional Day
   - Full-day program
   - Half-day program
   - Less than half-day program
   - After-school program

8) Length of Program
   - Summer only
   - Less than 1 semester
   - 1 semester
   - 1 year
   - 1 year plus summer
   - 1-2 years

Newcomer Student Demographics

9) Total number of students in newcomer program from the 2017-2018 school year (including students who might have entered or exited the program during the year):
10) Approximately, what percentage of your newcomer students are refugees?

11) Number of countries represented in the newcomer program:
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10-12
- 13-15
- 16-19
- 20 or more

12) Please list the top 5 countries with the most representation in your newcomer program:

13) Number of non-English languages represented in newcomer student population:
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- 11-12
- 13 or more

14) Please list the top 5 languages represented:

15) Would you be willing to participate in an interview (face-to-face, phone or via Skype) to provide additional information about the social-emotional aspects of your newcomer program? If yes, please include the best contact information for over the summer (June, July, August).

Name:
Phone Number:
Email Address:
APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Researcher’s Introduction: I am studying the ways in which newcomer programs address the social-emotional needs of refugee students. I’m going to ask you about your teaching background first, and then specifically about the program you work in. Any questions?

Background Information:
1. Tell me about your experiences teaching in general. (teaching autobiography)
   a. How did you become involved with working with EL students?
2. Tell me about your experiences specifically teaching in a newcomer program?
   a. How have you changed your practice since working with newcomers?

Newcomer Education
“Now, let’s talk about your newcomer classroom. I want you to picture the students you’ve worked with and answer these questions with them in mind. I encourage you to talk about specific examples of students when you have them.”
3. Describe the primary language needs of your students.
   a. How do you address these needs in your classroom and curriculum?
   b. Give me an example of a specific student that has shown these language needs and describe how you met them.
4. Describe the primary academic needs of your students.
   a. How do you differentiate academic content for students of all levels?
   b. How do you address these needs in your classroom and curriculum?
   “In education, we use a lot of different buzz words. One of those is social and emotional learning. I’m going to ask questions about what I call ‘social-emotional needs.’ These are related to social and emotional learning, but are more broad. They encompass things like mental health issues (depression, anxiety, PTSD), conflict resolution and interpersonal skills, developing a sense of identity and making goals for the future.”
5. Describe the primary social-emotional needs of your students.
   a. What categories of needs do you see in your students?
   b. Describe specific examples of these needs arising in your classroom.
   c. How do you address these needs in your classroom and curriculum?
6. How do you rank the importance of language, academic and social-emotional needs of your students in relation to each other?
   a. Is one area more important than the other? Why?
   b. Can you provide me with any documents about this?
7. Do you have students with limited formal education in your classroom?
   a. If yes, what do you think is best to start with them?
   b. What progression of learning works best for them in language, academics, and social-emotional?
8. In your opinion, what role do social-emotional needs have in the classroom? In the curriculum?
   a. Is this only for your classroom, or is this for the whole program?
   b. Can you provide me with any documents about explaining this?
9. Describe an example of addressing social-emotional needs in your classroom in a one-on-one situation. Description of specific students, not generalized response.
10. Describe an example of addressing social-emotional needs in your classroom in a large or small group situation.
   a. How do you manage the language barrier?
   b. What is the frequency of such an example?

11. In your opinion, how does culture influence social-emotional needs?
   a. How do you learn about topics that are culturally taboo for your students?
   b. What kinds of taboo topics have you encountered related to social-emotional needs?
   c. How do you navigate taboo topics while still addressing needs?

12. What other staff members are involved in addressing social-emotional needs with your students?
   a. How do you involve others?
   b. What role do parents have in addressing social-emotional needs?
   c. How do you manage the language barrier?

