2-2017

Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Context in Educational Leadership

Matthew R. Horne
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations
Part of the Educational Leadership Commons, and the Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons

CU Commons Citation
https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations/8

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses & Dissertations at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ed.D. Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.
Concordia University (Portland)
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE,
CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Matthew Robert Horne

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Julie McCann, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
Daniel Shepherd, Ed.D. Content Specialist
Lawrence P. Filippelli, Ed.D. Content Reader

ACCEPTED BY

Joe Mannion, Ed.D.
Provost, Concordia University, Portland
Sheryl Reinisch, Ed.D.
Dean, College of Education, Concordia University, Portland
Jerry McGuire, Ph.D.
Director of Doctoral Studies, Concordia University, Portland
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT
IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Matthew R. Horne
Concordia University – Portland
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Education Administration

Committee Chair, Dr. Julie McCann
Member, Dr. Dan Shepherd
Member, Dr. Lawrence Filippelli

Concordia University – Portland
2017
ABSTRACT

This qualitative, multiple case study investigated how educational leaders used and manifested Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills and abilities in unique organizational contexts. The study was conducted with five principals in a large, urban school district. The principals were selected to participate based on the organizational context of their schools. Each site was profiled and subsequently categorized based on the unique dynamics of the school including, but not limited to cultural, social, political, environmental, economic, and temporal factors. The principals were interviewed using a common, open-ended interview protocol. The interviews contained questions about the school’s organizational context, the principal’s relationships with stakeholders, and the principal’s use of Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills and abilities in their role as the leader of the school. The interview transcripts were coded, analyzed, and compared with publicly available information about each school site to draw themes and conclusions to answer the research question: How do educational leaders exhibit and utilize EI within distinct organizational contexts? All five principals demonstrated evidence supporting the importance of EI skills and abilities in their role as principal and all five believed they could grow and develop their EI. The findings indicated differences in the use and manifestation of specific EI skills and abilities, from basic skills to advanced skills, across the different school contexts. This study was unique because it combined two, previously independent fields of study in the area of leadership: EI and organizational context.

*Keywords:* Emotional Intelligence, organizational context, principal
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.................................................................................................................................................. 2

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................................... 8

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 9

  Problem Statement .................................................................................................................................. 9

  Nature of the Study ............................................................................................................................... 9

  Research Question .............................................................................................................................. 10

  Research Objective ............................................................................................................................ 10

  Purpose of the Study ........................................................................................................................... 10

  Conceptual Framework ...................................................................................................................... 10

  Operational Definitions ...................................................................................................................... 11

  Assumptions ....................................................................................................................................... 12

  Limitations ......................................................................................................................................... 12

  Scope and Delimitations ..................................................................................................................... 12

  Significance of the Study ................................................................................................................... 13

  Summary of Introduction and Preview of Chapters 2 and 3 ............................................................. 13

Chapter 2: Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 14

  Introduction to the Literature Review ................................................................................................. 14

    Introduction of emotional intelligence. ............................................................................................. 14

    Introduction of organizational context. ............................................................................................. 15
Expected Findings ...................................................................................................................... 45

Ethical Issues .......................................................................................................................... 46

Potential risks to participants. ................................................................................................. 46

Researcher connection and bias. .............................................................................................. 47

Summary of Methodology and Conclusion .............................................................................. 48

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results ....................................................................................... 49

Introduction to Data Analysis and Results ................................................................................ 49

Description of the Sample ......................................................................................................... 50

Site 1: turnaround school........................................................................................................ 50

Site 2: growth school................................................................................................................. 51

Site 3: realignment school A. ................................................................................................ 52

Site 4: realignment school B. ................................................................................................ 53

Site 5: sustaining school.......................................................................................................... 54

Research Methodology and Analysis ....................................................................................... 55

Document analysis related to each site. ................................................................................... 57

Data collection through open-ended interviews.................................................................. 58

Coding and data analysis through priori and emergent themes. ......................................... 58

Summary of Findings .............................................................................................................. 60

Presentation of Data and Results ............................................................................................ 63

Participant input about organizational context.................................................................... 64
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships and interactions with stakeholders.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting oneself to meet the needs of the school.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions and evidence of emotional intelligence.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant perceptions about their principalship and context.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis and Results Summary</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Results</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual framework and significance.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminal literature.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of methodology.</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings.</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of the Results</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization of schools by organizational context.</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonalities among all principals.</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround principal.</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth principal.</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realignment principals.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining principal.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences of EI use and manifestation across organizational contexts</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results in relation to the literature on organizational context. ......................... 109

Results in relation to the literature on emotional intelligence in leadership. ...... 111

Differences in the use and manifestation of ei across organizational contexts. .. 112

Limitations and Delimitations ........................................................................... 114

Implications of the Research for Practice, Policy, and Theory .......................... 115

Recommendations for Further Research ............................................................. 117

Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 118

References ......................................................................................................... 120

Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Procedure .................................................. 128

Appendix B: Research Consent Form ................................................................. 130

Appendix C: Statement of Original Work ............................................................ 132
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. EI domains and progression of skills and abilities adapted from Mayer & Salovey (1997) .................................................................................................................................................................. 20

Figure 2. Fiedler’s Contingency Model containing eight possible organizational contexts adapted from https://blogpsychology.wordpress.com/a2-psychology/organisations/leadership-and-management/ ........................................................................................................................................ 24

Figure 3. Repeat of Figure 1 charting EI domains and progression of skills and abilities adapted from Mayer & Salovey (1997). .................................................................................................................. 91
Chapter 1: Introduction

Leadership, in any context and at any level, is inherently a relational process involving recognizing, evoking, and influencing the emotions, and thereby the performance, of others (Humphrey, 2002). However, there are certainly elements of leadership which change based on the context of the organization in which it occurs (Vroom & Jago, 2007). This study focused on educational leadership and sought to synthesize these two, important elements: Emotional Intelligence (EI) and organizational context.

Problem Statement

Researchers have largely agreed that varying organizational contexts require different leadership approaches and skills (Stogdill, 1948; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002; Vroom & Jago, 2007). There has also emerged strong evidence within the research to support the importance of EI to leadership in all contexts (George, 2000; Humphrey, 2002; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005; Mayer & Salovey, 2007). This study investigated how EI is used and manifested differently by leaders in varying organizational contexts.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study used a collective case study approach to collect and analyze data from multiple, intentionally selected cases. Five schools and their leaders were selected using critical case, judgment sampling based on the uniqueness of their organizational context. Watkins’ (2013) categories were helpful in the selection and categorization of the schools: Start-up, Turnaround, Accelerated Growth, Realignment, and Sustaining Success. Open-ended interviews were the primary data source and were triangulated with publicly available
information about the schools’ demographic, economic, political, environmental, and other organizational factors.

**Research Question**

The essential question this research sought to answer was: How do educational leaders exhibit and utilize EI within distinct organizational contexts?

**Research Objective**

By profiling five schools and carefully studying their leaders, it was possible to compare, contrast, and analyze similarities and differences between and among these principals in their distinct organizational contexts. The objective of this research was to gain deeper insight into how the elements of EI – perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) – was used or exhibited to a greater or lesser extent by leaders of organizations with unique characteristics and in unique states of development.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to closely examine the use and manifestation of EI among educational leaders and, more specifically, to explore the effect different organizational contexts have on a leader’s use of particular EI skills and abilities. As a qualitative study, the data collected required processing and careful analysis in order to determine categories and themes to form conclusions (Jasper, 1994). This study formed conclusions, based on themes from the data collected, about how the use and manifestation of EI changed or stayed the same depending on the organizational context.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was based on the notion that EI is important to leadership (Kerr, et. al, 2006) and that varying organizational contexts call for
varying leadership skills, abilities, and behaviors (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). By extension, leaders within distinctly different organizational contexts may use and exhibit EI skills and abilities differently than their peers in schools with dissimilar organizational contexts.

The term *Emotional Intelligence* (EI) was coined and popularized by Mayer and Salovey (1997) as a measurement for one’s ability to manage, understand, use, and perceive emotions. Leadership, regardless of the context is, at its essence, a process of recognizing, evoking, and influencing the emotions, and thereby the performance, of others (Humphrey, 2002). EI, therefore, may be important element for educational leadership and was an important element of this study.

The context in which leadership occurs may vary based on social, political, economic, environmental, and even temporal factors. When considering the leadership of an organization, the context largely determines strategic direction, the scope of influence, the speed of change, relationship dynamics, information gathering, networking methods, and much more (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). Researchers have worked to categorize the contextual situation of organizations for the ease of study, planning, and response. Watkins (2013) simplified organizational contexts into five categories that supported the organization of this study.

EI is an important element of leadership, as is careful consideration of the organizational context. Just as organizational context has a significant determination on the approach of leadership, strategic planning, and dynamics, it follows that leaders may utilize and exhibit EI skills and abilities differently within distinct categories of organizational context.

**Operational Definitions**

Emotional Intelligence – A measurement of one’s ability to manage, understand, use, and perceive emotions.
Organizational Context – The unique dynamics of an institution including, but not limited to cultural, social, political, environmental, economic, and temporal factors.

Critical Case, Judgment Sampling – A form of convenience sampling in which participants are selected based on a framework of specific characteristics or variables.

Assumptions

A number of assumptions underlay the design of this study. First, it was assumed that participants responded honestly and sincerely to open-ended interview questions. Second, it was assumed that the use of publicly available information about school demographics to identify schools and leaders, within a single district, for study would yield a sufficiently diverse, representative group. Third and finally, it was assumed that the leaders of each school displayed some general introspection regarding their leadership and that they had some working knowledge of the organizational contexts of their schools.

Limitations

Certain limitations were inherent to the design of this research study. Most notably, participants may have had preconceptions or biases about their school’s organizational context or their own EI; the responses to the open-ended interviews represented self-reported data and people have a tendency to protect themselves and make themselves appear better than they actually are. Finally, with only five institutions and leaders being studied deeply – an important delimitation of this study – it was possible that not all variables related to organizational context were highlighted, identified, and coded in the analysis and reporting of the data.

Scope and Delimitations

The study was delimited to five public school leaders in a large, urban school district. The study was further delimited by geographic and time constraints. All participants were
located in a different country than the researcher and all interviews and data collection took place within a 90-day timeframe. These delimitations required the exclusive use of electronic media and communication to conduct the case studies; it is foreseeable that electronic communication potentially yielded more or less opportunity and freedom for full expression of ideas related to the interview questions.

**Significance of the Study**

The results of this study may provide educational leaders and potential educational leaders with insights on how, and to what extent, elements of EI are useful and manifest within varying school, organizational contexts. This study may also provide educational leaders, potential leaders, and educational leader preparation institutions with information about which elements of EI are important to develop in order to approach specific or varied organizational contexts within schools.

**Summary of Introduction and Preview of Chapters 2 and 3**

By deeply profiling five school leaders and their institutions through a qualitative, case study approach, this study provided insight into how educational leaders exhibited and used EI within distinct organizational contexts. The following chapter contains a review of the relevant literature and supports the research question as an important area for study. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to collect and analyze the research data. Together, these first three chapters provide a complete review of the literature and methodology underlying this dissertation research on EI and organizational context in educational leadership.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

Effective leadership has been a topic of discussion since the time of Plato, Cesar, and Plutarch (Bass, 1981). Thinkers and authors have sought to understand and articulate the skills, traits, experiences, and actions that will have the greatest impact on creating and sustaining successful organizations. This study examined two elements of leadership which, together, represented an under-researched area: Emotional Intelligence (EI) and organizational context.

In this chapter, a complete review of the seminal literature begins with the importance of both organizational context and EI in the leadership of educational institutions. The research question ultimately being addressed by this dissertation is: How do educational leaders exhibit and utilize EI differently within distinct organizational contexts? Following the introduction of the two key concepts – EI and organizational context – a conceptual framework included both the relevance of this research and the appropriateness of the data collection and analysis methods to be used (Ravich & Riggan, 2012). Following the contextual framework is a review of the research literature about both the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities in leadership and the importance of considering organizational context in leadership. Finally, after a review of the methodological literature related to this study, this chapter concludes with a synthesis of the research findings, a critique of the existing research, and an overall summary.

Introduction of emotional intelligence. In all contexts, leadership is inherently a relational process involving recognizing, evoking, and influencing the emotions, and thereby the performance, of others (Humphrey, 2002). Significant research has been undertaken and much literature has been written about individuals’ capacity for working with emotions (Rivers, Brackett, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007; George, 2000; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Kerr, et. al., 2006). The
The term *Emotional Intelligence* (EI) was coined and popularized by Mayer and Salovey (1997) as a measurement for one’s ability to manage, understand, use, and perceive emotions. As recently as 2000, authors have concluded, “Exactly how, and to what extent EI accounts for effective leadership is currently unknown” (George, 2000, p. 5).

**Introduction of organizational context.** Separate from EI, researchers have recently begun to examine the importance of the organizational context within which leaders may find themselves (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Antonakis (2004) pointed out that the contextual influences on leadership have not received a great deal of attention in the research. Research on leadership has largely understated the role of organizational context. Still, researchers have concluded that the context in which leadership occurs determines strategic direction, the scope of influence, the speed of change, relationship dynamics, information gathering, networking methods, and much more (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). The following section contains an explanation of the conceptual framework based on the existing literature surrounding the notion of EI and organizational context related to educational leadership.

**Conceptual Framework**

Modern conceptions of leadership have inherently been based on interpersonal relationships – creating a sense of ownership, motivating and inspiring, encouraging teamwork, and managing complex personal and interpersonal dynamics (Hogan, et. al., 1994). Research into the skills, traits, and behaviors which underlie the strong interpersonal skills present in many effective leaders has led naturally to the construct of EI (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Although recent studies have shown that an individual’s EI is important for leadership (Kerr, et. al., 2006), there is still a need for more research into exactly how EI plays a role within unique leadership contexts.
EI is important for leaders (Kerr, et. al., 2006) and the organizational context has a significant impact on leadership (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002), but exactly how EI is used and manifested within differing organizational contexts remains an area in need of further study. These unanswered questions about EI within differing contexts formed an important component of the conceptual framework, which supported the methodology and basis for the research in this dissertation.

Early leadership researchers made the assumption, which has now been disproven, that leadership was akin to a general personality trait. Now referred to as a heroic conception of leadership, this was a notion that certain psychological traits of aptitude and ability would yield a strong leader (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Beginning in the 1940’s and 50’s, some researchers began a move away from the pure disposition-based theories of leadership to potentially more dynamic theories (Zaccaro, 2007). Stogdill (1948) stated, “It becomes clear that an adequate analysis of leadership involves not only the study of leaders, but also of situations” (p. 64–65).

The models and theories have been refined much since Stogdill (1948) first called for a study of the situation within which leadership is occurring. Still, over 50 years later, Porter and McLaughlin (2006) completed a meta-analysis of empirical articles about leadership since 1990 and concluded that the impact of organizational context on leadership still represented an under-researched area. Shamir and Howell (1999) similarly called for the study of leadership to focus not only on the traits of the leader, but also on the situational factors underlying the leadership.

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the two-fold notion that EI is important to leadership (Kerr, et. al, 2006) and distinct organizational contexts call for varying leadership skills, abilities, and behaviors (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). By synthesizing these concepts, this study sought to understand if and how leaders within distinctly different
organizational contexts may use and exhibit EI skills and abilities differently than their peers in schools with dissimilar organizational contexts. It was within this conceptual framework that the methodology for this research was designed and conducted.

**Review of Research and Methodological Literature**

The study of leadership has been around since ancient times; as early as the sixth century B.C., the Chinese leader Lao-tzu described effective leaders as “selfless, hardworking, honest, able to time the appropriateness of actions, fair in handling conflict, and able to empower others” (Zaccaro, et. al., 2004, p. 101). Other notable figures from history including Plato, Aristotle, and Niccoló Machiavelli, also completed research and described, in their own ways, what made an effective leader.

As early as 1869, researchers began studying leadership scientifically through correlational and longitudinal studies (Galton, 1869). At the beginning of the 20th Century, Terman (1904) brought the first empirical studies of what may differentiate leaders from non-leaders. Similar studies, seeking to identify the traits of effective leaders, abounded in the following years and the support for trait-based and skill-based theories of leadership grew, mostly unchecked, through the 1940s (Zaccaro, et. al., 2004; Stogdill, 1948). Stogdill’s (1948) work was primarily focused on studying the history of trait-based leadership, but he also provided a brief foreshadowing of work to come when he was among the first to note that to fully understand leadership, we must also study the situations in which those leaders find themselves.

Although, theories of leadership based on skills and traits have remained a key area for study, Ghiselli and Brown (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of the history of leadership research and found that, as early as the 1950s, researchers investigated and came to appreciate
the importance of context when evaluating leaders. They summarized their extensive research by noting, “To a considerable extent, the manifestation of leadership is determined by the social situation. Under one set of circumstances and individual will be a good leader and under others he will be a poor one” (p. 471). This study followed a qualitative, case study methodology to examine the interplay between EI and the context within which leadership takes place.

**Emotional intelligence.** The concept and measurement of Emotional Intelligence (EI) arose from early research on “three components of the mind: cognition (thought), affect (feeling), and conation (motivation)” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 230). The theory of EI these researchers subsequently developed integrated the first two components – cognition and affect – to assert that emotions inform cognitive processes and also that one can think cognitively about emotions (Rivers, et. al., 2007).

As Mayer and Salovey (1997) completed their own research and reviewed the research of others, four emotional abilities emerged:

The ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion [perceiving]; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought [using]; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge [understanding]; and the ability to regulate emotions to provide emotional and intellectual growth [managing] (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10).

The theory of EI maintained that individuals are able to grow and develop each of these abilities as they age and gain more experience. Furthermore, these abilities may help with effectiveness in certain situations and careers involving extensive interpersonal relationships.

As mentioned previously, the specific impact and effect of EI on leadership remains largely unknown (George, 2000). Nonetheless, increased EI is clearly linked with the ability to
be effective in social situations – perceiving and being able to flexibly manage emotionally dynamic interactions (Goeman, 1998). Using the measurement of EI, which they developed and which is discussed in detail later in this chapter, Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000) concluded that individuals with a high EI appear better able to lead members of a group because of their ability to monitor feelings and adapt to take the appropriate action.

