



# Applications of Participatory Action Research to Promote Evidence-based Practice & Change in Schools



# **Implementing a Plan for School Mental Health: Facilitators and Barriers to Cultural Change**

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Tulane University

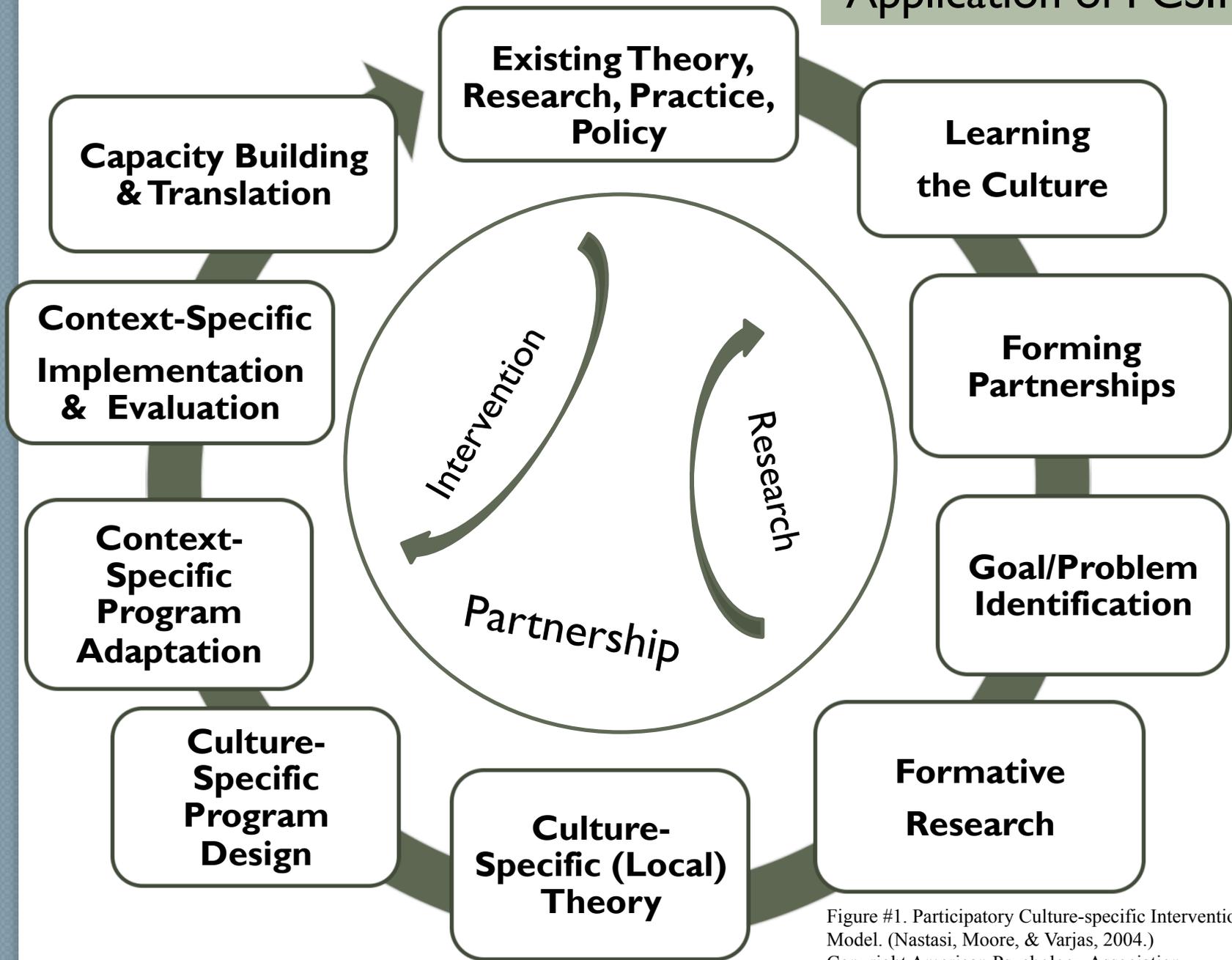


Figure #1. Participatory Culture-specific Intervention Model. (Nastasi, Moore, & Varjas, 2004.)  
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# Setting

- K-8 New Orleans charter school
- Primarily low income, African American student population
- 7<sup>th</sup> year of charter
- ~75 staff members:
  - Early career educators from outside of Louisiana
- ~500 students



