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# Cambodian Student Council Member Traits: Emotional Intelligence and the Three Goods

Chelsea Elise Cooper
*Lehigh University*

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CAMBODIAN STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER TRAITS:
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE THREE GOODS

A THESIS IN COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Presented to the faculty of Lehigh University
College of Education
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MASTER OF ARTS

by
CHELSEA E. COOPER
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CAMBODIAN STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER TRAITS AND ATTITUDES: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE THREE GOODS

CHELSEA E. COOPER

_____
Date

_____
Dr. Alexander W. Wiseman
Thesis Co-Advisor

_____
Dr. Sothy Eng
Thesis Co-Advisor

_____
Dr. Nicola Tannenbaum
Committee Member

_____
Dr. Arpana Inman
Chairperson of Department

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the relationship between membership in Cambodia's student council programs, emotional intelligence, and traits of the Three Goods (good student, good child, and good friend). It also examines Cambodian educators' and students' concepts of emotional intelligence, Three Goods, and how Youth Council cultivates the Three Goods. The study employs mixed methods including surveys of 318 Cambodian students (grades 10-12), eight focus groups involving 62 of those students, and interviews with four school administrators. It found that Youth Council status is somewhat associated with emotional intelligence, but has an insignificant relationship with Three Goods traits. It also found that Cambodian students have well-formulated notions of the Three Goods, which overlap considerably with their conceptions of emotional intelligence. Where fruitful collaboration occurred among students and between them and teachers, Youth Council members and non-members alike were more satisfied with the program and saw benefits to the school. However, Youth Council's implementation in many schools in this study limited members to at best announcers and enforcers of disciplinary policies, which helped improve the school environment but did little to cultivate students' potential as leaders and collaborative problem-solvers. By broadening conceptions of Youth Council's purpose to include nurturing emotional intelligence and Three Goods attributes, Cambodian schools could find Youth Council valuable in developing student leaders who inspire their peers to become emotionally intelligent as good children, students, and friends.

*Keywords:* emotional intelligence, Student Council, Youth Council, high school, Cambodia

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Contemporary Cambodian Society**

The nation of Cambodia, in Southeast Asia, has over fifteen million citizens (UNDP, 2014). A French protectorate from 1863 to 1953, it repeatedly experienced conflict after gaining independence, notably under Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. Under the Khmer Rouge, at least 1.7 million Cambodians (one-fourth of the population) died due to genocide, starvation, or untreated illness; survivors suffered intensely in myriad ways (BBC, 2015). After 1979, civil war and political turmoil hindered the country's efforts to rebuild, but Cambodia has now been essentially politically stable for nearly two decades as a constitutional monarchy (Chheang, 2015). However, the rule of law remains weak, human rights violations are routine, and the powerful have impunity for all manner of crimes (Edwards, 2008). Partly due to its tumultuous history, it has the youngest population in Southeast Asia (Graham & Chunly, 2015).

Nearly forty years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, its effects continue to reverberate across the nation. The Khmer Rouge separated children from their families; those children later found it difficult to provide warm and nurturing family environments for their own children (Eng, 2005). The Khmer Rouge turned neighbor against neighbor. Today distrust lingers in many communities: "Recent conflict [during and after the Khmer Rouge] has weakened trust and social cohesion and resulted in low levels of associational activity, especially in rural areas" (Malena & Chhim, 2009, p. i). The Khmer Rouge slaughtered the well-educated, closed all schools, and sent everyone to work in the rice fields. Today Cambodians' literacy rate is one of the lowest in the world (73.9% in 2012), and dropping out after primary school remains

common. Its largely unskilled workforce is hardly poised to compete in the ASEAN[1] Economic

Community (No et al., 2012; Vutha, 2014). The Khmer Rouge's violence haunted millions with

post-traumatic stress disorder; today mental health infrastructure remains vastly inadequate and

often irrelevant to the needs of the Cambodian population (Somasundaram et al., 1999). The

Khmer Rouge decimated a generation; their children lacked role models and elders, or suspected

them of terrible crimes, and thus lost a number of long-cherished values and practices (Zucker,

2008). Meanwhile, a generation has grown up since the Khmer Rouge regime ended - a

generation that knows little about this dark history and has learned almost nothing about it in

school (Pham et al., 1999).

Cambodia's government seeks to foster and equip its youth as citizens. The Royal

Government of Cambodia defines "youth" as those between the ages of 15 and 30, a

demographic comprising one-third of the nation's population. In its 2004 *Education Strategic

Plan*, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) described its hope of cultivating

"'national and civic pride, high standards of morals and ethics and a strong belief in being

responsible for their own future'" among Cambodian students (Tan, 2008, p. 562). Likewise,

according to the MoEYS *National Policy on Youth Development* (2011), the goal is for the

nation's youth to become active, loyal citizens displaying "self-confidence, dignity, leadership,

and broader social understandings" (p. 2). Several strategies are mentioned as possible ways to

involve young people in local politics, organizations, and volunteer work. These strategies could

conceivably help rebuild trust and social cohesion as students work for and with others.

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[1] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is comprised of ten member countries: Brunei
Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and
Vietnam.

School is another natural context in which to impact young people's values and attitudes, but influences are complex and often at odds. As in most nations, Cambodian schools reflect the interplay of traditional cultural values and newer outside influences, with clear distinctions between policy and implementation. Hierarchy matters a great deal in Cambodian society; Cambodians are constantly aware of their status in relation to those around them, whether due to age, wealth, gender, connections, or accomplishments. Through complex webs of patron-client networks, weaker members of society show loyalty to more powerful members in exchange for their favor and protection (Ayres, 2000; Hanks, 1975). Harmony is prized over honesty. Reverence for existing knowledge (and those who hold it) is preferred over rebuttals or reinvention. The society has historically had a strong sense of solidarity. For hundreds of years, the temple (*wat*) schools run by Buddhist monks received respect and support from the surrounding communities that sent their boys to them to gain an education in which morality was central (Ayres, 2000; Tan, 2008). However, global pressures and historical events have contended with these traditional values in shaping Cambodia's schools.

In the early twentieth century, the French converted the temple schools into coeducational public schools based on the French system. Identical to schools throughout French Indochina, these schools were ill-adapted to the needs and priorities of students, most of whom dropped out during primary school. Cambodian leaders in the 1950s-1980s (except the Khmer Rouge, which closed schools altogether) expanded enrollment and retention, but neglected thorough, careful reforms of schools' structure and content (Ayres, 2000). Since the 1990s, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has adhered to the modernization theory, in which education serves to promote human capital and economic development. This view extols Western values of democracy, honesty, human rights, and individual responsibility as essential

for productive employees in a knowledge-based economy (Tan, 2008). These values infuse the national "Civics and Morality" curriculum. However, they do not always resonate in a Cambodian context. Teachers described feeling ill-equipped to teach the content, which they perceived as too philosophical and complex. Many students likewise pronounced the courses boring and irrelevant. As in other subjects, classes are generally taught lecture-style with students copying down answers from the textbook, rather than inviting students to discuss and apply values in their own lives. Teachers commonly collect bribes from students for after-school lessons and exam fees; this widely accepted practice, linked to their insufficient salaries, undermines lessons about honesty and integrity (Tan, 2008; Wilkins & Odom, 2014; Wilson, 2013). Civics and morality as internalized traits might significantly augment social cohesion and trust in youth, but the current "Civics and Morality" curriculum is unlikely to do so.

Beyond the classroom, the Student Council Program for grades 4-12 has the potential to contribute to this vital task. This program is mandated for all government schools and seek to cultivate citizens well-equipped as good students, good children, and good friends (Dougherty et al., 2015). However, once again, there is a gap between the rhetoric used in official policy documents about student councils and the implementation (or lack thereof) in government schools across the country.

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between membership in Cambodia's student council programs, emotional intelligence, and traits of the Three Goods (good student, good child, and good friend). Student councils' actual effects on Cambodian students have received minimal scholarly attention. Moreover, Cambodian concepts of emotional intelligence have never been explored in English-language publications. Thus, a key question is the way in which Cambodian educators and students define emotional intelligence and the Three Goods, as

well as their perceptions of the school's role in cultivating the Three Goods. Exploring these questions will help equip Ministry officials, school administrators, and teachers to implement programs that holistically nurture Cambodian students.

CHAPTER II

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## Literature Review

**Student Councils**

### History and Purpose

Student councils, also known as student governments, promote student participation in school functions and decisions while also enhancing communication between students and faculty. They have long been common in high schools, colleges, and universities in the US, where educator John Dewey advocated participatory government in schools in his 1917 seminal work *Democracy and Education*. America's National Association of Student Councils was founded in 1931 and remains influential in US public schools (About NASC, Student Council Overview). High school student council advisor Lillian Wyman wrote about student governments in 1935, "Two factors are absolutely fundamental: first, student government must grow out of the democratic spirit of the school; second, the principal and the faculty must see in it, not a device for easy discipline, but a laboratory of democracy designed to produce, not docile subjects, but intelligent and conscientious citizens" (p. 7). Clearly Wyman, like other American educators of her time, saw student government as a key means of actively inculcating and applying democratic values among students. Today, rhetoric about democracy continues to drive student councils' implementation, not only in the U.S. and Canada, but in most secondary and tertiary schools in Asia and Australia.

While their structure can vary, student councils tend to address similar topics. They mediate between the student body and faculty about concerns related to student behavior, rules and policies, teaching and learning, and the physical school environment. They also plan, organize, and implement fund-raisers and social events. However, the composition and specific roles of student council members can vary, as can the council's election process, decision-

making authority, and meeting details (Griebler & Nowak, 2012). These factors can be crucial in determining the degree of success of the council's endeavors.

Several Western researchers have proposed recommendations to maximize the council's benefit to the school community. For example, schools must offer a supportive context and train both council members and staff advisers (Griebler & Nowak, 2012). This training is especially vital since many students, particularly those from non-Western cultures, tend to believe that good students should be passive and accepting; they need scaffolding and empowerment to take an active role in school affairs (Wilson, 2000). Schools should carve out time for regular meetings during school and consider granting an independent budget for its activities, in order to demonstrate that the council is prominent and valued by administrators (Griebler & Nowak, 2012). The council should be able to guarantee frequent and thorough representation on issues that students can understand, inspiring trust among the student body (Dougherty et al., 2015). Without overriding truly necessary decisions by administrators, the council must have enough power to take action and significantly influence outcomes in the school (Griebler & Nowak, 2012; Wilson, 2000). A lack of infrastructure and capacity often impedes schools worldwide from realizing their student council's potential, as does resistance by teachers and students who fail to celebrate adolescents' potential to contribute (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Wilson, 2000). These recommendations recall the tension between collective and individualistic values in Cambodian schools.

**Student Councils in Cambodia: Aims and Structure**

Cambodia's history of student governments begins in 1980, under Communist Vietnam's puppet government just after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, with a program called "Leading Model Students." In 1993, it was renamed the Student Council Program. The program is divided

into Child Council (for primary and lower secondary school students from Grades 4-9) and

Youth Council (for upper secondary school students from Grades 10-12). Today, Cambodia's

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport mandates an active Student or Youth Council program

in every government school.

This program is intended to promote development of its ideals - "Good Child, Good

Student, Good Friend, Good Citizen" – within individual students and throughout the student

body. Good citizens, according to Prime Minister Hun Sen, "can define the future of the country

and protect social harmony" (2014). "Good citizen" often appears separately from the other three

Goods, and may be more of an umbrella term encompassing the other three. Good children are

those who help their parents with housework, are polite and humble to adults, and seek to please

their parents. Good students are industrious, make time to study outside of school, and value

learning. Good friends help their peers, are perceived by peers as kind and polite, and their

presence is desired by peers (Dougherty et al., 2015). Student councils also provide awards and

certificates to winners of the national "three good movement contest" for good children,

students, and friends (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2016).

The national curriculum states that council members will head up eight different

committees, recruiting other students for collaborative work. The committees are as follows: (1)

Discipline and Goodness Encouragement, (2) Study and Library, (3) Rescue and Helping

Society, (4) Administrative and Financial, (5) Promotion, (6) Art, Sport and Culture, (7) Health,

Hygiene, Environment, and Life Skills, and (8) Younger Adult Resource Group Club (Dougherty

et al., 2015, p. 6). As of March 2016, there were 7,601 Child Councils involving 38,237 branches

and 1.5 million student members (49% female) across 11 provinces, and 444 Youth Councils

comprised of 6,031 branches and 266,000 members (48% female) (Royal Government, 2016).

However, the number of active branches and members is far lower.

**Impact of Student Council Program on the Three Goods**

Research in various Western contexts suggests a connection between Student Council Programs and the presence in youth of traits associated with good students, children, and friends. Multiple US studies have confirmed a positive association between extracurricular involvement in organizations such as Student Council and academic achievement (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Adolescents in community-based youth organizations likewise have more trusting and favorable views of those in their communities than their uninvolved peers (Flanagan, 2004). These elements of trust, responsibility, and optimism may have a positive impact on family relationships as well. Relationships between adolescents and their parents reveal a bidirectional flow of influence: while a parent's example may encourage an adolescent to act more responsibly, an adolescent's maturity may also influence the parent's decision to give the adolescent more freedom (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Thus, Student Council participants in Cambodia could be expected to display features of a good student, friend, and child.

A 2015 program evaluation by Dougherty et al. surveyed CFC students and conducted focus groups and interviews to examine the effectiveness of the Student Council program. It specifically targeted the traits of "Good Student," "Good Child," and "Good Friend" that Cambodia's Student Council program was created to develop. The survey of 251 students (grades 4-12) at nine CFC schools indicated that Student Council members held significantly more gender equitable views than their peers regarding topics like education, employment, and expressing one's opinion. Members also reported feeling supported by their schools and responsible to give back to the school community. There was a marginally significant overall relationship ($p = .07$) between the Three Goods and membership status, and a significant relationship between good child qualities and membership status. Among females, there was a

statistically significant association between Student Council membership and qualities of the good student ($p <.05$) and good child ($p <.05$), and a marginally significant relationship between membership and qualities of the good friend ($p = .056$). The evaluation recommended that future studies examine the ways in which Student Council policies are adapted and implemented differently throughout Cambodia, as well as how a community's economic status affects the function of its school's Student Council Program (Dougherty et al., 2015).

In academic language, the constructs "good child" and "good friend" are linked with social and emotional intelligence enabling an individual to pursue and maintain strong, harmonious relationships with family and peers. These associations are confirmed by the Royal Government of Cambodia's (2011) *National Policy on Youth Development*, which casts a vision for Cambodian youth to become good citizens who interact peacefully, love their country and compatriots, and contribute their opinions to their community, region, and nation.  Therefore, this paper will proceed to review literature on emotional intelligence in order to situate the present study on Cambodia's Student Council Program within a larger body of research.

**Social and Emotional Intelligence**

Socially and emotionally intelligent individuals can navigate their own and others' emotions and attitudes to solve problems and accomplish specific social goals. They are able "to generate and coordinate flexible, adaptive responses to demands and to generate and capitalize on opportunities in the environment" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406). Social and emotional learning therefore entails gaining knowledge and skills necessary to identify and respond to one's own emotions, to value others' points of view, to build healthy relationships with others, and to negotiate interactions constructively (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al.,

1997). An emotionally resilient child "works well, plays well, loves well, and expects well"

(Benard, 1991).

In recent decades, American scholars have proclaimed the many benefits of social and

emotional learning. It is crucial to numerous aspects of academic learning; constructing

knowledge is not a purely individual cognitive process, but often occurs in relationships and

interactions, making social and emotional skills a prerequisite (Elias et al., 1997). Social and

emotional intelligence is linked to improved school attitudes, behavior, and performance (Elias et

al, 1997, 2003; Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2007). Schneider et al. (2013) also found

ability-based emotional intelligence to be associated in adults with increased stress resilience

over time. As a result, many contemporary American scholars advocate incorporating social and

emotional instruction into the school curriculum.

To maximize the benefit to students, schools must carefully design social and emotional

interventions. They require comprehensive, supportive, long-term environments (Elias et al.,

2003; Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2007). These environments should be characterized by

the "Three Cs (cooperative community, constructive conflict resolution, and civic values)"

(Johnson & Johnson, 2004, p. 41). They should employ a strengths-based approach rather than

emphasizing deficits to overcome in students (Elias et al., 2003). Social and emotional learning

should be a shared commitment across the entire school (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). While

research shows clear benefits for young children, specifically ages 2-7, there is a lack of research

on social and emotional learning interventions in high schools (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et

al., 2003). In a review of 80 SEL programs available in the US, only 14% could offer strong

evidence corroborating their effectiveness (Zins et al., 2007).