Approaches to measuring EI. There have been a number of approaches to synthesizing the available research and measuring one’s EI: two less recognized methods included Goleman’s Mixed Model of Emotional and Social Competency and Petrides’ Trait-Based Theory. Goleman (1998) developed a “mixed model” of five emotional competencies he determined were linked to leadership ability; his model included an assessment called the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) (Goleman, 2007), and provided an assessment of an individual’s social and emotional abilities. Petrides, et. al. (2007) preferred a trait-based model of EI in lieu of an ability-based model. Many self-reporting assessments were developed based on Petrides’ trait-based theory (Perez, Petrides, & Furnham, 2005), but one of the better researched and widely circulated was the Trait Emotion Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) (Mikolajczak & Leroy, 2007). However, the most longstanding and statistically validated approach to measuring EI based on significant research remains the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (MacCann, Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2004). Although the MSCEIT was not administered to participants, the theory and framework underlying the MSCEIT formed a critical foundation for the organization of this study.

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test. The MSCEIT, which was used as a guiding framework in this study, was built as an ability-based assessment and thus resembles an IQ test; it measures an individual’s abilities in each of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997)
The four abilities in Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model, measured by the MSCEIT, included perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. In the model, these four abilities were arranged in order from the simplest to the most complex of psychological processes (Figure 1). Abilities at the higher levels, such as managing emotions, depended on the lower level abilities, such as perceiving and using emotions. Each of the separate abilities were thought to develop with age and experience (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007).

The first dimension of EI in Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model was the perceiving of emotions. This dimension contained the skills related to identifying and naming different...
emotions in oneself and others. At the basic level, this ability referred to being able to identify and differentiate how one is feeling both physically and emotionally. The higher levels referred to being able to read the feelings of others and even to tell the difference between truthful and dishonest emotional expressions in others.

Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) second dimension included skills and abilities related to using emotions. All aspects of this dimension included using emotions to help make decisions and determine further action. The basic levels involved using emotional information to determine what is important within the environment – to prioritize actions. The higher levels required the control of emotions and the generation of emotional states to make it easier to see multiple perspectives or to support different ways of thinking.

The third dimension of the model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), understanding emotions, included not only being able to recognize and name emotions, but also understanding the interplay between emotions and interpreting the meaning emotions. At the basic levels, understanding emotions included using the labeling of emotions to discriminate finer details, similarities and differences. The most complex aspects of this dimension included understanding blended emotions and subtle transitions between emotions.

Finally, the fourth and most advanced dimension in the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model was managing emotions. At its most basic level, this dimension allowed individuals to take control of their emotional states to allow both pleasant and unpleasant feelings to occur. The highest levels of managing emotions involved reflection on emotions and the control of emotions without the stifling of emotions both in oneself and in others (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007).
Still a prominent EI assessment today, the MSCEIT provides participants with scores in each of the four dimensions as well as an experiential EI score (combining perception and use of emotions), a strategic EI score (combining scores from understanding and managing emotions), as well as an overall score (Mayer & Salovey, 2007). The four dimensions of EI were found to be interrelated and to help individuals in various life situations by linking the affective and the cognitive processes.

**EI and leadership.** Leadership is, at its core, a social process in which a leader’s effectiveness is greatly determined by his or her ability to influence the performance outcomes of others (Humphrey, 2002). Effective leadership requires a great deal of social skills; these skills include perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 2007). Early correlational studies on EI and effective leadership cautiously concluded a preliminary relationship between EI and effective leadership (George, 2000). A similar study found elevated EI scores to be linked with improved leadership effectiveness (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). In a summary of research on EI and leadership, Gardner and Stough (2001) concluded that EI seemed to have strong validity in predicting effective leaders.

Recent literature has strongly suggested the importance of emotional skills for leadership effectiveness. This study sought to better understand how EI was presented in and used by educational leaders within varying situations. The following section explores the literature about the related, but separate effect of organizational context on leadership.

**Organizational context.** The unique contextual variables of an organization appeared to have an important impact on leadership (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Shamir and Howell (1999) argued that the study of leadership must include a study of the situational factors in addition to a leaders’ traits and actions. Boal and Hooijberg (2000) pointed out that a number of
the new theories of leadership appeared *context free* – they did not adequately consider the organizational context. Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) went so far as to claim that leadership effectiveness depended in large part, on the context within which it occurs. Finally, Vroom and Jago (2007) claimed that leader traits and behaviors were merely minor variables compared to structural and organizational elements.

Despite the overwhelming agreement of researchers about the importance of contextual influences on leadership, situational leadership remained an area in need of more research in order to develop a more complete understanding of exactly how varying organizational contexts required different skills and abilities in their leaders (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004).

Over time, there have been some researchers who have gone so far as to argue that the root causes of successful and unsuccessful leadership resided in structural features of organizations and not any characteristics of the people who led those organizations (Perrow, 1970). These purely situational views of leadership were predicated on three key arguments: 1) leaders of large organizations have much less power than it seems, 2) all candidates for a given position underwent the same screening process, thus drastically limiting any differences, and 3) any remaining differences would be insignificant compared with the situational demands the leader finds himself or herself in (Vroom, & Jago, 2007). This argument represented a pure view of the situational effects on leadership and allowed for little to no room for abilities, attributes, or actions. The same researchers who summarized this work ultimately concluded, “Most social scientists interested in leadership have abandoned the debate between person or situation in favor of a search for a set of concepts that are capable of dealing both with differences in situations and with differences in leaders” (Vroom & Jago, 2007, p. 20).
The understanding of the importance of the situation, with an allowance for the individual traits, abilities, and actions of the leader, gave rise to Fiedler’s (1967) Contingency Model. Fiedler was among the first to clearly articulate a model which took into account both the situation and the traits of the leader; in his model, he divided leaders into two groups: relationship motivated and task-motivated. He then categorized organizations based on combinations of three polar variables: leader relations vs. member relations, follower structure vs. task structure, and leader power vs. position power.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader-Member Relations</th>
<th>Situations (Fiedler’s Contingencies)</th>
<th>Task Structure</th>
<th>Position Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.** Fiedler’s Contingency Model containing eight possible organizational contexts adapted from https://blogpsychology.wordpress.com/a2-psychology/organisations/leadership-and-management/

As illustrated in Figure 2, there were eight possible combinations of these variables which could characterize an organization – for example, one possible organization might be categorized as a leader relations, follower structure, and leader power organization. Fiedler (1967) found that the relationship-motivated leader had greater success in four of the possible organizational situations and the task-motivated leader had greater success in the opposite four situations. Ultimately, Fiedler argued that leadership motivation was static in an individual, and therefore, a leader should be placed in organizational context which was favorable to his or her
style. If that was not possible, Fiedler suggested re-designing the job to fit the leader; essentially, he called for working to change the situational variables until a fit with the leader was achieved. Following Fiedler’s work, other researchers developed and refined theories incorporating both situational factors and leader traits.

One such study resulted in a leadership philosophy and subsequent 12-hour training program called, *Leader Match* (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975). The concept involved a deviation from the traditional training of leadership skills and actions in favor of a model based on analyzing the match of the situation to one’s style of leadership. This model emphasized how the situation determined the leadership response and even which leaders would have success within the given organization.

Zaccaro and Klimoski (2002) built upon the Leader Match work by explaining how the organizational context “stimulates and defines the parameters of appropriate leadership action” (p. 13). They were careful to avoid saying that only leaders with certain traits would be effective in certain organizational contexts; instead, they asserted that the context implied shifts in how leaders acquired information, made sense of information, planned their responses, and exercised their influence. Although the work of Zaccaro and Klimoski was strongly based on Fiedler’s (1967) Contingency Model, it was helpful to see how thinking has progressed to include a more holistic view of contextual influences on leadership – one which took into account both the situation and the leader’s skills, abilities, and actions.

While the earliest work on situational and contextual leadership emphasized the best leader match (Fiedler, 1967), more recently, focus was being given to analyzing organizational contexts to determine the best leadership strategies. Watkins (2013) built upon the work of his predecessors (Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002) to
develop a model for categorizing organizations in a way which was intended to help leaders and potential leaders formulate appropriate approaches to starting out and approaching change within their organization.

**Watkins’ STARS model.** Although his work was not directly based on the work of Fiedler, Chemers, and Mahar (1997), Watkins (2013) presented a model for contextualizing organizations and adjusting or selecting leadership that was similar in principle to their concept of Fiedler’s *Leader Match* theory, which asserted the importance of matching the leader to the situation. The questions that drove Watkins’ work supporting leaders and aspiring leaders were, “What kind of change am I being called upon to lead?” and “What kind of change leader am I” (loc. 0119)? He asserted that a careful study of the organizational context would help a leader determine challenges, opportunities, and resources to guide his or her approach.

Watkins (2013) created the acronym STARS to represent the five types of organizations leaders found themselves in or moving into. These five labels applied well to schools and educational institutions. The five categories were “start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success” (loc. 1025). Each separate organizational category presented different challenges, opportunities, and resources; thus, each required the right leader with the right approach.

Watkins (2013) used the term start-up to describe a new or relatively new organization, which was still defining itself and building its capacity. In a start-up organization, the leader had the opportunity to assemble all of the human, financial, and capital resources necessary to get business off the ground. The leader of a start-up organization was able to develop the vision, the management, and the team to get it done. While there was much
opportunity to tap into the enthusiasm of a start-up, challenges could include limited resources, lack of focus, and human resource issues around building and developing a strong team.

Turnaround organizations were in need of help; Watkins (2013) asserted they typically required serious change and demanded quick and determined action to correct course. Organizations in this situation required decisive leadership willing to take risks and make difficult decisions. While challenges included high-pressure situations and waning morale, it was a significant opportunity that everyone recognized the need for change and were typically willing to stretch themselves to get there.

Organizations which were doing well and were ready to grow their business or take on new and promising challenges were referred to by Watkins (2013) as accelerated-growth situations. Leaders of accelerated-growth organizations were called upon to make rapid expansion; this growth required the rapid building of structures and processes while hiring many new people. Watkins (2013) asserted that workers in accelerated-growth situations were typically willing to stretch themselves, but building the systems and integrating many new employees were significant challenges.

In realignment organizations, things were going okay, but there existed “internal complacencies, erosion of key capabilities, or external challenges” (Watkins, 2013, loc. 1074) and trouble is eminent. These organizations needed revitalizing and a new sense of urgency. Realignment organizations typically had major “pockets of strength” (loc. 1040), but challenges include convincing employees and stakeholders of the need for change and carefully restructuring past practices to create greater focus.

Finally, sustaining-success organizations were in healthy situations and needed to remain as good as they were or even improve. According to Watkins (2013), the leader was
challenged to learn the complexities of what made the organizations successful and worked to set the organization up for future success in a changing world. While these organizations were inherently healthy, challenges included maintaining focus, managing expectations from previous, successful leadership, and discovering ways to carefully and deliberately improve the organization further.

Educational leadership has been found to be as complex as the myriad of organizational contexts in which it occurred as well as the countless different individuals who assumed positions of responsibility and leadership. Just as Shamir and Howell (1999) noted that leaders’ traits, characteristics, and actions should not be studied independent of the situation, so contextual influences did not stand alone as sole determiners of leaders’ success or failure. This study sought to add a deeper understanding to the relationship between EI and leadership by studying how EI manifested itself in leadership at educational institutions in varied situations.

**Review of Methodological Issues**

In order to examine the interplay between the EI of educational leaders and the organizational context of their respective schools or institutions, this study used Watkins’ (2013) five categories of organizations from his STARS model along with interviews and case studies of leaders focused on the use and manifestation of EI in their roles. Watkins’ categories provided a helpful framework within which to study situational variances within educational institutions, and Mayer and Salovey’s (2007) model, along with interview and case study, provided rich information about how EI skills and abilities appeared and were used by leaders within each organizational context.

Although the concepts behind Watkins’ STARS model came from the work of many researchers (Fiedler, 1969; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Vroom & Jago, 2007) who had
been studying situational variables in leadership for many years, his work was written primarily as a support book for administrators and his five categories had not been research tested. His model had been cited by many authors (Randall, 2013; Rowitz, 2013; Coley & Hitch, 2014; Gallos, 2014), but it had not undergone rigorous peer review. However, his work was clearly influenced by Fiedler’s (1969) similar Contingency Model, which categorized organizations based on combinations of three variables: leader-member relations, follower-task structure, and leader-position power. Watkins’ work may have represented a simplification of the categorization of organizations, but he did so in a fashion that aligned with and complimented prior research and made the classification of organizations based on their context much clearer.

The selected methods for discussing EI, on the other hand, were based on a deep foundation of peer-reviewed research (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). While there were a number of alternative, well regarded tests of EI available today to provide a measure of emotion-related abilities (Goleman, 1998; Perez, Petrides, & Furnham, 2005; Mikolajczak & Leroy, 2007), the MSCEIT 2.0 was the most deeply researched and widely used measure of EI (Rivers, Brackett, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007). The MSCEIT 2.0 was a problem solving assessment which required the participant to answer 8 emotion-related tasks divided into 141 individual items related to the Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) four dimensions of EI. The four dimensions and the levels of sophistication within each dimension, which formed the framework for the MSCEIT, were used as key descriptors in the analysis of interviews during this study.

The MSCEIT categories and framework, along with a detailed organizational profile of each school provided important data for triangulating information gathered from interviews with the school leaders. By selecting individual educational leaders from organizational contexts based on Watkins’ STARS model, and performing a case study of each based on interviews
focused on EI, insight was gained into how EI skills and abilities manifested across different organizational contexts.

**Synthesis of Research Findings**

There remained little doubt from the literature that the dynamic variables which made for successful leadership were numerous and complex. Ultimately, the organizational context played a critical role in the success of a leader, but so did the leader’s ability to use his or her skills and attributes in the right ways at the right times (Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991).

The organizational context had a major impact on which leader may have been right for the institution and what approaches that leader should have taken (Leister, Borden, & Fiedler, 1977). However, no matter the organizational context, leadership required relational and social skills: influencing, motivating, inspiring, and collaborating with others (Humphrey, 2002). Mayer and Salovey (1997) quantified these skills in their theory of EI which included one’s ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and in others. These abilities manifested themselves differently and to different degrees in all people.

Organizational contexts, including schools and other educational institutions, have been categorized a number of ways (Fiedler, 1967; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Watkins, 2013). Recently, Watkins (2013) categorized organizations into five categories to be considered by current and potential leadership: start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success. Each of these different situations required a different approach to the social and relational aspects of leadership, thus, each of these different organizational contexts may have led a leader to use and manifest EI skills in different ways. The focus of this study was the
unique manifestations and variations of leaders’ EI across distinct organizational contexts within education.

**Critique of Prior Research**

Both EI and situational effects on leadership remained an area for continued study. Gardner and Stough (2001) concluded that, “theoretically, the area of emotional intelligence appears to have great validity predicting effective leaders; however, empirical evidence is very limited” (p. 71). Similarly, Porter and McLaughlin (2006) completed a meta-analysis of empirical articles about leadership since 1990 and concluded that contextual influences on leadership remained an area lacking deep research. Although limited, the research on EI and situational leadership was substantial compared to the lack of research combining EI and contextual factors within leadership (Zaccaro, 2007).

The research supporting the impact of organizational context on a leadership effectiveness was substantial (Fiedler, 1967; Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002; Perrow, 1970; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Leister, Borden, & Fiedler, 1977), however, the work to create working classifications that would help leaders determine fit and strategy was relatively new (Watkins, 2013). Similarly, the research validating the concept and measurement of EI was strong and thorough (Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000; Pérez, Petrides, & Furnham, 2005; Rivers, Brackett, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007), but research about the specific ways EI was manifested across leadership situations remains limited (George, 2000).

**Literature Review Summary**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how educational leaders used and manifested EI within distinct school contexts. The research about organizational context and its
impact on leadership is longstanding (Fiedler, 1967) and has continued to be better defined by an
ever-growing number of researchers (Chemers & Mahar, 1975; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004; Vroom & Jago, 2007). The concept of EI marked a more recent field of research (Salovey & Mayer, 1990); even more recent was direct connection between the skills and abilities defined by EI and effective leadership (Goleman, 1998; Kerr, et. al., 2006).

The research supporting the impact of organizational context on leadership had been well synthesized by Watkins (2013) in his STARS model, which he used to help guide new and established leaders in analyzing their organization and determining the necessary behaviors and attributes for success. The STARS model included five categories for organizations, such as schools and educational institutions: start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success (Watkins, 2013, loc. 1024). Each categorization came with unique recommendations for the type of leader and the actions necessary to achieve the best results.

Emotional Intelligence was first defined as a concept by Salovey and Mayer (1990). An EI assessment, named MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003), was subsequently developed and has since been extensively researched and peer reviewed for validity, reliability, and applicability (Bracket & Salovey, 2004; Grewal & Salovey, 2005; Mayer et. al., 2000; Mayer et. al., 2004; Salovey & Grewal, 2005). The EI model and the assessment measured the strength and complexity of four abilities within an individual: the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 2007).

This study built upon prior researchers to improve understanding about the interplay between EI and organizational context. By using Mayer and Salovey’s (2007) theory of EI along
with Watkins’ (2013) method for classifying organizations, this qualitative case study provided new insight into how EI manifested itself within school leaders in varying situations. The following chapter outlines the qualitative, case study methodology for profiling five schools with distinct organizational contexts and studying those schools’ leaders to understand their unique use and experience with EI in their role.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction to Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodology used in this study to explore the role EI plays in the work of educational leaders within unique organizational contexts. Designed as a collective case study, this research sought insights into the relationship between distinct organizational contexts and leaders’ use and manifestation of EI. Before exploring the detailed methodology, this chapter begins with a brief overview of organizational context and EI.

In the study of leadership, it was essential to consider the situation in addition to studying the leader himself or herself (Stogdill, 1948). Even researchers who devoted a majority of their work to trait-based theories of leadership concurred that a consideration of the context within which leadership occurs was essential (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Put simply, different contexts required different leadership (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). For this reason, this study profiled and studied institutions and their leaders based on their organizational context.

Within all contexts, leadership is fundamentally a relational process involving recognizing, evoking, and influencing the emotions of others, thereby affecting their performance (Humphrey, 2002). Emotional Intelligence (EI) was a term coined and popularized by Mayer and Salovey (1997) for one’s ability to manage, understand, use, and perceive emotions. High scores on EI assessments have been linked with increased leadership effectiveness through various measurements (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005, p. 398), but “exactly how, and to what extent EI accounts for effective leadership is currently unknown” (George, 2000, p. 5). 

34
To contribute to the scholarly research on EI and leadership, this study examined the manifestation of EI within leaders from five separate school contexts. A collective case study approach was used, including a profile of each site along with a focused study of each leader. To profile each leader’s use, skills, and abilities related to EI, open-ended interviews were used along with through reviews of publicly available information.

This chapter begins with an overview of the purpose of the study along with a rationale for the overall research design. The subsequent section details the questions and sub-questions to be addressed through this research. The body of this chapter is devoted to articulating the research design, target population, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, and the potential limitations and delimitations of the study. Finally, expected findings and potential ethical issues are shared before the conclusion of the chapter.