# 2013-2014

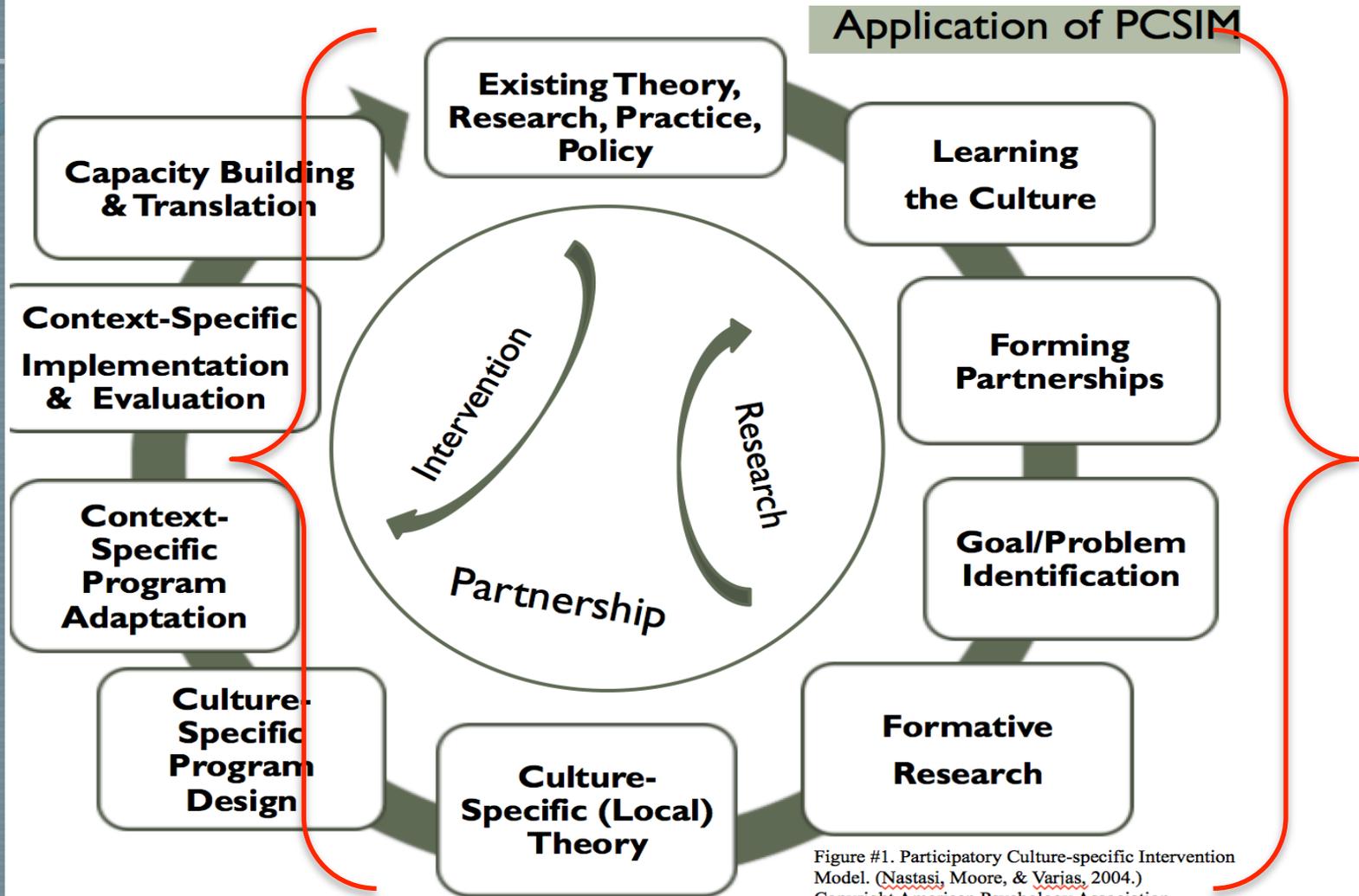


Figure #1. Participatory Culture-specific Intervention Model. (Nastasi, Moore, & Varjas, 2004.)  
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# 2014-2015 Pilot Year

- Context-specific program adaptation, implementation and evaluation
  - Programs selected:
    - Social-Emotional Learning in classrooms
    - Teacher coaching and mentorship
    - Peer mediation
    - Bi-monthly PD for teachers
  - SART (Social-Emotional Action Research Team) to oversee program implementation

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# Outcomes from Pilot Year

## CASEL School Climate Survey (Quantitative Data Collection)

- **Dramatic decline in performance**
  - *When you are trying to do your schoolwork do other children in your class bother you?*
  - *Do you let the teacher or other students in this class know how you are feeling?*
- **Remaining areas of concern**
  - *Is it hard for you to make friends at school?*
  - *Do you think that most students in your class follow the rules?*
  - *Do you let the teacher or other students in this class know how you are feeling?*
  - *Do you use your words when you are angry?*
- **Remaining areas of strength**
  - *Are the grown-ups at this school nice to children?*
  - *Do you think that your teacher believes that you can learn and do well in school?*
  - *Do you feel safe at school?*
  - *Do you think that you can do a good job at school?*
  - *Do you know what the rules are in your classroom?*
  - *Do you ask for help from your teacher in class when you need it?*

# Facilitators

## *Qualitative Data Collection (leadership team and SART)*

- **Innate Characteristics**
  - Teachers internally motivated to provide a welcoming environment and who valued social-emotional skills were better at teaching those skills and creating safe learning environment
- **Close Coaching Relationships**
  - Teacher coaches who were able to connect with the teachers they were mentoring both personally and professionally better able to improve teacher outcomes
- **Relevant Professional Development**
  - PD directly related to current classroom struggles and that required teachers to reflect and create an action plan

# Challenges/Barriers

*Qualitative Data Collection (leadership team and SART)*

- **Teacher safety**
  - When teachers did not that the school was an emotionally safe space, they had difficulty creating a safe learning environment for students.
- **Competing priorities**
  - SEL often took a backseat to other priorities, such as morning responsibilities during the time that SEL was supposed to take place.
- **Lack of continuity**
  - Since not all teachers were teaching the SEL curriculum, the tenets of the programs were inconsistently reinforced through the school day.

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- **Lack of continuity**
  - Since not all teachers were teaching the SEL curriculum, the tenets of the programs were inconsistently reinforced through the school day.
- Priority for 2015-2016 school year:
  - **SEL integration into whole-school culture**

# 2015-2016

- Context-specific program adaptation
- Context-specific implementation and evaluation
- Capacity building and translation



# 2015-2016

- Context-specific program adaptation
- Context-specific implementation and evaluation
- **Capacity building and translation**



# CULTURAL CHANGE THAT STICKS

START WITH WHAT'S ALREADY WORKING

*Katzenbach, Steffen & Cronley (2012)  
Harvard Business Review*



# Cultural Transformation

- *Create a vision for institutionalization/ cultural change*
- *Define critical changes to cultural knowledge and beliefs*
- *Implement formal and informal mechanisms to create cultural change*
  - Top-down incentives for enacting desired behavioral changes
  - Formal accountability structures
  - Modeling of desired behaviors
  - Engagement of employees who exemplify the desired changes
  - Physical reminders or artifacts that reflect desired cultural changes
  - Peer-to-peer interactions

*Adapted from Katzenbach, Steffen & Cronley (2012)*



# Cultural Transformation

- *Measure and monitor cultural evolution*
  - *Performance metrics*
  - *Critical behavioral milestones*
  - *Underlying beliefs, feelings and mindsets*
- *Adjust strategy as needed based on progress toward identified goals.*

*Adapted from Katzenbach, Steffen & Cronley (2012)*



# 2015-2016

- *Create vision for institutionalization/ cultural change & Define critical changes to cultural knowledge and beliefs*
  - Leadership team met to create “belief statements” & SEL vision in early summer 2015
- *Implement formal and informal mechanisms to create cultural change*
  - Staff introduced to cultural change priorities in summer PD
  - Belief statements posted on classroom walls
  - Teachers encouraged to teach and integrate belief statements
  - Staff trained in restorative & trauma-informed practices
  - School psychologist hired to provide teacher PD and support to students with intensive needs
  - Position of family liaison created

# Cultural Transformation

- *Measure and monitor cultural evolution*
  - Consultant (presenter) monitoring progress through:
    - *Performance metrics:*
      - Student grades, behavioral data, and attendance
      - CASEL climate survey
        - Assess changes to how students perceive culture
    - *Critical behavioral milestones*
      - Classroom observations & staff interviews
    - *Underlying beliefs, feelings and mindsets*
      - Are behavioral changes leading to sustainable, institutionalized culture change?
      - Surveys, interviews, observations and focus groups

# Cultural Transformation

- *Adjust strategy as needed based on progress toward identified goals.*
  - Using data to make structural changes as needed to better support cultural change initiative
    - Changes in coaching structure
    - Changes in rubric used to assess teachers
    - Planning for staff PD

# Challenges: Consultant Perspective

- Solidifying role as a “participatory” partner
- Integrating various school-wide initiatives
- Sustainability
- Consultant / school staff turnover



# Opportunities

- Relevance of research
- System-wide changes
- Likelihood of sustainability
- SEL champions within school staff



# Acknowledgements

- Tulane University 2015 Flowerree Fund
- Patrick Bell, Ph.D
- Laura Cornell, Tulane University



Questions?