13. What services do you have in your program or school that support the social-emotional needs of your students?
   a. How do students access those services?
   b. How do you ensure that they are culturally responsive and mediate language barrier issues?
Follow-up Interview Questions

For Sarah:
1. Please describe the home life and background experiences your students have.
2. Can you describe a day in the life of a year 2 student?
3. What specific reasons prompted the change to restorative practices and SEL focus?
4. Have you seen an impact from the SEL focus on the students?
   1. Do students self-regulate to go to the restorative lab?
   2. What kind of results have you seen on the behavior since starting restorative practices?
5. The curriculum map you sent is awesome! How much fidelity to it is there as you progress through the year?
6. How do you transition students from your environment to their next Academy?
7. How do you think teacher self-awareness of SEL impacts their ability to work with students?
   1. What makes you successful in connecting with students?
8. What role does assimilation to U.S. culture have in social emotional learning?

For Sandra:
1. Please describe the home life and background experiences your students have.
2. Can you describe a day in the life of a newcomer student?
3. How is your curriculum structured?
   1. Who impacts your curriculum?
   2. How much flexibility is there in your curriculum?
   3. If you could change anything about your curriculum, what would it be?
4. How do you think teacher self-awareness of SEL impacts their ability to work with students?
   1. What makes you successful in connecting with students?
   2. How do you create a safe space for students?
5. What role does assimilation to U.S. culture have in social emotional learning?

For Marilyn:
1. In the newcomer program, what positions have you had or what subjects have you taught?
2. Total number of students in newcomer program from the 2017-2018 school year
3. Approximately what percentage of your newcomer students are refugees?
4. Can you describe the backgrounds or home lives your students typically come from?
5. Can you describe a typical school day for a newcomer student?
6. What roles does assimilation to U.S. behaviors and cultures play in your classroom? Do you see differences when students assimilate to different subgroups of American culture?
APPENDIX F

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY RESULTS
## Demographic Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym and Region</th>
<th>Michelle, Midwest *</th>
<th>Courtney, East Coast</th>
<th>Sandra, South *</th>
<th>Briana, East Coast</th>
<th>Denise, South</th>
<th>Lauren, East Coast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years teaching total</strong></td>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>11-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years working with the newcomer program</strong></td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject taught</strong></td>
<td>Language Arts, Social Studies</td>
<td>Counselor and Intervention Support Specialist Coordinator</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
<td>ESL and foundational Literacy</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Teacher, specialist, supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Model</strong></td>
<td>Program within a school</td>
<td>Whole school</td>
<td>Whole School</td>
<td>Program within a school</td>
<td>Whole School</td>
<td>Program within a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Instructional Day</strong></td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Less than half-day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Program</strong></td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 semester</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of students in 2017-2018</strong></td>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>More than 100</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximate percentage of refugee students</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of countries represented</strong></td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of non-English language represented.</strong></td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 5 languages represented</strong></td>
<td>Swahili, Karen, Vietnamese, Arabic, Farsi</td>
<td>Arabic, Spanish, Swahili, French, Vietnamese</td>
<td>Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi</td>
<td>Spanish, Kurdish, Arabic, Swahili Tigrinya</td>
<td>Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willingness to participate in an interview</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym and Region</td>
<td>Stacy, South</td>
<td>Sarah, East Coast *</td>
<td>Kevin, East Coast</td>
<td>Marilyn, West Coast *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years teaching total</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years working with the newcomer program</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject taught</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Foundations of Algebra, Yoga &amp; Wellness Elective Teacher, Special Education Teacher (support all subjects), Social-Emotional Learning Liaison</td>
<td>English, Social Studies</td>
<td>Lead teacher at the newcomer center, English language development and the language for math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Model</td>
<td>Whole School</td>
<td>Program within a school</td>
<td>Program within a school</td>
<td>Program within a school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Instructional Day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td>Full-day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Program</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of students in 2017-2018</td>
<td>More than 100</td>
<td>More than 100</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate percentage of refugee students</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of countries represented</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-English language represented</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 5 languages represented</td>
<td>Spanish, Swahili, Pashto, Dari, Arabic</td>
<td>Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Vietnamese</td>
<td>Arabic, Farsi, Karen, Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to participate in an interview</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * denotes which participants were interviewed.
APPENDIX G