**Research Question**

The essential question behind this research was: How do educational leaders exhibit and utilize EI differently within distinct organizational contexts? By analyzing five schools based on their organizational context and carefully profiling their leaders, it was possible to compare, contrast, and analyze similarities and differences among and between the principals in their unique organizational contexts related to the use of EI skills and abilities. The following section describes the research design in detail.

**Purpose of the Proposed Study**

To bring together the fields of EI and situational leadership, this study called for the examination of both the unique characteristics of each of five institutions as well as the EI skills and abilities of their leaders. It is clear that varying leadership situations required different approaches and skills (Stogdill, 1948; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Osborn,
Hunt & Jauch, 2002; Vroom & Jago, 2007); there was also strong evidence to support the importance of EI to leadership in all contexts (George, 2000; Humphrey, 2002; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005; Mayer & Salovey, 2007). However, there was far less known about how leaders’ EI skills and abilities affected their day-to-day work (George, 2000). This research added to the existing knowledge about EI in leadership through multiple case studies focused on how EI was used and manifested differently by educational leaders in distinct organizational contexts.

A collective, or multiple case study was used in order to focus on one issue across a number of cases (Creswell, 2012). Case study research was well suited for examining real-life systems and situations through data collection involving multiple sources (Creswell, 2012). As a qualitative approach, data from a variety of wide variety of sources was used to investigate the research question; in the case of this research, interviews were employed as the primary source along with electronic document reviews. Multiple types of qualitative data collected and analyzed from each case allowed for a deep understanding of the issue across the unique contexts.

Each site was selected to illustrate the issue in a unique organizational context; an effort was made in selection to intentionally vary elements of organizational context. Yin (2009) referred to this approach as the logic of replication: replicating the same procedure across multiple cases in order to show different perspectives, and allow for analysis of themes and patterns which provided insight on the issue and its variation across contexts.

Stake (1995) defined the intent of this type of research as instrumental. Instrumental case study seeks to examine a particular issue and selects a case or cases to best understand the problem. In a collective case study such as this one, the researcher focuses on a common
question across multiple sites – the purpose of selecting multiple cases was to show varied perspectives on the same issue (Creswell, 2012, p. 99). In this collective case study, the schools were selected based on their organizational context.

Five schools and their leaders were selected for this research; institutions were selected with intentionality to seek as varied a sample as possible. Watkins (2013) described how each organizational context had unique implications on the type of leader and the actions necessary to achieve the best results. The importance of considering the situation in addition to a leaders’ skills, abilities, and actions has been well-documented by educational researchers (Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; Vroom & Jago, 2007).

The study of EI and its manifestations among leaders within distinct organizational contexts was nuanced and multi-faceted. Because of the depth and complexity of this research, a case study approach was selected for its open-endedness and context-dependent approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Following the case study methodology, data was collected about each school context through interviews, observations, documents, and web pages (Creswell, 2012).

Open-ended interviews with the leaders of each school were guided by findings from the research about their unique organizational context. Tellis (1997) identified three forms of interviews within a case study: open-ended, focused, and structured. The open-ended interview, he said, provided an opportunity to seek the leader’s opinion about each of the elements of EI and how they manifested in his or her unique situation. These interviews, embedded within the case study, were the most important source of information for this study.
As an additional data point to inform the open-ended interviews, the leader of each school was briefly introduced to the components of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, second edition (MSCEIT 2.0; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002a) and asked open-ended questions about their own perceptions and experience related to the components. The MSCEIT 2.0 is a commercially published assessment for reliably measuring and quantifying EI across “four branches, or skill groups: (a) perceiving emotion accurately, (b) using emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understanding emotion, and (d) managing emotion” (Mayer & Salovey, 2003, p. 97).

By combining multiple and varied sources of data, it was possible to collect a clear and thorough description of each school – a hallmark component of case study research (Creswell, 2012). The detailed descriptions of each site allowed for the analysis of similarities, differences, themes, and conclusions or assertions (Stake, 1995). In the following section, I explain the research population and sampling method.

**Research Population and Sampling Method**

Five schools in a large, urban school district, and their respective leaders were selected for this research based on the current state of their organization. The target population for this research was public school principals.

Leaders were selected for study by non-random, critical case, judgment sampling based on the organizational context of their school. Judgment sampling is the most frequently used form of sampling in qualitative research and involves the selection of participants based on a framework of specific characteristics or variables (Marshall, 1996). The critical case or critical incident sampling method is a type of judgment sampling in which participants were selected based on their particular experiences that matched the parameters of the study (Bradley, 1992).
For this study, Watkins’ (2013) method for categorizing institutions was helpful in profiling the five schools; the model defines five broad categories leaders experienced: start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success. These five categories, summarized by the acronym STARS, were helpful for identifying and categorizing the unique, critical cases within the target population for research.

The five schools were profiled in detail as an important component of the case study; as a necessary condition of their organizational context classification, each school had unique social, cultural, economic, and political issues which were important qualitative information for the study.

After identifying the five institutions and leaders through critical case, judgment sampling, each principal was contacted for an introduction to the study and the researcher. General information was confirmed to ensure the school and the leader represented an appropriate case for research. After initial screening, formal permission to complete the research was obtained based on Concordia University’s guidelines and the local requirements of the school district for conducting research. Once formal permission was obtained, the research procedures continued using the instrumentation outlined in the following section.

**Instrumentation**

The leader of each school participated in an in-depth, open-ended interview. The open-ended interview format was selected for this research because it allowed participants to contribute as much detail as they desire and it allowed the interviewer to ask probing, follow-up questions to ensure the participants fully expressed their experiences and viewpoints (Turner, 2010). As open-ended interviews, participants were all asked the same questions in the same
format, but the questions and format were prepared in such a way to allow extended, open-ended responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The interview consisted of 8 open-ended questions designed to elicit elaborative responses. The questions were designed with the consultation of current educational leaders, doctoral advisors, and the dissertation research committee; 8 questions were selected as the minimum number of questions needed to gather detailed responses without overwhelming the participant. Each of the five leaders received the same interview questions and procedures. The questions and interview procedures were reviewed and piloted with educational leaders on the research committee and are included in appendix A.

Two of the interview questions were designed to directly relate to the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, version 2.0 (MSCEIT 2.0). The MSCEIT 2.0 was built as an ability-based assessment and thus resembles an IQ test. It measured an individual’s abilities in each of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) four branches of EI: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. Participant responses to these questions were used to compare, contrast, and analyze variations between participants as well as to guide open-ended clarification with each principal.

The data from these interviews and documents were collected, compared, contrasted and analyzed. The process used for data collection is outlined in the following section.

Data collection. This research required the study of five separate organizational contexts as well as their respective leaders. The leaders were profiled through a collective, instrumental case study methodology involving a combination of open-ended interviews, document reviews, and a commercial EI instrument.
Each institution was profiled through the use of record reviews, digital, and paper artifacts. These methods for data collection revealed an adequate profile of the organization to determine the overall context in which the leadership is occurring.

When studying the leader of each organization and how he or she utilized and manifested EI skills and abilities, the primary data collection method was the analysis of transcripts from open-ended interviews. Leaders were interviewed using the open-ended prompts and procedures in Appendix A. The interviews were all conducted via video conferencing and recorded to assist with accurate transcription. Each interview was subsequently professionally transcribed, membered checked, coded, and analyzed.

In order to protect the identities of the participants, each site and leader was assigned a unique code and pseudonym, which was used throughout the data analysis for this research and will be used in all subsequent publication and oral presentations of this research. All materials collected, including artifacts, assessment results, interview recordings, notes, and transcripts were stored securely using password-protected, encrypted, redundant online storage to which only the researcher had access. At the conclusion of the research process, all raw data was stored on password-protected, encrypted electronic storage for a period of 3 years, after which time it was permanently deleted.

To ensure trustworthiness in the data, consistent procedures were used for the collective case study at all five sites. Similarly, the same tool and the same open-ended prompts and procedures were used when interviewing each leader. During the case the study of each organization, data sources including artifacts and interviews were triangulated to ensure overlap and verification.
Data Analysis Procedures

Because of the qualitative nature of this study, the data collected required processing and careful analysis in order to determine categories and themes from which to form conclusions (Jasper, 1994). Case study research included data collection, processing, and analysis of multiple sources including interviews, document reviews, participant observations, and direct observations (Creswell, 2009). This case study relied primarily on data from interviews and document reviews.

The multiple sources of data collected and organized across the five sites and from the five leaders was synthesized and analyzed to determine themes, similarities, differences, and conclusions. Both “within-case analysis” – descriptions of each individual case – and “cross-case analysis” – development of themes across cases – were used to propose assertions and identify insight on the research questions (Creswell, 2012, p. 101). A more detailed description of the data analysis processes is described in the forthcoming section on data analysis procedures.

Participant interview analysis. In order to improve the validity of the interviews, transcripts were transcribed, professionally, immediately after the interviews and double-checked by the researcher for any errors as recommended by Creswell (2009). Member checking was also used as a way to further validate the data collected from the interviews. Member checking, also known as respondent validation, involved obtaining feedback from the respondent on the findings collected (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007). All interview transcripts were returned to the participant following the interview and the participants reviewed the document for any errors or clarifications necessary; any changes were discussed with the participant.
A thorough analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted and priori codes were determined. Prior codes or themes were established prior to the coding based on prior literature review (Stemler, 2001). Emergent codes or themes were also determined based on ideas and phrases that were repeated or discussed in depth. As themes were identified, the transcripts were coded and categorized based on the themes and the data was compared to the data from the organization’s contextual profile.

**Document analysis.** Documents related to the organizational context of the institution, such as progress and demographic reports, annual reports, and web pages were reviewed and summarized in order to create a clear and consistent profile of each school. The following section contains the delimitations and limitations of the study.

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design**

The obvious delimitation of this case study was the selection of only five participants. This delimitation allowed for greater depth and thoroughness in the study, but it also restricted the study by narrowing the sample size. There were many extenuating variables in place at each school; to maintain the credibility with this limited sample size, care was taken to ensure these variables were clearly highlighted and taken into consideration during the data collection and through the coding and analysis of the interviews.

Other delimitations of the study included time constraints and geographic proximity. It was necessary to take a one-time, snapshot view of each of these dynamic organizations and their respective leaders in order to profile them in their state at the time of the study; this limited the time frame to a 90-day window for study of all five organizations and leaders.

Due to distance and travel limitations, it was not possible to visit or meet face-to-face with each leader. This limitation required the use of electronic media and communication to
conduct the case studies, administer the instruments online, and conduct the interviews. This delimitation may have impacted how participants felt during the interview and may have resulted in them sharing more or less information than an in-person interview.

Limitations included potential preconceptions and personal bias of participants. The selection of each site and each leader required research within and across districts to locate and receive permission to study schools which fit a unique profile of organizational context. There was a chance that a school leader could have learned why his or her school was selected and he or she may have tailored responses to accommodate that particular profile. To support the authenticity and credibility of the case studies and the interviews, I preceded each interview with a preamble explaining the research and requesting participation in as unbiased a form as possible. Each participant also signed an informed consent prior to any data collection.

Finally, because a large portion of the data came from interviews with the leaders themselves, it was important to remember the responses were self-reported and that participants may have protected themselves or failed to share information they might have felt could have threatened their job security.

Ultimately, the combination of instrumental case study, literature-based categorization, and open-ended interviews provided a rounded picture of each leader’s EI within his or her unique organizational context. The following section contains an overview of validation, credibility, and dependability of the study.

**Validation, Credibility, and Dependability**

In addition to member checking of all interviews to ensure accuracy and validity, data collected from interviews, document reviews, and EI assessments were triangulated in order to improve the validity of the study. Triangulation involved using multiple sources of data to
further clarify observations and verify the repeatability of a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). By triangulating the interview transcripts with the objective data collected from the individual EI inventories and the record reviews characterizing each school, greater validity was established. As Thurmond (2001) explained, triangulation served to strengthen the research data by revealing connections, new findings, and a clearer understanding of the emotional intelligence and organizational context in educational leadership.

The participant interviews were compared and contrasted with the demographic, social, economic, environmental, temporal, and political data collected from publicly available sources. This triangulation served to identify and validate the themes which emerged from the interviews. Similarly, review of electronic school documents was compared with the content of the interviews to yield greater clarity and accuracy in the profiling of each school.

Comparative analysis was well suited for studying human phenomena involving behavior and experience and it was useful in situations where there was pre-existing research (Thorne, 2000). As the data was collected, coded, and themes began to emerge, there was also the opportunity for comparative analysis of the phenomena observed in these cases with previous studies to gain a better understanding of the research question. The following section contains an overview of the expected findings of the research.

**Expected Findings**

EI was coined and popularized by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and shortly thereafter, the link between effective leadership and abilities related to perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions became a topic of interest (Goleman, 1998). More recently, studies showed that increased scores on measures of EI were linked with higher ratings of leadership
effectiveness (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). However, more research was needed into the intricacies of how EI played a role in effective leadership (George, 2000).

By profiling five separate schools, each with unique social, political, economic, demographic, and temporal factors, and studying the leader of each, with a focus on his or her skills, abilities, and actions related to EI, it was expected this study would offer insight into how EI was manifested and utilized differently within varying organizational contexts. Through this collective, instrumental case study, a rich portrait of each leader and his or her EI emerged (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995).

It was expected that certain elements of EI – perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions – would be used and exhibited to a greater or lesser extent by leaders in varying organizational contexts. By analyzing individual profiles and patterns, as well as comparing and contrasting among leaders, it was expected noticeable themes would develop. Analysis and description of these themes contributed to the current body of literature by supporting the organization and categorization of evidence around what role EI played in educational leadership in different organizational contexts. The next section contains a review of the potential ethical issues faced by this research including efforts taken to minimize risk and bias.

**Ethical Issues**

**Potential risks to participants.** One’s EI is, inherently, a personal topic. How one perceives, uses, understands, and manages emotions is largely invisible to any outside observer and although humans are quite likely to talk about their emotions with those close to them (Pennebaker, et. al, 2001), it is much less common to discuss our emotional processes in a professional context. By asking these leaders to think deeply about their personal EI and discuss
that in an interview related to their leadership, there was a risk that participants may have felt uncomfortable and even view themselves differently after the research.

Understanding the potentially sensitive nature of EI and the profiling of schools in the professional realm, there was also a risk that publishing the results of this study could divulge information the participant would find uncomfortable. By describing the organization in sufficient detail, there is a possibility that the participant’s responses could be deductively linked back to him or her.

Both of these risks were minimized by fully describing each element of the research procedure, including the interview questions, in advance of obtaining permission to participate; the informed consent is included in Appendix B. The risk was also minimized by allowing for an informal debriefing of the process after the completion of the research procedures and providing each participant with a copy of the interview transcripts. The next and final section of this chapter on methodology contains information about any potential research connection and bias.

**Researcher connection and bias.** For the researcher, this study was part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education Administration. Additionally, the researcher is currently a school administrator and has been an administrator at five schools and two districts over the past 10 years. As an educational leader, studying other educational leaders created the possibility for researcher bias; the researcher may be partial toward responses that agreed with his personal philosophy or experience within educational leadership. To minimize any conflict of interest, none of the research sites were schools or districts in which the researcher had previously worked or hoped to work in at any point in the future.
In order to limit researcher bias, the research protocols were performed consistently across the five different schools. The same procedures and the same interview questions were used for all participants. When coding the interviews, the same method was used for all transcripts. Key portions of transcripts were included in the published report. Following these protocols, researcher bias was limited during the data collection, data analysis, and final publishing of the study.

**Summary of Methodology and Conclusion**

By profiling, assessing, and interviewing five leaders from five different schools, carefully selected for their unique organizational contexts, this study provided insight into how EI was manifested and utilized differently within specific organizational contexts. The following chapter describes the results of the study and the analysis of the data in detail.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction to Data Analysis and Results

This multiple case study was focused on the use and manifestation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) within unique organizational contexts by school leaders. Five, targeted school principals in the same large, urban school district were interviewed to describe how they exhibited and used EI skills and abilities in their role as principal. Data was collected from publicly available sources in order to describe the unique organizational context of the five schools. Together, the data provided the opportunity to compare, contrast, and analyze similarities and differences between and among principals and their schools’ unique organizational contexts. The essential question underlying this research was: How do educational leaders exhibit and use EI within distinct organizational contexts?

The primary data for this research was gathered from open-ended interviews with selected principals as well as publicly available information about each specific school’s demographic, social, economic, environmental, and even temporal context. The interviews each consisted of 8, open-ended questions and lasted approximately 50 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were evaluated using both a priori codes and emergent codes to analyze and synthesize the important themes, categories, and relationships. The systematic, yet open-ended structure of the study provided rich data related to both principals’ use of EI and the impact of the schools’ unique organizational contexts on how they used and exhibited these same EI skills and abilities. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the data analysis process, a presentation of the analyzed data and a summary of the synthesized findings.
Description of the Sample

The sites selected for this research were all elementary schools within the same, large, urban school district. The district supported a very diverse population of nearly 50,000 students, served by over 7,500 staff in more than 75 very different schools. Five principals were selected for this study using non-random, critical case, judgment sampling (Bradley, 1992). Using this sampling method, participants were selected based on specific characteristics or experiences which supported the research study. Specifically, sites were selected based on their social, political, economic, geographic, and demographic characteristics to represent a wide variety of organizational contexts. Watkins’ (2013) STARS model, which supported the categorization of organizations as start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustain success based on their characteristics was useful in the identification and profiling of each school’s organizational context.

All five schools subjectively fit the description of one of Watkins’ (2013) five categories for organizational context; the five categories were described in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. In the sample, there were no schools which classified as “start-up” schools. One school best fit the category of a “turnaround” school, one an “accelerated growth” school, two “realignment” schools, and one “sustaining success” school. The following sections provide a profile of each of the five schools and principals in the study. To support readability and interpretation of the data, Watkins (2013) descriptors will be used to refer to the schools and the principals throughout this chapter. Also, to further protect the confidentiality of the participants, masculine pronouns will be used throughout this chapter when referring to any of the principals.

Site 1: turnaround school. As a Title I school with nearly 90% of students qualifying as economically disadvantaged and 78% of students from minority families, 16% of
students qualifying for Special Education, and over 40% of students qualifying as English Language Learners, this school received more funding per student than most schools in the district. The school was a bilingual school using a 90% Spanish, 10% English model for Spanish immersion. The neighborhood was historically low-income, but had been experiencing increased gentrification the long-time, resident families were under economic and social stress. As a result, many students experienced trauma in their homes and arrived at school with social emotional issues the school needed to address. Moreover, student mobility was very high; consistent matriculation of students from Kindergarten consistently through fifth grade was as low as 25%. Due to the significant challenges facing this school and the school’s identification by the state as a school in need of improvement for the prior several years, Site 1 would best be described by Watkins (2013) turnaround category: in need of swift and dramatic improvement.