**Impact of Student Council Program on Social and Emotional Intelligence**

According to resiliency theory, both internal traits and external contexts play a role in an individual student's ability to succeed academically and otherwise. A healthy school environment can foster young people's resilience. As it is structured in many countries, student government provides leadership opportunities and activities that strengthen students' sense of school community and their emotional connection to the school. By increasing bonding with prosocial individuals, offering opportunities to contribute, and fostering life skills such as cooperation and healthy conflict resolution, student councils act in ways that tend to mitigate risk and cultivate resiliency among their members. Specifically, the availability of mentors (a feature of some Cambodian Student Council programs) and activities that connect students to their school is a protective factor for students' social competence (Morrison & Allen, 2007). In a systematic review of 32 publications, Griebler & Nowak (2012) found that over half the studies cited improvements in student-adult relationships resulting from student government participation. The opportunity to try out various roles and responsibilities helps many members in the process of formulating their identities while gaining relational skills and self-esteem (Crystal & DeBell, 2012; Dougherty et al., 2015; Griebler & Nowak, 2012). Student government also provides opportunities for students to apply responsible behavior and social and moral problem-solving skills, thus promoting intrinsically motivated self-discipline (Bear, 2010).

Focus groups with Cambodian members of Student Council revealed their beliefs that Student Council has equipped them with interpersonal skills. One member reported, "Before I was shy and couldn't assign tasks to other people and lead, and now I can do that" (Dougherty et al., 2015, p. 5). Another added, "I feel really happy and brave" due to membership (p. 5). They expressed very positive attitudes toward the Student Council Program's role in their lives and in

the school community. While the researchers sought signs of jealousy or friction between members and non-members, evidence indicated harmonious relationships between the two groups, a sign that members have the social and emotional intelligence to avoid patronizing or alienating their peers (Dougherty et al., 2015).

Cambodian members of Student Council indicated loyalty to their school, pride in their joint achievements, and a strong school ethos. They reported feeling a strong sense of personal obligation to contribute to their school community in gratitude for the support they have received from their peers and teachers. In an interview, a Student Council advisor described how "teacher, students, everyone, we all cooperate" to achieve mutually beneficial goals for the school (Dougherty et al., 2015, p. 5). Members expressed pride in their teamwork and service to the school through gardening, coordinating reading competitions, decorating, and cleaning the campus. Many had undertaken Student Council projects in the broader community, such as building a bridge, receiving first aid training, or disseminating health care information. Moreover, Student Council initiatives often included non-members, who reported feeling included and respected by Student Council members in activities and discussions. These non-members likewise appeared enthusiastic about Student Council initiatives, although it is possible that those who took part in the focus groups were more active in Student Council than the general student population at their respective schools (Dougherty et al., 2015).

**Theoretical Framework**

**Experiential learning theory**

The theoretical explanation for this research stems from John Dewey's experiential learning theory, as well as theories of social and emotional intelligence. Dewey conceived of

education as necessitating active participation by students. In his view, school was inherently a social institution. Schools must not be isolated from the interests of families and communities; rather, "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform" (Dewey, 2013, p. 39). Dewey argued that education is vital to democracy because democracy is "primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience," built on shared concerns and learning to consider the interests of other groups along with one's own (Dewey, 1944, p. 87). Since a democracy's citizens should all have the power to influence society, it must ensure that "its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability" (p. 88). The ultimate goal of education, writes Dewey, is "the promotion of the best possible realization of humanity as humanity" (p. 95). A democracy's education will therefore address broad social goals rather than merely seeking to fill immediate national needs for a workforce, loyal soldiers, and so forth. Dewey calls for schools to emphasize "whatever binds people together in cooperative human pursuits and results" (p. 98). He considered participation to be the key to democracy. In a democratic school, therefore, students should be invited to actively participate in their learning.

**Social and emotional intelligence theories**

These theories originated with Thorndike, who in 1920 defined social intelligence as "'the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations'" (Wong & Law, 2002, p. 245). Gardner set forth "intelligence" as "'the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings'" (2000, p. 33). He then split social intelligence into two of his seven "multiple intelligences": intrapersonal, or awareness of one's own emotions and goals, employed "effectively in regulating one's own life," and interpersonal intelligence, the ability "to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and, consequently, to work effectively with others" (p. 43). These

intelligences are separate from other intelligences such as spatial and linguistic, but people often employ them in conjunction in completing a task.

Social intelligence theory assumes that people's actions are purposive and linked with their goals and plans. It views individuals as active rather than passive, and views behavior as inherently social and situated in a specific context. It also emphasizes cognition in the sense that people work creatively to adapt to and transform their surroundings in pursuit of their goals. Social intelligence therefore measures an individual's ability to achieve his or her given purpose within a given social milieu (Zirkel, 2000). It probably correlates best with Gardner's interpersonal intelligence, while intrapersonal intelligence is more closely linked with emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence examines the interaction and cooperation between intelligence and emotion. There has been considerable debate about how to measure emotional intelligence, with Davies et al. (1998) concluding that it was an elusive construct (Wong & Law, 2004). However, Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2004) provided more clarity by narrowing it from a mixed trait model including ability, well-being, and disposition to only a set of abilities. They defined it as "the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking" (p. 197). In their theory, it encompasses "four areas: the ability to (a) perceive emotion, (b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotions" (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 199). Emotional intelligence has been demonstrated to correlate positively with academic performance and prosocial behavior, while varying inversely with deviancy. While it develops with age, it appears to be a relatively stable trait, and evidence remains inconclusive on the efficacy of interventions in augmenting emotional intelligence in a given individual (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

Emotional intelligence is not a uniquely Western phenomenon. Indeed, many Asian, African, and Latino cultures emphasize social intelligence more than Anglo-Americans do (Yang & Sternberg, 1997). Yang & Sternberg (1997) found that both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences were included in Taiwanese respondents' conceptions of intelligence, aligning well with Gardner's view. Respondents' descriptions included statements like "'good at understanding and empathizing with others' feelings'" for interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal descriptions like "knows the meaning and purpose of his/her life and has his/her own philosophy of life" (Yang & Sternberg, 1997, p. 27). Wong, Law & Song (2004) hypothesize that emotional intelligence should be stable across cultures when assessed without regard to specific behaviors. "Our position is that one's abilities to understand, regulate, and use one's emotions in constructive ways are general human abilities. There is no immediate evidence that the validity of EI, as defined under our four-dimensional view, should vary across cultures." However, they acknowledge that the same behavior may be viewed differently across cultures and therefore may reflect varying degrees of EI. In this sense, the self-report is an advantage in that it allows room for varying cultural interpretations of behavior or methods of assessing emotional intelligence.

Sternberg's theory of managerial intelligence argues that these and other intelligences are needed in addition to traditional academic knowledge for effective management and leadership. Superior managers know their own strengths and weaknesses and those of their employees, and they capitalize on this knowledge in achieving their goals (Sternberg, 1997). Wong and Law (2002) build on Sternberg to argue that "social intelligence may be even more important in affecting the job success of managers and leaders than traditional general mental intelligence" (p. 245). As leaders navigate intricate social relations and conflicts, their insights into emotions

(their own and others') and regulation of their own emotions are paramount to successfully resolving situations. The greater the degree of "emotional labor" involved in a job, the larger the role of emotional intelligence in predicting an employee's success as rated by a supervisor. For example, emotional intelligence matters more to flight attendants, bill collectors, and social workers, who must present certain emotions to clients to perform their job effectively, than with auto mechanics who rarely deal directly with their clients face-to-face (Wong & Law, 2002).

### Metatheory of Resiliency

Resiliency is a metatheory used to examine the traits of those who thrive despite risks and adversity, the process of attaining resilient qualities, and the experiences that can foster activation of motivational forces within individuals and groups. Its history begins with Emmy Werner and R. Smith (1982), who discovered that within a population of 200 children deemed "high-risk" due to poverty, daily instability, parental mental illness, and perinatal stress, 72 of them were thriving by various measures over the span of thirty years. This groundbreaking study helped shift scholars' attention from risks and problems to strengths and resiliency. Subsequent research revealed both innate and external protective factors for children at risk, including an achievement orientation, optimism, self-control, problem-solving skills, a positive school climate, and warm relationships with caring adults. Garmezy (1991) describes a "triad of resiliency" integrating personality, family support, and an "external support system" (Richardson, 2002, p. 309). These internal qualities and environmental factors help individuals recover from adversity. Resiliency metatheory also suggests a process of acquiring these protective traits through disruptive events during which people can choose to reintegrate resiliently, experiencing some insight or growth through the disruption and strengthening resilient qualities.

**Conceptual Framework**
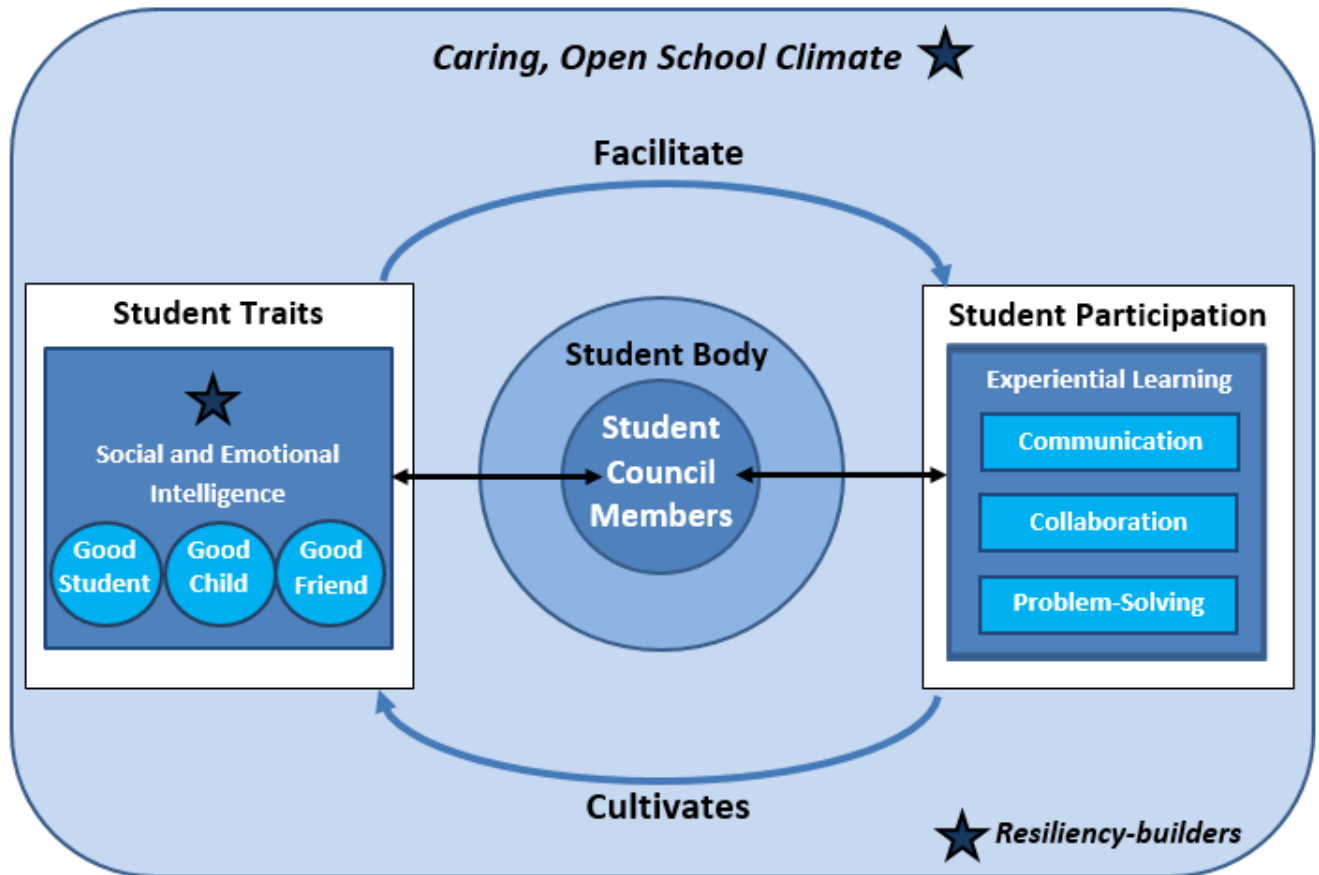


**Connection to the present study**

This study seeks to measure associations between Student Council membership and a set

of personal traits. The Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport founded its Student

Council Program as a means of fostering qualities of "good children, good students, and good

friends" in Cambodian students (NYDC, 2014). One way of defining a good child and a good

friend would be an individual who has strong and positive relationships with his or her family

and peers, and who is perceived by them in a favorable light. These qualities can therefore be

expected to correlate with higher scores on a scale of emotional intelligence. It can also be

expected that since they are selected by their peers, Student Council members will tend to be

those with more social and emotional intelligence, and therefore those who are perceived by classmates as good friends and good students. Moreover, since participation in school activities and relationships with adult members act as protective factors that strengthen students' resiliency, Student Council involvement should enhance students' emotional intelligence.

**Purpose of the Present Study**

Little research exists on students' social and emotional intelligence in non-Western contexts. Even with the recent trend among schools in Anglo-Saxon countries of addressing and measuring students' socio-emotional intelligence, initiatives have largely been limited to younger grades rather than secondary school. More research is clearly needed on social and emotional intelligence, including the types of programs that nurture this quality in students.

This study aims to examine the efficacy of current Student Council programs in cultivating practices and attitudes of good students, good children, and good friends among the nation's young people. While student council programs are technically mandated nationwide, many schools have yet to implement them. If current programs prove to accomplish governmental objectives for Cambodian youth, these findings could spur on more schools toward implementing analogous programs. If not, the study could inspire reflections on the purpose of student council and how to improve the link between practices and anticipated outcomes.

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

**Hypothesis 1.** Students who participate in Youth Council will exhibit different degrees of social and emotional intelligence than non-Youth Council members.

**Rationale for Hypothesis 1.** Youth Council may attract those who are especially aware of emotions in themselves and others, and able to manipulate these emotions to achieve goals.

Frequent application may further heighten this social and emotional intelligence, as Youth

Council members pursue goals related to eliciting feedback from their peers, leading a group

toward a consensus, and facilitating volunteer work to enhance the school's atmosphere. Student

government provides leadership opportunities and activities that strengthen students' sense of

school community and their emotional connection to the school. By increasing bonding with

prosocial peers and adult advisers, student councils reinforce students' social competence

(Morrison & Allen, 2007). Trying new responsibilities and roles often helps students gain self-

esteem and social skills (Crystal & DeBell, 2012; Dougherty et al., 2015; Griebler & Nowak,

2012). Student government also enhances students' self-control by inducing them to behave

responsibly and to build social and moral problem-solving skills (Bear, 2010).

**Hypothesis 2.** Students who participate in Youth Council program will score differently

on the Three Goods traits than non-participating students.

**Rationale for Hypothesis 2.** Cambodia's Youth Council program enhances the holistic

development of the entire school community by offering all students the opportunity to work

together and contribute positively to their school through various committees. Moreover, the

Three Goods are qualities set forth by Cambodian schools and by the Ministry of Education,

Youth, and Sports as ideals to which students should aspire. Cambodian Student Councils are

tasked with promoting these Three Goods among the student body, including through

schoolwide contests. Therefore, when asked to vote for Youth Council members, students tend to

select peers whom they perceive as best displaying these traits. Youth Council members are seen

as school leaders and are accorded a great deal of respect, so they may feel a strong desire to be

good role models and worthy of re-election the following year (Royal Government of Cambodia,

2016; S. Ung, personal communication, April 25, 2016). The process of promoting the Three

Goods may also inspire Youth Council members to reflect on and improve their own practices.

