

# Ordinary Magic in Action:

## Promoting Resilience in Children and Youth



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# Pioneering insight 5 decades ago

From the study of resilience we can learn how to improve outcomes for children and youth at risk...



# 4 waves

## 1 ~ Descriptive

- Who is resilient? What makes a difference?

## 2 ~ Process

- How do promotive or protective processes work?

## 3 ~ Intervention

- Can resilience be promoted?

## 4 ~ Integration

- How can sciences of resilience be integrated across multiple levels and disciplines?

# Today's focus

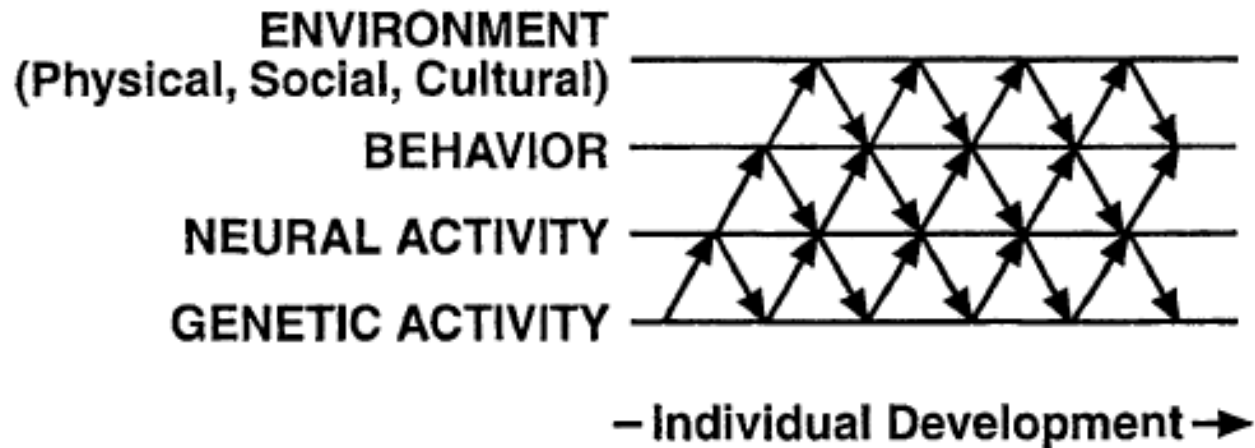
- **Meaning**
- **Lessons learned**
- **Implications for action**
- **Highlighting Check & Connect**

