


# Exploring Variability in Social & Behavioral Adjustment Among Children in Head Start Experiencing Homelessness



Mary Haskett, Kate Norwalk &  
Sarah Neal  
NC State University



# No surprise to you...

...there is wide variability in adjustment of young children who experience homelessness.

Many seem to be doing well despite tough family situations and unstable housing.

What is “resilience”?

“Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity... As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth..”

—American Psychological Association





**Our Purpose:**  
Identify factors that account for  
differences among children who are  
doubled up

# Participants



## Head Start CARES

321, 4-year old children  
doubled up with others

- ❖ Hispanic 46.3%
- ❖ Black 32.7%
- ❖ White 12.5%
- ❖ Other 5.9%

# Children's adjustment

## Behavior Problems Index

Internalizing  
Externalizing  
Hyperactivity



## Social Skills Rating Scale

Cooperation  
Assertion w/peers  
Self-control



## Cooper-Farran Behavior Rating Scale

Interpersonal skills





# Four unique “profiles” (subgroups)

68.7%

## High Functioning

Highest social skills;  
lowest behavior  
problems

## Hanging in There

Slightly elevated externalizing,  
internalizing behaviors, and  
hyperactivity; better social  
skills than other risk groups

15.9%

12.1%


## At Risk

Elevated externalizing &  
internalizing behaviors, and  
hyperactivity; lowest social  
skills

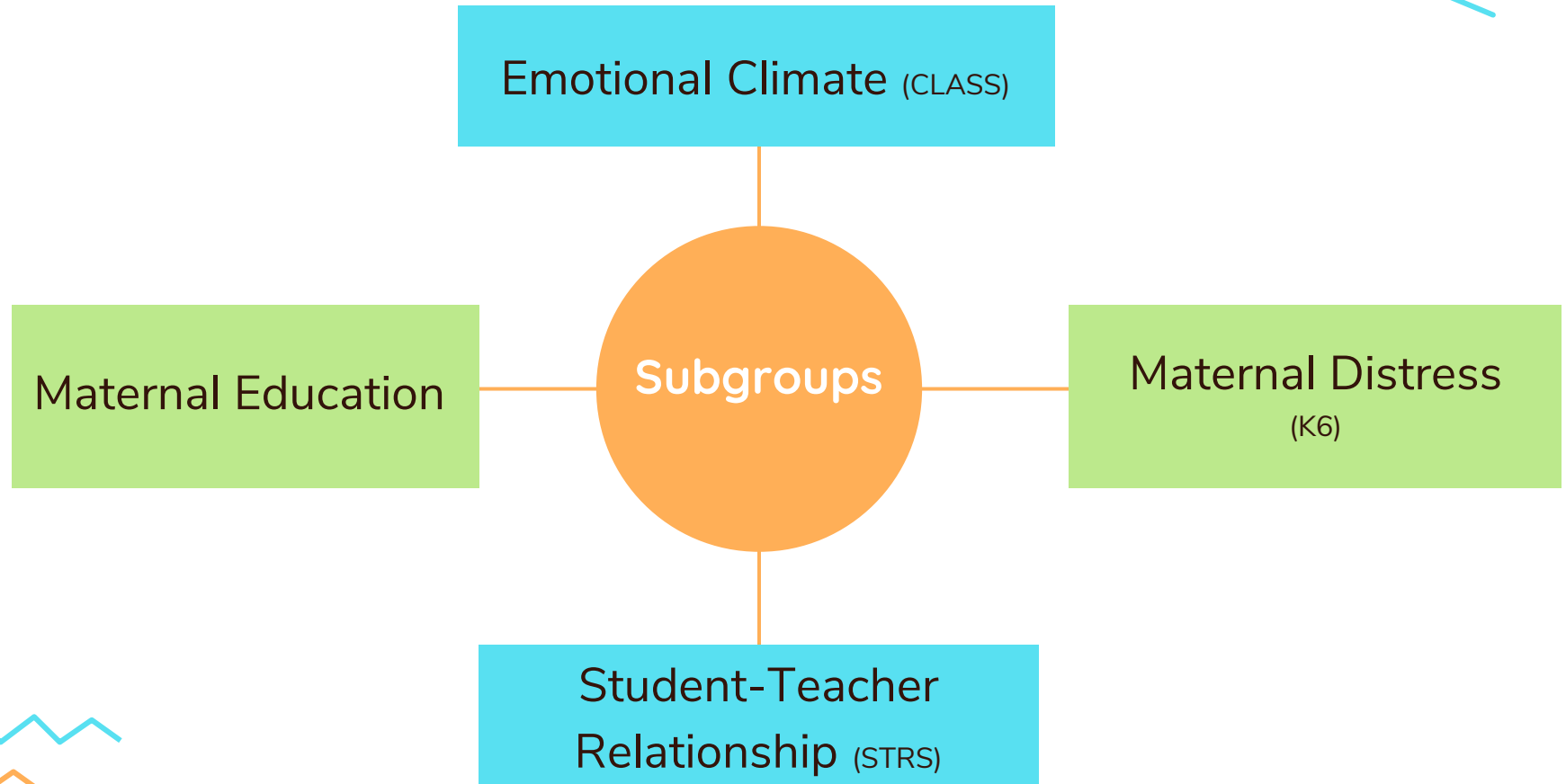
## Struggling

High externalizing;  
moderate internalizing  
& hyperactivity; social  
skills difficulties