CHAPTER III

**METHODOLOGY**

**Methods**

**Participants**

**Survey Section**

A Student Council Program exists in the government schools supported and run by the non-governmental organization Caring for Cambodia (CFC), in Siem Reap province. At CFC's ten schools serving almost 6,500 students, grades 4-12 take part in student council. Elementary students are appointed by teachers, while high school members are elected by their peers. CFC's Student Councils have implemented the eight committees proposed by the government curriculum. They actively promote activities like hygiene instruction, school gardens, and mentoring from older to younger students (Dougherty et al., 2015). Many other government schools have sent representatives in recent years to observe CFC's Youth Councils and meet with their members and advisers in hopes of learning from their example.

Six government high schools in Siem Reap province in Cambodia were chosen for this study. Two are CFC-sponsored with an active Youth Council program; three are not sponsored but have an active Youth Council program; and one lacks both a sponsor and an active Youth Council program. (While it has student names on its Youth Council roster, they do not meet on a regular basis). The selection of these four high schools allows for comparison among Youth Council members across schools, among Youth Council members and non-members within a given school, and among non-members at schools with and without an active Youth Council Program. Most or all Youth Council members within the former five schools (between 10 and 24 students per school) were sampled. Stratified random sampling was used to select a roughly comparable number of non-member students at those schools, taking care to have an even mix of genders and grade levels. (Cambodian high schools serve students in grades 10, 11, and 12.) At

the sixth school, which has no Youth Council program, stratified random sampling was used to select 75 students as a control group. Altogether, 318 students were sampled from the six schools: between 21 and 82 from each school.

Table 3.1. *Survey Participants*

| School (N) | Youth Council Status (N) | Grades | Number | | Sampling techniques |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Boys** | **Girls** | |
| School 1 (46) | Members (24) | 10 | 3 | 4 | All members selected |
| | | 11 | 2 | 3 | |
| | | 12 | 9 | 3 | |
| | Non-Members (22) | 10 | 12 | 0 | Stratified random sampling |
| | | 11 | 3 | 1 | |
| | | 12 | 3 | 3 | |
| School 2 (82) | Members (18) | 10 | 4 | 0 | All members selected |
| | | 11 | 5 | 0 | |
| | | 12 | 2 | 6 | |
| | Non-Members (66) | 10 | 12 | 26 | Stratified random sampling |
| | | 11 | 7 | 0 | |
| | | 12 | 11 | 7 | |
| School 3 (22) | Members (10) | 10 | 2 | 3 | All members selected |
| | | 11 | 2 | 1 | |
| | | 12 | 2 | 0 | |
| | Non-Members (12) | 10 | 3 | 3 | Stratified random sampling |
| | | 11 | 2 | 1 | |
| | | 12 | 1 | 1 | |
| School 4 (21) | Members (12) | 10 | 1 | 3 | All members selected |
| | | 11 | 2 | 2 | |
| | | 12 | 1 | 3 | |
| | Non-Members (9) | 10 | 2 | 1 | Stratified random sampling |
| | | 11 | 1 | 1 | |
| | | 12 | 2 | 1 | |
| School 5 (72) | Members (22) | 10 | 1 | 4 | All members selected |
| | | 11 | 2 | 1 | |
| | | 12 | 5 | 8 | |
| | Non-Members (50) | 10 | 6 | 7 | Stratified random sampling |
| | | 11 | 6 | 10 | |
| | | 12 | 7 | 13 | |
| School 6 (75) | Members (0) | 10 | Since the school had no active Youth Council until the month of the survey, all survey participants were classified as non-members. | | |
| | | 11 | | | |
| | | 12 | | | |
| | Non-Members (75) | 10 | 14 | 11 | Stratified random sampling |
| | | 11 | 14 | 13 | |
| | | 12 | 12 | 10 | |

**Note.**
Due to technical difficulties at Schools 1 and 5, where the online survey was administered, many students attempted to take the survey but did not complete and submit it.

**Individual Interviews and Focus Groups Section**

Participants for the qualitative portion included eight student focus groups and four administrators from four of the six high schools surveyed. At each high school, focus groups were conducted with one group of Youth Council members and one group of non-member students, while an administrator participated in an individual interview. Each administrator self-identified as the primary adviser for Youth Council at his or her respective school, except in one case, where the adviser (the vice-principal) was away and the principal agreed to an interview in his place. Students were in grades 10-12, with each focus group ranging from six to nine students and an approximate balance of genders and grades overall.

*Table 3.2. Participants in Student Focus Groups.*

| School | Youth Council Status | Grade 10 | | Grade 11 | | Grade 12 | | Totals | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Both |
| 1 | Members | | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | 4 | 4 | **8** |
| | Non-Members | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | **8** |
| 2 | Members | 2 | 1 | 3 | | 1 | | 6 | 1 | **7** |
| | Non-Members | 2 | 4 | | | | | 2 | 4 | **6** |
| 4 | Members | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 3 | **9** |
| | Non-Members | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 1 | 4 | 5 | **9** |
| 6 | Members | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 4 | **7** |
| | Non-Members | 2 | 1 | | 2 | 2 | | 4 | 3 | **7** |
| **Totals** | | **12** | **15** | **13** | **8** | **9** | **5** | **34** | **28** | **62** |

**Procedures**

**Quantitative Method**

I employed a native Khmer speaker fluent in English to translate the English survey into Khmer. Two native Khmer speakers fluent in English, then checked the Khmer translation, comparing it to the English version to ensure the survey's validity and reliability. I went to Cambodia and supervised the data collection process. I piloted the survey on four Cambodian

high school students and solicited feedback on the survey from these students and from a Youth Council adviser before administering the survey to the research subjects. My interpreter contacted the six high schools to request permission to carry out the research. He distributed the surveys to each school and collected them a few days later.

I sought informed consent from each student by having them check on a box on top of the survey questionnaire indicating their agreement to participate. The survey explained that the study would be completely confidential and that participants might withdraw at any time. As an incentive, participants received a pencil upon completion of the survey. Students who did not sign the consent form were permitted to stay in the classroom with their peers or to wait elsewhere in the school (such as the library) while the survey is being administered in the classroom. At two schools equipped with computer labs, students completed the survey on the computer; at the other four, they completed it on paper. The survey was estimated to take each student up to 30 minutes to complete. I then entered the data from the paper surveys into a spreadsheet with the data from the computer surveys.

**Qualitative Method**

All focus groups and interviews were audio recorded and took between 20 minutes and one hour to complete, with most lasting 30-45 minutes. They took place on school campuses during the school day. The focus groups and interviews were assisted by an interpreter who translated live between Khmer and English, except in the case of one staff member who was highly proficient in English. I took detailed notes during the interviews and focus groups, and clarified questions with the translator both during and after each one. Questions concerning the best rendering into precise English were resolved by examining the text in context. A total of

eight translated/coded focus groups and four translated/coded interviews formed the basis for research findings.

Safeguards were built into the study to help assure the ethical treatment of participants and data collected. Participation was voluntary and confidential; individuals who chose to participate were free at any time during the study to end their involvement. At the beginning of each session, focus groups and interview subjects heard an informed consent, in Khmer, providing a general overview of the project. This study was approved by Lehigh University's institutional review board. Questions concerning the data collection process, analysis, and confidentiality were fielded prior to and at the time of participation. The participants were provided with my e-mail, allowing them the opportunity to contact me later if desired.

**Measures**

**Questionnaires**

The questionnaires collected information on students' demographics, emotional intelligence, and displays of the Three Goods.

***Demographic Variables.*** The questionnaires collected information on students' age, gender, current grade in school, attendance, history of repetition, academic performance, number of children and adults in the home, household wealth, parents' education and occupation, and so on.

***Emotional Intelligence Scale.*** This self-report survey, developed by Wong and Law (2002), contains 16 items, four per sub-scale: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. The sub-scales are based on Mayer et al.'s (2004) divisions of emotional intelligence. The alpha levels for these sub-scales were .89, .88, .76, and

.85, respectively. The survey was designed for, and tested on, university students in Hong Kong in both undergraduate and MBA programs; undergraduate samples from several Hong Kong universities completed the survey to cross-validate it. The scale was shown to be distinct from the Big Five personality dimensions, though moderately correlated (Wong, Law & Song, 2004). Each statement in Wong & Law's survey has a seven-point Likert scale for responses, but my study simplified responses to four points - "strongly disagree" (1), "disagree" (2), "agree" (3), and "strongly agree" (4). Higher scores on this scale have been associated with greater life satisfaction and a lesser sense of powerlessness.

　　　　*Three Goods.* This 24-item questionnaire was developed by Dougherty et al. (2015) for Cambodian youth. With a four-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," this self-report survey indicates the extent to which students feel they display qualities associated with the ideals of "Good Student," "Good Friend," and "Good Child" advocated by Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport as an intended outcome of the nation's Youth Council programs. Cronbach's alpha was .92 for Good Child, .86 for Good Student, and .84 for Good Friend.

### Individual Interviews

　　　　I developed a series of open-ended questions for each interview and focus group. The questions explored subjects' perceptions of the school's role in cultivating good citizens, the impact of Youth Council on students at their school, and the strengths and weaknesses of their school's current Youth Council Program.

　　　　Administrators and Youth Council advisers were asked several open-ended questions about the structure of their school's Youth Council, their conceptions of the Three Goods and emotional intelligence, the impact of Youth Council on students at their school, and the strengths

and weaknesses of their school's current Youth Council Program. Some examples of the

questions asked included, "What is the value and purpose of Youth Council at your school?" and

"Do you think participating in the Youth Council program has changed your students' thoughts

or actions related to the Three Goods? If so, how?"

### Focus Groups

Focus group questions varied slightly according to whether the groups consisted of

members or non-members of Youth Council.

*Youth Council Members.* Members were asked several open-ended questions about their

conceptions of the Three Goods and emotional intelligence, how Youth Council had affected

their relationships with others, the best aspects of their Youth Council, and how it could improve

in the future. Some of the examples asked included "What do the Three Goods mean to you?"

and "How has joining Youth Council affected your relationships with teachers and students?"

*Youth Council Non-Members.* Non-members were asked several open-ended questions

about their conceptions of the Three Goods and emotional intelligence, their interactions with

Youth Council members, the value of Youth Council to their school, and how it could improve in

the future. Some of the examples asked included "What does it mean for someone to be good at

understanding and controlling their emotions? When might this be a helpful skill?" and

"Describe your interactions with Youth Council members."


### Data Analysis

The statistical analysis for this study was performed using STATA statistical software

(version 14). The main independent variables in this research are "Youth Council membership"

and "school." I assessed Youth Council membership both as a binomial variable (member vs.

non-member) and with multiple levels (years of membership in grades 7-12, hours per week participating, new member vs. returning member vs. never a member). Within the survey, one section asked about non-members' attitudes toward Youth Council. The questions for non-members asked about the extent to which they feel inclined to participate in Youth Council activities and the extent to which they feel that they can approach members with ideas or concerns. Non-members who participate often and feel that Youth Council members are open to them may be significantly different from non-members who are not involved and do not feel respected by members. Furthermore, non-members' attitudes toward Youth Council may differ by school.

Dependent variables include "emotional intelligence" and "Three Goods traits." The hypotheses state that Youth Council participation will be significantly correlated with each of these variables. Each dependent variable has a corresponding subscale within the survey that was averaged to create a composite variable. To determine whether a relationship exists between Youth Council and the dependent variables, I first ran a correlations test to find binary relationships. After seeing which variables appeared to be related, I ran a regression model for each dependent variable, further breaking it down into composite scales and subscales. These tests indicated to what extent Youth Council participation is associated with describing oneself as emotionally intelligent and a good student, child, and friend. Results were considered significant for p-values below 0.05.

To examine the influence of school affiliation on the dependent variables, independent groups t-tests and chi-squared tests were performed. T-tests contrasted Caring for Cambodia (CFC) schools with non-CFC schools, while chi-squared tests contrasted the six schools. Results were considered significant for p-values below 0.05. Furthermore, among Youth Council

members and non-members, I examined whether there was a difference between the schools they attend. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of school climate in defining the extent to which Youth Councils benefit members and schools. Examining the association between membership and the dependent variables by school may therefore reveal a difference between schools.

For the qualitative data, I collaborated with translators to clarify and comprehend all responses. I coded the interviews in a multi-stage process. Firstly, *Initial Coding* inspected the transcripts and searched for contrasts and comparisons within them, with an openness to any direction the data might lead. Secondly, *Pattern Coding* examined major emerging themes within segments of the data in order to structure and organize the ideas represented. *Triangulation* deepened understanding of these themes by scrutinizing to what extent the themes identified in one type of source (such as focus groups) corroborated or added nuance to themes identified in another type, such as interviews or surveys. Finally, *Vertical Coding* examined trends in responses by status (student or administrator), Youth Council membership, and school.

CHAPTER IV

**RESULTS**

## Results

### Quantitative Findings

#### Variables Recoded for Skewness

*Absenteeism.* Originally, this question offers 16 choices of responses, 1-16 days in the previous school year (October 2014 through July 2015). However, results show that this variable is skewed, 1.39, with a kurtosis of 4.62. Therefore, it is recoded into 1-8, with 8 representing "8 or more days." Skewness reduces to 0.32 and kurtosis to 1.84.

*Age.* Originally, this question offers 11 choices of responses, 14-24 years old. However, results show that this variable is skewed, 0.70, with a kurtosis of 3.80. Therefore, it is recoded into "15 and below," 16, 17, 18, 19, and "20 and up." Skewness reduces to 0.09 and kurtosis reduces to 2.12.

*Age of enrollment in grade 1.* Originally, this question offers 8 choices of responses, 3-10 (or more) years old. However, this variable has a skewness of .46 and a kurtosis of 4.07. After recoding it into four levels – "5 and below," 6, 7, and "8 and up" - skewness reduces to .30 and kurtosis reduces to 2.22.

*Class Rank.* Originally, this question averages the write-in responses for two semesters in the previous year, which ranged from 1 to 39. However, this variable has a skewness of 0.93 and a kurtosis of 3.36. Recoding it into four levels – 1 "4 and below," 2 "4.5 to 8," 3 "8.5 to 12," and 4 "above 12" – improves the skewness to 0.13 and the kurtosis to 1.44.

*Years of Council Membership.* Originally, students checked off the grades in which they were council members, with responses ranging from 0 to 9 years in grades 4-12. After recoding as 0, 1 and "2 or more," skewness is reduced from 3.74 to 1.56 and kurtosis from 21.2 to 4.14.

***Emotional Intelligence.*** Emotional intelligence is a composite score based on students' self-ratings from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) on sixteen questions. Originally, its skewness was -.64 and its kurtosis was 5.68. Recoding it as 1 (1-2.5), 2 (2.51-3), 3 (3.01-3.5) and 4 (3.51-4) reduces the skewness to 0.44 and the kurtosis to 2.9.

***Three Goods.*** Three Goods is a composite score based on students' self-ratings from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) on sixteen questions. After recoding it as 1 (1-2.5), 2 (2.51-3), 3 (3.01-3.5) and 4 (3.51-4), skewness is reduced from -1.06 to .24 and kurtosis from 7.85 to 2.93.