# **A participatory approach to universal screening in a New Orleans charter elementary school**

Jorge Verlenden, M.S., M.Ed

Emiliya Adelson, M.S.

Bonnie Nastasi, Ph.D

International Psychological Well-Being Lab

Tulane University

# Agenda

- Background on universal screening
- Overview of the consultation project
- Results of the screening effort
- Implications for schools

# Participants in the Systems-Level Consultation

- New Orleans Charter Elementary School
  - Grades K-4
  - Staffed by new and early career teachers
- Predominately African American student body of approximately 450 students
  - Most qualify for free or reduced lunch

# PCSIM

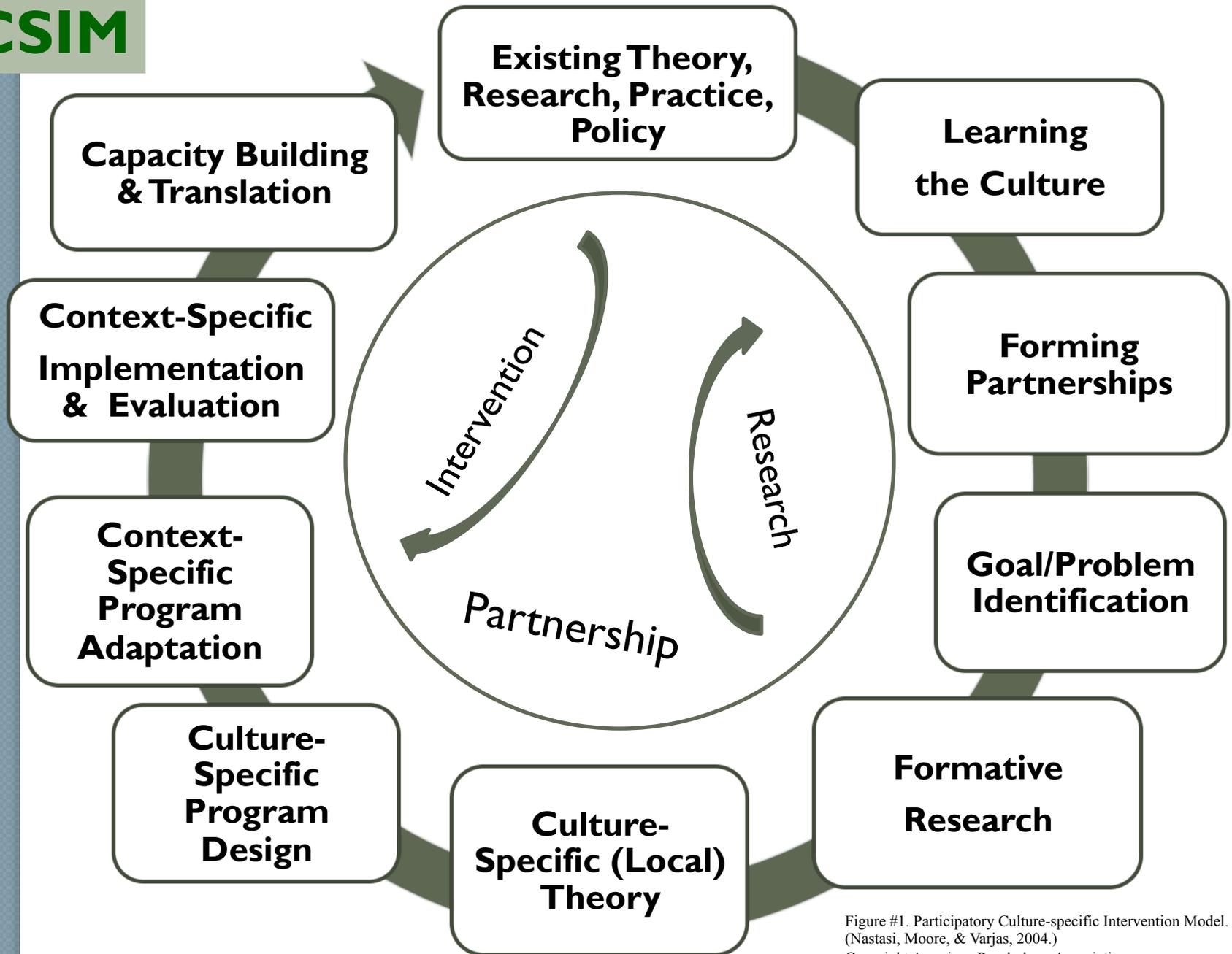


Figure #1. Participatory Culture-specific Intervention Model. (Nastasi, Moore, & Varjas, 2004.)

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PCSIM:	
<p><b>System entry</b> (phase 1-3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School social worker reached out to community mental health agency for help</li> <li>• Doctoral student placed at school by agency</li> <li>• Built relationship with 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers</li> <li>• Began PCSIM consultation after building relationships with social worker and assistant principal</li> <li>• Principal began meeting with the team</li> </ul>
<p><b>Model development</b> (phase 4-6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzed existing interventions and programs in school</li> <li>• Based on findings, team determined need to create triage system for intervention</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program development</b> (phase 7-9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected universal mental health screener</li> <li>• Developed comprehensive mental health screening system including DESSA, academic, attendance, and behavioral reports</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program continuation</b> (phase 10 &amp; 11)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued consultation with school team to attain sustainability</li> <li>• Plan for additional school input through focus groups</li> </ul>

# Goal

- To engage in a participatory process aimed at helping the school create a comprehensive system of mental health promotion and tiered intervention that utilizes a public health framework

( Hess, Short, and Hazel, 2012)

# What is Universal Social Emotional and Behavioral Screening?

- A systematic process similar to screening in reading or mathematics (Ikeda et al., 2008)
- Global indicators of students' social-emotional-behavioral (SEB) functioning
- Central aspect of meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral development needs of students

# Why Universal Screening?

- Embedded within a comprehensive mental health system, universal screening is a *process* that allows for data-based decision-making about:
  - Tiered programming
  - Individual student strengths and challenges
  - Students at risk for symptomatology
  - Gaining a perspective on school climate and culture

(Albers, 2007; Albers, Glover, & Kratochwill, 2007)

# Why Universal Screening?

- Established link between SEB functioning & learning
- Focus on prevention in direct contrast to a traditional “wait-to-fail” model
  - Allows for data-based decision-making and early intervention before issues become manifest
- Part of our legal responsibility (RTI)
- Provides a perspective on school and classroom culture

# Implementation Issues

- Universal screening has been identified as an evidence-based practice; however, only 2% of schools implement.
- Identified barriers to implementation:
  - Stakeholder understanding of uses
  - Concern that data results in stigmatization of students, especially low-income children of color.
  - Deficit-oriented
  - Understaffing of MH professionals to address needs

# Universal Screening Supports RTI

## Universal

- Screening helps identify school-wide needs related to student well being and learning supports.

## Selected

- Screening can help identify “hot spots” where consultation or skill building groups could address elevated risk.