The principal of Site 1 was in his second year in the position. He had previously served as the associate principal in this same school for 2 years, secured a principal position in a different school for 3 years, and subsequently returned as principal. He taught elementary school both in other states and in this same district. He had a Master of Education degree. He described growing up in a divorced family with one brother and he shared that he was married without children. When asked if he had studied or had any training related to EI, he described taking a class in “Mindful Leadership” and doing a small amount of personal and professional reading on the subject.

Site 2: growth school. The school was a small, neighborhood school which served just over 350 students with 18 teachers and was located in the center of the city. More than half of the students walked to school from the surrounding neighborhood which was rapidly developing into high-rise, urban housing. As a result, the student population was quickly
growing beyond the capacity of the building. The school served mostly White students and only about 17% came from economically disadvantaged families. There was high parent participation in this neighborhood school and academic achievement remained acceptable, but not great, at around 60% of students meeting expectations on standardized assessments. Because rapid expansion was this school’s primary challenge, Site 3 would best be described by Watkins’ (2013) category of accelerated growth: a need to analyze the current status quo to address new, changing realities.

The principal of Site 2 was in his third year at this school and his 18th year in school administration. Prior to this principalship, most of his administrative work was overseeing programs serving students with disabilities. Prior to becoming an administrator, he taught for 10 years in middle school special education. He had a Masters of Education in Deaf Education and a Masters of Education in Administration. When asked about his personal history, he explained that he grew up in a fairly traditional, two-parent home in an agricultural community with two older brothers and a younger sister. He said that he had never had any training or study related to EI.

**Site 3: realignment school A.** With 580 students, this was one of the larger elementary schools in the district. This school had seen a significant demographic shift in the last 20 years: a change from 75% minority students in 1996 to 63% white by 2016. The school was high achieving and 13% of students were identified as talented and gifted. Parental involvement through school councils and associations was strong and there was good financial support for the school to accomplish identified goals. One remaining issue of concern was the achievement gap between the remaining minority students and the majority white, middle-class students. While this school had realized high achievement for most students, the continuing concern regarding
minority and disadvantaged students led this school to best be classified into Watkins’ (2013) realignment category: celebrating successes while addressing hidden problems preventing the full realization of their vision.

The principal of Site 3 was in his first year at this school after serving as the principal of a smaller school in the district for 3 years. He had never taught in K–12, but did some teaching at the university level and worked at the district office for 5 years before entering the principalship. He described his personal life by sharing that he was the “biracial child of a teen mother” with an older brother and younger sister. He shared that his mother died when he was 13 years old. He was divorced and had three children: two adult daughters in college and a daughter in fifth grade. He said that, other than a degree in counseling, he did not have any training or study related to EI.

**Site 4: realignment school B.** With 400 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade and 33 staff members, the school represented a mid-sized elementary school compared to others in the district. It was a school with a long and storied history of serving African-American students. Recently, the profile of the school community began a slow change toward a higher socioeconomic and less diverse demographic. Despite ongoing gentrification, it remained the school with the second highest percentage of African-American students in the state. In addition, because of a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students and English Language Learners, the school received the second-highest amount of funding per pupil in the district. The curriculum was based on the International Baccalaureate (IB) model for inquiry-based, thematic lessons and the school maintained a Mandarin Immersion program, providing the option of 50/50 instruction in Mandarin beginning in Pre-Kindergarten. Academically, the school was in the bottom 5% of achievement in the state and had been so for many years. Although the school had
many programs in place, which looked very successful and were worth celebrating, student achievement remained low; for this reason, Site 4 fit best into Watkins’ (2013) realignment category: A careful examination of the system as a whole is needed to bring attention to clear areas for improvement.

The principal of Site 4 was in the middle of his second year leading the school. Prior to this principalship, he served as the principal of another large school in the district for 3 years after serving there for 2 years as an associate principal. His experience never included classroom teaching; his training and experience was as a school counselor. He had a Master’s degree in counseling along with his administrative licensure. He first described his childhood as “fairly typical” with two parents and an older sister in a stable community with good schools. He then explained growing up with a father who had “alcohol dependence issues” and who “suffered from either depression or anxiety and was physically and emotionally abusive. When asked if he had ever studied EI, he replied that, other than a Master’s degree in counseling, he had never studied EI specifically.

**Site 5: sustaining school.** Built in the center of a modern housing development serving families from many of the large, multinational companies doing business in the city, the school served mostly White and Asian students with almost no economically disadvantaged families. Parental involvement was described as strong and sophisticated in both scope and clear organization; the Parent Teacher Association maintained a foundation, which earned over $200,000 per year to pay for strategic staffing at the school. The 450 students, taught by 26 teachers, demonstrated very high academic achievement with nearly 20% qualifying for Talented and Gifted services. Due to relatively high achievement and strong, effective structures in place,
Site 5 would best be categorized in Watkins’ (2013) sustaining success category: working to find ways to improve within the structure of a high-functioning system.

The principal at Site 5 was in his third year in the position and this was his first time in the role of principal. Prior to starting at this school, he taught for 17 years and earned a Master in Education with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction. He served as an intervention specialist, a coordinator of special programs, and an associate principal prior to taking on the principalship at this school. He shared that his parents were together until his father died as he was finishing high school. He had two younger siblings and he described his relationship with his father as “difficult.” As an adult, he was married with two children. He shared that he had done some reading about EI and “leadership style,” but was not able to recall anything specific.

All five schools were located within 10 miles of one another in the same school district, but the demographics, the challenges, the opportunities, and the overall organizational context of each varied widely. Similarly, all five principals had been in their current role for less than 3 years and all five had between 5 and 10 years of administrative experience. Despite their similarities, it became evident through conducting, coding and analysis of the open-ended interviews that each principal perceived, used, understood and managed emotions related to their role as principal in distinct and unique ways. The following two sections describe the methodology used for the collection and analysis of the data and present a summary of the key findings related to the role played by EI and organizational context in the principalship.

**Research Methodology and Analysis**

The study used a qualitative, multiple case study approach to collect data to answer how educational leaders exhibited and used EI within distinct organizational contexts. Five sites and their principals were selected for study based on the varied demographic, social, political,
economic, and geographic factors of their schools. The design supported the “logic of replication” (Yin, 2009): The same procedure was replicated across multiple cases to show different perspectives and allow for analysis of themes and patterns, which provided insight on the issue and its variation across contexts. For this research, participants responded to the same open-ended interview questions about their school’s organizational context and their own use of EI.

The open-ended interview format provided participants the opportunity to express their opinions and perceptions about EI and how those skills and abilities were used and manifested in their unique organizational contexts. Participants were able to contribute as much detail as they desired and the interviewer was able to ask probing, follow-up questions to ensure the participants fully expressed their experiences and viewpoints (Turner, 2010). The principals in the study were all asked the same questions in the same format, but the questions and format were prepared in such a way to allow extended, open-ended responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The framework for interviewing participants about how they used, perceived, understood, and managed emotions came from work by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2002a) related to measuring and quantifying EI across “four branches, or skill groups: (a) perceiving emotion accurately, (b) using emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understanding emotion, and (d) managing emotion” (Mayer & Salovey, 2003, p. 97).

The design and conducting of interviews with participants about the organizational context of their school was based on work by Watkins (2013) for categorizing institutions based on political, economic, temporal, social, and cultural factors. Watkins (2013) created the acronym STARS to represent five types of organizations leaders may find themselves in or
moving into. These five labels, coined by Watkins for any business or organization, applied easily to schools and educational institutions. The five categories are “start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success” (loc. 1025). According to Watkins, each separate organizational category presents different challenges, opportunities, and resources; thus, each requires the right leader with the right approach. Mayer and Salovey’s (2003) work on EI and Watkins’ (2013) work on organizational context provided much of the foundation for the open-ended interviews and subsequent coding and analysis.

**Document analysis related to each site.** Initially, for the purpose of identifying schools for the study, documents were collected from the school district’s System Planning and Performance office’s online archives. The district provided aggregated and school-specific student achievement results, enrollment reports, and discipline and behavior reports. Additionally, the System Planning and Performance office generates annual school profile reports with detailed information about the schools’ characteristics. Information gathered included enrollment figures related to special education, gifted and talented, English language learners, ethnicity, gender, free-and-reduced lunch qualification, primary language, and student mobility. School characteristics including budget, class size, student discipline and attendance rates, and teacher experience and education level.

All of the information gathered about each school in the target population was aggregated in a single, large digital spreadsheet with a row for each school and columns for the long list of target schools. The spreadsheet was subsequently conditionally formatted to color code differences between schools based on individual measures. Then, the schools were sorted based on the differences in their characteristics and five schools were selected which most exemplified Watkins (2013) organizational context categories.
Once the research sample was selected, the data was exported from the large spreadsheet and merged into individual profile sheets in a word processor for further, more detailed research. A search was conducted of local media for the five schools in the research sample and newspaper articles and district press releases added additional information about the organizational context of each school. Also, each of the schools in the research sample maintained a website with more detailed, narrative information about the school. This information was collected on the individual profile sheets and formed the basis for the site categorizations and subsequent descriptions as part of the research sample.

Data collection through open-ended interviews. Each of the five principals in the study participated in an interview, which consisted of 8 questions and lasted approximately 50 minutes. The interview questions and protocol are included in Appendix A. All interviews were conducted via video or audio conferencing and were recorded and professionally transcribed. The transcripts were shared with the participants for error checking before beginning the coding and analysis process.

Coding and data analysis through priori and emergent themes. After all five interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and error checked by the participants, codes representing priori and emergent themes (Stemler, 2001) were used to systematically organize the data. Priori themes were the codes established before beginning analysis based on the literature review and themes that all participants brought up during the interviews. Prior codes included, but were not limited to direct answers to all of the questions, evidence and perceptions around all four EI skills and abilities (perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotion), and information related to the organizational context of the schools. During the transcript analysis, themes emerged from the open-ended questions and these generated emergent codes.
Emergent codes eventually included, but were not limited to concepts related to buy-in, culture, and various stakeholder groups. These codes were kept in a running list and all interview transcripts used the same coding structure. The common codes provided the ability to compare, contrast, and synthesize findings across the five sites and principals.

During the coding process, all five transcripts were reviewed a first, second, and third time to ensure no coding had been missed. Codes were assigned to selected quotes from each interview based on direct answers to interview questions, information related to organizational context, or evidence of the use, perception, understanding, or managing of emotions. In all, 27 codes were used and a codebook was created to record the codes, descriptions of each code, and notes about how the codes were applied to the transcripts.

Codes were added to the transcripts using the comments feature of word processing software. The comments were then extracted using special program plug-ins in order to create a single spreadsheet for all five interviews with columns for each site, priori, and emergent codes, quotes from the transcripts, and additional researcher notes. The single, large spreadsheet facilitated filtering and sorting of codes, quotes, and notes for analysis of each theme within and across the interviews.

With the data from all 5 principals included on a single spreadsheet, cross-case analysis was streamlined through filtering by keywords, quotes, and codes during the analysis of similarities and differences among the transcripts. For example, it became simple to filter all of the principals’ responses related to parent relationships or the motivation of teachers. Once the responses were filtered and displayed side by side, the process of conducting cross-case analysis, noting differences and similarities across the organizational contexts, became straightforward.
It is important to consider that the scope of this study did not include assessing the strength or weakness of the participants’ EI. This study did not address organizational context nor EI in any quantitative sense. The data collected, through open-ended interviews merely described observable evidence of EI skills and abilities, in practice, as an educational leader. Using the MSCEIT framework (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) it was possible to sort the EI skills and abilities that the principals discussed in order from basic to advanced, but this sorting should not be misinterpreted as measuring the level of EI for each participant. Considering these important delimitations, the results of this analysis are summarized in the following section.

**Summary of Findings**

Five open-ended interviews were conducted with principals during this research project. Each interview focused on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the unique organizational context of the school in which the principal was working. Principals answered questions about the challenges and opportunities facing their school, about their relationships with stakeholders, and about their perceptions of their own EI skills and abilities. The transcripts of the interviews were coded and analyzed with priori themes, question by question, and subsequently by emergent themes that became apparent during the coding process. The codes were then synthesized and compared within and across interviews to generate findings.

All five principals identified clear challenges and opportunities facing their school and described the organizational context sufficiently to assist categorization into Watkins’ (2013) categories for schools’ organizational context. Through subjective, non-scientific classification, one school was categorized as a turnaround school, one an accelerated growth school, two as realignment schools, and one as a sustaining success school.
When asked, all five principals agreed their role as principal was, at its core, a relational process. Each principal spoke at length about relationships with stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, community organizations, and district contacts. Through these discussions, evidence was collected about each principal’s EI skills and abilities. In addition to this evidence, principals were asked specifically for their perception about their own EI skills and abilities related to their school and their leadership role.

When presented with the following brief introduction to the Theory of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) as part of the interview protocol, all five participants agreed with the concept that EI skills and abilities could be developed with time and experience. The interview protocol read, “The theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) divides the skills and abilities related to human emotions into four categories:

the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion [perceiving]; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought [using]; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge [understanding]; and the ability to regulate emotions to provide emotional and intellectual growth [managing].” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10)

“The theory also maintained that individuals are able to grow and develop each of these abilities as they age and gain more experience” (Appendix A, Interview Procedure).

All five participants also named specific ways in which they had adapted or adjusted themselves to meet the unique needs of their school. Even though the question said nothing about EI and they did not use the specific, technical language, all five participants responded to this question with some way they had growth related to perception, use, understanding, or managing of emotions.
The analysis of all five transcripts revealed that EI skills and abilities, in general, played a critical role in the leadership of a school regardless of the organizational context. In particular, there was an overwhelming consensus regarding the relational nature of school leadership and the necessity of adapting or adjusting one’s approach to those social and emotional interactions. There was also consensus from all participants that it was possible to grow and develop EI skills and abilities in the course of work and life.

All participants, regardless of their personal history or the organizational context of their school, demonstrated evidence related to the importance of EI skills and abilities in the role of principal. However, analysis of the data related to observable evidence of EI skills and abilities discussed during the interviews revealed differences in the particular skills and abilities used and manifested at each site. Specifically, the Turnaround Principal (Site 1) shared evidence of frequently using and manifesting EI skills and abilities in the basic levels of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions (see Figure 1, Mayer & Salovey 1997); specifically, these included identifying emotions, noticing person-environment relationships, labeling emotions or detaching from emotions. On the other end of the organizational context spectrum, the Sustaining Principal (Site 5) discussed evidence of using and manifesting EI skills and abilities at the advanced levels of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. These more advanced skills included, but were not limited to, producing emotional states in others to foster different thinking styles, recognizing transitions in emotions, and managing emotions in others. As the data and results in the next section demonstrate, this finding of varied EI skills and abilities being used in different contexts held largely true with the Growth Principal (Site 2) sharing evidence of EI skills and abilities from the middle to basic levels of the four domains, while Realignment Principal B (Site 4) shared evidence of using and exhibiting EI
skills and abilities from the middle to high levels of the four domains (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

In essence, the findings indicated the principals of the Sustaining Success and Realignment schools tended to use and manifest the EI skills and abilities from the more advanced end of the spectrum while the principals of the Turnaround and Accelerated Growth schools tended to use and manifest the EI skills and abilities from the more basic end of the model.

The analysis of the interview transcripts, EI domain by EI domain, revealed limited, non-generalizable evidence that the higher achieving schools with more sophisticated problems were led by principals who used and manifested EI skills and abilities from the more advanced end of the MSCEIT model. The results from these five case studies were consistent with many findings identified during the literature review, described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Specifically, leadership requires relational and social skills (Humphrey, 2002; Watkins, 2013) and the success of a leader is largely determined by his or his ability to match the school situation (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Ghiselli & Brown, 1995). It is important to understand that these findings are not related to the strength of the principals’ EI or their effectiveness as leaders; this study did not seek to answer these questions. The data and results from the study are shared in the following section of this chapter.

**Presentation of Data and Results**

Five sites were selected based on the schools’ profiles to represent a sampling of unique organizational contexts. Interviews were arranged with the principals and the resulting video and audio were analyzed, line-by-line using 45, single-spaced pages of interview transcripts. The data obtained included rich information about organizational context, participants’ personal background and experiences, and their use of EI within their role as principal in their unique schools.
**Participant input about organizational context.** In the opening question of the interview, participants were asked to describe the primary challenges and opportunities facing their school. As principals, they were in the best position to understand the true organizational context of their school. Triangulated with publicly available information about the school’s profile, such as enrollment, staffing, funding, demographics, and student achievement, this opening question served to validate information about the unique organizational context of each school.

Speaking about his school community, Turnaround Principal, spoke at length about trauma and “adverse childhood experiences” that he and his staff were trying to address in order to help the students at his school. He also pointed to a high mobility rate and a lack of family education as contributing factors to the school’s relatively low achievement and identification as a school in need of improvement for the last 5 years. Considering the school’s low achievement rates and high numbers of students qualifying for Special Education and English Language Learner support along with the principal’s own reflections, the interview validated the categorization of Site 1 as a school in need of turnaround.

Growth Principal focused his response to this question on the challenge of his growing student population and the limited space available to serve them. He also shared a frustration about the lack of district support for the small school in a difficult situation. The numerical, publicly available information corroborated the principal’s perceptions that the population of his school’s attendance area was growing rapidly. The principal’s perceptions validated the classification of Site 3 as a school focused on accelerated growth; there was a need for deliberate and intentional steps to address rapid expansion.
Realignment Principal A described a major demographic shift and the impact that had on his school. 10 years prior, over 50% of the students in the school were African-American and now, after several years of rapid gentrification, 70% of the families are White and the achievement gap between the African-American students and the more privileged White students was growing, not shrinking. Disaggregated student achievement data supported this concern and confirmed the categorization of Site 2 as a school in need of realignment; there was a need to accept a difficult truth about the achievement gap and take bold steps to improve it.

Realignment Principal B shared the struggle to push for changes that will lead to academic improvement while at the same time honoring long-held tradition. As a school with a long and storied history and many students who represented the third or fourth generation families attending the school, Realignment Principal B shared how any change was met with deep, emotional reaction. Considering this dynamic and surveying the very low student achievement results led clearly to the categorization of a school in need of realignment. Despite a strong school culture, practices must be revisited to address current, uncomfortable realities related to student achievement.