Table 4.1. *Demographic Variables*

| Student Characteristics | % (N) | *M (SD)* | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | | |
|   Male | 48.89 (154) | | |
|   Female | 51.11 (161) | | |
| Age | | 17.66 (1.76) | 14-24 |
| Grade | | | |
|   10th | 39.49 (124) | | |
|   11th | 25.16 (79) | | |
|   12th | 35.35 (111) | | |
| First semester grades | | 4.09 (.68) | 2-5 |
| Absent rate | | 4.80 (3.47) | 1-16+ |
| Grade repetition rate | 29.13 (90) | | |
| Grade skipping rate | 14.19 (44) | | |
| Age of enrollment in grade 1 | | 6.42 (1.27) | 3-10 |
| Mother's education in years | | 5.51 (4.17) | 0-13+ |
| Father's education in years | | 7.20 (4.34) | 0-13+ |
| Number of siblings | | 3.99 (1.46) | 1-6+ |
| Sibling has dropped out | | | |
|   Yes | 54.95 (161) | | |
|   No | 45.05 (132) | | |
| Sibling in university | | | |
|   Yes | 46.71 (142) | | |
|   No | 53.29 (162) | | |
| Plans after high school | | | |
|   University | 63.58 (199) | | |
|   Teacher training | 11.18 (35) | | |
|   Vocational training school | 11.18 (35) | | |
|   Work | 8.63 (27) | | |
|   Other | 1.92 (6) | | |
| Intended major | | | |
|   Business | 22.88 (70) | | |
|   Science | 15.03 (46) | | |
|   Social sciences | 13.40 (41) | | |
|   Medicine | 12.75 (39) | | |
|   Foreign languages | 9.15 (28) | | |
|   Engineering | 7.52 (23) | | |
|   Other | 6.54 (20) | | |
|   Computer sciences | 5.88 (18) | | |
|   Math | 5.88 (18) | | |
|   Don't know or not planning to attend | 3.68 (11) | | |

*Note.*
N = 318

Table 4.2. *Youth Council Member and Non-Member Variables*

| Youth Council Member Characteristics | % (N) | *M (SD)* | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hours per week spent on Youth Council | | 2.06 (1.37) | 0-5 |
| How they joined | | | |
|   Elected | 53.25 (41) | | |
|   Volunteered | 46.75 (36) | | |
| Position | | | |
|   Member | 48.68 (37) | | |
|   Student Adviser | 13.16 (10) | | |
|   Committee Chair | 15.79 (12) | | |
|   Vice-President | 17.11 (13) | | |
|   President | 5.26 (4) | | |
| Committee | | | |
|   Discipline & Goodness Encouragement | 32.39 (23) | | |
|   Study and Library | 11.27 (8) | | |
|   Rescue and Helping Society | 1.41 (1) | | |
|   Administrative and Financial | 5.63 (4) | | |
|   Promotion | 5.63 (4) | | |
|   Art, Sport, & Culture | 12.68 (9) | | |
|   Health, Hygiene, Environment, & Life Skills | 16.90 (12) | | |
|   Younger Adult Resource Group | 4.23 (3) | | |
|   Other/NA | 9.86 (7) | | |
| *How they spend time | | | |
|   Meeting with each other | 71.23 (52) | | |
|   Meeting non-members about issues | 43.84 (32) | | |
|   Organizing projects | 31.51 (23) | | |
|   Meeting non-members about projects | 21.92 (16) | | |
|   Carrying out projects | 5.48 (4) | | |
|   Other | 4.05 (3) | | |
| *Reasons for joining | | | |
|   To help their school | 80.00 (60) | | |
|   To learn new things | 44.00 (33) | | |
|   To help the community | 36.00 (27) | | |
|   To challenge themselves | 13.33 (10) | | |
|   To make new friends | 8.00 (6) | | |
|   To work with teachers | 6.67 (5) | | |
|   To work with other students | 6.67 (5) | | |
|   To please their parents | 5.33 (4) | | |
|   To gain respect | 5.33 (4) | | |
|   Other | 4.00 (3) | | |

*Note.*
*Two responses allowed

Table 4.2, continued. *Youth Council Member and Non-Member Variables*

| Youth Council Member Characteristics | % (N) | *M (SD)* | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Favorite aspects of Youth Council | 4.00 (3) | | |
|   Helping their school | 77.92 (60) | | |
|   Learning new things | 44.16 (34) | | |
|   Challenging themselves | 25.97 (20) | | |
|   Working with other students | 23.38 (18) | | |
|   Working with teachers | 17.11 (13) | | |
|   Making new friends | 9.09 (7) | | |
|   Gaining respect | 5.19 (4) | | |
|   Other | 1.30 (1) | | |
| *Least favorite aspects of Youth Council | | | |
|   Nothing – I like everything about it | 34 (44.74) | | |
|   Difficulties with other members | 35.53 (27) | | |
|   Difficulties with non-members | 23.68 (18) | | |
|   Takes too much time | 21.05 (16) | | |
|   Not being able to accomplish enough | 5.26 (4) | | |
|   Difficulties with teachers | 3.95 (3) | | |
|   Boring | 1.32 (1) | | |
|   Stressful | 1.32 (1) | | |
|   Other | 3.93 (3) | | |
| Overall enjoyment of youth council | | 3.23 (.48) | 2-4 |
| (1 = strongly dislike, 2 = dislike, 3 = like, 4 = strongly like) | | | |
| Which adults know that you belong? | | | |
|   Neither teachers nor parents | 8.00 (6) | | |
|   Parents only | 2.67 (2) | | |
|   Teachers only | 8.00 (6) | | |
|   Teachers and parents | 61 (81.33) | | |

| Youth Council Non-Member Characteristics | % (N) | *M (SD)* | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Participation in Youth Council this year | | 3.43 (.85) | 1-4 |
| (1 = often, 2 = a few times, 3 = once, 4 = never) | | | |
| Enjoyment of Youth Council participation | | | |
|   Strongly dislike | 1.76 (3) | | |
|   Dislike | 15.29 (26) | | |
|   Like | 64.71 (110) | | |
|   Strongly like | 2.35 (4) | | |
|   I never participate | 15.88 (27) | | |
| Agreement with statements | | | |
| (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree) | | | |
|   I know at least one Youth Council member well. | | 2.70 (.98) | 1-4 |
|   I feel respected by Youth Council members. | | 2.54 (.90) | 1-4 |
|   It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with suggestions. | | 2.53 (.91) | 1-4 |
|   It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with concerns. | | 2.60 (.90) | 1-4 |

*Note*.
*Two responses allowed

Table 4.3. *Cronbach's Alphas of Emotional Intelligence Subscales*

| | Mean | SD | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self-Emotion Appraisal (Alpha = .76) | 2.96 | .53 | 1-4 |
| I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time. | 2.67 | .68 | 1-4 |
| I have good understanding of my own emotions. | 3.02 | .71 | 1-4 |
| I really understand what I feel. | 2.99 | .68 | 1-4 |
| I always know whether or not I am happy. | 3.18 | .67 | 1-4 |
| Others' Emotion Appraisal (Alpha = .76) | 2.71 | .54 | 1-4 |
| I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior. | 3.01 | .64 | 1-4 |
| I am a good observer of others' emotions. | 2.45 | .77 | 1-4 |
| I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. | 2.61 | .72 | 1-4 |
| I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me. | 2.76 | .68 | 1-4 |
| Use of Emotion (Alpha = .75) | 3.03 | .52 | 1-4 |
| I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them. | 3.18 | .61 | 1-4 |
| I always tell myself I am a competent person. | 2.77 | .78 | 1-4 |
| I am a self-motivated person. | 3.05 | .67 | 1-4 |
| I would always encourage myself to try my best. | 3.15 | .63 | 1-4 |
| Regulation of Emotion (Alpha = .81) | 2.76 | .58 | 1-4 |
| I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally. | 2.68 | .72 | 1-4 |
| I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions. | 2.86 | .70 | 1-4 |
| I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry. | 2.75 | .76 | 1-4 |
| I have good control of my own emotions. | 2.75 | .71 | 1-4 |

Table 4.4. *Cronbach's Alphas of "Three Goods" subscales*

| | Mean | SD | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Good Student (Alpha = .74) | 2.84 | .47 | 1-4 |
| I study every night before bed or early every morning. | 2.73 | .66 | 1-4 |
| I feel like school is my good friend. | 3.28 | .64 | 1-4 |
| I like to practice again and again with homework my teachers give me. | 2.85 | .69 | 1-4 |
| My teachers think I am an industrious student. | 2.66 | .65 | 1-4 |
| My friends think I am an industrious student. | 2.69 | .67 | 1-4 |
| Good Child (Alpha = .85) | 3.12 | .52 | 1-4 |
| I help my parents cook or wash dishes. | 3.16 | .74 | 1-4 |
| I help my parents keep the house clean. | 3.22 | .66 | 1-4 |
| I help take care of my siblings. | 3.00 | .71 | 1-4 |
| I don't ask my parents to buy unnecessary stuff for me. | 3.04 | .72 | 1-4 |
| My parents think I am polite and humble. | 2.97 | .64 | 1-4 |
| I try my best to make my parents happy. | 3.32 | .68 | 1-4 |
| Good Friend (Alpha = .65) | 2.82 | .43 | 1-4 |
| I participate in activities with friends. | 2.93 | .72 | 1-4 |
| I help friends who need help. | 3.10 | .58 | 1-4 |
| My friends help me when I need help. | 2.92 | .62 | 1-4 |
| My friends want to hang out with me. | 2.20 | .77 | 1-4 |
| My friends think I am polite and humble. | 2.93 | .63 | 1-4 |

**Descriptive Findings**

Before assessing the hypotheses central to this thesis, it is helpful to set the stage by presenting findings from the rest of the survey. These findings provide a more thorough understanding of survey respondents and the Youth Councils and schools with which they are affiliated.

Members seemed positive in general about Youth Council. They appeared to enjoy it (1 = "strongly dislike," 4 = "strongly like," M = 3.23, SD = .48). Most Youth Council members (81%) stated that both their teachers and their parents were aware of their membership; only 8% said that neither group knew. By far the most popular committee is Discipline & Goodness Encouragement, representing about 1/3 of total membership (although there are 8 committees total) and nearly double the number of the next-largest committee, Health & Hygiene. This disproportionate representation stems largely from School 5, where 13 of 18 members reported belonging to the Discipline & Goodness Encouragement committee. Most Youth Council members reported similarities between their reasons for joining and their favorite aspects since joining: helping the school and community, learning, and challenging themselves. Almost half report liking everything about Youth Council. Those non-members who participated mostly enjoyed it (64.71%) but participation seemed rare, and 65% said they had never participated this school year.

Within the fields of emotional intelligence and Three Goods traits, certain sub-scales scored higher overall than others. Self-emotion awareness (M = 2.96, SD = .53) and use of emotion (M = 3.03, SD = .52) had higher ratings than others' emotion awareness (M = 2.71, SD = .54) and regulation of emotion (M = 2.76, SD = .58). Good Child ratings (M = 3.12, SD = .52)

were much higher than those for Good Student (M = 2.84, SD = .47) or Good Friend (M = 2.82, SD = .43).

Independent samples t-tests and chi-squared tests revealed a few other ways in which Youth Council members differ from their peers. A t-test showed that members are more than half a year older (mean = 18.1, SD = 1.8, median = 18) than their non-member counterparts (mean = 17.5, SD = 1.7, median = 17). Interestingly, they are far more likely to have repeated a grade ($p <$ .01), with 41% of members but only 25% of non-members having repeated a grade at some point in their educational careers. It is speculated that this phenomenon could be related to the Cambodian value of respecting one's elders and referring to peers with even slight age gaps as "older sister," "younger brother," and so on. Perhaps older students tend to receive more respect from their grade-level peers and be viewed more as leaders despite their flawed academic history. A thorough understanding of such pre-existing differences between members and non-members can yield insight into the selection criteria for membership and inform interpretations of members' traits and attitudes compared to those of their peers. In an independent samples t-test, members also had more friends in whom they would confide (mean = 3.7, SD = 2.4, $p$ = .01) than non-members (mean = 3.0, SD = 2.1). This fact might be related to the fact that a slight majority of Youth Council members (53%) were elected by their peers. Chi-squared tests showed that Youth Council members are more likely to intend to major in languages ($X^2(1)$ = 5.81, $p <$ .05) and less likely to major in business ($X^2(1)$ = 5.98, $p <$ .05). Finally, an independent samples t-test indicated that members who reported spending more hours per week on Youth Council activities were far more likely to report enjoying Youth Council ($p <$ .0001) than members who spent less time. This last finding could suggest that students who enjoy it commit more time, or that those who become more involved find themselves enjoying it more, or there could be an

outside factor causing both these phenomena. Since more involved and motivated members are a desired outcome, it is important to explore what factors contribute to their satisfaction and commitment.

Furthermore, differences among non-members appeared in independent samples t-tests and chi-squared tests. In the section answered only by non-members, two related items had significantly different results by school in independent samples t-tests: "It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with concerns" ($p < .01$) and "It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with suggestions" ($p < .01$). For the former question, on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), scores ranged from low at School 2 (mean = 2.36, SD = .96) to high at School 3 (mean = 3.00, SD = .89). In other words, students at School 3 were more likely than those at School 2 to feel confident bringing concerns to Youth Council members. For the latter question, using the same scale, scores ranged from School 6, the lowest (mean = 2.29, SD = .83) to School 4, the highest (mean = 2.86, SD = .69). This finding suggests that students at School 4 feel more comfortable approaching Youth Council members with suggestions than students at School 6.

Respondents' overall emotional intelligence and Three Goods scores were also associated with these questions. According to independent samples t-tests, higher emotional intelligence scores were correlated with finding it easy to bring concerns ($p < .05$) or suggestions ($p < .01$) to members. Higher Three Goods scores were likewise correlated ($p < .05$ for both questions). Thus, students who say it is easy to approach Youth Council members with concerns and suggestions are likely to perceive themselves as more emotionally intelligent and better students, children, and friends than other respondents. These findings suggest that both innate traits and environmental factors are associated with the general student body offering input to members.

**Results from Bivariate Correlations**

Bearing in mind the context described in the previous section, we now proceed to the central hypotheses. Results from bivariate correlations are presented in Table 4.5. One of the main interests in this study is to examine factors that predict emotional intelligence. First, factors that predict higher overall emotional intelligence include a respondent's father attaining a higher level of education ($r = .11$, $p < .05$), the respondent having been a Youth Council member in grades 7-12 ($r = .13$, $p < .05$) and a higher number of friends in whom the respondent is willing to confide ($r = .11$, $p < .05$). Breaking down the emotional intelligence scale into four subscales reveals that a higher self-emotion appraisal rating is associated with skipping a grade ($r = .12$, $p < .05$) and both the father ($r = .13$, $p < .05$) and the mother ($r = .13$, $p < .05$) attaining a higher level of education. Superior use of emotion is predicted by students having a lower (better) class rank in the previous school year ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$) and more friends in whom they would confide ($r = .11$, $p < .05$). Higher self-ratings on regulation of emotion are associated with a higher number of friends in whom respondents would confide ($r = .12$, $p < .05$).

Another key variable in this study is the Three Goods. A higher score in this composite variable is predicted by respondents having a lower (better) class rank in the previous school year ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$), a higher Semester 1 average this year ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) and more friends in whom they would confide ($r = .14$, $p < .05$). A higher score in Good Student is predicted by current membership in Youth Council ($r = .13$, $p < .05$), class rank last year ($r = .23$, $p < .001$), and the father's level of education ($r = .13$, $p < .05$). Good Child is associated with none of the independent variables. Good Friend is associated with the number of friends in whom respondents would confide ($r = .20$, $p < .001$). Specifically, respondents who report having more close friends also rate themselves as better friends.