## Indicated

- Screening can identify students who need individualized interventions or further assessment.

Teacher, Group or Individual  
Tier II & Tier III Interventions

# Tier I: Universal Screening

## Goals:

- Identify general levels of social, emotional, and behavioral concern
- Identify teachers for intervention and students for follow-up screening

## Screening instrument:

- Devereux Student Strength Assessment-mini (DESSA-mini; Naglieri, LeBuffe, & Shapiro, 2011)

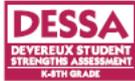
## Additional data points:

- Disciplinary history
- Current academic progress (informal and formal monthly assessments)
- Other information gathered by the school mental health coordinator

# What is the DESSA-Mini?

- Devereux Student Strengths Assessment – Mini (Naglieri, LeBuffe, & Shapiro)
- Strengths-based questionnaire
  - Provides standards of appropriate behaviors, so we know what to teach/support
- Eight-item survey, based on developmental research about normative behaviors in children
- Linked to Tier II Assessment
  - DESSA-full
  - Behavioral Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2)

# Four Forms of the DESSA-Mini



## DEVEREUX STUDENT STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT - MINI (DESSA-MINI)

FORM 1

JACK A. NAGLIERI, PAUL A. LEBUFFE, AND VALERIE B. SHAPIRO

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Person Completing this Form \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Child \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Rating \_\_\_\_\_ School/Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom/Program \_\_\_\_\_

This form describes a number of behaviors seen in some children. Read the statements that follow the phrase: *During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child...* and place a check mark in the box underneath the word that tells how often you saw the behavior. Answer each question carefully. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer every item. If you wish to change your answer, put an X through it and fill in your new choice as shown to the right.

Never Rarely Occasionally Frequently Very Frequently

Item # *During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child...*

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very Frequently	Score
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____
0	1	2	3	4	_____

Raw Score Sum \_\_\_\_\_

Turn over to finish scoring →

Recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

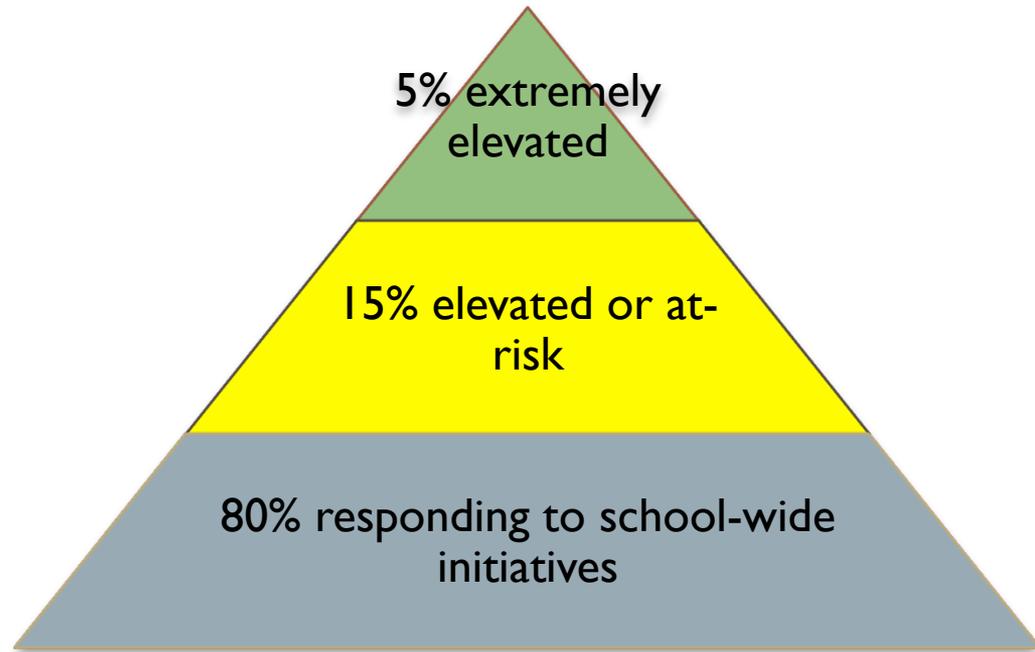
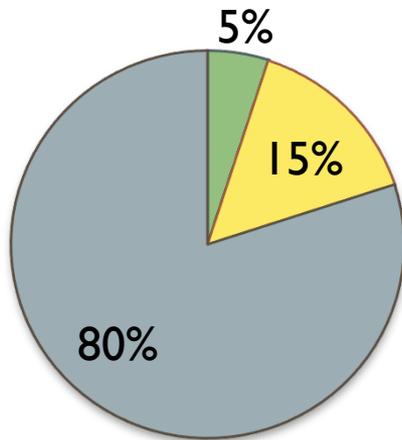


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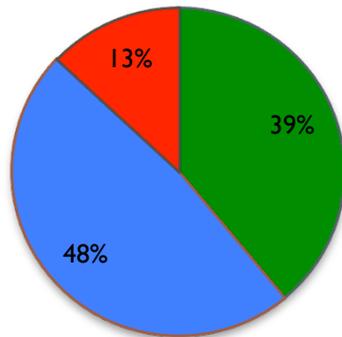
# Expected Risk Prevalence



**Tiered Model of Response to Intervention**

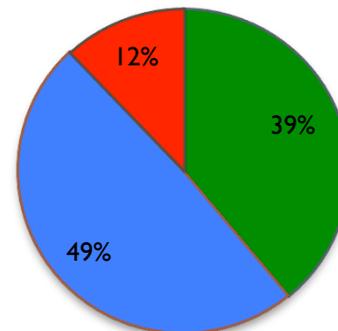
# Tier I School-Wide Results

## Beginning of the Year



- Students with Strength Ratings 155
- Students with Typical Ratings 190
- Students with Need Ratings 50

## End of the Year



- Students with Strength Ratings 147
- Students with Typical Ratings 182
- Students with Need Ratings 45

# Sample Results for Two Classes

1st	Number of Ratings 21		1st	Number of Ratings 25	
	Average Educator T-Score 54			Average Educator T-Score 51	
	Percentile Avg T-Score Equivalent N/A			Percentile Avg T-Score Equivalent 54	
	Students with Strength Ratings 6			Students with Strength Ratings 7	
	Students with Typical Ratings 14	Students with Typical Ratings 13			
Students with Need Ratings 1	29% 67% 5%	Students with Need Ratings 5	28% 52% 20%		
2nd	Number of Ratings 20		2nd	Number of Ratings 25	
	Average Educator T-Score 60			Average Educator T-Score 56	
	Percentile Avg T-Score Equivalent N/A			Percentile Avg T-Score Equivalent N/A	
	Students with Strength Ratings 11			Students with Strength Ratings 9	
	Students with Typical Ratings 8	Students with Typical Ratings 14			
Students with Need Ratings 1	55% 40% 5%	Students with Need Ratings 2	36% 56% 8%		