Sustaining Principal characterized his school’s primary challenge as finding ways to meet the needs of a wide variety of students who entered and progressed at significantly different levels and speeds. With over 14 different languages spoken and students arriving from all over the world as their families move for work in multinational companies, there was a wide range of expectations for the school. The principal’s perception, along with consistently high academic achievement validates the categorization of this school as a one focused on sustaining success. The unique challenge was to continue refinement while maintaining ongoing, high performance.
**Relationships and interactions with stakeholders.** All participants were asked the question, “Some researchers have said that leadership, at its core, is a social or relational process (Humphrey, 2002). In what ways do you see this as true or not true in your current role?” Five out of five principals interviewed felt their work was, at its core, a relational process. The principals made similar comments including, “I do think it’s a social-relational process” (Turnaround Principal). “I think it is absolutely at the core. My job is all about relationship and its relationships with the different communities, it's relationships with students, with staff, with parents, with the community” (Growth Principal). “I think it's very true, I think it's absolutely true” (Realignment Principal A). “I think it's 100% about the social and relational process that, we're humans” (Realignment Principal B). And, “Very true, with staff and with parents and with kids” (Sustaining Principal). Realignment Principal B offered additional specificity about the importance of relationships for helping with the technical aspects of the principalship; he said, “I think, especially, when you're trying to look at closing the gap and you’re operating within social construction, the gap, and systemic racism. We all created that so we have to un-create that or evolve it, and so that's only going happen through little kinships and our interactions.”

The only principal who added a caveat to his response about his work being a social or relational process was the Turnaround Principal. Although he did say, “The majority of the work that is going to make an impact on students and families is the relationship piece,” he added, “I don't see, though, all the work being as relationship building, I do feel like there is a big technical piece when it comes to systems and routines, procedures and schedules, calendars, and that kind of things.” Even though there were no guiding questions in this direction, throughout his interview, he tended to highlight the technical elements of his work in addition to the relational elements.
In the fourth question of the interview, participants were asked to list the stakeholder groups they worked with in their role as principal: “List the stakeholders you interact with frequently in your role. How do you interact differently with each?” All five of the principals mentioned the same five stakeholder groups, to greater or lesser extent: students, teachers, parents, community stakeholders, and district contacts. The depth and specificity with which each principal described and explained their interactions with particular stakeholders varied and appeared indicative of both their own EI awareness and their organizational context.

The principal of Turnaround School had a significant focus on stakeholders as resources. He spoke of community groups to support student needs:

We work with a community advocacy group called [redacted]. They support our families through our after-school program and also connecting families with housing assistance or rental assistance or bill-paying, that kind of things…We have quite a few other community partners: [redacted], which is a housing organization. We're working on implementing a food pantry through the [redacted] Food Bank. We have a partnership with [redacted] to provide health education and incentives for kids to stay healthy.

Turnaround Principal had a strong sense of his role in gathering support services for his students and his school; he viewed the school district and state school improvement support in a similar way.

When asked about his interaction with teachers and staff, Turnaround Principal explained that his school,

has turned over 97% of their staff in the last 2 years, so I'd say 21 out of 26 of my teachers are in their first 3 years so I'm doing a lot more coaching than I am evaluating. Trying to find a balance between those two roles is always a challenge. So yeah, I think
that's the big difference for the teacher stakeholder group because I kind of have to live in a duality with them.

This technical view of his leadership permeated his responses.

With students and parents, Turnaround Principal expressed a clear view of himself and the school as caretakers and support systems. He said, “Here at [Turnaround School], a lot of our parents are a lot younger than the parents I've worked with before, so we do a lot of coaching with our parents about parenting.” He understood the needs of his students for support from the school as well: “A lot of our students’ experience primary and secondary trauma at home, whether it's domestic violence, or child abuse, or drug and alcohol related things.” This understanding characterized his interactions with students and parents and he expressed pride in being able to understand these interconnections to support kids and his school. He said, “I feel like I see the bigger picture more quickly than a lot of other people do. I kind of see how the inter-connectivity of different facets work.”

The principal of Growth School consistently emphasized the importance of stakeholders feeling important, involved and connected to his and the school. Regarding his interactions with students, he said,

I strive to know all of their names. I try really hard to know something about them. And my biggest goal when it comes to students is that every student feels like they belong at this school. And that it's a place they want to be. So my interactions are always trying to ensure that they feel valued here at school.

Similarly, when asked about his interactions with parents he replied, “My approach is first and foremost that they understand that I care about their child.” His focus on belonging also extended to teachers. When asked about his interactions with them, his reply was, “I very much
view them as members of my team. I like to collaborate with teachers. I make top-down
decisions when I have to, but my comfort level is to work side by side and collaborate with my
teachers.” Growth Principal saw the focus of his stakeholder interactions as creating a sense of
belonging to his school as it continues to grow beyond current capacity.

The principal of Realignment School A focused on the challenge of navigating a
complicated social structure. When asked about his interactions with parents, which he said
were his most challenging interactions, he answered,

I have to be careful of land mines because I'm learning this community and I think that
outside of school, it's a really small community of folks and our families who are more
privileged, socio-economically, seem to be more connected to each other. And I might
say something...that could have a ripple effect and then pretty soon folks are talking and
when it comes back to me, it's been filtered through lots of different hands.

This sensitivity to being new and learning the culture was also evident when he spoke of
his interactions with teachers. He said,

One thing that I tried to do before I started this is to sit down, one on one with teachers
this summer and have conversations with teachers before I even came to the school. So
like, what do you love about [Realignment School A]? What needs to change? You
know something fun and something personal about them.

His responses related to his interactions with community stakeholders and the district were
similar: He spent his time learning the intricacies and nuances of the relationships.

The principal of Realignment School B saw his role with stakeholders as a provider of
clear information and resources. Unlike Realignment Principal A, Realignment Principal B
reflected on his interactions with stakeholders by saying, “My least favorite part of the job is the
schmoozing and all that stuff.” Although he realized the importance of navigating social structures, building alliances, and making stakeholders feel connected, he certainly saw his primary role as one of informing and providing resources.

With the teachers and support staff, Realignment Principal B explained, “They're really the boots on the ground and so they need to have the resources they need. My focus is always on supporting, and resourcing them.” Similarly, regarding parents, he said, “With the parents, my philosophy or game plan is definitely to create a partnership.” He spoke of his approach to helping parents see the larger picture while still focusing on solving the problem for their child.

With the community stakeholders and the school district, Realignment Principal B expressed some frustration and a need to protect his school from outside influence that may not align with his vision for the school. With the community stakeholders, he expressed a need to “narrow down what people are bringing to the table.” He explained,

It really came to, ‘Are you here and are you trying to help from our perspective of what we need? Or are you going to do your thing and hope we're going to shift around you?’ It's not a value judgment, but we just can't do that. You need to come in and make it work here based on our shared vision, and not the other way around.

His perspective about the district was similar. He said,

I think for them, it's listening to what buzz words and what different things they want to hear, and you have to figure out what their bottom line is, and what they're going to value, which is often different…I don't think anybody's got malice, it's just they are driven by different factors.

The principal of Sustaining School understood that stakeholders viewed him as a sort of figurehead. He explained,
I'm really aware that being principal means that there's a certain perception of me, so I try to make sure that that perception is also met with who I am as a person and that I'm a person who takes myself seriously in my profession, but that I really am interested in being friendly, that I'm invested in my school, that I'm smart, that I know what I'm doing. He expressed the importance of his being approachable, but also sensitive to representing the face of the school.

With teachers, Sustaining Principal shared his hope for a partnership. He said, I'm very intentional about treating staff as professionals and that I'm a part of that team, and it's not just me and my office making some decisions about stuff by myself. And I think that that serves me well when tough decisions have to be made that maybe aren't the ideal choice for staff.

Here again, Sustaining Principal is sensitive to the perceptions of all stakeholders. With students, parents, staff, and the community he repeated, “I want to show up as a friendly person and interested in them.” The awareness of the message he sends to those around his permeated his responses to these questions about stakeholder interactions.

All five principals emphasized the importance of relationships in their role, leading a school. Each principal’s focus in their interactions was tailored to the particular organizational context they found themselves in and their own personal EI skills and abilities. In the schools with the most technical issues needing to be resolved, there was a greater focus on solving problems. In the schools with greater success rates and more nuanced improvements to be made, there was a much greater focus on the interplay between all of the social-political factors and the incremental, technical problems that existed. Each principal was also asked how they had
adapted themselves to fit the particular needs of their school. This question is explored in the following section.

**Adapting oneself to meet the needs of the school.** Early in the interview, each principal was asked, “How have you had to adapt or adjust yourself to meet the unique needs of [your school]?”. This question followed the participants’ description of the challenges and opportunities facing their school, so those challenges and opportunities were fresh in their minds. Each principal named elements he had learned or was learning related to the unique needs of his school. All five principals were sensitive to the image they were presenting to the stakeholders they worked with and how they represented the position of principal and their school.

Turnaround Principal emphasized the need to adjust his communication skills to match the culture of his school. He shared that he was from the East Coast where he felt communication was much more direct. Then he explained, “I've had to adjust my style of communication and my expectations for other people's communication. I've had to use some more of those soft skills than I'd use back home.” As he reflected on his growth in the position, he shared,

When I first came here I definitely heard that I was very blunt and very direct. I took that as a compliment, but now I'm understanding that I sometimes need to use my soft skills to make them feel supported while still expecting them to bend, to reach.

This responsive introspection about practice was common during all of the interviews with all of the principals.

Growth Principal shared how his experience managing a school growing beyond its capacity had been challenging. He said, “I had to really work at making sure that I maintained a high level of professionalism even though on a personal level it felt like I was being attacked.”
Growth Principal also recognized the importance of presenting a certain outward image in his role as principal. Controlling how others feel about or perceive him shows evidence of EI skills and abilities related to both using and managing emotion. He shared very openly,

I wasn't used to being so publicly criticized, I guess. So that's a way that I've had to adapt to make sure that I am presenting myself professionally, even though I'm emotional about some of the things that I'm dealing with.

Realignment Principal A focused his response on the need to present a confident demeanor while, at the same time, feeling unsure about many aspects of the community. He explained,

It's been a huge learning curve. There's a lot that I just don't know, and I think that when you go to any school community, you're learning that community, you're learning about the school, you're learning about the staff. So I think sometimes there's a confidence that you present, that, ‘I got it all,’ but inside you're on pins and needles, like, ‘Please don't ask me a question I don't know the answer to.’

The theme of presenting a strong façade came up many times during the interview with Realignment Principal A; it was something he felt was very important to being successful in his role.

Realignment Principal B responded very similarly to Growth Principal and Realignment Principal A when he answered, “I know, and I've learned over time, how I respond sets the tone for everybody.” He spoke of being calm while also setting the expectation for excellence in his school. Uniquely from the other principals, he commented on the racial climate within his school; he said, “I'm constantly having to be aware and I know there's still growth in there around my whiteness and my privilege and how that shows up.” He explained the duty he felt to
not lower expectations for his students or his staff simply because of their socioeconomic class, their ethnicity, or their race.

Sustaining Principal expressed a different focus than the other four principals when asked how he adapted or adjusted to meet the unique needs of his school. He responded, “I think the most difficult thing for me has been to create boundaries that don't make me come across as defensive. There are some times when I’m asked for things that I can't give.” Although he did still speak of the importance of representing his school, his response was unique from the other four principals in that the other principals were focused on what they were putting out to the world while Sustaining Principal was focused on holding the line against what the world was pushing into his school.

All five principals named ways in which they adapted or adjusted themselves to meet the unique needs of their current school. After sharing about their school’s challenges, opportunities, and their experience as the principal in their school, participants were asked specific questions about their personal and professional Emotional Intelligence. The responses to these questions are shared in the following section.

**Perceptions and evidence of emotional intelligence.** To prepare participants to share their perceptions and evidence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in their role as principal, the interview protocol contained a short description of the theory of EI:

The theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) divides the skills and abilities related to human emotions into four categories: ‘the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion [perceiving]; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought [using]; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge [understanding]; and the ability to regulate emotions to provide emotional and intellectual
growth [managing]’ (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). The theory also maintained that individuals are able to grow and develop each of these abilities as they age and gain more experience (Appendix A, Interview Procedure).

Each participant also had this information in front of them to read and, as the protocol was designed as an open-ended interview, participants had the opportunity to ask any clarifying questions about the information shared. I further explained to each participant that each domain of EI had a continuum of skills from simplest to most complex and that was how the theory proposed individuals had the ability to grow in these skills and abilities throughout their lives (see Figure 1). After the explanation, each participant was asked, “How has this been true or not been true for you in the context of your leadership career?”

Five out of five principals agreed with the proposal that skills and abilities related to EI could be grown and developed. They said, “I think that I’ve grown…and gained some skills” (Turnaround Principal). “I think it's true” (Growth Principal). “I think that this is very true of me and my career” (Realignment Principal A). “I think that just off the bat I think it definitely correlates” (Realignment Principal B). And, “I feel strongly that it is definitely a part of what I do and that I have to model that constantly” (Sustaining Principal).

After briefly providing any clarity and confirming general understanding of the Theory of EI, all participants were asked,

Considering your perception, use, understanding, and management of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 2007), what do you believe are some of your strengths related to EI? What do you believe are some of the relative weaknesses related to EI? What are your reasons for believing that? Can you give any examples? (Appendix A, Interview Protocol)
This question opened rich discussion among participants about how EI skills and abilities were used and manifested in their work.

**Perceiving emotions.** At some point during each interview, all five participants showed evidence of perceiving their own emotions and each commented on the importance of that perception to their role as principal. In a few instances, particularly in the schools with more complex social and political climates, participants demonstrated evidence of perceiving others' emotions as an important skill or ability for their work as a principal.

Turnaround Principal showed evidence of perceiving his own emotions when he said, “I'm not someone who really enjoys pats on the back or cheerleading or saying that I'm doing a great job, I want to get to the point, get to the mission, and figure out what the next steps are.” He shared how this knowledge of himself led him to be more sensitive to his “soft skills” and recognized that not everyone feels the same as he does when it comes to praise, recognition, and personal connection.

In a clear example of perceiving his own emotions and comparing those with the values and emotions of those around him, Growth Principal shared,

Having had the opportunity to work in different schools and different school districts, I kind of developed what I believe is a good fit for my values. I have worked in a couple of school districts where I think that my values didn't align well with the leadership above me.

This example provided strong evidence of perceiving one’s own emotions, understanding them in the context of the environment and using them to make a decision about the best match for his leadership.

Realignment Principal A reflected on his own feelings about authenticity when he said,
I've learned in [this] culture, you tell people the nice things first. It conflicts with my cultural experience because it's not authentic. I think I'm an authentic communicator. I won't tell you something that I don't really feel or believe.

Like Turnaround Principal and Growth Principal, Realignment Principal A perceived this about his own emotions and realized that he would have to adjust his approach to interacting with stakeholders in order to meet the unique needs of his current culture.

As a powerful example of the impact of personal history on EI skills and abilities, Realignment Principal B shared how he did not feel as strong as he wanted to be in perceiving and understanding his own emotions, but that he excels in perceiving the emotions of others. He shared his story,

Although I would say from that basic level I am not as good at recognizing my own emotion, like because of how I grew up, I learned how to manage my emotion which then devalued figuring out what it is…But I'm really sensitive to other people's emotions and so also because of how I grew up. Growing up with an alcoholic father who was very volatile, I learned really quickly to read where he was at so that I could navigate and do that, and so I find myself accessing that skill with people. Like really quickly assess like, ‘Where are you at? What's going on? You're smiling but that doesn't correlate with your body language,’ or those types of things.

This powerful example showed a principal merging the development of his personal EI skills and abilities with the demands of the principal role.

Sustaining Principal did not express much evidence of perceiving emotions beyond acknowledging they are an important part of his role. He said, “I find myself in situations where there's a lot of feeling, there's a lot of emotionality, and that's okay.” For Sustaining Principal,
there was much more evidence of advanced levels of managing and using emotion and little evidence of perceiving emotion. Evidence related to the skills and abilities of using, understanding, and managing emotions are presented in the following sections.

**Using emotions.** Throughout the interviews, it was easier to find evidence of using emotions than perceiving emotion. In their relationships with stakeholders, it appeared across all participants, that principals relied on their EI skills and abilities to notice person-environment relationships, consider multiple perspectives, and produce emotional states to foster different thinking styles (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007).

Turnaround Principal shared a volume of examples of using emotions during his interview. He noticed many relationships between the environment and the people he worked with. For example, “Getting students trained on resilience skills will also help support my staff because behaviors, and just the needs of my students, are really draining.” He also showed evidence of using emotion to help solve problems:

Whether it is playing one stakeholder against the other one, convincing people to join the team, or framing things differently so they see how decisions or concerns sit in the greater scheme… I kind of see how the inter-connectivity of different facets work. At the higher levels of using emotions, Turnaround Principal recognized emotion can be used to generate a style of thinking that will help the school move forward. He said, “That's where I'm trying to go next: developing skills and strategies to help people solve their own problems and see that they can and they don't have to rely on someone else, externally, to fix it for them.”

Growth Principal demonstrated using emotions mostly to generate emotional states in himself and others. For example, he shared his experience with a frustrating situation and said,
I needed to take a step back and say, ‘I can't let this happen. I had a list of things that I wanted to accomplish today and I need to get back on track and not let this take my attention off of what needs to be focused on.’

He had the EI skills and abilities to use emotions to generate a mental state in himself. Similarly, he showed evidence of using emotion to generate states of thinking in parents when beginning a difficult meeting when he shared, “my approach is, first and foremost, that they understand that I care about their child. That's important for me, just to set the tone for the meeting.” Growth Principal showed evidence of using emotions to generate states of thinking, but little else; this is in contrast to the other principals.

Realignment Principal A shared evidence of primarily using emotions to consider multiple perspectives and to help others consider multiple perspectives. He shared directly that he believed one of his strengths was “being able to relate to students, to adults, to parents, to folks coming from varied backgrounds and experiences with multiple perspectives.” In his interactions with students, he shared examples of using emotions to help children consider other points of view: “Teaching ‘perspective thinking,’ helping kids to consider how someone else felt in the situation, being the victim or target or the person harmed.” Realignment Principal A used emotion mostly for considering multiple perspectives.

Realignment Principal B showed evidence of both using emotions to generate motivation in others toward a shared goal and to consider multiple perspectives. He said, “I think it's important to have those nuanced relationships, and ultimately for everybody to feel valued and heard so that they'll contribute everything they can to the shared goal.” His perspective showed clear evidence of using emotions to motivate others toward a shared goal for the school. Regarding his interactions with parents, he shared,
They don't have that responsibility to the collective. They have a responsibility to their child, and so they often don't want to hear about the system, or the whole program, or that the districts got this, or that going. They want to know how it's going to work for them and their kid.