Table 4.5. *Bivariate correlations among Emotional Intelligence, Three Goods, and selected independent variables*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | .83*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | .75*** | .43*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | .83*** | .62*** | .50*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | .86*** | .66*** | .52*** | .60*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | .71*** | .60*** | .48*** | .66*** | .57*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | .57*** | .56*** | .33*** | .52*** | .47*** | .86*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | .64*** | .50*** | .47*** | .64*** | .51*** | .85*** | .58*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | .62*** | .49*** | .47 | .57*** | .49*** | .83*** | .56*** | .59*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | .02 | -.03 | .04 | .07 | -.03 | .06 | -.02 | .13* | .05 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | .13* | .12* | .05 | .16** | .09 | .11 | .05 | .14* | .10 | .56*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | .02 | .02 | -.04 | .02 | .05 | -.04 | -.09 | -.03 | .07 | .11 | .05 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | -.01 | -.03 | -.07 | .03 | .05 | .03 | .03 | -.01 | .05 | .14* | .16** | .29*** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | -.02 | .03 | -.06 | -.02 | .00 | .00 | .04 | -.07 | .02 | -.06 | .08 | .15** | .46*** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | -.03 | -.04 | -.05 | .03 | -.04 | -.01 | .03 | -.05 | .00 | .15** | .07 | .09 | .29*** | -.09 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | .03 | .12* | -.06 | .01 | .02 | .04 | .05 | .04 | .01 | .01 | .06 | .04 | -.11 | -.11 | .02 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | -.05 | -.02 | -.02 | -.18* | .06 | -.16* | -.08 | -.23*** | -.12 | -.15* | -.06 | .15* | .20** | .04 | .08 | .03 | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | .05 | .02 | .06 | .13* | -.03 | .15* | .07 | .18** | .11 | .02 | -.10 | -.13* | -.31*** | -.12* | -.17** | .03 | -.59*** | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | .08 | .09 | .06 | .05 | .06 | .09 | .08 | .08 | .05 | -.02 | -.11 | -.04 | -.28*** | -.23*** | -.11 | .03 | -.14* | .18** | | | | | | | |
| 20 | .13* | .12* | .09 | .12 | .08 | .15* | .09 | .13* | .15* | .06 | -.13* | -.06 | -.41*** | -.29*** | -.06 | .01 | -.12 | .21*** | .59*** | | | | | | |
| 21 | .11 | .09 | .12 | .06 | .09 | .09 | .06 | .08 | .10 | .06 | -.03 | .04 | -.21*** | -.25*** | -.08 | .00 | -.09 | .20** | .38*** | .46*** | | | | | |
| 22 | .06 | .04 | .04 | .10 | .03 | .06 | .08 | .06 | .03 | .08 | .08 | .17** | .35*** | .25*** | .18** | .00 | .13 | -.14* | -.28*** | -.26*** | -.21*** | | | | |
| 23 | -.06 | -.12* | .02 | -.02 | -.07 | .04 | .04 | .04 | -.01 | -.06 | -.09 | -.13* | -.33*** | -.24*** | -.16** | .12* | -.15* | .13* | .46*** | .40*** | .22*** | -.40*** | | | |
| 24 | .05 | .00 | .05 | .02 | .08 | .05 | .00 | .04 | .07 | .02 | .00 | .11 | .00 | .02 | -.03 | .03 | -.02 | -.03 | .09 | .18** | .09 | .20*** | .06 | | |
| 25 | .11* | .13* | .01 | .11* | .12* | .14* | .08 | .07 | .20*** | .15* | .15* | .11 | .17** | -.04 | .08 | .08 | .05 | -.10 | -.04 | .04 | .01 | .04 | .01 | .01 | |
| 26 | .00 | .01 | -.01 | -.03 | .02 | .05 | .03 | -.02 | -.05 | .07 | .22*** | -.05 | -.03 | .06 | .04 | .08 | .12 | -.13* | -.07 | -.04 | -.12 | .06 | -.01 | -.06 | .01 |

1. Emotional intelligence (composite), 2. Self-emotion appraisal, 3. Others-emotion appraisal, 4. Use of emotion, 5. Regulation of emotion, 6. Three Goods (composite), 7. Good Child, 8. Good Student, 9. Good Friend, 10. Current Youth Council member, 11. Member in grades 7-12, 12. Gender, 13. Age, 14. Age of enrollment in grade 1, 15. Has repeated a grade, 16. Has skipped a grade, 17. Class rank last year, 18. Semester 1 average score this year, 19. Mother's level of education, 20. Father's level of education, 21. Family income, 22. Number of siblings, 23. Sibling has dropped out, 24. Sibling has attended university, 25. Number of friends in whom student can confide, 26. Attends a CFC school.

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

**Hypothesis 1**

Two outcomes are being examined in this study: emotional intelligence (as measured by students' self-ratings on four subscales) and Three Goods (as measured by students' self-ratings on three subscales). Results from Hypothesis 1 are shown in Table 4.6. This regression table shows the role of demographic variables (gender and age), family background (parents' educational attainment, family income, and the number of siblings overall, who had dropped out, and who were attending university), school performance (the number of absences and class rank in the previous school year, as well as the first-semester average score), and Youth Council (how many years respondents had been members in grades 7-12, whether they were currently members, and how many hours per week they spent on Youth Council) in predicting emotional intelligence overall and by subscale (self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion).

Hypothesis 1 states, "Students who participate in Youth Council will exhibit different degrees of emotional intelligence than non-Youth Council members." The table shows that for the emotional intelligence composite score, the overall model was significant, $F(14, 156) = 1.80$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .13$, $\Delta R^2 = .06$. The model explains 6% of the variance accounted for by the predictor variables. However, Youth Council predictors are not significant. Rather, factors that predict emotional intelligence include number of siblings ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$) and school absenteeism ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .01$). Specifically, the results suggest that having more siblings and fewer absences from school in the previous year are significantly associated with higher emotional intelligence.

Among the four emotional intelligence subscales, only use of emotion had a significant overall model, $F(14, 156) = 2.20$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .15$, $\Delta R^2 = .08$. The model explains 6% of the variance accounted for by the predictor variables. Number of siblings ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$), school absenteeism ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$), and years of Youth Council membership ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$) all predict use of emotion. Namely,

having more siblings, being absent from school fewer times, and being a member for more years in grades 7-12 are significantly associated with higher use of emotion.

While self-emotion appraisal's overall model was not significant, several of its variables were. Factors that predict self-emotion appraisal include the number of siblings ($\beta$ = .21, $p$ < .01), having a sibling who has dropped out of school ($\beta$ = -.20, $p$ < .05), and years of Youth Council membership ($\beta$ = .20, $p$ < .05) all predict self-emotion appraisal. Namely, having more siblings, being absent from school fewer times, and being a member for more years in grades 7-12 are significantly associated with self-emotion appraisal. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is partially supported in the sense that while Youth Council-related factors are not significant predictors for overall emotional intelligence, they are significant for two of the four sub-scales.

**Hypothesis 2**

Table 4.7 displays results from Hypothesis 2. This hypothesis states: "Students who participate in Youth Council will score differently on the Three Goods traits than non-participating students." As in Table 4.6, based on multiple regression analysis, includes variables related to student demographics, family background, school performance, and Youth Council, this time as potential predictors of overall Three Goods traits, as well as of the subscales Good Student, Good Child, and Good Friend.

The table indicates that the overall model is significant only for the Good Student subscale, $F$ (14, 155) = 2.49, $p$ < .01, $R^2$ = .18, $\Delta R^2$ = .11. The model explains 11% of the variance accounted for by the predictor variables. Number of siblings ($\beta$ = .18, $p$ < .01) and class rank in the previous school year ($\beta$ = -.20, $p$ < .05) are both factors significantly associated with Good Student traits. Specifically, students with more siblings and a superior (lower) class rank are more likely to rate themselves as good students.

Table 4.6. *Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Overall Emotional Intelligence, Self-Emotion Appraisal, Others' Emotion Appraisal, Use of Emotion, and Regulation of Emotion*

| | Overall Emotional Intelligence | | | Self-Emotion Appraisal | | | Others' Emotion Appraisal | | | Use of Emotion | | | Regulation of Emotion | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE | β | B | SE | β | B | SE | β | B | SE | β | B | SE | β |
| *Demographics* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | -.15 | .14 | -.09 | .06 | .09 | .05 | -.09 | .09 | -.09 | -.04 | .09 | -.03 | -.03 | .10 | -.02 |
| Age | .06 | .05 | .11 | .02 | .03 | .05 | .03 | .03 | .08 | .06 | .03 | .15 | .06 | .04 | .16 |
| *Family background* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mother's education | .02 | .02 | .08 | .01 | .01 | .04 | .01 | .01 | .07 | -.01 | .01 | -.08 | .00 | .01 | -.03 |
| Father's education | -.01 | .02 | -.04 | .00 | .01 | .02 | .01 | .01 | .05 | .02 | .01 | .15 | .00 | .02 | .03 |
| Family income | .01 | .02 | .06 | .00 | .01 | .03 | .01 | .01 | .04 | .01 | .01 | .06 | .01 | .01 | .05 |
| Number of siblings | .17 | .05 | .27** | .11 | .04 | .26** | .04 | .03 | .10 | .08 | .04 | .21* | .06 | .04 | .14 |
| Sibling in university | .00 | .13 | .00 | -.12 | .09 | -.11 | .03 | .09 | .03 | -.02 | .09 | -.02 | .01 | .10 | .01 |
| Sibling dropped out | -.18 | .15 | -.11 | -.22 | .10 | -.20* | .12 | .10 | .11 | -.02 | .10 | -.02 | -.18 | .11 | -.15 |
| *School performance* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Absences last school year | -.09 | .03 | -.23** | -.04 | .02 | -.15 | -.05 | .02 | -.19* | -.04 | .02 | -.17* | -.03 | .02 | -.13 |
| Rank last school year | .06 | .07 | .09 | -.02 | .05 | -.03 | .04 | .04 | .08 | -.05 | .05 | -.12 | .05 | .05 | .11 |
| Semester 1 average score | .14 | .13 | .11 | -.03 | .09 | -.03 | .10 | .08 | .13 | .02 | .09 | .02 | .10 | .09 | .11 |
| *Youth Council (YC)* Years of membership, grades 7-12 | .10 | .12 | .08 | .17 | .08 | .20* | -.05 | .08 | -.07 | .17 | .08 | .20* | .12 | .09 | .14 |
| Current member | -.17 | .29 | -.09 | -.13 | .20 | -.10 | -.11 | .19 | -.10 | -.18 | .20 | -.14 | -.24 | .21 | -.18 |
| Hours per week spent on YC | .10 | .13 | .13 | -.01 | .09 | -.01 | .10 | .08 | .21 | .04 | .09 | .07 | .08 | .09 | .14 |
| $R^2$ ($\Delta R^2$) | .14 (.06) | | | .12 (.04) | | | 0.09 (0) | | | .15 (.08) | | | .09 (0) | | |
| F | 1.8* | | | 1.52 | | | 1.05 | | | 2.02* | | | 1.04 | | |

*Note.*

*B* is a regression coefficient indicating the strength of each predictor.

*SE* is standard error, a measure of the statistical accuracy of an estimate.

*β* is a standardized regression coefficient indicating the strength of each predictor, measured in standard deviations.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

Although the overall model for the composite Three Goods scale is not significant, the number of weekly hours spent on Youth Council ($\beta$ = .34, $p < .05$) is a predicting factor. Namely, the results suggest that members who spend more hours per week on Youth Council-related activities have more Three Goods traits. Moreover, a chi-squared test showed that Youth Council membership is associated with higher Three Goods ratings, although this difference was not statistically significant ($p = .078$). As seen in Figure 4.1, students who had been in Youth Council for one or more years were more likely to rate themselves as good students, children, and friends. Despite these findings, Hypothesis 2 is overall not supported.

Table 4.7. *Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Overall Three Goods, Good Student, Good Child, and Good Friend*

| | Overall | | | Good Student | | | Good Child | | | Good Friend | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE* | *ß* | *B* | *SE* | *ß* | *B* | *SE* | *ß* | *B* | *SE* | *ß* |
| *Demographics* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | -.12 | .12 | -.09 | .00 | .08 | .00 | -.16 | .09 | -.16 | .00 | .07 | .00 |
| Age | .07 | .04 | .15 | .02 | .03 | .07 | .03 | .03 | .09 | .05 | .03 | .17 |
| *Family background* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mother's education | .02 | .02 | .12 | .00 | .01 | -.04 | .01 | .01 | .09 | .00 | .01 | .04 |
| Father's education | .00 | .02 | .02 | .02 | .01 | .19 | .02 | .01 | .15 | .02 | .01 | .22* |
| Family income | -.01 | .02 | -.03 | .00 | .01 | -.03 | .00 | .01 | -.02 | .00 | .01 | .00 |
| Number of siblings | .04 | .05 | .09 | .06 | .03 | .18** | .10 | .03 | .26* | .02 | .03 | .07 |
| Has sibling in university | .09 | .11 | .07 | -.02 | .08 | -.02 | -.06 | .08 | -.06 | -.03 | .07 | -.03 |
| Has sibling who dropped out | -.01 | .13 | -.01 | .02 | .09 | .02 | .05 | .10 | .05 | .13 | .08 | .15 |
| *School performance* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Absences last school year | -.02 | .03 | -.08 | -.01 | .02 | -.05 | -.02 | .02 | -.10 | -.01 | .02 | -.06 |
| Rank last year | -.01 | .06 | -.02 | -.08 | .04 | -.20* | -.01 | .04 | -.03 | .00 | .04 | -.01 |
| Semester 1 average score | .22 | .11 | .20* | .08 | .07 | .11 | .07 | .08 | .09 | .11 | .07 | .17 |
| *Youth Council (YC)* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Years of membership, grades 7-12 | -.01 | .10 | -.01 | .07 | .07 | .10 | -.04 | .07 | -.05 | .04 | .06 | .06 |
| Current member | -.33 | .25 | -.21 | -.12 | .17 | -.12 | -.17 | .18 | -.15 | -.15 | .15 | -.15 |
| Hours per week spent on YC | .23 | .11 | .34* | .10 | .07 | .22 | .12 | .08 | .23 | .09 | .07 | .23 |
| $R^2$ ($\Delta R^2$) | .13 (.05) | | | .18 (.11) | | | .13 (.05) | | | .12 (.04) | | |
| *F* | 1.66 | | | 2.49** | | | 1.59 | | | 1.57 | | |

*Note.*

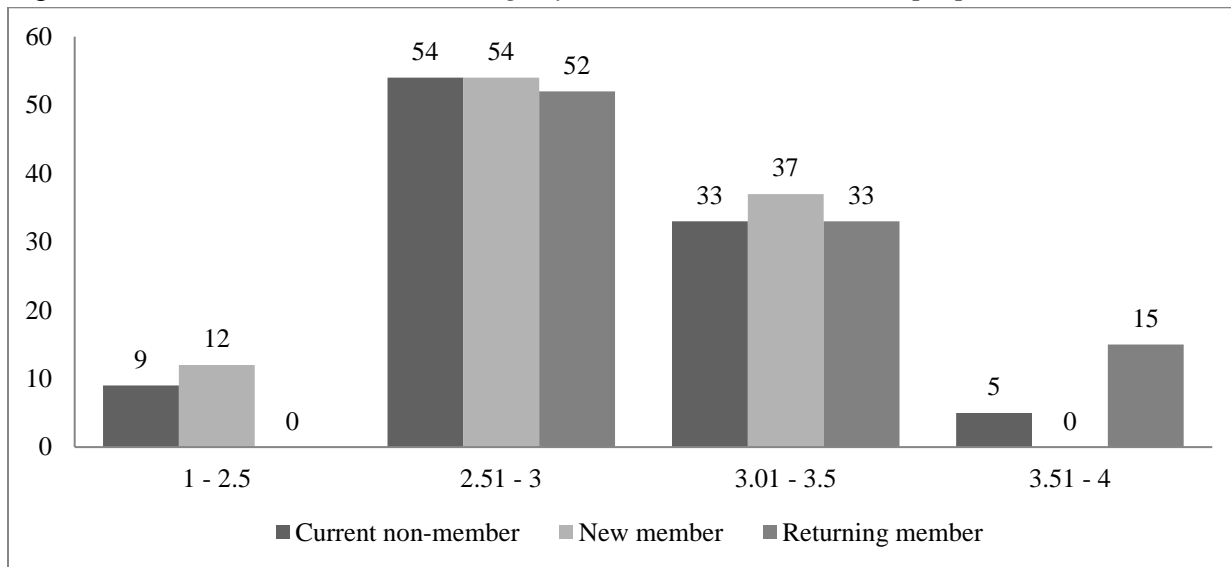*B* is a regression coefficient indicating the strength of each predictor.

*SE* is standard error, a measure of the statistical accuracy of an estimate.

*ß* is a standardized regression coefficient indicating the strength of each predictor, measured in standard deviations.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

Figure 4.1. *Three Goods Overall Ratings by Youth Council Membership, (p = .078)*



**Qualitative Findings**

This study's mixed methods design facilitates a nuanced picture of Youth Council's effects in Cambodian schools. In addition to the quantitative data found in survey results, qualitative data from focus groups and interviews deepens our understanding of Cambodian Youth Councils, emotional intelligence, and the Three Goods. Open-ended questions allowed participants to discuss various concepts and issues at length, unlike the multiple-choice responses on the survey. Participants' responses sometimes confirm the survey's quantitative findings, sometimes qualify or challenge them, and sometimes illuminate them.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore Cambodian high school students' and faculty's conceptualizations of the Three Goods constructs – Good Student, Good Child, and Good Friend – and of emotional intelligence. The research further explored the structure and activities of Youth Council, as well as their perceptions of relationships between members and others, and of the value and impact of Youth Council at their schools.

During semi-structured focus groups, student participants described their perceptions and experiences related to the Three Goods, emotional intelligence, and Youth Council. Administrators (principals and Youth Council advisers) addressed similar questions during semi-structured individual interviews. The research findings that this chapter reports are based on analysis of these focus groups and interviews.