**Capacity of a system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development**

**RESILIENCE**

# Development

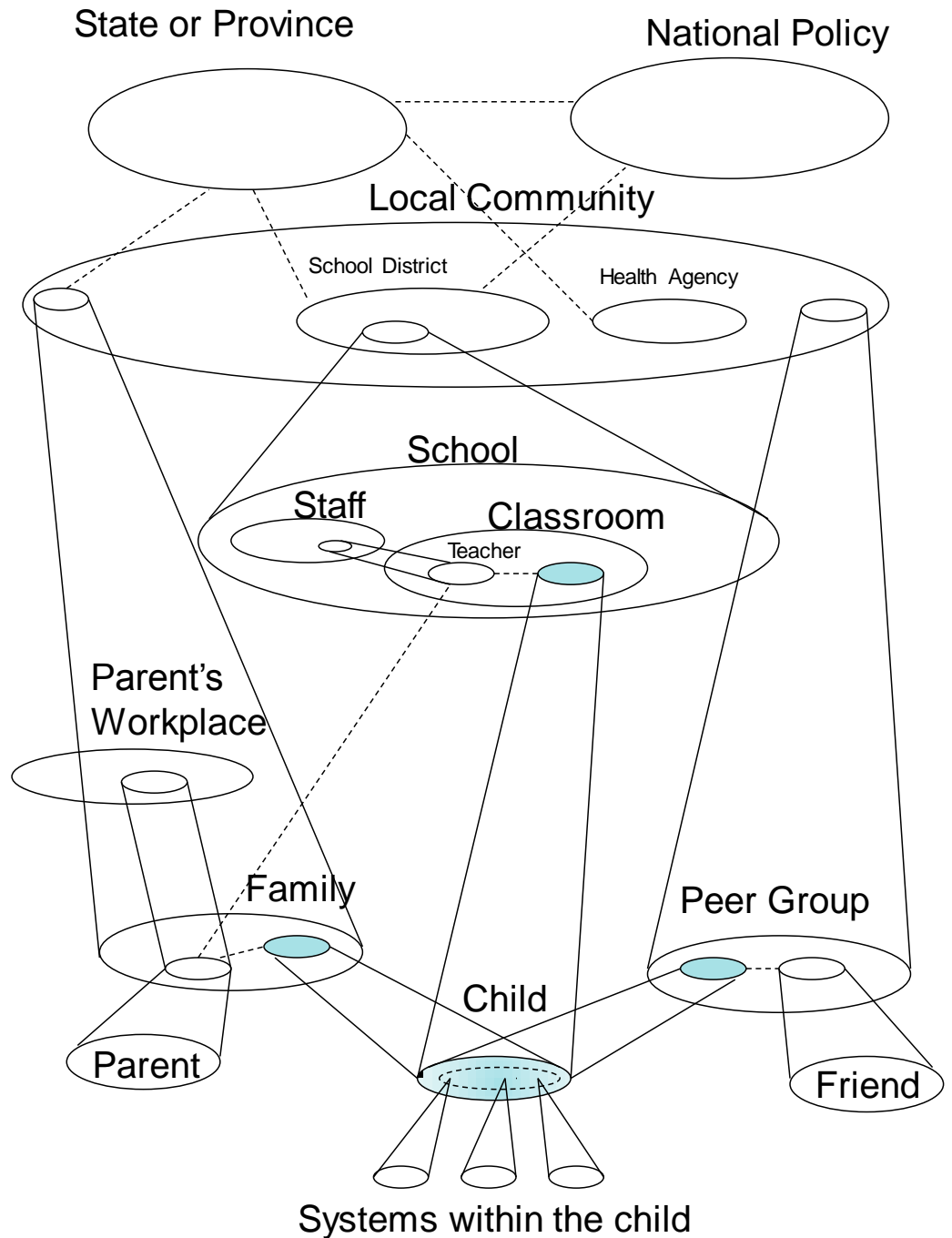
...emerges from interactions of many systems across levels