The ability to see the world through the viewpoint of other stakeholders, as principal, was evidence of both understanding and using emotion to consider multiple perspectives.

Sustaining Principal demonstrated using emotion to build trust and buy-in among his stakeholders. He shared,

I'm really aware that being principal means that there's a certain perception of me, so I try to make sure that that perception is also met with who I am as a person and that I'm a person who takes myself seriously in my profession, but that I really am interested in being friendly, that I'm invested in my school, that I'm smart, that I know what I'm doing.

This attitude permeated his interview – he demonstrated his use of emotion to generate the trust he was looking for to bring his stakeholders along with his toward the next set of goals for the school.

*Understanding emotion.* During the interviews, all five principals shared evidence of labeling, discerning, and interpreting emotions. There was also some evidence of higher level skills such as understanding complex, blended emotions, and transitions between emotions. They used this emotional information to assess their school’s needs and design strategies for responding.

Turnaround Principal, early in the interview, shared an example that showed the importance for him, as principal, of understanding emotion. He described his work as “helping the people keep moving in a positive direction and supporting them while still also holding them
accountable to your expectations.” He added, “It’s a fine balance, I think.” This understanding of blended emotions and the necessity of transitioning between emotions and emotional states characterized his approach to working with his internal stakeholders.

Growth Principal showed evidence of understanding complex, blended emotional interactions when he explained, “There are layers to my parent interactions.” He shared that she kept parents informed at a basic level, but then also about helped them understand how much he cared for their children when there was an issue or incident.

Realignment Principal A found himself frustrated by some of the complex emotions in external stakeholders. Although he didn’t identify it clearly, he did demonstrate an ability to discern and interpret emotions in others, even if he didn’t quite know how to respond. When he shared about a challenging time in his first few months, he said,

There was a lot of discussion outside of school and folks coming to their own conclusions or setting off the panic button instead of coming in, and alleviating some of their concerns by asking the questions from the person who’s the source of information. There was no more reflection on his part about the particular labeling of these emotions and he did not share any additional comments about the nature of makeup of these parents’ emotions.

Realignment Principal B shared thorough responses related to his mixed, complex emotions and how they influenced his work when he reflected on “schmoozing” with stakeholders. He said, “Just walking that line with the integrity of also knowing like, those are resources that can help my kids and I want that. But I also don't want to completely sell out or reinforce a perspective that's not accurate.” He demonstrated that understanding his own emotions, labeling them, and identifying necessary transitions between emotions has helped him navigate complex dynamics in his principal role.
Sustaining Principal shared evidence of his work to support his teachers and staff in their labeling and discerning of emotions. He shared the story of how he addressed staff before the Thanksgiving Break by acknowledging their feelings and bringing them out into the open. He explained to them, “I know that it's been hard to have team members gone and I really value how you've come together as teams and as a staff to support people when they've needed the support.” By acknowledging and labeling their emotions, he gave them a safe space to understand the emotions for themselves and move on.

**Managing emotions.** All five principals showed evidence of managing emotions. These skills and abilities included staying open to feelings, engaging or dethatching from emotion as needed, monitoring and reflecting on emotions, and managing emotions in others (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey & Mayer, 2007). This section contains evidence of how each principal, depending on their situation, demonstrated skills related to managing emotions at a different level of complexity.

Turnaround Principal began by sharing how he monitored the emotions of the teachers he worked with and provided them skills on managing their own emotions. When discussing professional development that he led in the last year, he said, “It helps the staff learn how to take care of themselves so they can take care of the students.” This example showed Turnaround Principal explicitly monitoring and managing the emotions of others. In his work with his advisory Site Council, he also shared evidence of teaching them to monitor and detach from their emotions to focus on the school’s needs. Regarding the work he had done with the Site Council, he said,

* Trying to open their eyes to see students outside their own children is really important when working with the Site Council because everyone has their own vested interest or
their own needs, but helping them understand the broader picture, looking at things through the equity lens, is really important to make sure we're addressing the needs of all students and not just the needs of their own specific mission.

Growth Principal repeated several times how important he felt it was to always be professional. He shared evidence that managing emotions by detaching from them was often useful in his role. For example, he said, “I make sure that I am presenting myself professionally, even though I'm emotional about some of the things that I'm dealing with,” and he added, “I make sure that I maintained a high level of professionalism even though on a personal level it felt like I was being attacked.” Growth Principal felt that the management of his own emotions was critical to earning the trust and respect he needed in his role.

Realignment Principal A shared evidence of overcoming his emotions in order to accomplish the goals he felt were important in his role as principal. This skill or ability to detach from emotion was evident when he shared, “Sometimes there's a confidence that you present, that, ‘I got it all,’ but inside you're on pins and needles.” Similarly, he recognized the importance of being able to set unhelpful emotions aside when communicating. Referring to dealing with situations that challenged him personally, he said, “I try to be thoughtful about it, especially when you have to say difficult things.”

Realignment Principal B also saw great value in being able to detach from his emotions at times in his role. He shared that often times “just going brain dead and just hearing and being present, has often ratcheted down some touchy situations.” To his, the key was in remembering that he was hired to do a job and any conflicts with his were probably not personal. He shared, “I really try to depersonalize whatever's going on even though this work is deeply personal to me.”
Sustaining Principal demonstrated a more complex management of emotions. He talked about both staying open to emotion while at the same time detaching as necessary. He shared, “I can't show up as someone who is going to cry or get mad. I have to be level-headed and rational, but I also have to show up as a human being too and someone who understands all that.” Sustaining Principal told a story of putting a teacher on a remediation plan for improvement and how the teacher got quite upset and began to cry. Sustaining Principal recognized he first had to manage the teacher’s emotions before he could continue sharing information. This focus on managing others emotions extended to teaching others strategies for managing their emotions. At a faculty meeting, he encouraged teachers by saying, “I hope that this Thanksgiving holiday, whether you ate a turkey or not, was a way for you to relax and rejuvenate.”

The levels of complexity with which each principal perceived, used, understood, or managed emotions varied depending on their personal skills and abilities as well as in response to their organizational context. The following section contains participants’ perceptions about how they use their EI skills and abilities within their roles.

**Participant perceptions about their principalship and context.** During each interview, participants were asked, “How do you believe you use your EI skills and abilities differently than other educational leaders?” Each principal was able to identify a way they felt they used their EI skills and abilities in a way they thought was different from other administrators they observed. In a related question, participants were asked, “How do the unique challenges and opportunities at [your school] require you to adjust your approach to perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions in yourself and others?” The answers to these two
questions, for all principals, aligned and appeared to be influenced by both their perceptions of their own strengths as well as the needs of their particular school.

Turnaround Principal explained,

I feel like I see the bigger picture more quickly than a lot of other people do. I kind of see how the inter-connectivity of different facets work. I feel like I see a lot of people attacking individual problems, solving individual questions, and not seeing how it's interconnected.

Although the ability to see problems in context was not explicitly a skill related to EI, it certainly involved EI when the problems were relational, which can often be the case in the principalship. Due to his school’s population of students with significant socio-economic needs, Turnaround Principal explained,

I feel like Emotional Intelligence is part of equity: understanding how the brain functions and my kids are in fight-or-flight mode 90% of the time, and just helping [teachers] understand that may not have been their personal experience, but how they can connect that knowledge to what their students are going through.

This theme of supporting children through traumatic situations and solving day to day problems permeated Turnaround Principal’s interview.

Growth Principal felt that his emotional consistency was one of his greater strengths. He shared, “One of the things that makes me a good leader is my stability and I'm pretty consistent and that's my comfort zone. I've worked around and with other leaders who tend to be more reactionary.” When asked how he had to use EI in his particular context he spoke of teachers in need of improvement. He explained, “An area that I would really like to work on improving, would be how to have difficult conversations that really make a difference in teacher
performance.” Growth Principal’s interview responses focused frequently on the need to remain the consummate professional in the face of difficult work, attacks, and conflicting priorities.

Realignment Principal A responded in the context of being new to his school. He said, “My secretary says, ‘You're really good at communicating and writing and being thoughtful about communication.’” He explained that this was important for him at that moment because being new required a lot of learning and trust building. He explained, “I have to use inquiry, ask questions, but also demonstrate that I'm listening and can shape, that I can at least communicate back to the families or teachers what their concerns are.” Many of Realignment Principal A’s responses during the interview focused on his newness to the school in need of realignment and his need to continue learning about the school, the stakeholders, and the right approach.

Realignment Principal B considered himself a much more relational person than other administrators he had known. He said, “Because of having a counseling background, that's really my strength area. Sometimes I don't feel as grounded [in teaching and learning] as some of the more technical people.” He explained that when he worked with teachers to improve practice, the conversations were rarely about teaching and learning, but more about how he could support them. As a White individual leading a historically African-American school, Realignment Principal B shared that much of his work focused on overcoming lowered expectations. He presented his struggle by saying, “How do I inspire kids and teachers who have had really negative experiences and have a lot of reasons to give up or lower expectations?”

Sustaining Principal explained his need to communicate with a diverse population of family stakeholders. He said, “I know that people come from a variety of different backgrounds, and I think that that's true in any school, but I think it's particularly true at [this school] because of the multi-national aspect that comes with this community.” He shared how this diversity often
required him to bring people together from multiple positions to see a common goal. A focus on building buy-in and bringing stakeholders together to support the school’s advancement to an even higher level was a theme that was evident throughout the interview with Sustaining Principal. The following section provides a summary of the data analysis and results across all five interviews.

**Data Analysis and Results Summary**

In this chapter data was presented from five in-depth, open-ended interviews with school principals in schools across a variety of organizational contexts. Each interview focused on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the unique organizational context of the school in which the principal worked. Based on information gathered, one school was subjectively categorized as a Turnaround school, one an Accelerated Growth school, two as Realignment schools, and one as a Sustaining Success school. Each principal answered questions providing evidence and perceptions about the use and manifestation of EI.

All participants showed evidence and shared perceptions emphasizing the importance of EI skills and abilities in their role as principal. However, analysis of the data revealed differences in the specific EI skills and abilities used and manifested at each site. In addition to elements of EI, which appeared important to all of the principals, regardless of the organizational context of their schools, the results suggested that the principals of the higher achieving schools with more sophisticated problems used and manifested EI skills and abilities from the more advanced levels of the four domains of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. The results presented in this chapter are discussed and interpreted in the following, concluding chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this final chapter is to discuss the results of this study in relation to seminal literature as well as to explore the potential implications for the community of practice. The following sections contain a brief summary of the methodology for this study followed by a discussion and interpretation of the results presented in Chapter 4 in light of the research question and existing literature. The final sections of this chapter contain a discussion of the limitations of this study, implications for practice, policy, and theory, as well as recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Results

Underlying this research was the essential question: How did educational leaders exhibit and use Emotional Intelligence (EI) within distinct organizational contexts? Using a multiple case study approach, data was collected from in-depth, open-ended interviews and publicly available sources in order to compare, contrast, and analyze similarities and differences related to the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities among principals of schools with unique organizational contexts.

**Conceptual framework and significance.** Researchers widely agreed that leadership was inherently based on relationships. Leadership, they said, was a relational process involving motivating and inspiring, encouraging teamwork, and managing complex personal and interpersonal dynamics (Humphrey, 2002; Hogan, et. al, 1994). An analysis of the skills, traits, and behaviors underlying the interpersonal work of leaders led naturally to the construct of EI (Sosik & Megerian, 1999) and recent studies restated that an individual’s EI was important for leadership (Kerr, et. al., 2006). However, authors continued to conclude, “Exactly how, and to what extent EI accounts for effective leadership is currently unknown” (George, 2000, p. 5).
Leadership researchers in late 19th and early 20th centuries made the assumption, which has now been disproven, that leadership was akin to a general personality trait (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Recently referred to as a *heroic conception* of leadership, the notion was that certain psychological traits of aptitude and ability would yield a strong leader. As early as the 1940’s, more dynamic theories began to emerge and Stogdill (1948) concluded, “It becomes clear that an adequate analysis of leadership involves not only the study of leaders, but also of situations” (p. 64–65). Modern researchers understood that the context in which leadership occurred determined strategic direction, the scope of influence, the speed of change, relationship dynamics, information gathering, networking methods, and much more (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002).

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the two-fold notion that EI was important to leadership (Kerr, et. al, 2006) and distinct organizational contexts called for varying leadership skills, abilities, and behaviors (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). By synthesizing these concepts and applying them to school leadership, this study sought to understand how skills and abilities related to EI were used or exhibited by principals of schools with varying cultural, political, economic, geographic, and demographic characteristics.

Within the last 10 years, researchers continued to emphasize the need for more research into the role played by both EI and the organizational context in leadership. Although research showed that individuals with high scores on EI measurements appeared better able to lead (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000), the specific role that EI skills and abilities played in effective leadership remained largely unknown (Kerr, et. al., 2006). Similarly, it had been established that situational factors played a critical role for leadership (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002), however, a meta-analysis of research on situational leadership by McLaughlin (2006) concluded that organizational context and its impact on leadership remained an under-researched area. This
study sought to expand knowledge about both EI and organizational context in school leadership by studying how EI skills and abilities were evident in varying organizational contexts.

**Seminal literature.** To provide the full background for this study of EI within and across organizational contexts, Chapter 2 of this dissertation contained a full review of the literature on both elements of leaderships: EI and organizational context. Following is a brief summary of the key, seminal literature in each area.

**Emotional intelligence.** Significant research was undertaken and much literature written about individuals’ capacity for working with emotions (Rivers, Brackett, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007; George, 2000; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Kerr, et. al., 2006). The specific term Emotional Intelligence (EI) was coined and popularized by Mayer and Salovey (1997) as a measurement for one’s ability to manage, understand, use, and perceive emotions. There were a number of alternative approaches to categorizing and measuring one’s EI (Goleman, 1998; Mikolajczak & Leroy, 2007; Petrides, et. al., 2007), but the most longstanding and statistically validated approach, based on significant research, was the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (MacCann, Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2004).

The four abilities in Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model, measured by the MSCEIT included perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. In the model, these four abilities were arranged in order from the simplest to the most complex of psychological processes (Figure 1). Abilities at the higher levels, such as managing emotions, depended on the
lower level abilities, such as perceiving and using emotions. Each of the separate abilities was thought to develop with age and experience (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007).

Humphrey (2002) emphasized leadership required significant social skills including those in Mayer and Salovey’s (2007) model: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions in oneself and others. Some correlational studies on EI and effective leadership cautiously concluded a preliminary relationship between EI and effective leadership (George, 2000; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005).

**Organizational context.** The unique contextual variables of an organization appeared to have an important impact on leadership (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Some researchers went so far as to conclude that leader traits and behaviors were merely minor variables compared to structural and organizational elements (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Despite an understanding of the

---

**Table 1:**EI Domains and Progression of Skills and Abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing Emotions</th>
<th>Understanding Emotions</th>
<th>Using Emotions</th>
<th>Perceiving Emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending and staying open to pleasant and unpleasant feelings</td>
<td>Engaging or detaching from an emotion depending on its perceived utility in a particular situation</td>
<td>Monitoring and reflecting on the emotions in the self and others</td>
<td>Managing emotions in the self and others without compromising their informative utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labeling emotions, recognizing similarities and differences between emotion labels and the emotions themselves</td>
<td>Interpreting the meaning of emotions</td>
<td>Understanding complex feelings, including simultaneous feelings, or blends of feelings</td>
<td>Recognizing transitions between emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing attention to important information about the person-environment relationship</td>
<td>Generating vivid emotions to be used as aids to judgement and memory processes</td>
<td>Generating moods to facilitate the considerations of multiple perspectives</td>
<td>Producing emotional states to foster different thinking styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and differentiating emotions in the physical state, feelings, and thoughts of the self and others</td>
<td>Identifying emotions in others and in designs or objects</td>
<td>Expressing emotions and related needs</td>
<td>Discriminating between honest and false emotional expressions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.* Repeat of Figure 1 charting EI domains and progression of skills and abilities adapted from Mayer & Salovey (1997).
importance of contextual influences on leadership, Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader (2004) determined that more research was needed to develop a complete understanding of specifically how varying organizational contexts required different skills and abilities from their leaders.

In an effort to support leaders of organizations in determining what type of organizational context they were in or were moving into, Watkins (2013) built upon prior research (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1997) to create a model for categorizing organizations based on their contextual characteristics. He created the acronym STARS to represent five types of organizations leaders find themselves in or moving into. The five categories were “start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success” (Watkins, 2013, loc. 1025). Each separate organizational category presented different challenges, opportunities, and resources and thus, each required the right leader with the right approach, skills or abilities. In this study, these five labels applied well to schools within a district. Watkins’ (2013) STARS categories were described, in detail, in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

**Review of methodology.** The study used a qualitative, multiple case study approach to collect data to answer how educational leaders exhibited and used EI within distinct organizational contexts. Five sites and their principals were selected for study based on the varied demographic, social, political, economic, and geographic factors of their schools. Following Yin’s (2009) “logic of representation,” the same procedure was replicated across all five sites to show different perspectives and allow for analysis of themes and patterns.

In addition to the collection of publicly available information about demographics, funding, staffing, achievement, and cultural factors of each school, open-ended interviews provided the bulk of the data for this study. Using an open-ended interview format, principals were able to contribute as much detail as they desired and the interviewer was able to ask
probing, follow-up questions to ensure the participants fully expressed their experiences and viewpoints (Turner, 2010). The interview questions related to EI were designed to elicit responses from the principals about how they used, perceived, understood and managed emotions following Mayer, Salovey and Caruso’s (2002a) model for quantifying EI.

Based on the data gathered from publicly available information and interviews with principals, each site was subjectively categorized into one of Watkins’ (2013) five categories for organizational context (start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success). The interview questions related to organizational context were designed to validate the subjective categorizations of each school made using Watkins’ (2013) STARS model and to gather more information about the unique organizational dynamic of the particular school.

After all five interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and error checked by the participants, codes representing priori and emergent themes (Stemler, 2001) were used to systematically organize the data. The resulting codes, quotes, and researcher notes were organized using software to allow for filtering and sorting of each theme within and across interviews. The full results of the analysis are provided in Chapter 4 while the following section provides a brief summary of the findings.

**Summary of findings.** All five principals identified clear challenges and opportunities facing their schools and described the organizational contexts sufficiently to assist categorization into Watkins (2013) categories of organizational context. Through subjective, non-scientific classification, one school was categorized as a turnaround school, one an accelerated growth school, two as realignment schools, and one as a sustaining success school.