**Theme 1: What are participants' conceptualizations of The Three Goods?**

This question ensures that the survey questions about the Three Goods focus on attributes and actions typically ascribed by Cambodian students to good children, students, and friends. If there is a significant gap between how participants tend to describe them and what the survey asks about, this discrepancy may skew survey results.

**Good Child.** Respondents mostly defined a good child by his or her interactions with parents. Every group mentioned parents among the beneficiaries of a good child's actions and attitudes. A good child's actions include helping parents with housework, with the care of younger siblings or ill parents, and a few respondents mentioned with income generation. A good child respects parents and other older relatives, expressing this respect by listening to and obeying parents' advice. Studying hard is a way to make parents proud, and to show gratitude for their care and support. Children's words and actions should promote harmony, not upsetting parents but rather bringing honor to the family.

Descriptions of Good Child traits seemed largely consistent across schools and membership status. Six of seven groups, representing all four schools, mentioned that a good child "listens to parents' advice" and obeys parents. (There were eight focus groups, but the School 1 members' interview was cut short and they did not discuss any of the Three Goods.) Two member groups and three non-member groups, representing all four schools, mentioned helping the family in practical ways such as "tak[ing] care of siblings" or "help[ing] with parents' work." Two member groups and two non-member groups,

representing all four schools, mentioned diligent studies as the responsibility of a good child. A non-member from School 1 said, "I need to study hard because [my parents] worked hard to support me coming to school and cared for me." In a parallel comment, a member from School 4 asserted that "a good child studies hard to make parents feel happy, confident, and proud of them."

Variations appeared in a few less-frequent answers. Only students at Schools 2 and 4 said that good children should "not make their parents feel uncomfortable or upset" (according to a member at School 2) or "defame the family" (a member at School 4) by "causing problems at home or outside" (a non-member at School 2). Both members and non-members expressed these ideas within these two schools. The theme of respect appeared in discussions with every group except the two from School 4.

**Good Student.** As described by respondents, a good student shows respect for the authority of school rules and for his or her teachers. Good students attend classes punctually and consistently, obey school regulations, listen attentively to the teacher, and contribute to school maintenance as needed by cleaning classrooms, planting gardens in the courtyard, and so on. Good students seek harmony with other students and show respect to everyone. They "listen more than talk," according to a member at School 2, and are "thankful to the school for helping them," in the words of a member at School 4. They avoid risky behaviors like gangs, drugs, and gambling.

Of the seven groups responding, three member groups and only one non-member group mentioned that good students respect their teachers, with neither of School 6's groups represented among them. For example, a member at School 4 said good students should "respect elders and use proper words." Only the two School 2 groups mentioned participating in school-initiated community service activities like cleaning their village after a flood, which might reflect unique opportunities at their school. Two member groups and two non-member groups representing three of four schools (all

but School 1) indicated that good students help clean, maintain, or improve school buildings and grounds.

     **Good Frien***d.* Respondents conceptualized a good friend as one who helps others facing difficulties. By far the most common difficulty mentioned was academics – if good friends are "good at a lesson, they help others" (according to a School 2 non-member) to understand the lesson or study for an exam. A School 4 member mentioned that friends could help address practical needs: "They can share materials like books, or even money. They can form a savings group and share some money, then help [each other] as needed." Good friends also need to give wise advice about topics like studying, avoiding risky behaviors, and facing challenges. A School 2 member stated, "When some students try to avoid school, they try to talk to them and make them come to school. They tell them not to follow a bad path or do bad things." They lead by example in personally avoiding risky behaviors, whether drugs, alcohol, theft, or other illegal activities. A good friend's attitude is caring, selfless, honest, and respectful to all – whether bad students or good, poor or rich.

     All seven groups stated that a good friend helps others facing difficulties. Six of seven (all but School 1) mentioned giving advice, encouragement, or motivation to peers, while five of seven (again excluding School 1) cited the avoidance of risky or illegal behaviors. School 2 students also mentioned that the day before our discussion, they had been warned by school leaders about the dangers of drugs; this lecture may have influenced their answers. Finally, at School 2, unlike other schools, both members and non-members described good friends as selfless. A School 2 member said, "Good friends respect each other without thinking, 'I can count on her because she has something for me.'" A School 2 non-member echoed the sentiment: "They don't expect anything in return."

     In descriptions of all three constructs, there was both overlap with and divergence from the statements found in the surveys. Most, but not all, survey statements were mirrored in participants'

discussions. For example, on the topic of "Good Child," focus group participants echoed the survey's language on topics like cooking, doing housework, caring for younger sibling, being polite and humble, and striving to please one's parents. The one survey statement that did not explicitly appear in the focus group discussions was, "I don't ask my parents to buy unnecessary stuff for me." However, if asked, respondents may have said that this idea was loosely covered in their broader statements that good children do not distress their parents. Moreover, several groups mentioned that good children sometimes help with income generation, a theme that did not appear on the survey but that fits with the general idea of being a financial boon rather than draining family resources.

The greatest discrepancy appeared on the topic of good students. Focus groups had a great deal of consensus among groups, but their answers did not always align with the descriptions found in the survey. Participants did not say that good students should study diligently and complete all homework; rather, they focused on students' need to obey school rules and show respect to teachers. By contrast, the survey about Good Student includes statements like "I study every night before bed or early every morning," and "I like to practice again and again with homework my teachers give me." The survey also includes statements that teachers and friends perceive the respondent as an industrious student, which partially overlaps with focus group participants' statements that a good student listens attentively during instruction.

Their description of "Good Friend" lacked the element of shared leisure time. The survey includes two related statements: "I participate in activities with friends," and "My friends want to hang out with me." Focus groups, on the other hand, emphasized the second survey statement – "I help friends who need help," as well as the last one, "My friends think I am polite and humble." They also included the idea of giving wise counsel, a concept missing from the survey.

**Theme 2: What is the role of Youth Council in cultivating Three Goods traits in students?**

**Youth Council Members.** Members generally indicated significant changes in their actions and attitudes from Youth Council, compared to their non-member counterparts. Some expressed having more opportunities to practice being a good friend or a good student within the context of their leadership role with Youth Council. They had increased confidence in presenting information, discussing class topics with other students and welcoming their peers' ideas, rather than only passively learning from the teacher. As one respondent from School 4 explained, "I think my friends are good and I am open to their ideas. I try to accept all the ideas from friends. I learned a lot from Youth Council because we have a lot of ideas together and we can solve problems." A School 1 student expressed her newfound confidence: "We are brave and confident in public speaking. Before, we were nervous and afraid. Now, we do not tremble. Since joining, I can be open and discuss problems with friends in Youth Council to find a solution." It also expanded their network of peers as they met other students through Youth Council-initiated activities such as traditional Khmer New Year games and an inter-school event for Youth Council members. "Before, I worked only in class. Now, I work all over the school and participate outside of class," said one School 2 respondent.

Being perceived as role models and partnering with others who were role models to them inspired some members to become more responsible and "act like an adult." They reported fighting less, studying more, improving their school attendance and punctuality, and adhering to other school regulations like throwing out trash or wearing a proper uniform. One student at School 2 described reforming since joining: "Before, I didn't wear my uniform properly or have a name tag sewn to my shirt. Now I've changed. I show a good example and complete all my work." Several students also mentioned gaining respect for "poor" students (both financially and academically). Someone from

School 4 reported, "Before, I didn't understand the feelings of poor students. Now I have friends who are poor."

Only one student (from School 6) said that Youth Council had not significantly changed his thoughts or actions regarding the Three Goods. He said, "Before, I was already involved in helping society, so I didn't really change. I was a good child, a good student who helped the school, and a good friend who helped friends. The new thing now is that I made many new friends." However, at School 6, where the Youth Council had just been formed that month, three other members described specific changes in themselves. For example, one commented on changes in her ability to be a good daughter: her time with family had decreased due to her responsibilities at school, but her family accepted the change because her hard work at school was another way to be a good child.

The remaining two respondents at School 6 mentioned their activity in a similar organization, the Scouts (កាយរិទ្ធ), so their answers may include the effects of this group in addition to Youth Council. One reported becoming more outgoing: "I could apply being a good friend every day. Before, I didn't have many friends because I was quiet. This year I got to know many people through participating in Scouts, Youth Council, and organizing traditional games for Khmer New Year. It made me change quickly, and now I'm really good at making friends." Another said he had gained confidence in starting the Scouts program at his school, and had since begun to spend time with struggling students, teaching them to write compositions and advising them to study hard.

**Youth Council Non-Members.** When non-members were asked about the influence of Youth Council activities or campaigns on their thoughts and actions related to the Three Goods, students interpreted this question narrowly. They considered only where they had heard about the Three Goods. When asked whether Youth Council members' examples or activities had influenced non-members' behavior, almost none could think of examples. The perceived influence of Youth Council on non-

members' actions and attitudes related to the Three Goods varied somewhat by school. Half of the focus

groups and interviews mentioned the morning routine of students lining up by the flagpole as a key time

for Youth Council members to announce information related to school regulations, safety tips, and other

issues of which they should be aware. Some schools also had periodic grade-level meetings in which the

class president and class representatives could make announcements. Some groups reported that teachers

and parents were equally or more important in teaching students about the Three Goods; one also

mentioned an NGO playing a significant role.

     This question illuminated a clear distinction between schools. At School 1, non-members

claimed they learned about the Three Goods equally from teachers and Youth Council, and at School 2,

they said Youth Council was their main source of information about the Three Goods, along with some

input from parents and outside organization. At School 4, by contrast, students reported that only

teachers had informed them about the Three Goods, while the Youth Council had discussed nothing

beyond rules. At School 6, they claimed only their parents had told them.

     This question enhances the survey, which compares Three Goods scores between Youth Council

members and non-members. Inquiring about this topic in the focus groups lends insight into whether and

how Youth Councils are explicitly promoting the Three Goods. Despite the annual Three Goods

competition sponsored by the national government and implemented by Youth Councils, none of the

focus groups mentioned being aware of this competition. Although "good child, good student, and good

friend" is stated in national policy as intended outcomes of the entire Student Council program,

participants reported that some schools' Youth Councils had never discussed the Three Goods with the

student body, nor apparently had advisers specifically urged Youth Council members to embody these

traits.

**Theme 3: How do students perceive emotional intelligence?**

**In relation to one's own emotions.** Members and non-members were asked, "What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling their own emotions (អារម្មណ៍)? When might this be a helpful skill?" They described emotional intelligence as facilitating a patient and prudent response to events or situations that triggered emotions, such as being blamed. Respondents from nearly every group saw emotional intelligence as essential in promoting harmony and avoiding conflict or violence. "I have to learn to control myself before I make other friends upset also." For example, when I asked about specific situations in which emotional intelligence was needed, a non-member at School 4 replied: "In class when a group of [students] is responsible for cleaning the room, and they don't do their roles like taking out trash and don't clean well, I feel angry with them. I can control my emotions and try to talk to them peacefully, without bad words, to get them to do it. I can use sweet, soft words." Emotional intelligence could help students show respect to teachers, peers, and themselves. Respondents viewed emotionally intelligent individuals as desirable friends with strong relationships.

Non-members at three schools discussed the need to solve underlying problems. This process could involve individual reflection and action, or collective discussion and action. As a School 2 respondent put it, "I ask a good friend to give me an idea about a solution. If no one can help, I will think and think to find a solution by myself." Whenever the possibility of involving others was mentioned, it was always in the context of seeking help to solve a problem. It was unclear whether students saw a value in expressing one's emotions to others, even close family and friends, who could offer no practical help beyond a listening ear. Three non-member groups added that emotional intelligence helps regulate one's emotions, which someone from School 6 described as "…not to be angry, try to calm down. Take deep breaths." Non-members at Schools 1 and 2 proposed that those with

emotional intelligence might sometimes ignore an upsetting situation, focusing on studies or something enjoyable like music. These distracting activities were described as ways of regulating emotions.

Youth Council members at Schools 2 and 6 emphasized thinking before acting or speaking: "If I'm very angry, I don't say anything until I'm calm." One respondent specified that this period of reflection was necessary to consider others' emotions and perspectives and avoid damaging relationships: "Think about others – what will they feel if I say this to them? How would I feel if they said it to me? We need to think before doing something because maybe we think we're right but other people think it's wrong. Find out about ourselves and others." Members at Schools 2 and 4 pointed out its benefit in teamwork: "We can work well with friends and improve – no arguments or quarreling." Only members mentioned that emotional intelligence could contribute to one's success: "We have success with work if we can control our feelings." "With positive thinking… we can achieve something that is different from others." "If I am impatient and cannot cope with emotions, I cannot achieve. Now I can do everything well." This idea extends emotional intelligence's value from the social realm into academic and career-related realms.

**In relation to others' emotions.** All students responded to the question, "What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling other people's emotions? When might this be a helpful skill?" The most common response across all groups was that emotional intelligence enables people to encourage and motivate others. "When a friend is angry, I will use soft words and psychology questions… I can use what I know – different styles and ways of facilitating people." "If students are unhappy or sleepy, the teacher can tell them funny stories and use energizing games… to make students feel fresh and continue learning." Entertaining others to "make them laugh and feel happy" was another common use of emotional intelligence, as were helping others in practical ways and building strong friendships.

The only answer unique to non-members pertained to promoting harmony, echoing the previous discussion about regulating one's own emotions. A School 4 non-member explained, "I know my teacher's feelings, so I have to listen to her presentation. If I don't listen, I'll make her feel upset." Members mentioned the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. One School 6 member reported, "When I know [my peers'] feeling, I know what they like and how to manage them. I will be able to achieve the group task very smoothly. If you know about their feelings and their competency, you can assign tasks effectively." They also mentioned the value of empathizing with others, such as new students, poor people, and those facing family difficulties.

Focus groups' descriptions of emotional intelligence corresponded fairly well with the statements on the survey, as well as with Western researchers' discussions of emotional intelligence and its importance. Of the four types of emotional intelligence included on the survey, they most frequently indicated Regulation of Emotion (ROE) when asked about understanding or controlling one's own emotions.  They mentioned the need to control one's emotions in public, and to avoid making regrettable decisions while upset. These comments echo ROE statements on the survey like "I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally," or "I have good control of my own emotions." They also discussed ways to make oneself calm down or cheer up, which relates to the ROE statement, "I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry." Members also included some comments that pointed to Use of Emotion (UOE) in discussing one's own emotions. They mentioned that emotional intelligence can help people have "success with work" or "achieve something that is different from the others" through "positive thinking." These comments correlate with the UOE statement, "I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them," and with UOE statements about being self-motivated and using positive self-talk, such as "I always tell myself I am a competent person." In discussing others' emotions, participants' responses covered ideas found in Others' Emotion Awareness

(OEA) and often extended from there into influencing others' emotions or adjusting their own behavior based on others' emotions, a concept not included in the survey but often mentioned in research on emotional intelligence.

The concept that was most notably absent was Self-Emotion Awareness (SEA), which includes statements like, "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time" or "I have good understanding of my own emotions." It may be that students found these statements too obvious to mention, since my focus group question asked, "What does it mean for someone to understand their own emotions?" Another conjecture is that Cambodia's collectivist culture may value introspective reflection less than many Western cultures, or may express that introspection in different ways.

**Theme 4: How does Youth Council influence students' relationships with one another?**

**Members' perspectives.** Youth Council members were asked about the influence of Youth Council on their relationships with teachers and other students. Those at schools affiliated with Caring for Cambodia reported the most positive influence. At the CFC-affiliated schools (1 and 2), respondents described their relationships with teachers in warm terms, with School 1 students saying teachers were proud of their teamwork within the Youth Council and School 2 students reporting close relationships with teachers. School 1 students claimed to feel closer than before to "students with problems," presumably since they were helping or encouraging such students. They also described how teamwork and joint problem-solving had deepened their friendships with other members. School 2 students asserted that Youth Council had expanded their circle of friends through new opportunities to help other students and to collaborate with grades 7-12.

At School 6, by contrast, past incidents had harmed the reputation of student organizations among both staff and students. One student reported: "Some teachers don't understand our work. They

always have negative thoughts when students want to do anything." He added that teachers' trust in

student leaders of the Scouts had been damaged when non-members wore the Scout uniforms and

scarves, and left class with the Scouts, but chose to waste time instead of helping with tasks like painting

the school. Likewise, the previous Youth Council angered students through members' hypocrisy in

enforcing rules but not personally adhering to them. "They took a chance to pressure other students and

thought they were higher than the other students." Students are supposed to wear sport shoes or normal

shoes instead of flip-flops with their uniforms, but in heavy rain, everyone prefers to wear flip-flops.