Gottlieb

# Systems in a child's life are

- Embedded
- Interacting
- Interdependent

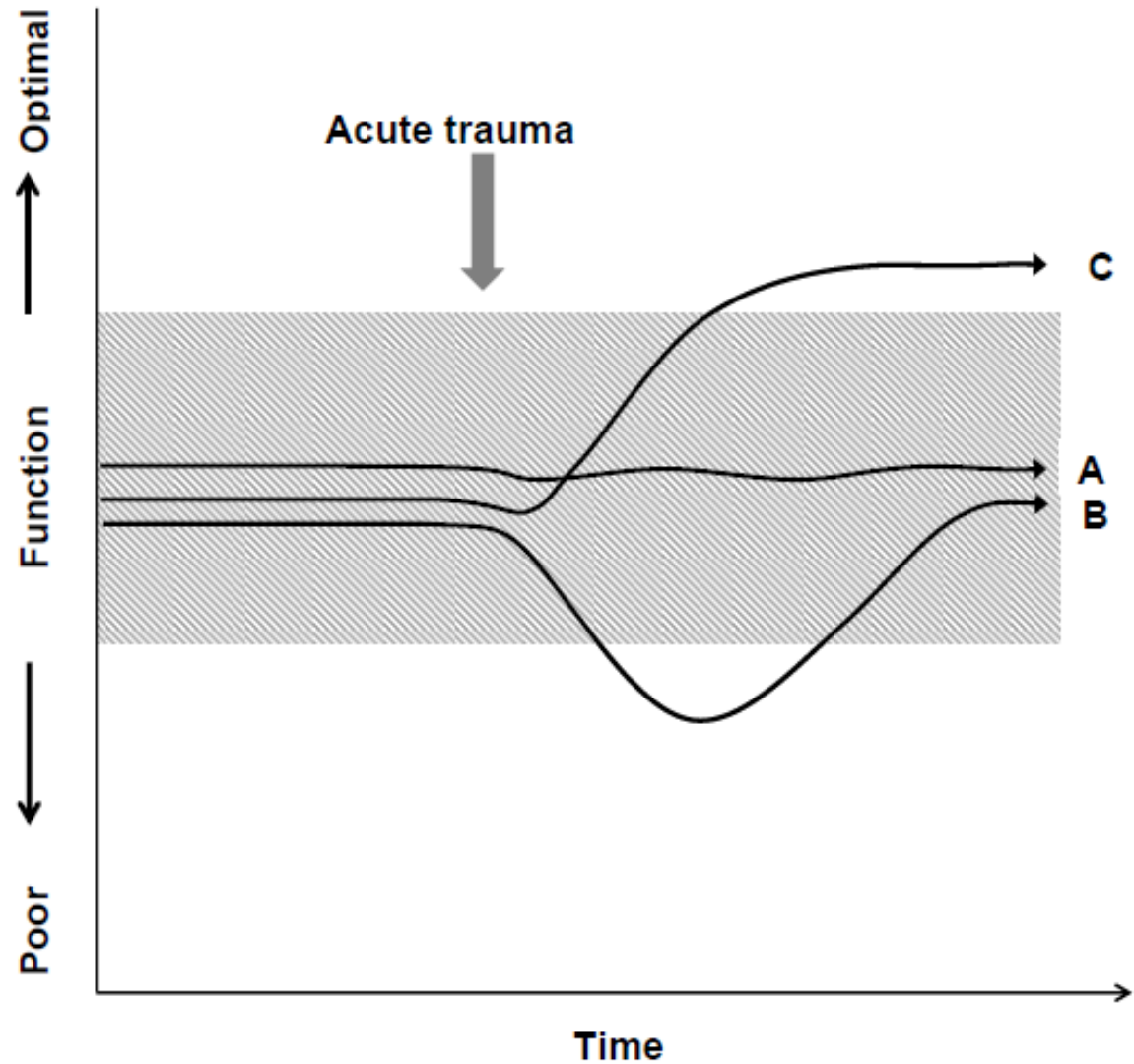


# Therefore

- **Resilience is dynamic**
- **Capacity for adaptation to adversity is distributed across systems**
- **Individual resilience depends on resilience of other systems**
- **Resilience is not a trait**



# Multiple pathways



# Two key components

Risk	Adaptation
Trauma	Achievement
Neglect	Mental health
Poverty	Physical health
War	Happiness
Natural disaster	Developmental task success