# Data-Based Decision Making

- Use results as part of grade level decision making meetings to discuss student growth and challenges
- Make Rtl decisions
  - Determine need for Tier 2 assessment( e.g. DESSA-full, BASC-2, ecomaps,)
  - Inform coaching/mentoring discussions
  - Guide changes in classroom management practices
  - Use the screener for progress monitoring
- Reflect on school-wide SEL programming
- Investigate utility in context (e.g., predictive and ecological validity)

# Thank you!

**This consultation effort was conducted in collaboration with members of Tulane University's International Psychological Well-Being Team:**

- Laura Cornell, Amanda Borja, Allisyn Swift, Heather Henderson, Meredith Summerville, Patrick Bell, Michael Brachfeld, Sydney Wing,
- Dr. Bonnie Nastasi





# Ecomaps as a Measure of Psychological Well-Being

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# Purpose

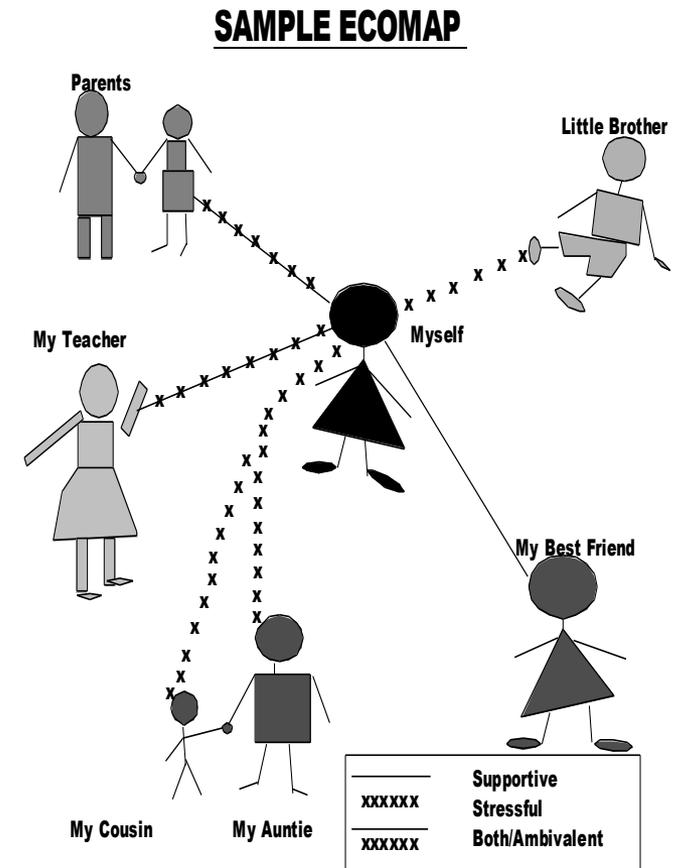
- Introduce ecomap as a measure of psychological well-being
- Provide illustrations of the ecomap's use in research and practice (locally and internationally)

# Need for Self-Report

- Child perspective on psychological well-being critical
- Can be difficult to acquire valid and reliable self-report information in some situations
  - Written/verbal self-report measures exclude young children
  - Can also exclude children with exceptional needs
  - Concerns about lack of cultural/contextual specificity

# What are ecomaps?

- Child's view of stress & support in own social network
- Ecological foundation
- May indicate psychological strengths and risks



Nastasi et al. (2000)  
Artwork by Kitt Bryce

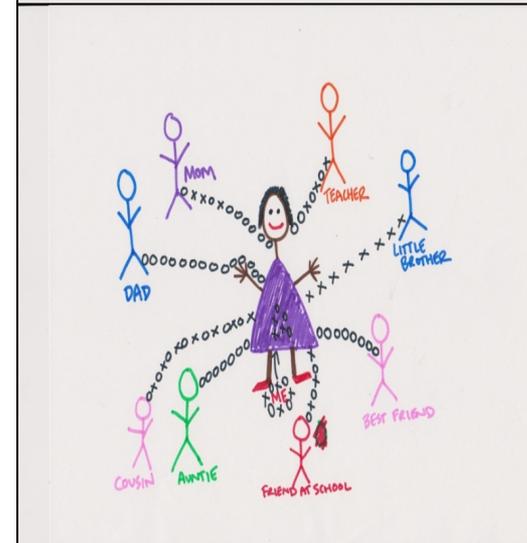
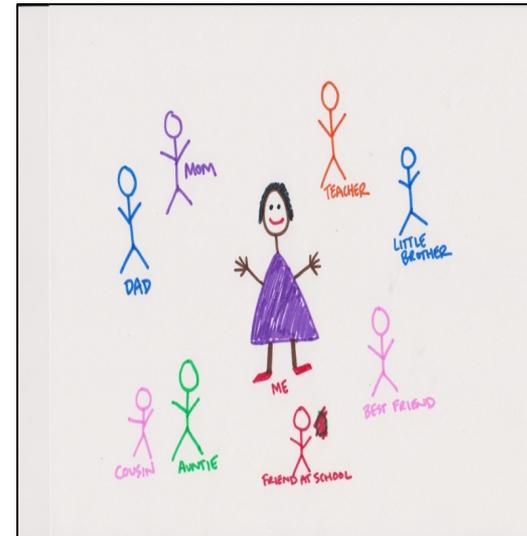
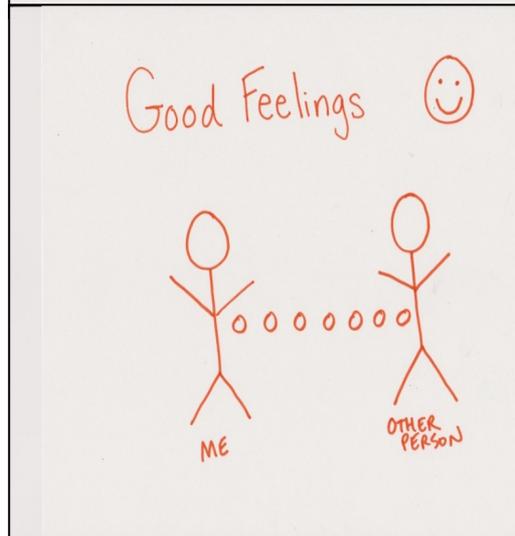
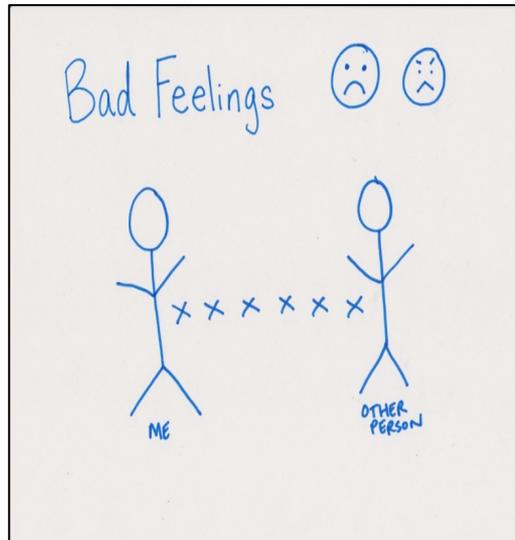
# Rationale for ecomaps