"Youth Council also broke the rules and wore flip-flops, but they scolded the others who wore them."

The speaker used this incident as an example of why students don't respect the current Youth Council.

However, the newly elected Youth Council president sounded determined to regain the trust of the

school community, and School 6 members described having close relationships with each other that

were now being strengthened through their shared Youth Council experiences.

At School 4, few members seemed to consider their membership status a major factor in the

quality of their relationships with teachers and students. Students said that their Youth Council activities

led them to interact with the vice-principal who oversaw them, but not collaborate with a variety of

teachers. They did not indicate Youth Council as a significant factor in their relationships with others,

and only described making periodic announcements to their classes.

Part of my initial hypothesis was that Youth Council members' increased opportunities and

needs to build relationships would either attract more emotionally intelligent individuals or would

increase their emotional intelligence throughout their membership. While the survey did not explicitly

ask about the quality of their relationships with others at school, it did ask several related questions.

Members cited interpersonal factors low in their list of reasons for joining Youth Council: working with

teachers, making new friends, and working with other students all ranked near the bottom of the eight

factors, below the top four reasons, which included helping the school and community, as well as learning new things and challenging themselves. Among members' favorite aspects of Youth Council, these interpersonal factors earned a slightly higher percentage of votes, but remained low at #4-6 most popular out of seven. Members reported that most of their time is spent in groups or pairs, whether meeting with each other or meeting non-members. Among their least favorite aspects of Youth Council, "difficulties with other members" and "difficulties with non-members" were respectively the second and third most commonly selected responses, just after "Nothing – I like everything about it." The overall impression of relationships based on the survey is that while relationships were not members' primary interest in joining, Youth Council imposes a significant relational burden on members for which they may not feel prepared. Focus group respondents seemed more positive or neutral about their relationships with others, which may be due to the social desirability effect. Especially since their fellow members were fellow participants in the focus groups, many Youth Council members likely felt reluctant to bring up any difficult or negative incidents except in very general terms.

**Non-members' perspectives.** Non-members were asked to describe their interactions with Youth Council members in their school. This question showed a significant difference between schools. At School 6, a youth council had been hurriedly elected in the weeks just prior to the focus group. Unsurprisingly, non-members seemed unaware of the youth council and unsure who its members were. They could think of one or two events in previous years when they had interacted with the youth council.

At the other three schools, the youth councils were more clearly established. At Schools 2 and 4, non-members described their council members as equals who acted humble and didn't require special treatment from other students. One School 4 student reported, "If I speak politely to them, it feels too distant." At these two schools, non-members stated that being friends with youth council members was

both easy and desirable in the eyes of most students. At School 4, they said it was also normal to collaborate with council members on cleaning, working on the school grounds, and preparing special events like a ceremony for the opening of a new school building. By contrast, non-members at Schools 1 and 2 emphasized council members' roles in advising and helping students.

At School 1, while non-members spoke warmly of members, they emphasized the confidence and leadership of members, rather than their humility and equality with other students. One student reported, "I respect Youth Council members even if they are younger, because they are leaders in the school. But outside of school, we can be friends and equals." Others in the group agreed.

This question corresponded to four statements on the survey. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), non-members ranked the statements in the following order from highest to lowest score: "I know at least one Youth Council member well" (mean = 2.70, SD = .98), "It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with concerns" (mean = 2.60, SD = .90), "I feel respected by Youth Council members" (mean = 2.54, SD = .90), and "It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with suggestions" (mean = 2.53, SD = .91).  As mentioned in the descriptive quantitative findings, these scores were significantly correlated ($p < .05$) with school affiliation. For two of the responses, scores were also associated with emotional intelligence in non-members, and for a third one ("I feel respected by Youth Council members") there was an association that approached statistical significance ($p = .068$). Therefore, the survey and focus groups agree that Youth Council's relationships with the general student body often vary by school, due to factors such as school culture and composition of Youth Council members. The survey's link with emotional intelligence presents non-members as likewise having agency to influence these relationships, a theme implicit in the responses of many focus group participants.

**Theme 5: What is the perceived value and purpose of Youth Council?**

**Non-members***' responses*. In describing the value of Youth Council to their schools, non-members at all four schools cited its contribution to students' behavior. Specifically, by announcing, enforcing, and exemplifying school regulations, council members encourage the student body to adhere to school policies related to uniforms, punctuality and attendance, and so on. According to a School 4 student, "They tell me about discipline at school, not to be late to class – be punctual, study hard, and have good relationships with other friends…. I started to come punctually and regularly and pay attention to my teachers." On a related note, council members teach students to make wise choices around topics like study habits and substance abuse – "to avoid problems from drugs," as one student at School 2 put it. A School 1 student further added that Youth Council's role in enforcing rules had improved the school climate: "Because Youth Council makes students obey the rules better, I feel happy to come to school. I look at them and follow their example in order to grow." In a similar vein, School 6 students added that it made the school safer: "They observe strangers coming in, like bad kids and gangsters." Other non-members at School 6 described the Youth Council's value as minimal, stating that non-members had never been invited to participate in Youth Council's activities, like planting trees, which occurred only on Sundays when other students were not present.

Council members pass on tips and reminders from teachers and administrators. A School 2 respondent said, "With work assigned by the teacher, the teacher reminds me only a few times. But Youth Council continues to remind me [about the work] and to bring the flowers to school and water them." Youth Council members promote discussion among students and give them ideas, as well as modeling collaboration and respectful dialogue with teachers: "We can learn from the way they dress up and talk to the teachers," said a School 2 student. One student at School 1 also mentioned feeling free to tell them about concerns: "They are helpful to me because when I have a problem, even at home, I can

discuss it with them." None of the non-member focus groups mentioned them transmitting ideas from students to teachers and administrators; information seemed to flow down the hierarchy from adults to students.

*Staff responses.* Administrators and advisers' responses had many parallels to those of non-members. They mentioned Youth Council teaching other students about health, hygiene, life skills, and resources for studying. Two administrators valued Youth Council's role in administration and discipline. The School 1 administrator, by contrast, emphasized the mutual benefits of members' collaboration with teachers. "If [members] have questions, they will find solutions by asking the teachers. Youth Council works well with the teachers because teachers never think they are better or higher than the students; they are a group together." Lastly, administrators at CFC schools described Youth Council offering significant help to the administrators themselves. School 2's administrator said, "They save me time to announce things and they help with other projects." At School 1, the administrator reported, "Youth Council is really helpful to the teachers and students… I need them; I can't work without them. I'm so proud of them – they're so clever and hard-working."

Among both students participating in the focus groups and administrators being interviewed, the Three Goods were never explicitly mentioned. However, the Good Student traits came up indirectly in discussions about discipline, study habits, collaboration, and reminders about schoolwork. Administrators seemed inclined to use Youth Council members to facilitate existing work of announcing news, promoting healthy habits, enforcing school policies, and so on, rather than rigidly adhering to national policies and recommendations about developing the Three Goods in students. Some of these schoolwide goals overlap with the national Three Goods objectives more naturally than others. In this way, Cambodia's Youth Councils stem from a centrally mandated program, but decisions about whether and how to implement them are decentralized.

CHAPTER V

**DISCUSSION**

**Discussion**

**Summary of Findings**

The purpose of the quantitative portion of the study was to investigate links between Youth Council membership status and emotional intelligence, and between membership status and Three Goods traits. Surveys were administered to 318 students at six different high schools, of whom 86 were current members of Youth Council. Correlation and regression tests partially confirmed Hypothesis 1 (Youth Council participants will have a different level of emotional intelligence). The overall model was significant for the Emotional Intelligence composite scale and the Use of Emotion sub-scale. Years of Youth Council membership in grades 7-12 proved a significant predictor for two of the four subscales: Self-Emotion Appraisal and Use of Emotion. An independent samples t-test showed that members had more friends in whom they would confide, which was significantly correlated with the composite scale and three of the sub-scales.

However, these tests offered little support for Hypothesis 2 (Youth Council participants will have a different level of Three Goods traits), although some results approached significance at $p < .05$. The overall model was not significant for the Three Goods composite scale, but within that scale, hours per week spent on Youth Council was a significant predictor. While the overall model was significant for the Good Student sub-scale, number of siblings and class rank were the only significant predictors. A chi-squared test indicated that Youth Council members (especially returning members) had higher Three Goods ratings than non-members, but this result was insignificant with a p-value of .078.

The quantitative results led to unanswered questions about criteria for electing Youth Council members. If they are not necessarily more emotionally intelligent or of better repute than their non-member classmates, but they are significantly older and more likely to have repeated a grade, does that imply that age is one of the most important factors for Cambodians in determining whom they respect?

It is certainly the case that Cambodia is a very age-conscious culture, in which people commonly refer to each other as "older sister," "younger brother," and so on according to age. Just as Cambodia's national language (Khmer) demands respectful forms for older people, perhaps students are more likely to perceive older classmates as more deserving of leadership roles.

Qualitative research based on student focus groups at four of the six schools aimed to explore Cambodian students' conceptions of emotional intelligence, good students, good children, and good friends. The research further explored their perceptions of the value and impact of Youth Council at their schools. Descriptions of the Three Goods were relatively consistent across schools and Youth Council membership statuses. All three combined inner attitudes with outward actions. Some traits, such as respect, dependability, willingness to help, and honorable or correct behavior, extended across all three relationships (student, child, and friend). Other traits were specific to a given relationship: for example, good children are expected to help with housework, while good students should be punctual for class. These descriptions mostly corresponded with attributes emphasized in the survey, but sometimes contrasted, as in the case of good students. While the survey emphasized good students' diligence and studiousness, focus group participants highlighted their obedience to school rules and deference to teachers.

Members reported a greater influence of Youth Council on their own Three Goods actions and attitudes than did non-members. They cited expanding social circles and deepening relationships, new opportunities for public speaking and collaboration, and increased motivation to be a model student. By contrast, non-members at two schools mentioned hearing announcements about the Three Goods from members, which had played a significant role in shaping their understanding but not necessarily their behavior. At the remaining two schools, most students could think of no way in which Youth Council had impacted their thoughts or actions related to the Three Goods. It would be interesting to know to

what extent this limited influence could be altered if Youth Council representatives were distributed more evenly among committees. For example, only three Youth Council members total reported belonging to the Younger Adult Resource Committee, which aims to provide mentors for struggling students. If this committee were better-represented, perhaps more non-members would have testimonials of Youth Council helping them become good students. Conversely, perhaps by ensuring adequate staffing of the Discipline & Goodness Committee (which had at least three representatives at most schools), schools are maximizing the effectiveness of Youth Council at shaping the student body into good students and even friends.

In the focus groups, it became apparent that like many Cambodian schools, School 6 had not had an active Youth Council until contacted by the research team, less than a month before the focus group. However, it had had similar youth organizations that were active: namely Scouts and the Red Cross Society. The fact that several participants in the members' focus group had also belonged to these organizations may explain why they often attested to personal growth due to their membership; perhaps they were including the role of these organizations in their development. These organizations exist at many Cambodian schools; it is unclear to what extent their purposes overlap with that of Youth Council.

School 6 members' responses may also be influenced by the social desirability effect and the importance in Cambodian culture of saving face at both personal and institutional levels. Despite my best attempts to maintain neutrality and ask open-ended questions, they and their administrator may have assumed that I wanted glowing testimonials, and therefore done their best to provide them. Indeed, the administrator contradicted the students in claiming that elections had been held at the beginning of the school year. Of course, the social desirability effect could also have been in play at other schools, but at least at those schools there is independent verification that the Youth Council has been active

throughout the school year. This occurrence speaks to the importance of triangulation in interpreting data.

Members and non-members described emotional intelligence as facilitating a measured response to emotion-triggering phenomena and enabling someone to encourage and motivate others. Respondents largely agreed that emotional intelligence was essential in promoting harmony, building strong relationships, and avoiding conflict or violence. Non-members emphasized the importance of solving underlying causes of negative emotions and regulating those emotions through distracting activities as a means of preserving harmony. Members pointed to its benefits in teamwork, leadership, and one's ultimate success in academics and career. The latter points suggest that members grasp the importance of emotional intelligence on a deeper and broader level than their peers. Descriptions of emotional intelligence overlapped to a large extent with attitudes attributed to the Three Goods, and the two were highly correlated in the quantitative analysis. As Wong, Law & Song (2004) and Yang & Sternberg (1997) posit, Asians' conceptions of emotional intelligence largely coincides with definitions by Western researchers. However, its specific behavioral applications may vary widely by culture. In the present study, respondents emphasized the need to maintain harmony, if needed by remaining silent about difficult emotions, perhaps to a greater extent than many in the West would advocate.

The effect of Youth Council on students' relationships varied by school. Members at the CFC-affiliated schools (1 and 2) seemed to have the most positive reputation with peers and teachers, characterized by ongoing leadership and collaboration. At School 4, members reported minimal effects of membership on their relationships, and at School 6, members discussed the challenges of distrust and a negative reputation lingering from previous members' misconduct. These descriptions paralleled discussions of the value of Youth Council at each school. This contrast among schools illustrates

research suggesting that student councils' efficacy relies heavily on the school ambiance and their place within a school.

**Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research**

This study was not longitudinal. It addressed a relatively narrow age group (grades 10-12) in six schools in one province of Cambodia. Moreover, at some schools the sample size was fairly small, and the sample sizes were uneven across schools. Therefore generalizability to other Cambodian regions and other age groups is limited, and some results may have been skewed due to patterns in School 2, which had a larger sample. Better supervision of the data collection during the surveys could have ensured that all Youth Council members from each school completed the survey, that grades and genders were evenly represented in non-member samples, and that students took their time and completed most or all questions in the survey, as a number of students skipped portions of it. Resolving technical difficulties at Schools 1 and 2, where students took the survey online, could have also enabled more thorough completion of surveys.

Future studies could survey a larger population of students, drawing from more schools and regions as well as more diverse ages. Qualitative data could include students' parents and other stakeholders in the community. They could explore the election process and which traits are valued in prospective Youth Council members. They could also compare Youth Council to similar student organizations like the Scouts and the Red Cross Society. While the experiences of students in this study may not be generalizable to all high school students in Cambodia, it nonetheless lays important groundwork in exploring conceptions of emotional intelligence in relation to the Three Goods.

**Recommendations**

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) should clarify its expectations for Youth Councils. If the "Three Goods" are to be central priorities, it should spell out attributes associated with each, or encourage students, school staff, and even parents to pursue dialogue defining these constructs at a local level. Without a clearly defined standard, it is difficult to reach consensus in measuring progress. The MoEYS could develop posters, teaching resources, and suggested strategies for encouraging the Three Goods rather than leaving each school to start from scratch with limited resources of money and time. It would also be helpful to develop a series of trainings for Youth Council members on effective presentation and interpersonal communication skills. The trainings could help them rise to the challenge of teaching their peers and enforcing discipline, and could help make their interpersonal interactions a boon to members rather than a source of ongoing frustration.

If Youth Councils are to be mandatory, the MoEYS should consider communicating to schools that they are to take precedence over similar organizations like the Red Cross Society and the Scouts. It should require not only a list of members at each school, but also an annual report of their activities. MoEYS should meet with administrators of active Youth Councils around the country to discuss the advantages and challenges of implementing Youth Council, and should disseminate findings to administrators nationwide.

Otherwise, the MoEYS could allow schools to choose one of the three organizations, as long as there are no significant differences in their aims and structures. Since membership and administration largely overlapped between groups at the school where multiple groups coexisted, it seems prudent for schools to focus on implementing one organization well rather than halfheartedly pursuing several directions.