# Developmental tasks

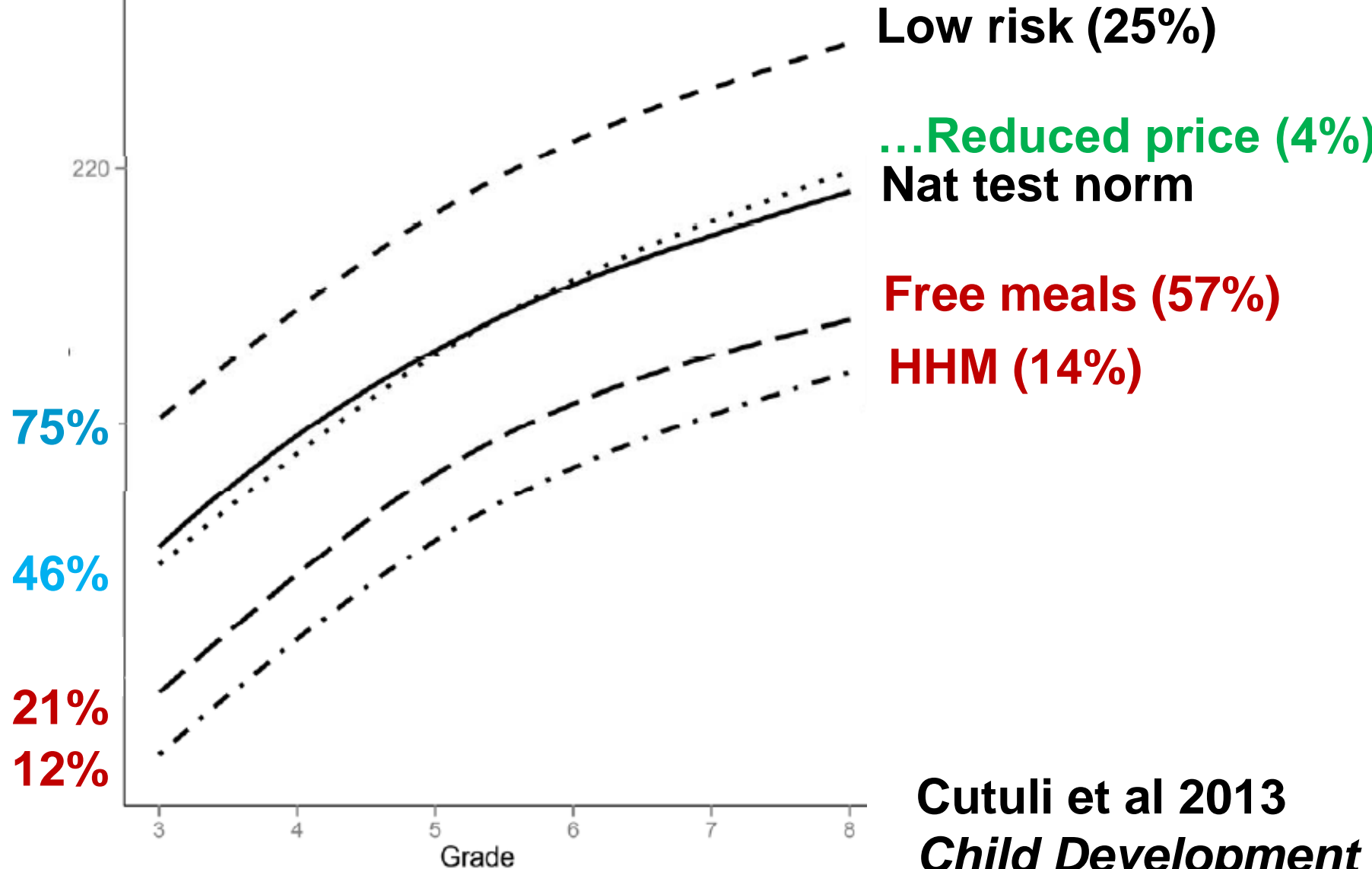
- **Expectations and standards of judging progress and prospects in development**
  - **Early childhood examples**
    - Attachment bonds with caregivers
    - Walking & talking
    - Beginnings of compliance and self-control
  - **School age**
    - Going to school and learning
    - Getting along with others, making friends
    - Following community and school rules for conduct

# Developmental cascades

- **Adaptation spreads over levels, domains, contexts**
  - Neurobiological to behavior to school function
  - Misbehavior to academic and social problems
  - Community to family to child (and vice versa)
- **Competence begets competence**
  - High returns on early investment in development
- **Intervene to initiate or interrupt cascades**
  - Key – targeting the level, process, and/or timing