- **Developmentally appropriate**
  - Drawing instead of verbal/writing-focused
- **Allows for cultural/contextual specificity**
  - Have applied in global project in 12 countries
- **Quickly clarifies & summarizes complex information, without oversimplifying**
- **Open-ended**
  - Permits child expression and further exploration through follow-up interview
- **Flexible**
  - Adaptable to different research and screening questions

# Ecomapping Protocol

- Collaborative: model/sample, draw, appraisals, follow-up questions, narrative
- Modifications for young children
  - New Orleans
  - Small group administration ( $\leq 5$ )
  - Extended Time
  - Multi-step administration, standard probes
  - Simplified terminology
  - Structured interview protocol with probes
  - Include check for understanding

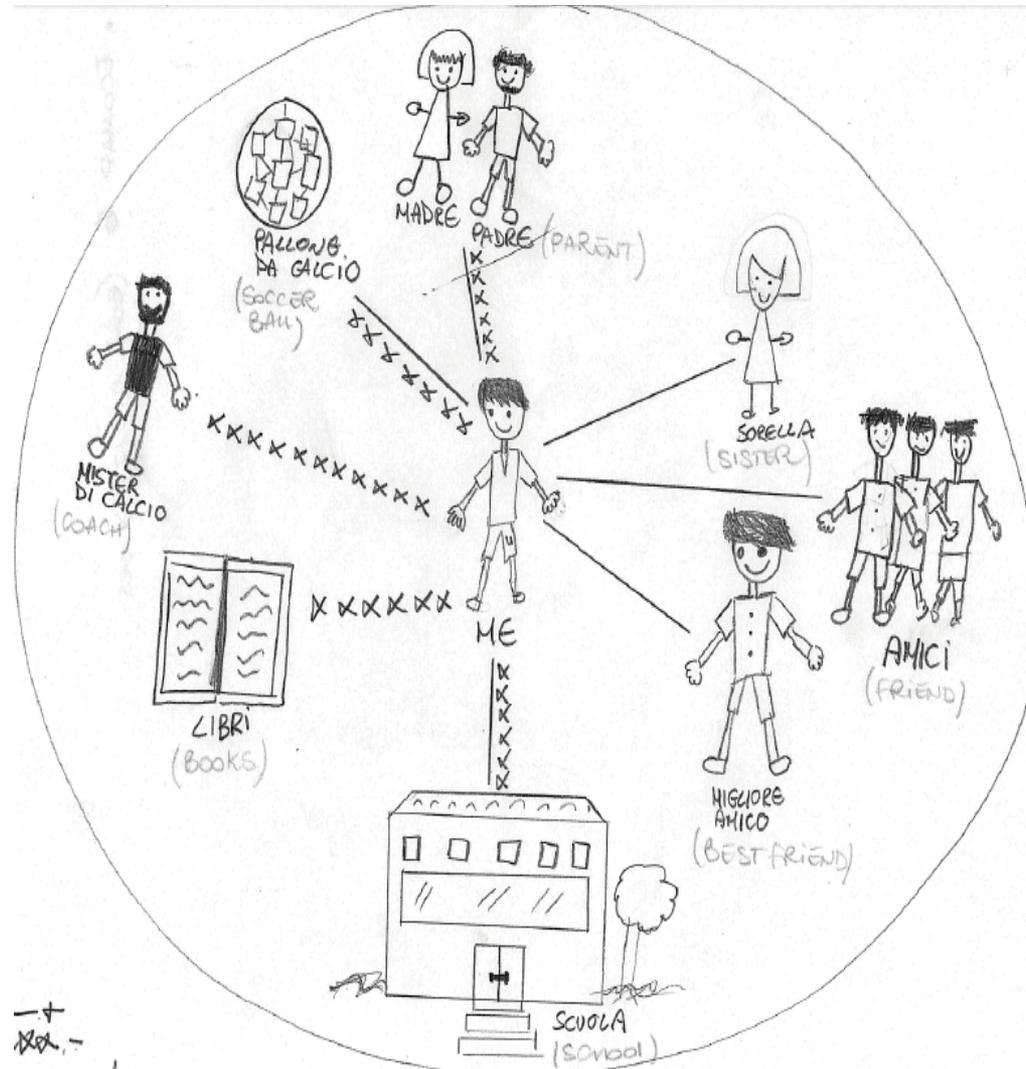
# Ecomapping Procedures: Samples



# Ecomap created by 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Female (New Orleans)



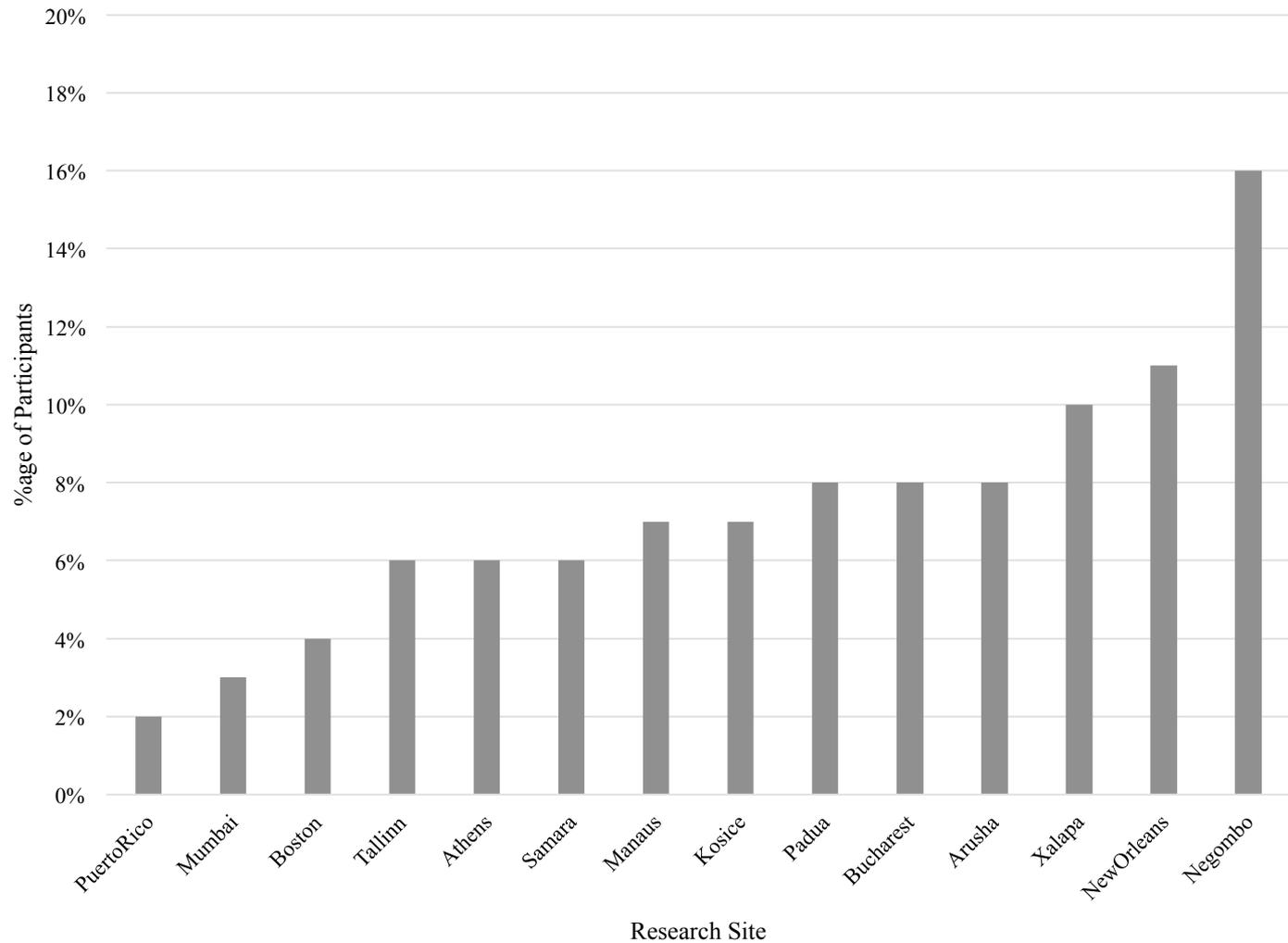
# Ecomap created by Secondary School Male (Italy)