COMPLETE LIST OF CODES AS DEVELOPED FROM DATA ANALYSIS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Themes</th>
<th>Subtopics</th>
<th>Sarah</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
<th>Michelle</th>
<th>Marilyn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Information</td>
<td>- Program type - Student background - Credits - Schedule - Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>- Program type - Student background</td>
<td>- Program type - Student background</td>
<td>- Program type - Student background</td>
<td>- Program type - Student background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Emotional Learning is the Foundation</td>
<td>A. Student background - SEL first</td>
<td>- SEL role</td>
<td>- SEL first</td>
<td>- SEL first</td>
<td>- SEL first</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Social-emotional student issues and assimilation struggle</td>
<td>- Assimilation - SEL issues - Trauma</td>
<td>- SEL needs - Student trauma</td>
<td>- Fearless</td>
<td>- Teach assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Academic and Language Needs Come After Social-Emotional Needs are Addressed</td>
<td>A. Teacher’s choice to reach out - Teacher SEL - Connections - Listen - Desire to connect</td>
<td>- Language - Whole person - English language development</td>
<td>- L2 needs - Whole student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Making Connections</td>
<td>A. Community - Community Support Staff - Find strengths</td>
<td>- Safe space - Peer support - Peers</td>
<td>- Community - Support Staff</td>
<td>- Safe Space - Solve Conflicts - Support personnel - Community - Desire for acceptance - Acceptance of L1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creating a Safe Space</td>
<td>A. Acceptance of home - Family contact - Acceptance of L1</td>
<td></td>
<td>- L1 culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Support Staff - Find strengths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Themes</td>
<td>Subtopics</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Marilyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language and culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use L1</td>
<td>- Work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Teaching respect for others</td>
<td>- Respect</td>
<td>- L1 peer conflict</td>
<td>- Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Prevent issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Expressing emotions</td>
<td>- Reflection</td>
<td>- SEL example</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- SEL example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social-Emotional Learning in the Curriculum</td>
<td>A. Social-emotional learning strategies</td>
<td>- SEL in the curriculum - SEL Strategies</td>
<td>- SEL in the curriculum - SEL strategies</td>
<td>- Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Expectations, not rules</td>
<td>- Behavior Awareness - SEL results - Modeling Behaviors</td>
<td>- Behavior - Behavior awareness</td>
<td>- Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Advisory Time</td>
<td>- Advisory</td>
<td>- Advisory</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Advisory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

PROGRAM OPTIONS FROM THE EL TOOLKIT
## Program Options from The EL Toolkit

**SOME EL PROGRAMS CONSIDERED EDUCATIONALLY SOUND IN THEORY UNDER CASTAÑEDA'S FIRST PRONG**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Option</th>
<th>Program Goal</th>
<th>Language/s Used for Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD)</td>
<td>Program of techniques, methodology, and special curriculum designed to teach ELS explicitly about the English language, including the academic vocabulary needed to access content instruction, and to develop their English language proficiency in all four language domains (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing).</td>
<td>Usually provided in English with little use of the ELS’ primary language(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured English Immersion (SEI)</td>
<td>Program designed to impart English language skills so that the ELS can transition and succeed in an English-only mainstream classroom once proficient.</td>
<td>Usually provided in English with little use of the ELS’ primary language(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), or early-exit bilingual education</td>
<td>Program that maintains and develops skills in the primary language while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English. The primary purpose of a TBE program is to facilitate the ELS’ transition to an all-English instructional program, while the students receive academic subject instruction in the primary language to the extent necessary.</td>
<td>Students’ primary language and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Language or Two-Way Immersion</td>
<td>Bilingual program where the goal is for students to develop language proficiency in two languages by receiving instruction in English and another language in a classroom that is usually comprised of half primary-English speakers and half primary speakers of the other language.</td>
<td>English and another language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(National Center for English Language Acquisition, 2016, p. 10)