3.2%

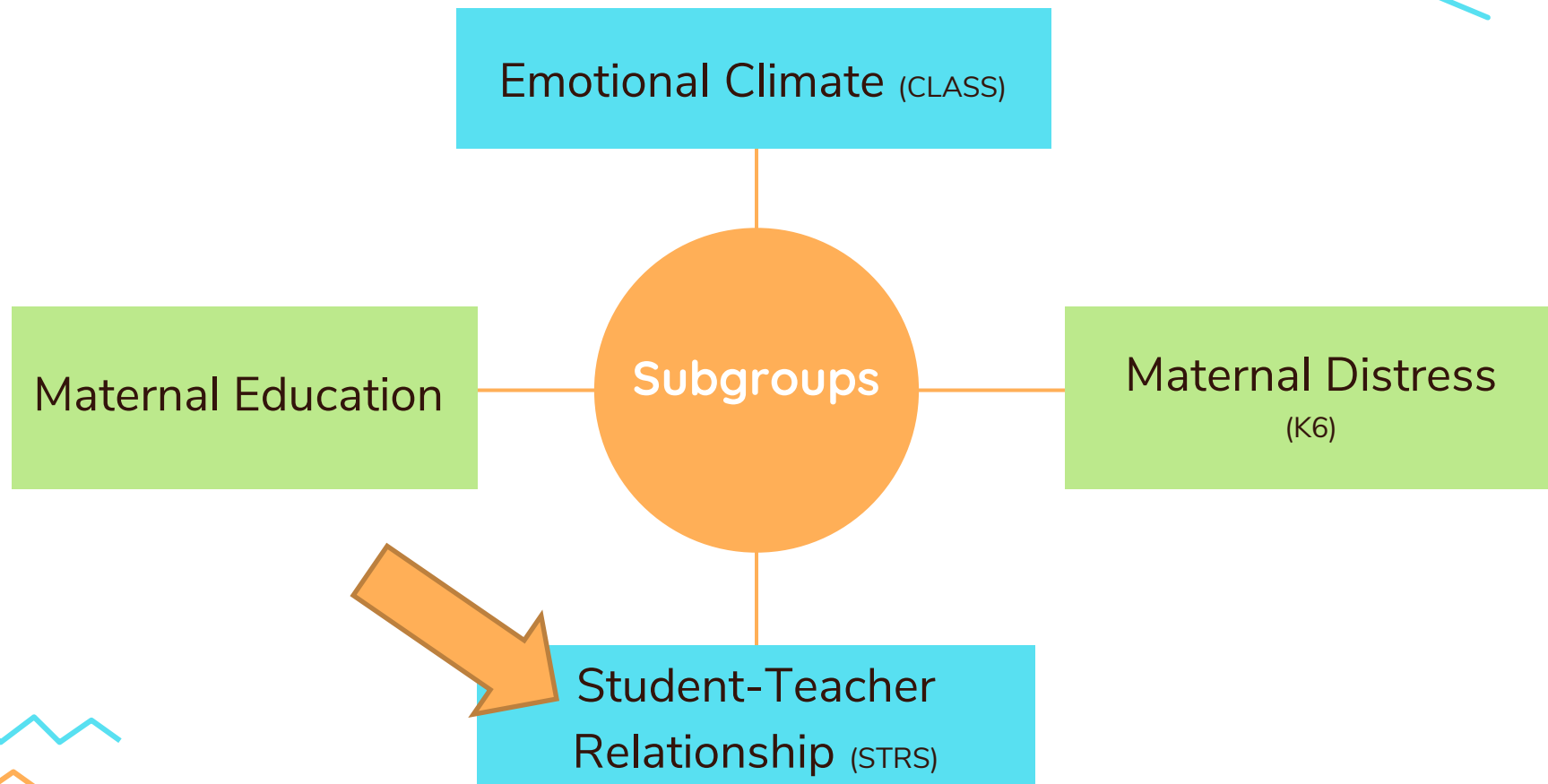


# Factors that account for differences among subgroups





# Factors that account for differences among subgroups



# Quality of teacher-student relationship

## Conflict

“This child easily becomes angry with me.”



## Closeness

“I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child”

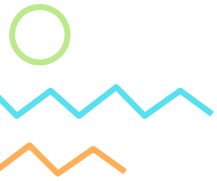


# Implications?

For practice

For policy

How can the findings be used in your work?





# Thank you!

Check the WSJ for article by Susan Pinker on March 27.  
Marsha Basloe and Barbara Duffield contributed.



[mary\\_haskett@ncsu.edu](mailto:mary_haskett@ncsu.edu)  
[knorwal@ncsu.edu](mailto:knorwal@ncsu.edu)