# History in Local Setting (K – 2)

Year	Who?	Notes
2009-2010	Universal (research)	Ecomaps & interviews as part of research project; parents/guardians of all students approached via letter
2010-2011	Selected (Tier 2)	Ecomaps & interviews; concurrently with BASC-2 for at-risk based on BESS (T and/or S report) and/or teacher nomination
2011-2012	Selected (Tier 2)	Ecomaps & interviews; concurrently with BASC-2 for at-risk based on BESS (T and/or S report) and/or teacher nomination
2012-2013	Universal & selected (Tiers 1 & 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universal screening, all K &amp; new students, ecomaps only (no interviews)</li><li>• Selected for at-risk based on universal screening, ecomaps &amp; interviews</li></ul>

# Participation in International Project (N = 817)



# Contribution to Universal Screening

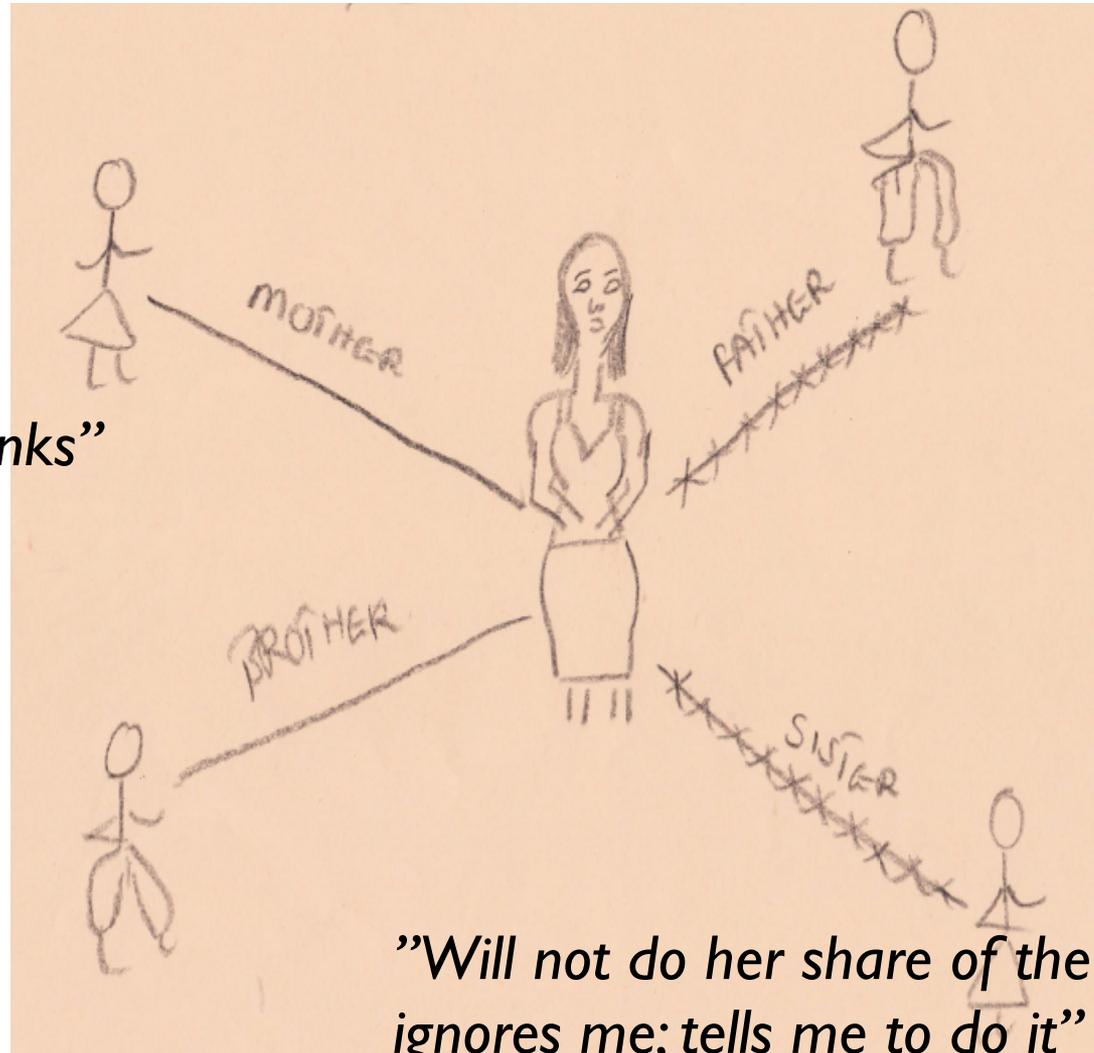
1. Critical/Immediate concerns
2. Stressors, supports, and coping strategies at individual, group, and population levels
3. Might help identify children with internalizing problems and other psychological risks

# (I) Critical/Immediate Concerns

- Disclosure of abuse, bullying, self-harm
- Significant psychological distress
  - Anxiety, loneliness, depression
  - Alienation, anger
- Follow-up
  - Additional assessment and treatment
  - Involvement of parents/guardians, teachers
  - Outside agencies