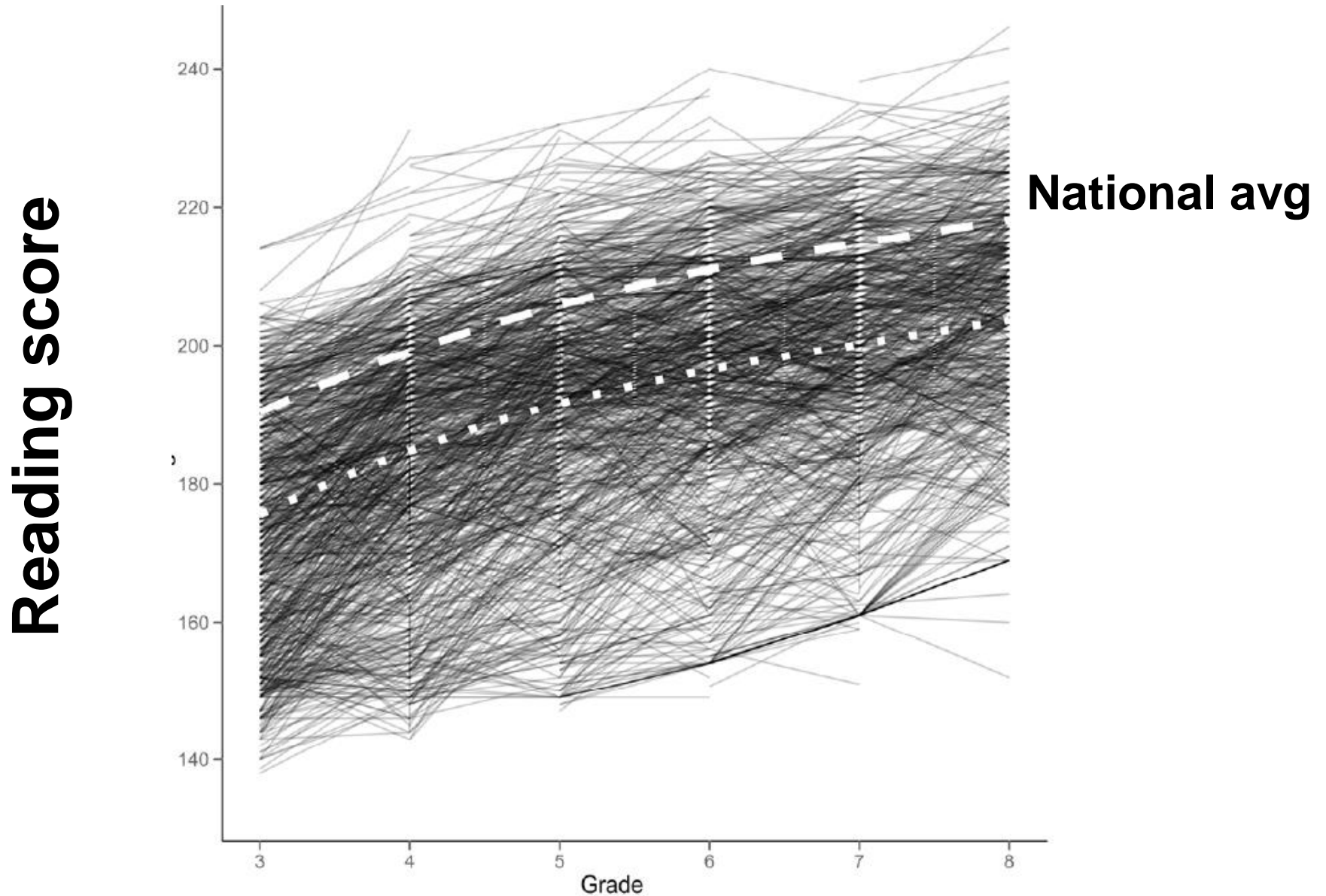
# Reading scores 2005 to 2009

26,501 students



Cutuli et al 2013  
*Child Development*

# HHM student individual reading scores N>3000



**What makes a difference?**

# The “short list” for resilience

- **Capable caregiving and parenting**
- **Other close relationships**
- **Problem-solving skills**
- **Self-regulation skills**
- **Motivation to succeed**
- **Self-efficacy**
- **Faith, hope, belief life has meaning**
- **Effective schools**
- **Well-functioning communities**



# What does the short list mean?

- **Basic adaptive systems are important for resilience under many different circumstances**
- **Adaptive capacity extends beyond the person into other social and cultural systems**

# Adaptive systems in the individual

- **Learning/problem-solving systems**
  - A human brain in good working order
  - Equipped with a powerful thinking system
- **Mastery motivation system**
  - Self-efficacy or intrinsic motivation
  - Motivated to adapt
- **Self-control or regulatory capacity**
  - Of attention, affect, impulse; executive control
  - Able to control behavior to behave strategically

# **Adaptive systems in the family and other relationships**

- **Attachment relationships**
  - Early caregiving system
  - Later with friends, romantic partners, children
  - Mentors
- **Social-control or regulatory capacity**
  - Effective parents, families, other connected adults
  - Prosocial friends and romantic partners

# Families matter

- **Moderating stress**
- **Epigenetic programming**
- **Nurturing body, mind and spirit**
- **Emotional security**
- **Economic security**
- **Safety monitoring**
- **Scaffolding learning and self-regulation skills**
- **Facilitating achievement in developmental tasks**
- **Brokering of resources (social capital)**
- **Transmitting cultural capital**