There was little disagreement among the five participants that their role as principal was, at its core, a relational process. When asked questions about EI, all five participants named
specific ways they had adapted or adjusted themselves related to their perception, use, understanding, or managing of emotions to meet the unique needs of their school. The transcript analysis revealed a belief among all participants that EI skills and abilities, in general, played a critical role in the leadership of a school, and all five participants shared and demonstrated evidence that they believed it was possible to grow and develop EI skills and abilities in their role as principal.

Differences between the participants surfaced when analyzing the specific skills and abilities, from basic to advanced, presented and discussed by the participants within each of the EI domains: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. Specifically, Turnaround Principal shared examples and discussed interactions involving the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities in more of the basic levels of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions (see Figure 1, Mayer & Salovey 1997); these included identifying emotions, noticing person-environment relationships, labeling emotions or detaching from emotions. On the other end of the organizational context spectrum, Sustaining Principal shared examples and discussed interactions involving the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities at more advanced levels of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. These skills, which are categorized by Mayer and Salovey (1997) as advanced, included, but were not limited to, producing emotional states in others to foster different thinking styles, recognizing transitions in emotions, and managing emotions in others.

As the data and results shared in Chapter 4 demonstrated, the Growth Principal and the two Realignment Principals also demonstrated differences in the specific EI skills and abilities used and manifested in their roles. In broad terms, the findings revealed that all five of the principals used EI skills and abilities in their work, but there were observable differences in the
specific skills and abilities, basic to advanced, used by the principals of schools with varying organizational contexts. In this very limited sample of five principals, the three schools on the higher end of the organizational context spectrum (realignment and sustaining success) were led by principals who shared and provided evidence for the use of more advanced EI skills and abilities while the principals of the two schools on the lower end of the organizational context spectrum (turnaround and accelerated growth) shared and provided evidence for the use of more basic EI skills and abilities.

The analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that the three higher achieving schools with more sophisticated and nuanced problems were led by principals who shared evidence, during the interviews, of specific EI skills and abilities from the advanced levels of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) four categories of using, perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions. This study did not seek to investigate leadership effectiveness in any way. This study also stopped well short of examining any correlation between basic and advanced EI skills and abilities and different organizational contexts. The implications of these results in relation to the research question and seminal literature are explored in the following sections.

**Discussion of the Results**

The essential question underlying this research was: How do educational leaders exhibit and use Emotional Intelligence (EI) within distinct organizational contexts? Using a multiple case study approach targeting five school leaders whose schools had specifically unique characteristics, this study examined, compared, and contrasted how each principal demonstrated skills and abilities related to EI in his role as principal. The results summarized in the previous section and detailed in Chapter 4 revealed some uses and manifestations of EI which were common among all five principals, regardless of the context of their schools. The data also
revealed some differences across sites with differing organizational contexts. The purpose of this section is to interpret the findings in light of the study as a whole and the underlying research question.

**Categorization of schools by organizational context.** Every organization in the world, including every school, has its own unique organizational context made up of factors including, but not limited to, culture, politics, demographics, economics, environment, and the age of the organization (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Humphrey, 2002; Leister, Borden, & Fiedler, 1977; Watkins, 2013; Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). In order to support the organization of the results of this study, it was helpful to categorize the five schools in the study based on their organizational context. Using a model designed to help leaders assess and determine strategic direction, scope of influence, speed of change, and other important leadership considerations, the five schools in the study were each categorized into one of five organizational contexts: start-up, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success (Watkins, 2013). These categories were explained in detail in Chapter 2.

It is important to note that the categorization of the schools in this study was a subjective process utilizing publicly available information about demographics, finances, staffing, school age, achievement, and socio-political considerations. The information used for the categorization of each school was validated during the interviews as the principal of each school shared about the organizational context in which his leadership took place.

All five principals, when asked about the primary challenges and opportunities facing their schools, described in detail the unique organizational context of their school and the implications that had on their practice. Turnaround Principal spoke of the state restructuring process and the significant achievement problems facing his school. Growth principal shared the
challenge of a rapidly growing student population. Both Realignment Principals described working to overcome long-held traditions or expectations in order to realize needed change. Sustaining Principal spoke of managing numerous high-functioning initiatives and working to support her diverse community of learners to achieve even higher levels.

The details provided by each principal about the organizational context of their schools corroborated the publicly available information that led to the subjective categorization of the schools into Watkins’ (2013) five categories for this study. Furthermore, the awareness demonstrated by all five principals of the impact organizational context had on their leadership confirmed researchers’ recent emphasis on the importance of considering the situational factors in leadership roles (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Watkins, 2013; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004).

**Commonalities among all principals.** During this study, there were elements of EI evident in all five interviews, regardless of differing organizational contexts. This confirmed a body of recent literature which strongly suggested the importance of emotional skills for any type of leadership effectiveness (Gardner & Stough, 2001; George, 2000; Humphrey, 2002; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). Although there were certain differences in the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities among the five principals, a number of significant commonalities emerged.

There was unanimous agreement among the principals that their work as principals, at its core, was a relational process involving perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions in oneself and other stakeholders. All five principals named the same, general set of stakeholders: students, staff, parents, community, and district contacts. There was consistency
among the principals’ responses regarding the importance of being able to read the emotional state of other people and adjust their own emotional state to fit the interaction.

After a brief introduction to Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) theory of EI, all five principals emphasized the importance of these skills and abilities to their work and all five believed that these were skills and abilities that could be grown and developed. Each principal had specific areas they were working to strengthen and improve related to EI. Turnaround Principal said, “I’m still working on managing [emotions], both for myself and others.” Growth Principal sought to improve the management of her own emotions and shared an example, “a parent sent me an e-mail that I read first thing this morning and it was upsetting to me. It pulled me completely off what my plans were for the morning.” Realignment Principal A shared that she is trying to improve her perception of emotions during interactions with critical stakeholders. Realignment Principal B said, “Identifying my own emotions is a new thing. I’m trying to find value in being able to communicate and ask for help instead of just pulling myself up by the bootstraps and keeping moving.” Finally, Sustaining Principal was focused on growing her ability to manage complex emotions while still feeling and understanding the meaning behind those emotions, all while keeping the overall goal for the school in mind.

Considering Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) four EI skills and abilities – perceiving emotion, using emotion, understanding emotion, and managing emotion – only some principals showed evidence that perceiving and understanding emotion was an important part of their role as principal, but all five shared clear examples of how using and managing emotion was important in their work. In their relationships with stakeholders, it appeared across all participants that principals relied on their EI skills and abilities to notice person-environment relationships, consider multiple perspectives, and produce emotional states to foster different
thinking styles (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007). Similarly, all five principals shared the importance of managing emotions – staying open to feelings, engaging or dethatching from emotion as needed, monitoring and reflecting on emotions, and managing emotions in others (Rivers, Bracket, Salovey, & Mayer, 2007) – as critical skills and abilities to support them in their roles.

The results indicated there were many skills and abilities related to EI which were important for principals of all schools, in general. Further analysis of the results revealed some distinct differences in the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities depending on the unique organizational context of the school a principal was called to lead. These differences are examined in the following sections for each particular site.

**Turnaround principal.** Turnaround School had some significant challenges with nearly 90% of students qualifying as economically disadvantaged and 78% of students from minority families, 16% of students qualifying for Special Education, and over 40% of students qualifying as English Language Learners. Moreover, the neighborhood was historically low-income and families were under significant stress because of socio-economic pressures. Student mobility was very high and consistent matriculation of students from Kindergarten through fifth grade was as low as 25%. Due to these factors, along with very low student achievement, the interview with Turnaround Principal focused largely on the technical aspects of solving problems facing his school and less on nuanced emotional interactions among himself and stakeholders.

Turnaround Principal was the only principal to say, “I don't see, though, all the work being as relationship building, I do feel like there is a big technical piece when it comes to systems and routines, procedures and schedules, calendars, and that kind of things.” Even
though there were no guiding questions in this direction, throughout his interview, he tended to highlight the technical elements of his work in addition to the relational elements.

When discussing his interactions with stakeholders, there was a strong focus from Turnaround Principal on using connections to get resources to solve problems for his school. In a particularly clear example of this, he said,

We work with a community advocacy group called [redacted]. They support our families through our after-school program and also connecting families with housing assistance or rental assistance or bill-paying, that kind of things…We have quite a few other community partners: [redacted], which is a housing organization. We're working on implementing a food pantry through the [redacted] Food Bank. We have a partnership with [redacted] to provide health education and incentives for kids to stay healthy.

Within his school, Turnaround Principal was focused, again, more on the technical aspects than interpersonal, emotionally-focused aspects of the job. He explained that his school had “turned over 97% of their staff in the last 2 years, so I'd say 21 out of 26 of my teachers are in their first 3 years so I'm doing a lot more coaching than I am evaluating.” He saw himself as a problem solver, a caretaker, and a support for the stakeholders he interacted with; his perception of himself was unique from the other principals interviewed who tended to focus on themselves as one member of a larger team working to achieve the goals of the school.

Turnaround Principal showed some evidence that he was working toward more advanced EI skills and abilities such as understanding complex, blended emotions, or producing emotional states in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). For example, he said,
When I first came here I definitely heard that I was very blunt and very direct. I took that as a compliment, but now I'm understanding that I sometimes need to use my soft skills to make them feel supported while still expecting them to bend, to reach. He understood that he would need to grow in his EI skills and abilities as the school grew, but his focus remained largely pragmatic and focused on solving the immediate problems facing his school. He said, “That's where I'm trying to go next: developing skills and strategies to help people solve their own problems and see that they can and they don't have to rely on someone else, externally, to fix it for them.”

Although Turnaround principal did show evidence of all four EI domains – perceiving, using, understanding, and managing – the complexity of the skills and abilities he discussed and demonstrated remained in the more basic levels: identifying emotions in others, directing attention to information about the person-environment relationship, labeling emotions and noticing similarities and differences (see Figure 1) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

**Growth principal.** Growth School was located in a rapidly developing neighborhood in the center of a large city and, as a result, the student population was quickly growing beyond the capacity of the building. The school served mostly White students and only about 17% came from economically disadvantaged families. There was high parent participation in this neighborhood school and academic achievement remained acceptable, but not great, at around 60% of students meeting expectations on standardized assessments. Ultimately, the rapid increase in enrollment brought Growth Principal a number of challenges for meeting the needs of his students and community.

When describing his leadership approach and his interactions with stakeholders, Growth Principal frequently spoke of creating a sense of belonging and connection to the school.
Regarding students, he said, “My biggest goal when it comes to students is that every student feels like they belong at this school.” With respect to parents, he said, “My approach is first and foremost that they understand that I care about their child.” His focus on creating emotions in others to make them feel a sense of belonging also extended to teachers. When asked about his interactions with them, his reply was, “I very much view them as members of my team. I like to collaborate with teachers. I make top-down decisions when I have to, but my comfort level is to work side by side and collaborate with my teachers.” Growth Principal saw one of his primary roles as creating a sense of belonging to his school as it continues to grow beyond current capacity.

Within the context of a school growing beyond its capacity, Growth Principal showed evidence of using EI skills and abilities to influence how others perceived him; he wanted to be sure he presented a strong outward appearance as the leader of the school. He said, “I've had to adapt to make sure that I am presenting myself professionally, even though I'm emotional about some of the things that I'm dealing with.” And, “I had to really work at making sure that I maintained a high level of professionalism even though on a personal level it felt like I was being attacked.” These examples demonstrate relatively basic EI skills and abilities related to using and managing emotions: noticing important information about the person-environment relationship and detaching from emotion depending on its utility (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

In light of a growing and changing organizational context, Growth Principal’s interview responses focused frequently on the need to remain the consummate professional in the face of difficult work, attacks, and conflicting priorities. He felt that his emotional consistency was one of his greater strengths. He shared, “One of the things that makes me a good leader is my
stability and I'm pretty consistent and that's my comfort zone. I've worked around and with other leaders who tend to be more reactionary.”

Like the other four principals, Growth Principal demonstrated evidence of EI skills and abilities in all four domains of Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model. When considering the complexity of Growth Principal’s use and demonstration of EI skills and abilities, his examples were mostly at the basic levels of each domain (see Figure 1), but suited the needs of his growing school. In his interactions, using his EI skills and abilities, he strove to make stakeholders feel involved and to present a sense of stability and consistency as a leader.

**Realignment principals.** Realignment School A had experienced a significant demographic shift from mostly minority to mostly white over the previous 10 years. Student achievement was good, overall, but there remained a significant achievement-gap between the remaining minority students and the majority White students. Similarly, Realignment School B was in the midst of a demographic shift from predominately African American to increasingly non-minority students. The school had many successful programs which had been in place for many years, but despite these rich programs, student achievement for their majority population of African American students remained low. Both schools had much to celebrate, but lurking problems needed to be address in order to fully realize their vision for all students.

Both Realignment Principals recognized the challenge of navigating a complex social structure in their role as principal of a school in need of realignment. Realignment Principal A noticed, “It's a really small community of folks [who are] connected to each other. I might say something…that could have a ripple effect and then pretty soon folks are talking.” Similarly, Realignment Principal B reflected on her interactions with parents and community members by saying, “I have to figure out what their bottom line is and what they're going to value, which is
often different...I don't think anybody's got malice, it's just they are driven by different factors.”

The advanced perceiving and understanding of emotional factors demonstrated by the Realignment Principals included discriminating between honest and false emotional expressions and understanding complex feelings and blends of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

When considering the management and use of emotions, the Realignment Principals both shared evidence of reflecting on their emotional reactions and using emotions to generate useful moods in others. Realignment Principal A said, “I think sometimes there's a confidence that you present, that, ‘I got it all,’ but inside you're on pins and needles, like, ‘Please don't ask me a question I don't know the answer to.’” Realignment Principal B shared clearly, “I know, and I've learned over time, how I respond sets the tone for everybody.”

Responding to a need, as a leader, to bring stakeholders together around a common mission, both principals shared evidence of using EI skills and abilities to consider multiple perspectives in order to encourage working together toward a shared goal. Realignment Principal A believed one of his strengths was “being able to relate to students, to adults, to parents, to folks coming from varied backgrounds and experiences with multiple perspectives.” Realignment Principal B said, “I think it's important to have those nuanced relationships, and ultimately for everybody to feel valued and heard so that they'll contribute everything they can to the shared goal.”

The Realignment Principals each demonstrated evidence of all four domains of EI skills and abilities in their work. The level at which they demonstrated skills and abilities related to perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions was relatively advanced compared to the Turnaround Principal and Growth Principal. They demonstrated discriminating between honest and false emotional expressions, generating moods in themselves and others to facilitate
the consideration of multiple perspectives, and monitoring and understanding complex, blended feelings without compromising their informative utility (see Figure 1) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Their practice of these more advanced EI skills and abilities appeared to be in response to the need to work within a nuanced and complicated social dynamic in order to address underlying issues preventing full realization of the school’s potential.

**Sustaining principal.** Sustaining School was built in the center of a modern housing development serving families from many of the large, multinational companies doing business in the city. Parental involvement and student achievement were very strong and clear, effective operational structures were in place to support the realization of these positive outcomes into the future. The goal for Sustaining School was to find ways to improve within the structure of an already high-functioning system.

Sustaining Principal understood that stakeholders viewed him as a sort of figurehead and it was important for him to uphold this role. He explained, “I'm really aware that being principal means that there's a certain perception of me.” He also understood that while managing his persona in this way, it was important not to lose his own emotions or the informative utility of those emotions. He continued, “I try to make sure that that perception is also met with who I am as a person and that I'm a person who takes myself seriously in my profession.” The reflection on the way he was presenting himself to others while trying to stay true to and in tune with his own emotions permeated Sustaining Principal’s interview.

Sustaining Principal expressed a different focus than the other four principals when asked how he adapted or adjusted himself to meet the unique needs of his school. He responded, “I think the most difficult thing for me has been to create boundaries that don't make me come across as defensive. There are some times when I’m asked for things that I can't give.”
Although he did still speak of the importance of representing his school, his response was unique from the other four principals in that the other principals were focused on what they were putting out to the world while Sustaining Principal was focused on holding the line against what the world was pushing into his school.

Regarding the management of emotions, Sustaining Principal demonstrated a complex understanding and advanced skills and abilities related to perceiving and managing emotions when he said, “I can't show up as someone who is going to cry or get mad. I have to be level-headed and rational, but I also have to show up as a human being too and someone who understands all that.”

In all four of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model of EI, Sustaining Principal demonstrated skills and abilities at the advanced end of the spectrum: producing emotional states to foster different thinking styles, understating complex feelings, including simultaneously feelings, or blends of feelings, recognizing transitions between emotions, and managing emotions in oneself and others without compromising their informative utility (see Figure 1). In the following section, the use and manifestation of EI skills and abilities are compared and contrasted among the five sites and the five principals.

**Differences of EI use and manifestation across organizational contexts.** All of the principals, regardless of their personal history or the organizational context of their school, demonstrated evidence related to the importance of EI skills and abilities in the role of principal. Moreover, all of the principals demonstrated evidence of each of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) four domains of EI: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing. However, when the data related to EI skills and abilities across the five principals and their four organizational contexts
was compared and contrasted, there appeared to be differences related to the complexity of the skills and abilities observed and discussed.

Specifically, Turnaround Principal showed evidence of using and manifesting EI skills and abilities in the basic levels of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions (see Figure 1) (Mayer & Salovey 1997). These basic skills and abilities included identifying emotions, noticing person-environment relationships, labeling emotions or detaching from emotions. On the other end of the organizational context spectrum, Sustaining Principal showed evidence of using and manifesting EI skills and abilities at the more advanced levels of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. These more advanced skills and abilities included, but were not limited to, producing emotional states in others to foster different thinking styles, recognizing transitions in emotions, and managing emotions in others. In like form, the Growth Principal and the two Realignment Principals demonstrated differences in the specific EI skills and abilities used and manifested in their roles.

In this very limited sample of five principals, the three schools on the higher end of the organizational context spectrum (realignment and sustaining success) were led by principals who shared and provided evidence for the use of more advanced EI skills and abilities while the two schools on the lower end of the organizational context spectrum (turnaround and accelerated growth) had principals who shared and provided evidence for the use of more basic EI skills and abilities. A discussion of these findings is discussed, in relation to the literature, in the following section of this chapter.

**Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

Effective leadership has been a topic of discussion since the time of Plato, Cesar, and Plutarch (Bass, 1981). Thinkers and authors have sought to understand and articulate the skills,
traits, experiences, and actions that will have the greatest impact on creating and sustaining successful organizations. This study examined two elements of leadership which, together, represented an under-researched area: Emotional Intelligence (EI) and organizational context.