# Ecomap & Sample Narratives from 14 y.o. Female (Tanzania)

*“Harsh, drinks”*



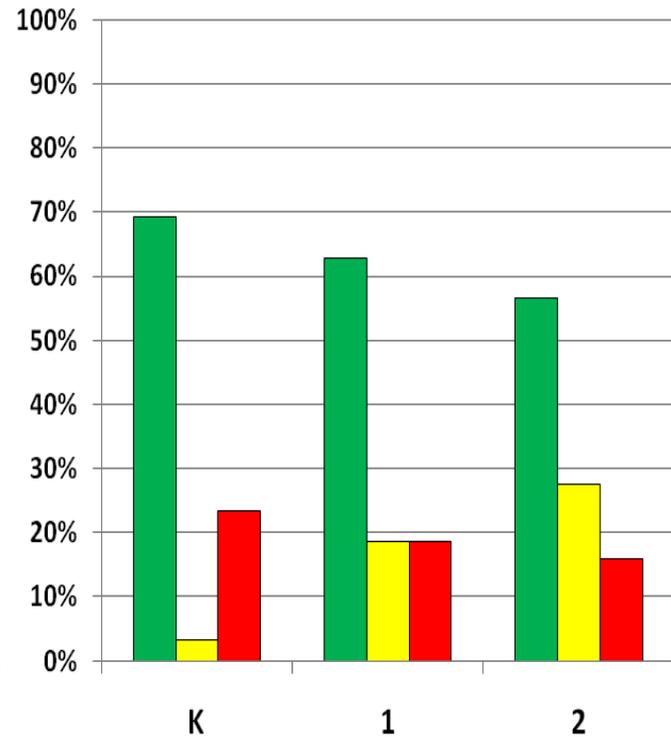
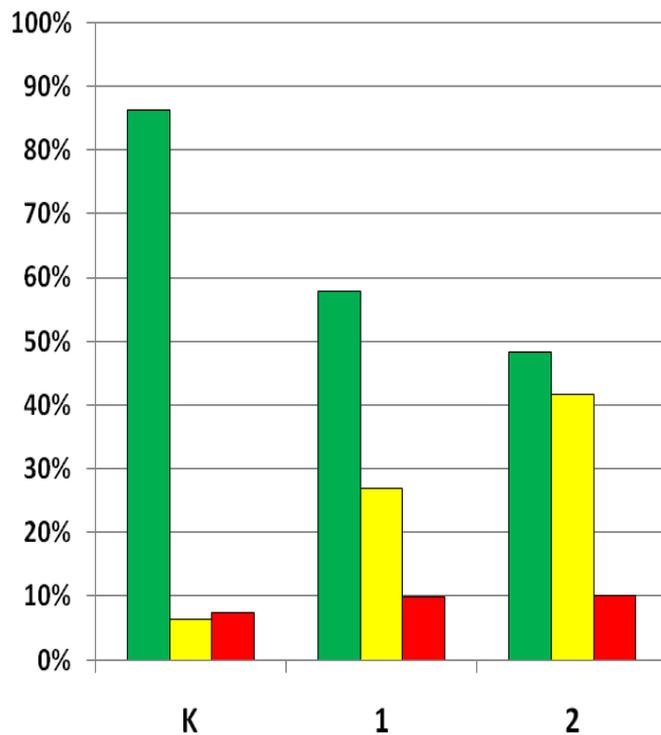
*“Will not do her share of the work;  
ignores me; tells me to do it”*

## (2) Stressors/Supports

### Relationship Ratings by Sex and Grade (New Orleans Primary Students)

**Girls (n=24)**

**Boys (n=18)**



■ % Supportive   ■ % Ambivalent   ■ % Stressful

■ % Supportive   ■ % Ambivalent   ■ % Stressful

## (2) Stressor/Support Themes (International)

<b>Grade Level Group</b>	<b>High Consensus Stressors</b>	<b>High Consensus Supports</b>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Physical Aggression</b> <i>“He whoop me a lot with a belt” (Primary School Female, New Orleans)</i>	<b>Play/Sport</b> <i>“One day my sister and I were playing. I was happy. Then I kept playing” (Primary School Male, Brazil)</i>
<b>Middle</b>	<b>Uncooperative Relationship/ Treatment by Others</b>	<b>Companionship</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Characteristics/Traits of Person, Place, or Thing</b>	<b>Consistency/Trustworthiness</b>
<b>All Grades</b>	-	<b>Cooperative Relationships/ Treatment by Others</b> <i>“I like spending time with my friend...he always thanks me for everything...and I like it very much when a boy is kind!” (Primary School Female, Italy)</i>

# (3) Identify Psychological Risk

*Correlations Between BESS Scores and  
BASC-2 and Achievement Scores, K-3 Students (N=61)*

BESS SCORES	BASC-2 SUBSCALE SCORES					ACHIEVEMENT SCORES	
	Attitude Toward Teacher	Social Stress	Anxiety	Depression	Interpers. Relations	Reading/ Language	Math
BESS: Self Report	0.25	0.26	0.40	<b>0.64***</b>	0.05	0.24	0.15
BESS: Teacher Report	0.07	-0.01	-0.18	-0.07	-0.04	<b>-0.26**</b>	<b>-0.31**</b>

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*  $p < .1$

# (3) Identify Psychological Risk

## ***Correlations: Ecomap Indices & Other Social-Emotional Indicators, K-3 Students (N=61)***

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL INDICATORS	ECOMAP INDICES				
	Total	Family Adult	School Adult	Peer/Friend	Self
BASC-2: Attitude Toward Teacher	<b>0.31**</b>	0.14	<b>0.31**</b>	<b>0.38***</b>	0.36
BASC-2: Social Stress	<b>0.24*</b>	0.14	0.03	0.08	0.24
BASC-2: Anxiety	<b>0.23*</b>	<b>0.28**</b>	0.16	-0.02	0.30
BASC-2: Depression	0.16	<b>0.23*</b>	0.02	0.13	<b>0.54**</b>
BASC-2: Interpersonal Relations	<b>-0.23*</b>	-0.10	-0.15	-0.04	<b>-0.60**</b>
BESS: Self Report	0.05	0.32	-0.41	0.07	—
BESS: Teacher Report	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.08

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*  $p < .1$

# Conclusions

- Ecomaps yield quantitative and qualitative data
- Young children can effectively participate
- Use as part of multi-method, multi-source assessment
- May add depth and specificity
  - Individual, cultural, network differences
  - Patterns across groups of children
  - Rapport, engagement, disclosure
- Highlights strengths, resources, and needs

# Future Directions

- **Reliability, validity, norms**
  - Continue as part of routine universal screener with longitudinal tracking (& local norms)
  - Expand data collection to other sites
- **Cross-cultural application**
  - Global project data analysis (14 sites in 12 countries)
  - Application to different populations (e.g., Russia with gifted)
- **Multiple uses**
  - To examine multiple ecologies (school, family, peer)
  - Use as pre-post measure
  - Assess school climate, bullying, etc.

# THANK YOU!

*Ecomap data collection was made possible under the leadership of Dr. Bonnie Nastasi and our partners worldwide.*

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