# **Schools matter**

- **Nurture human capital**
- **Can be asset-rich environments**
- **Can promote prosocial peer activities**
- **Facilitate relationships with competent adults**
- **Afford opportunities for building self-efficacy**
- **Can provide a sense of return to normal life**
- **Build capacity for resilience in many ways**

*...including Check & Connect!*

# Protective Systems at Other Levels

- **Within the individual**
  - Immune system
  - Arousal regulation systems
  - Stress systems
- **In religion and other cultural systems**
  - Meaning-making systems of belief, rules and rituals for living
  - Attachments to spiritual figures
  - Arousal regulation through meditation or prayer
  - Cultural practices that provide support
- **In community and society systems**
  - Effective schools
  - Communities that work
  - Good health care systems
  - Policies and laws that protect young people or adults

# What can we do to promote resilience?

**Facilitate resilience by  
strategic intervention**

**Promote  
positive development  
to prevent problems**

# Transforming practice

- **Overtured deficit models**
- **Shifted the focus**
- **Multiple fields**



# Resilience Framework for Action

## 5 Ms

<b>Mission</b>	<b>Frame positive goals</b>
<b>Models</b>	<b>Include positive influences</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Assess the positive</b>
<b>Methods</b>	<b>Prevent - promote - protect</b>
<b>Multiple</b>	<b>Levels and disciplines</b>

See Masten 2011 or 2014

# *Mission*

## **Frame positive goals**

- **Treat illness** → **Promote or restore health or wellbeing**
- **Prevent violence, problems, risky behaviors**  
→ **Promote**  
school and work success, conflict resolution, healthy relationships, civic engagement, gun safety, positive youth development
- **Promote the positive to prevent problems**
- **Appeal to stakeholders**

# *Models*

**Include positive influences and outcomes**

- **Competence and positive outcomes as well as symptoms or problems**
- **Protective factors as well as vulnerabilities**
- **Assets and resources as well as risks**

# Measures

## Track the positives along with the problems

- **Assess the positive as well as the negative**
  - Strengths in children, families, communities
  - Potential resources and protective factors
  - Strengths in systems
- **Evaluate positive and negative outcomes**
  - Gains, achievements
  - Competence as well as problems or symptoms

# *Methods*

## **Consider strategies for positive change**

- **Risk-focused**
  - **Prevent / reduce risk, adversity, trauma exposure**
- **Asset-focused**
  - **Increase resources or access to resources**
- **Process-focused**
  - **Restore, mobilize, or harness the power of human adaptive systems**

# ***Risk-focused strategies***

- **Prenatal care to prevent premature birth**
- **Reduce stress of pregnant women**
- **Screen and treat depression in mothers**
- **Reduce child maltreatment**
- **Avoid multiple foster care placements**
- **Reduce family violence**
- **Reduce neighborhood violence**
- **Clean up toxins**
- **Dig up landmines**
- **Prevent homelessness**

# *Asset-focused strategies*

- **Add financial resources**
- **Food, water, shelter, medical and dental care**
- **Provide a tutor**
- **Educate parents**
- **Educate teachers and first responders**
- **Quality childcare & early education programs**
- **Build schools, playgrounds, libraries**
- **Build or restore community services**
- **Stabilize housing, schooling, case managers**
- **Scholarships from early childhood into adulthood**

# *Adaptive system focused strategies*

## *Engage powerful engines of change*

- Foster secure attachment relationships
- **Promote bonds with competent/caring adults**
- Support healthy family life and function
- Protect and nurture brain development
- **Facilitate school bonding and engagement**
- Foster friendships with prosocial peers
- Integrate systems of care
- Provide opportunities
  - to succeed & develop talents
- Support cultural traditions
  - that provide children with adaptive tools and opportunities to connect with prosocial adults



## ***Interventions that work typically ...***

- **Are developmentally informed and timed**
- **Culturally appropriate**
- **Ecologically and developmentally strategic**
- **Focus on the positive and existing strengths**
- **Promote the positive & reduce risk or problems**
- **Mobilize & support powerful adaptive systems**