Modern conceptions of leadership were inherently based on interpersonal relationships – creating a sense of ownership, motivating and inspiring, encouraging teamwork, and managing complex personal and interpersonal dynamics (Hogan, et. al., 1994). Research into the skills, traits, and behaviors which underlay the strong interpersonal skills present in many effective leaders led naturally to the construct of EI (Sosik & Megerian, 1999) and recent studies confirmed that an individual’s EI is important for leadership (Kerr, et. al., 2006). However, “exactly how and to what extent EI accounts for effective leadership [remained] unknown” (George, 2000, p. 5) and represented an area in need of further study.

As early as of the 1940s, researchers began to call for a study of leadership which included more than the psychological traits, skills, and aptitude of the leader, but which also considered the situation in which the leadership was taking place (Stogdill, 1948). Since that time, research has confirmed that distinct organizational contexts call for varying leadership skills, abilities, and behaviors (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). Despite much research validating the importance of contextual influences on leadership, exactly how varying organizational contexts required different traits, skills, and abilities in leaders remained an area in need of more research (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004).

The findings of this study represented additions to the understanding of the impacts of both EI and organizational context in school leadership by synthesizing the two areas of study. The results showed that there were many elements of EI which were commonly exhibited across all principals studied – this validated the importance of EI, in general, to leadership (Kerr, et. al.,
The results also showed that all five principals were keenly aware of situational factors influencing their work as school leaders – this validated the notion that varying organizational contexts called for varying leadership skills, abilities, and behaviors (Osborn, Hunt, & Jauch, 2002). While there were certain consistencies related to the use and manifestation of EI by the principals, there were also notable differences in the complexity of the EI skills and abilities evidenced by each principal during the study. An analysis of the sophistication with which each principal evidenced EI skills and abilities across varying organizational contexts supported and added to the existing literature in both areas. The following sub-sections present the results of this study in light of the literature about both organizational context and EI in leadership.

**Results in relation to the literature on organizational context.** In this study, the term organizational context was used to describe the unique dynamics of an institution including, but not limited to cultural, social, political, environmental, economic, and temporal factors. Zaccaro and Klimoski (2002) found that the context in which leadership occurred determined strategic direction, the scope of influence, the speed of change, relationship dynamics, information gathering, networking methods, and much more. During this study, all five of the principals identified clear challenges and opportunities facing their school and spoke at length about how demographic, historical, social, political, economic, and environmental factors affected how they approached their work. Moreover, when asked if and how they had to adapt or adjust themselves to meet the unique needs of their schools, all five principals named specific ways in which they have had to grow and develop themselves in response to the organizational context of their schools. Each principal’s awareness and consideration of the situational factors affecting his leadership confirmed many researchers’ conclusions that organizational context played a key role in any leadership position (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Humphrey, 2002; Leister,
Similar to early concepts of matching leaders to organizations (Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975), Watkins (2013) presented a model for contextualizing organizations and adjusting or selecting leader traits, skills, and behaviors to best fit. The questions which drove Watkins’ work supporting leaders and aspiring leaders were, “What kind of change am I being called upon to lead?” and “What kind of change leader am I” (loc. 0119)? He asserted that a careful study of the organizational context would help a leader determine challenges, opportunities, and resources to guide his approach. Watkins subsequently created the acronym STARS to represent the five types of organizations leaders find themselves in or moving into. The five categories were “start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success” (loc. 1025). Each separate organizational category presented different challenges, opportunities, and resources; thus, each required the right leader with the right approach.

During this study, the demographic, economic, environmental, historical and student achievement data gathered about each school from publicly available sources was compared with input and reflections from each principal to build a complete profile of the organizational context of each school. The resulting profiles of each school revealed that Watkins’ (2013) five categories for institutions applied well to schools. Through subjective, non-scientific classification, no schools met the definition of a start-up organization, one school was categorized as a turnaround organization, one an accelerated growth organization, two as realignment organizations, and one as a sustaining success organization. The descriptions of each organizational category were detailed in Chapter 2 and the data used to classify each school was fully outlined in Chapter 4.
Results in relation to the literature on emotional intelligence in leadership.

Regardless of organizational context, researchers agreed that leadership was, at its core, a social process in which a leader’s effectiveness was greatly determined by his or her ability to influence the performance outcomes of others (Humphrey, 2002). Five out of five of the principals in this study felt their work was primarily social and relational – this confirms researchers’ emphasis regarding the importance of studying interpersonal relationships and the skills and abilities underlying social and relational interactions.

An analysis of the skills, traits, and behaviors underlying the interpersonal work of leaders led naturally to the construct of EI (Sosik & Megerian, 1999) and recent studies restated that an individual’s EI was important for leadership (Kerr, et. al., 2006). During each interview, before introducing the concept of EI skills and abilities, all five principals shared examples and demonstrated evidence of perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions in their work as principal.

In order to categorize and quantify skills and abilities related to EI, Mayer and Salovey (1997) formalized a model and a subsequent Emotional Intelligence test (the MSCEIT). The model contained four broad domains related to perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. The four domains make up a continuum of EI skills and abilities discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Following Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model, each of the four domains contains a progression of skills from the most basic to the most advanced (see Figure 1). During this study, all five principals demonstrated evidence of skills and abilities from each of the four EI domains, however, the specific skills demonstrated by each principal varied in complexity from basic to advanced. The analysis of these differences compared with the organizational context within which each principal was working revealed a variety of EI skills and abilities
being used and manifested across organizational contexts. These differences and variations are discussed in the following section.

**Differences in the use and manifestation of EI across organizational contexts.** All of the principals, regardless of their personal history or the organizational context of their schools, demonstrated evidence related to the importance of EI skills and abilities in their role as principal. However, analysis of the data related to specific EI domains revealed differences in the complexity of the skills and abilities used and manifested at each site.

Watkins (2013) described organizations based on their challenges, opportunities, and resources on a continuum from most technical to most visionary. Watkins (2013) explained that in a turnaround organization, the focus was on serious and rapid change to correct course; leaders had to be ready to take risks and make quick decisions regarding the central elements of the organization. Accelerated growth organizations, he said, were in the midst of rapid expansion and required the rapid building of structures and processes while integrating new stakeholders. In realignment organizations, Watkins (2013) explained the need for change as less obvious; leaders must convince stakeholders of the need for change and carefully restructure past practices to create a focus on a central mission. Finally, Watkins wrote about sustaining success organizations as healthy and in need of remaining so; leaders must analyze the complexities of what has made the organizations successful and inspire stakeholders to continue improvement in a changing world. The principals interviewed during this study confirmed these categorizations and echoed many of the same perceived needs for their schools.

identified basic skills and advanced skills. For example, managing emotion on a basic level would include “attending and staying open to pleasant and unpleasant feelings” (Figure 1.1, Mayer & Salovey, 1997) while at the advanced level one would be “managing emotions in the self and others without compromising their informative utility” (Figure 1.1, Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Mayer and Salovey (1997) identify basic and advanced skills for each of the four domains of the MSCEIT (see Figure 1).

When analyzing data collected about EI skills and abilities from each principal with relation to the organizational context of their schools, there appeared to be connections between the organizational context of the school and the principal’s use and manifestation of basic or advanced EI skills and abilities. Turnaround Principal, whose organization demanded technical and decisive leadership, showed evidence of more basic EI skills and abilities including identifying emotions, noticing person-environment relationships, labeling emotions or detaching from emotions. Growth Principal evidenced more basic EI skills and abilities while Realignment Principal A and B evidenced increasingly advanced EI skills and abilities. Finally, Sustaining Principal showed evidence of significantly more advanced EI skills and abilities including producing emotional states in others to foster different thinking styles, recognizing transitions in emotions, and managing emotions in others.

Analysis of the specific EI skills and abilities shared and discussed by each of the five principals revealed differences in the sophistication (basic to advanced) within each of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) four categories of using, perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions. In this very limited sample of five principals, the three schools on the higher end of the organizational context spectrum (realignment and sustaining success) were led by principals who shared and provided evidence for the use of more advanced EI skills and abilities while the
principals of the two schools on the lower end of the organizational context spectrum (turnaround and accelerated growth) shared and provided evidence for the use of more basic EI skills and abilities.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study was conducted within a single, urban school district. The five schools selected were all within 10 miles of each other, geographically, and the five principals all worked within the same district governance structure. Because of the limited scope of the research sites, the findings of this study are not generalizable. However, future researchers and practitioners may find some practical applications or transferability of certain elements of the methodology. The findings of this study were consistent with prior research and might serve to validate and extend prior literature.

The limited sample size of five schools and five principals did not allow for the full range of organizational contexts. Although the focused nature of the multiple-case study approach provided rich site profiles and deep, meaningful interviews with participants, the sample size permitted only one representative from Watkins’ (2013) turnaround, accelerated growth, and sustaining success categories. The start-up organizational category was not represented in this study due to limitations in the available population.

The interview protocols and questions were not fully piloted prior to being used. The question content was based on findings from the literature review and the methodology for the interview procedure was based on established qualitative analysis principles (Creswell, 2012). The questions and the protocols were reviewed and approved by the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board prior to beginning research. The study could have been enriched
by more specific questions related to the participants’ personal histories and the specific organizational contexts of their schools.

As important delimitations, this study did not seek to measure the EI of the principals, nor did this study address leadership effectiveness in any way. Other studies have linked high EI scores with increased leadership effectiveness (Gardner & Stough, 2001; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005), but this study was not examining that question. Another critical delimitation of this study was stopping well short of examining any correlation between basic and advanced EI skills and abilities and different organizational contexts.

This study was designed as a qualitative investigation based on subjective classification of sites and personally reported information from participants during open-ended interviews. As a result of the study design, the findings which emerged are not supported by objective or quantitative data. In the subsequent section providing recommendations for future research, it is recommended that future studies employ a quantitative tool for measuring EI such as the MSCEIT (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). However, quantitative investigation of the research question was not the goal of this study and the study did explore a potentially promising research design and the findings did contribute to existing research, practice, policy, and theory.

Implications of the Research for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The implications of this study’s results, though limited and tentative, serve to support and extend existing theory and future practice in the same way prior research informed this study. Many researchers emphasized the importance of contextual factors when determining what leadership skills, abilities, or behaviors would be necessary for leadership of an organization (Fiedler, 1969; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Watkins, 2013). The case study of each site and the interviews with each principal confirmed and
extended this understanding as all principals spoke at length of the realities, challenges, and opportunities facing their schools and how that required them to adapt and adjust themselves to meet those needs.

All five principals clearly agreed that their work as school leaders was, at the most fundamental level, a social and relational process of working with stakeholders. The principals’ reflections supported researchers’ assertions that leadership requires a great deal of social and emotional skills (Gardner & Stough, 2001; George, 2000; Humphrey, 2002; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). Evidence of the use of EI skills and abilities from each domain of Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) model by the principals confirmed that EI is an important part of school leadership (George, 2000).

Researchers concluded that EI skills and abilities could be grown and developed (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003). All five principals expressed a belief that they could develop and grow their own EI skills and abilities and they demonstrated evidence of this belief. Considering that EI can be grown and developed and that school leaders are open and receptive to growing and developing their EI, abilities and skills related to emotions may be a practical metric, or at least a point of discussion, for determining which leader would be a good fit for a particular school or what skills and abilities a particular leader may need to develop in order to support the school he is already in.

Although the findings of this study are not generalizable, it may be helpful for superintendents, school boards, and principals to consider the organizational context of a school prior to hiring a principal to lead that school. As an additional consideration, these practitioners may also find it helpful to consider evidence related to potential principals’ use and
manifestation of EI skills and abilities and whether or not the EI skill set demonstrated by the potential principals is a good fit for the organizational context of the school in question.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Although the importance of considering context when studying leadership is well supported by many researchers (Fiedler, 1969; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1975; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Watkins, 2013), the categorization of institutions based on their organizational context is a relatively new concept (Watkins, 2013). Particularly related to schools and educational institutions, additional research into the classification and categorization based on organizational context would add increased validity to future research or intervention efforts. It remains unclear whether Watkins’ (2013) five categories are the most accurate method for categorizing schools, future research into the organizational context of schools could provide a more valid method or one focused specifically on educational institutions.

As this study was limited to five principals, the results are not generalizable. If this study is to be replicated in part or whole, a more comprehensive study across districts may provide a more comprehensive understanding. Similarly, it is recommended that future research into EI in the principalship include considerations for the individual principals’ demographics and personal history as these could be lurking variables not addressed in this study.

Finally, this study was designed as a purely qualitative investigation. The classification of sites was subjective based on their organizational factors and the conclusions about participants’ EI were drawn from open-ended interviews. A quantitative study investigating the same research question using statistical data to categorize organizational contexts and using a commercially available assessment such as the MSCEIT (Mayer, Salovey,
Caruso, & Sitarenious, 2003) to measure participants’ emotional skills and abilities may yield additional or deeper understanding about EI in the principalship within varying school contexts.

**Conclusion**

This doctoral research study of five principals in an urban school district yielded meaningful findings about the use and manifestation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) by the leaders of schools with varying organizational contexts. The potential for categorize schools based on their organizational context was successfully explored. Furthermore, the categorizations, as well as the importance of organizational context to the work of principals, was validated through open-ended interviews. Evidence from all five of the principals reinforced the importance of EI skills and abilities in the principalship. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the sophistication with which EI skills and abilities are used in the principalship may vary depending on the characteristics of the school.

This study was unique because it combined two, previously independent fields of study in the area of leadership: EI and organizational context. Although this study was limited in scope and generalizability, the methodology did prove promising and the findings did indicate that the three higher achieving schools with more sophisticated and nuanced problems were linked with principals who discussed and shared evidence of more advanced EI skills and abilities.

Through the long process of this research, as a researcher and as an educational leader, I learned more than I ever imagined possible about myself, my craft, and the world in which I practice. I was honored by the five principals who shared their time with me and extended their trust to me. Each of them revealed intimate pieces of themselves and their work
to me that made this doctoral dissertation study rich and meaningful to the community of scholars, practitioners, and learners in the timeless field of education.
References


Galton, F. (1869). *Comparison of the two classifications*.


The science of emotional intelligence: Knowns and unknowns (pp. 230–257). Oxford University Press.


Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Procedure

Interview Procedure:

All interviews will be conducted remotely via video or audio conferencing (Skype, Google Hangouts, or similar technology). Appointments will be scheduled in advance with an anticipated duration of one hour. Each participant will be provided the interview questions well in advance when they consent to participate in the study; the questions are designed to be open ended. Each video or audio conference will be recorded electronically, transcribed by me, the researcher, and all media will be stored securely using password-protected, encrypted, redundant online storage to which only I have access.

Open-ended Interview:

Thank you again for taking the time to complete the Emotional Intelligence assessment and participate in this interview about the use of Emotional Intelligence in your work as the leader of <name of school>.

This interview should take between 40 and 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be recorded and transcribed; I will share the transcript of the interview with you afterward so you may review it for accuracy. If, at any time during this interview, you feel uncomfortable or do not wish to proceed, you may ask to skip the question or ask to stop the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. As the principal of <name of school>, you are in a position to see the large scale workings of the school. From your perspective, list the primary challenges and opportunities faced by <name of educational institution>. How are these different from other educational institutions?
2. Some researchers have said that leadership, at its core, is a social or relational process (Humphrey, 2002). In what ways do you see this as true or not true in your current role?
3. How have you had to adapt or adjust yourself to meet the unique needs of <name of educational institution>?
4. List the stakeholders you interact with frequently in your role. How do you interact differently with <name of each stakeholder group listed—first 10>?
5. The theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) divides the skills and abilities related to human emotions into four categories: “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion [perceiving]; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought [using]; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge [understanding]; and the ability to regulate emotions to provide emotional and intellectual growth [managing]” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). The theory also maintained that individuals are able to grow and develop each of these abilities as they age and gain more experience. How has this been true or not been true for you in the context of your leadership career?
6. You have taken, or will take the MSCEIT v. 2.0; this assessment measures your EI overall and across the four categories: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing (Mayer & Salovey, 2007). Which areas do you believe will be relative strengths for you? Which do you believe may be your lower scoring areas? What are your reasons for believing that?
7. How do you believe you use your EI skills and abilities differently than other educational leaders?
8. How do the unique challenges and opportunities at <name of educational institution> require you to adjust your approach to perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions in yourself and others?

We are finished with the interview. Thank you for your time in this interview process and completing the Emotional Intelligence assessment. Within 1 week, I will share with you a transcript of this interview and I would like you to review it for accuracy. Within 4 weeks, I will share with you the commercially-scored results from the MSCEIT v. 2.0 assessment that you took. Do you have any more questions for me?
Appendix B: Research Consent Form

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title: Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Context in Educational Leadership
Principle Investigator: Matt Horne
Research Institution: Concordia University Portland
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Julie McCann

Purpose:
The purpose of this research study is to examine how educational leaders manifest and utilize Emotional Intelligence (EI) differently within distinct organization contexts. In other words, how do different social, political, environmental, and other pressures change the way a school leader uses and exhibits EI skills in the line of his or her work?

Selection of Participants:
You are being asked to participate in this study because of the unique organizational context of the school you lead.

Activities and Commitment Involved:
Participating in this case study will involve:
1. Completion of a commercially available assessment of EI skills and abilities (approximately 45 minutes)
2. An open-ended interview about the organizational context of your school and how EI plays a role in your leadership (approximately 1 hour)
3. Review of the interview transcript for accuracy (approximately 20 minutes)

Total participation in this study should require 2 to 3 hours of your time between May and July, 2016.

Risks:
The risks associated with participating in this study include answering some moderately sensitive questions about the use and manifestation of EI in your career along with providing some personal information which will be kept confidential. The EI assessment and open-ended interview questions will seek to expand upon how you perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions. Any personal information collected will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any identifying information will be recorded and stored securely via password protected online storage and will be destroyed within 3 years.

Benefits:
By participating in this study, you will receive the results of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test version 2.0. The complete MSCEIT version 2.0 battery and report, administered and reported online by Multi-Health Systems, Inc. has an individual user fee of $110 US dollars. The information gathered from this assessment could potentially be useful to a
reflective leader hoping to play to his or her strengths or to choose the best path forward based on his or her own skills and abilities.

Confidentiality:
No information will be distributed to any other agency and all information shared will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you share about abuse or neglect that raises serious concern for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is greatly appreciated, but it is understood that the questions related to EI are personal in nature. You are free, at any point, to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience distress from participating in the study, you participation will be concluded.

Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principle investigator, Matt Horne (matt@horne.ws or +1 509-386-6726). If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (obranch@cu-portland.edu or +1 503-493-6390).

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I have and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_______________________________  __________
Participant Name  Date

_______________________________  __________
Participant Signature  Date

_______________________________  __________
Investigator Name  Date

_______________________________  __________
Investigator Signature  Date
Appendix C: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

• Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
• Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
• Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
• Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.
I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Digital Signature

Matthew Robert Horne

Name

February 9, 2017

Date