**Conclusion**

This study found that Youth Council status is somewhat associated with emotional intelligence. Specifically, students with more years of experience in Youth Council scored higher on the subscales of Self-Emotion Appraisal and Use of Emotion. However, Youth Council membership has an insignificant relationship with traits of a good student, good child, and good friend. It also found that Cambodian students have well-formulated notions of the Three Goods, which overlap considerably but not completely with their conceptions of emotional intelligence. There were wide discrepancies among schools in attempts to cultivate the Three Goods in the student body through the Youth Council. Where fruitful collaboration occurred among students and between them and teachers, Youth Council members and non-members alike were more satisfied with the program and saw benefits to the school. However, Youth Council's implementation in many schools in this study limited members to at best announcers and enforcers of disciplinary policies, which helped improve the school environment but did little to cultivate students' potential as leaders and collaborative problem-solvers. By broadening conceptions of Youth Council's purpose to include nurturing emotional intelligence and Three Goods attributes, Cambodian schools could find Youth Council valuable in developing student leaders who enrich the school by promoting respect, diligent study habits, teamwork, and service in culturally appropriate ways. In this way, Youth Council would strengthen the fabric of the school community and more thoroughly achieve its original intent of producing good children, students, friends, and ultimately citizens.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Survey

### HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SURVEY

Lehigh University is currently conducting a survey among Cambodian high school students to understand their traits, attitudes, and behaviors. We would like to obtain information on yourself and your current status, as well as your beliefs and attitudes on various educational and relational issues. The results of this survey will allow school administrators and educational policy makers a better understanding of the impact of various programs that are provided to high school students. There is no right or wrong answer.  It is about what you think (not what others think). So we need your honest answers. We will not share your answers to anyone else except the researchers involved in the project. If some questions make you feel bothered, please feel free to skip them. We appreciate your help in completing this survey!

Please check the box indicating your agreement to take this survey:
- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**

1. What is your gender?
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
2. What school are you currently studying at?
   - ☐ _____ High School
   - ☐ _____ High School
   - ☐ _____ High School
   - ☐ _____ High School
   - ☐ _____ High School
   - ☐ _____ High School
3. What is your grade in school?
   - ☐ 10
   - ☐ 11
   - ☐ 12
4. How old are you?
   - ☐ 12 or younger
   - ☐ 13
   - ☐ 14
   - ☐ 15
   - ☐ 16
   - ☐ 17
   - ☐ 18
   - ☐ 19
   - ☐ 20
   - ☐ 21
   - ☐ 22
   - ☐ 23
   - ☐ 24
   - ☐ 25 or older
5. How many times last year were you absent from school in total?
   - ☐ 0
   - ☐ 1
   - ☐ 2
   - ☐ 3
   - ☐ 4
   - ☐ 5
   - ☐ 6
   - ☐ 7
   - ☐ 8
   - ☐ 9
   - ☐ 10
   - ☐ 11
   - ☐ 12
   - ☐ 13
   - ☐ 14
   - ☐ 15
   - ☐ 16 or more

6. At what age did you enroll in grade 1?
   - ☐ 3
   - ☐ 4
   - ☐ 5
   - ☐ 6
   - ☐ 7
   - ☐ 8
   - ☐ 9
   - ☐ 10 or older

7. Have you repeated a grade since Grade 1?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

8. Have you jumped a grade since Grade 1?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

9. What was your academic ranking last year for both semesters? _____

10. What is your Semester 1 average score this year?
    - ☐ 0-10
    - ☐ 11-20
    - ☐ 21-30
    - ☐ 31-40
    - ☐ 41-50

11. What are your plans immediately after you graduate from high school?
    - ☐ Go to university
    - ☐ Go to teacher training school
    - ☐ Go to vocational/technical training school
    - ☐ Look for employment
    - ☐ Help with a family business (selling things or helping with farming)
    - ☐ Get married
    - ☐ Don't know
    - ☐ Other (please specify): …………………………………………

12. If you have a plan to go to university, which major do you want to study?
    - ☐ Science (biology, chemistry, physics)
    - ☐ Engineering
    - ☐ Math
    - ☐ Computer sciences (IT)
    - ☐ Medicine
    - ☐ Social Sciences (Khmer, Sociology, Psychology, History, Philosophy, Geography, Tourism, Law)
    - ☐ Business (accounting, finance, banking, marketing, management, economics)
    - ☐ Foreign languages
    - ☐ Other (please specify): ………………………………………………….
    - ☐ Don't know or not planning to attend university

13. Have you heard about Youth Council club before?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

14. Have you ever been a member of a Child Council or Youth Council club?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

15. If you answered "yes," in which grade(s) were you a member? (Check all that apply.)
    - ☐ 4
    - ☐ 5
    - ☐ 6
    - ☐ 7
    - ☐ 8
    - ☐ 9
    - ☐ 10
    - ☐ 11
    - ☐ 12

16. Do you want to run for Youth Council in the future?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

17. Do you want to participate in Youth Council activities in the future?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

**QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS**
*If you are not a current member, skip to question #24.*

18. What were your main motivations for joining Youth Council? (Choose up to two.)
    ☐ To gain respect from other students
    ☐ To help the school
    ☐ To please my parents
    ☐ To challenge myself
    ☐ To learn new things
    ☐ To work with teachers
    ☐ To work with other students
    ☐ To make new friends
    ☐ Other: _____

19. How many hours a week do you spend on Youth Council activities?
    ☐ 0
    ☐ 1
    ☐ 2
    ☐ 3
    ☐ 4
    ☐ 5 or more

20. How did you become a Youth Council member?
    ☐ I was elected.
    ☐ I volunteered.

21. What is your position in Youth Council?
    ☐ President
    ☐ Vice-president
    ☐ Committee chair
    ☐ Adviser
    ☐ Member

22. Which committee do you belong to?
    ☐ Discipline and Goodness Encouragement
    ☐ Study and Library
    ☐ Rescue and Helping Society
    ☐ Administrative and Financial
    ☐ Promotion
    ☐ Art, Sport, and Culture
    ☐ Health, Hygiene, Environment, and Life Skills
    ☐ Younger Adult Resource Group
    ☐ Other: _____

23. Which Youth Council activities do you spend the most time on? (Choose up to 2.)
    ☐ Meeting with other Youth Council members and/or the advisor
    ☐ Meeting or talking with non-members about a committee project
    ☐ Meeting or talking with non-members about school issues or students' needs
    ☐ Organizing a project
    ☐ Carrying out a project
    ☐ Other: _____

24. What is your favorite thing about being a Youth Council member? (Choose up to 2.)
    ☐ Respect from other students
    ☐ Helping the school
    ☐ Challenging myself
    ☐ Learning new things
    ☐ Working with teachers
    ☐ Working with other students
    ☐ Making new friends
    ☐ Other:
    _____

25. What is your least favorite thing about being a Youth Council member? (Choose up to 2.)
    ☐ Takes too much time
    ☐ Boring
    ☐ Stressful
    ☐ Not able to accomplish enough
    ☐ Difficulties with other members
    ☐ Difficulties with non-member classmates
    ☐ Difficulties with teachers
    ☐ Other: _____
    ☐ Nothing; I like everything about being a member
26. Overall, how much do you like being a Youth Council member?
    ☐ Strongly dislike
    ☐ Dislike
    ☐ Like
    ☐ Strongly like
27. Do your parents and/or teachers know that you belong to Youth Council?
    ☐ No, none of them knows.
    ☐ Only my parent(s) know.
    ☐ Only my teacher(s) know.
    ☐ Both my parents and my teachers know.


**QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT YOUTH COUNCIL NON-MEMBERS**
*If you are a current member, skip to question #30.*

28. This year, have you ever participated in Youth Council activities?
    ☐ Yes, often
    ☐ Yes, a few times
    ☐ Yes, once
    ☐ No, never
29. How much do you like participating in Youth Council activities?
    ☐ Strongly dislike
    ☐ Dislike
    ☐ Like
    ☐ Strongly like
    ☐ I never participate

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*1 = Strongly disagree     2 = Disagree     3= Agree     4 = Strongly agree*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. I know at least one Youth Council member well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. I feel respected by Youth Council members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with suggestions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. It is easy for me to come to Youth Council members with concerns. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTIONS

I would like to ask about your participation in your school and community, as well as your interactions with other people.

Attitude: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

> *1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34. I believe I should make a difference in my school or community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. I believe that I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 36. I am committed to serve in my school or community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. I believe that all citizens have a responsibility to their community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Behavior: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

> *1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38. I am involved in structured volunteer position(s) in my school or community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. When working with others, I make positive changes in my school or community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. I help members of my school or community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. I stay informed of events in my school or community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Confidence in Participation at School: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

> *1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree*

42. Electing student representatives to suggest changes in how the school is run makes schools better.

    1    2    3    4

43. Lots of positive changes happen in this school when students work together.

    1    2    3    4

44. Organizing groups of students to state their opinions could help solve problems in this school.

    1    2    3    4

45. Students acting together can have more influence on what happens in this school than students acting alone.

    1    2    3    4

Emotional Intelligence: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

> *1   = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = agree   4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46. I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 47. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 48. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 49. I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

> *1   = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = agree   4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50. I have good understanding of my own emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 51. I am a good observer of others' emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 52. I always tell myself I am a competent person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 53. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*1     = strongly disagree    2 = disagree       3 = agree         4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 54. I really understand what I feel. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 55. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 56. I am a self-motivated person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 57. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*1     = strongly disagree    2 = disagree       3 = agree         4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 58. I always know whether or not I am happy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 59. I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 60. I would always encourage myself to try my best. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 61. I have good control of my own emotions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Good Student: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*1     = strongly disagree    2 = disagree       3 = agree         4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 62. I study every night before bed or early every morning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 63. I feel like school is my good friend. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 64. I like to practice again and again with homework my teachers give me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 65. My teachers think I am an industrious student. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 66. My friends think I am an industrious student. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Good Friend: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*1 = strongly disagree       2 = disagree       3 = agree         4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 67. I participate in activities with friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 68. I help friends who need help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 69. My friends help me when I need help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 70. My friends want to hang out with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 71. My friends think I am polite and humble. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Good Child: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

*1 = strongly disagree       2 = disagree       3 = agree         4 =strongly agree*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 72. I help my parents cook or wash dishes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 73. I help my parents keep the house clean. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 74. I help take care of my siblings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 75. I don't ask my parents to buy unnecessary stuff for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 76. My parents think I am polite and humble. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 77. I try my best to make my parents happy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**FAMILY BACKGROUND QUESTIONS**

78. What is the level of education of your mother?
    - ☐ No schooling
    - ☐ Primary school
    - ☐ Secondary school
    - ☐ High School
    - ☐ Above High School
79. What is the level of education of your father?
    - ☐ No schooling
    - ☐ Primary school
    - ☐ Secondary school
    - ☐ High School
    - ☐ Above High School
80. Do you know how much do your parents earn per month (combined both mother and father together)?
    - ☐ Below $50
    - ☐ $50-99
    - ☐ $100-199
    - ☐ $200-299
    - ☐ $300-399
    - ☐ $400-up
81. Including you, how many children are in your family?
    - ☐ 1 (just me)
    - ☐ 2
    - ☐ 3
    - ☐ 4
    - ☐ 5
    - ☐ 6 or more
82. Do you have any siblings who have attended or are attending university?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

**Appendix B: Focus Group Instruments**

| Student Council Members Focus Group Instrument | |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | |
| "Hello! My name is Chelsea Cooper. I am a graduate student from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, USA. I am conducting this focus group to explore how Cambodian high school students are impacted by the Youth Council Program. I am looking specifically at the areas of social-emotional intelligence and the Three Goods (Good Student, Good Child, and Good Friend).<br><br>You have been selected to speak with us today because of your involvement in a Student Council Program. My project as a whole focuses on how the program has impacted the students immediately involved with the program as well as its influence in the broader school community. I have a particular interest in understanding how Cambodian students think about social-emotional intelligence and the Three Goods, as well as how these traits have been influenced by the program. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am seeking to understand more about the ways the program influences the school. Do you have any questions?" | |
| **Obtain Verbal Consent** | |
| "This focus group will be conducted in person and will not capture any personally identifiable information. The focus group should take approximately 60 minutes. The risks of participating in this focus group are minimal. If you choose to participate in this focus group, you may stop at any time. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in the process, you are encouraged to discuss your discomfort with me. There is no penalty for ending your participation in the focus group early." | |

| Question | Notes |
|---|---|
| **Social and Emotional Intelligence** | |
| 1. What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling their emotions? When might this be a helpful skill? | |
| 2. What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling other people's emotions? When might this be a helpful skill? | |
| 3. How has joining Student Council affected your relationships with teachers and students? | |
| **Three Goods** | |
| 4. What do the "Three Goods" mean to you? | |
| 5. Do you think participating in the Youth Council program has changed your thoughts or actions related to the Three Goods? If so, how? | |
| **Youth Council** | |
| 6. What do you think are the best aspects of your school's current Youth Council program? | |
| 7. How do you hope to see your school's Youth Council program improve in the future? | |

| **Youth Council Non-Members Focus Group Instrument** |
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**Introduction**

"Hello! My name is Chelsea Cooper. I am a graduate student from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, USA. I am conducting this focus group to explore how Cambodian high school students are impacted by the Youth Council Program. I am looking specifically at the areas of social-emotional intelligence and the Three Goods (Good Student, Good Child, and Good Friend).

You have been selected to speak with us today because of your attendance at one of the schools I am studying. My project as a whole focuses on how the program has impacted the students immediately involved with the program as well as its influence in the broader school community. I have a particular interest in understanding how Cambodian students think about social-emotional intelligence and the Three Goods, as well as how these traits have been influenced by the program. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am seeking to understand more about the ways the program influences the school. Do you have any questions?"

**Obtain Verbal Consent**

"This focus group will be conducted in person and will not capture any personally identifiable information. The focus group should take approximately 60 minutes. The risks of participating in this focus group are minimal. If you choose to participate in this focus group, you may stop at any time. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in the process, you are encouraged to discuss your discomfort with me. There is no penalty for ending your participation in the focus group early."

| **Question** | **Notes** |
|---|---|
| **Social and Emotional Intelligence** | |
| 1. What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling their emotions? When might this be a helpful skill? | |
| 2. What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling other people's emotions? When might this be a helpful skill? | |
| **Three Goods** | |
| 3. What do the "Three Goods" mean to you? | |
| 4. Do you think Youth Council activities or campaigns have changed your thoughts or actions related to the Three Goods? If so, how? | |
| **Youth Council** | |
| 5. What is the value and purpose of Youth Council to your school? Do you feel that the Youth Council benefits you personally? | |
| 6. Describe your interactions with Youth Council members. | |
| 7. What do you think are the best aspects of your school's current Youth Council program? | |
| 8. How do you hope to see your school's Youth Council program improve in the future? | |

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

| **Youth Council Adviser/Administrator Interview Protocol** |
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| **Introduction**<br>"Hello! My name is Chelsea Cooper. I am a graduate student from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, USA. I am conducting this focus group to explore how Cambodian high school students are impacted by the Youth Council Program. I am looking specifically at the areas of social-emotional intelligence and the Three Goods (Good Student, Good Child, and Good Friend).<br><br>You have been selected to speak with us today because of your oversight of a Youth Council Program. My project as a whole focuses on how the program has impacted the students immediately involved with the program as well as its influence in the broader school community. I have a particular interest in understanding how Cambodian students think about social-emotional intelligence and the Three Goods, as well as how these traits have been influenced by the program. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am seeking to understand more about the ways the program influences the school. Do you have any questions?" |
| **Obtain Verbal Consent**<br>"This interview will be conducted in person and will not capture any personally identifiable information. The interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes. The risks of participating in this interview are minimal. If you choose to participate in this interview, you may stop at any time. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in the process, you are encouraged to discuss your discomfort with me. There is no penalty for ending your participation in the interview early." |

| **Question** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- |
| **Social and Emotional Intelligence** | |
| 1. What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling their emotions? When might this be a helpful skill? | |
| 2. What does it mean for someone to be good at understanding and controlling other people's emotions? When might this be a helpful skill? | |
| 3. How have you seen your students use these skills? Do you think Youth Council has affected their skills related to emotions and relationships with others? | |
| **Three Goods** | |
| 4. What do the "Three Goods" mean to you? | |
| 5. Do you think participating in the Youth Council program has changed your students' thoughts or actions related to the Three Goods? If so, how? | |
| **Youth Council** | |
| 6. What is the value and purpose of Youth Council to your school? Do you feel that the Youth Council benefits your students personally? | |
| 7. What do you think are the best aspects of your school's current Youth Council program? | |
| 8. How do you hope to see your school's Youth Council program improve in the future? | |