# *Windows of opportunity*

- **When plasticity is surging**
- **When conditions converge for change**
- **When systems are in changing, in flux, or unstable**
- **Some are developmental**
- **Some arise from chance**
- **Some arise in the context of adversity**
- **Some arise when people seek help**

# ***The 5<sup>th</sup> M is for multiple*** **levels, strategies, & disciplines**

- **Resilience depends on multiple systems**
  - Individual
  - Family, school, peer systems
  - Cultures and religions
  - Communities
  - National identities
  - Informational and social media
- **Multiple sectors and disciplines can be helpful**

# *Integrate and collaborate*

- **Effective programs often target multiple systems**
- **Adversity or risk often comes in cumulative forms that may require multiple intervention strategies**
- **No one person or sector has the capacity to understand or intervene in complex systems**
- **Collaborative intervention benefits from collaborative training experiences**

# Check & Connect

- **Focusing from the outset on**
  - Competence and school success
  - **Engagement**
  - Relationships
  - Collaborative synergy
- **Linking adaptive systems**
  - Individual – family – school
- **Strategic targeting and timing**
  - When to do what for whom
- **Generating evidence**
  - Resilience can be promoted

# New Horizons

# The 4<sup>th</sup> wave of resilience science

## Emerging neurobiology of resilience

- Interplay of genes, biological systems, and experience
- Programming and reprogramming of adaptive systems
- Biological embedding of stress, good parenting, culture


## Aligning systems to foster resilience

- Linking families, schools, peers, community
  - Check out special issue of *Family Relations* 2015
  - How can communities support family and child resilience?
  - **Check & connect as an early exemplar**
- Aligning state and national policies with child resilience

## Cultural traditions/practices that promote resilience

- At last!

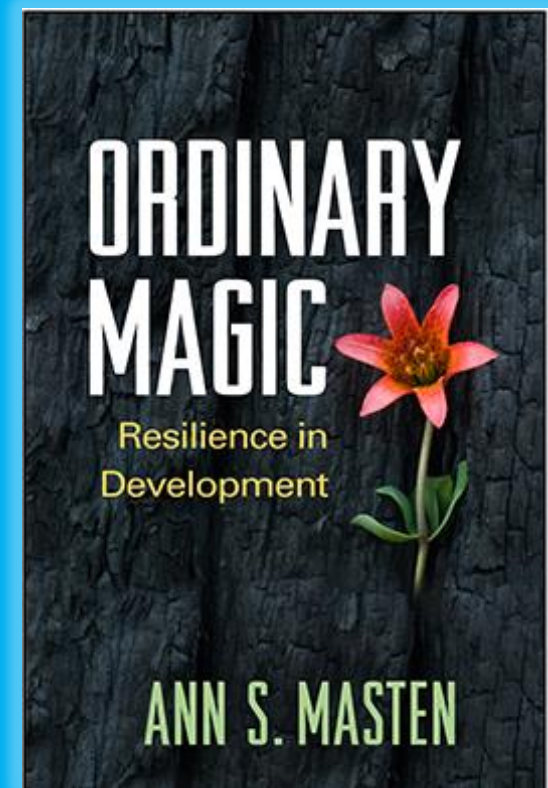
# Globalization emerging in many forms

- **Disaster preparedness**
  - Focusing on the needs of children
- **State and national governments**
  - Investing in young children for lifelong benefits
  - Prevention economics
- **U. S. National Academies**  **#iYCG**
  - Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally
- **International humanitarian action**
  - Raising the bar beyond survival with multi-sector efforts
  - UNICEF, World Bank, Save the Children, and others



# Enduring Take-Home Messages

- Resilience is common
- There are many paths of resilience
- Ordinary adaptive systems are powerful
- Resilience can be supported and promoted
- Resilience of children and youth depends on resilience of families, communities, societies



**Resilience of societies globally  
depends on the resilience of children**



**RESILIENCE**

**MOOC on Coursera.org**

# *Thank you!*

- ❑ Families & individual research participants
- ❑ Mentors in developmental and resilience science
- ❑ Faculty and student colleagues & collaborators
- ❑ Community partners
- ❑ Funders over the years

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