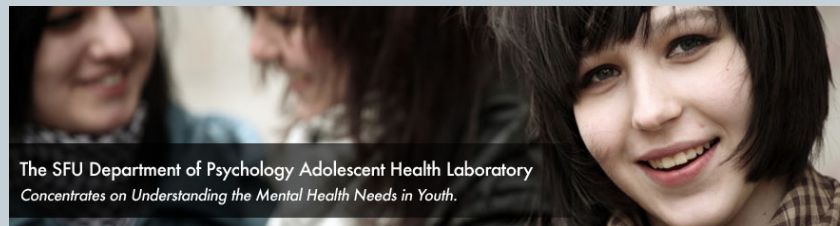


Connect – Implementing an Attachment Based Program for Caregivers of Adolescents at Risk

Dr. Marlene M. Moretti
Professor & Canada Research Chair in Youth
Clinical Science, Simon Fraser University
Vancouver, Canada moretti@sfu.ca



Dr. Vicky Kelly
Psychologist & Consultant
Annie E. Casey Foundation

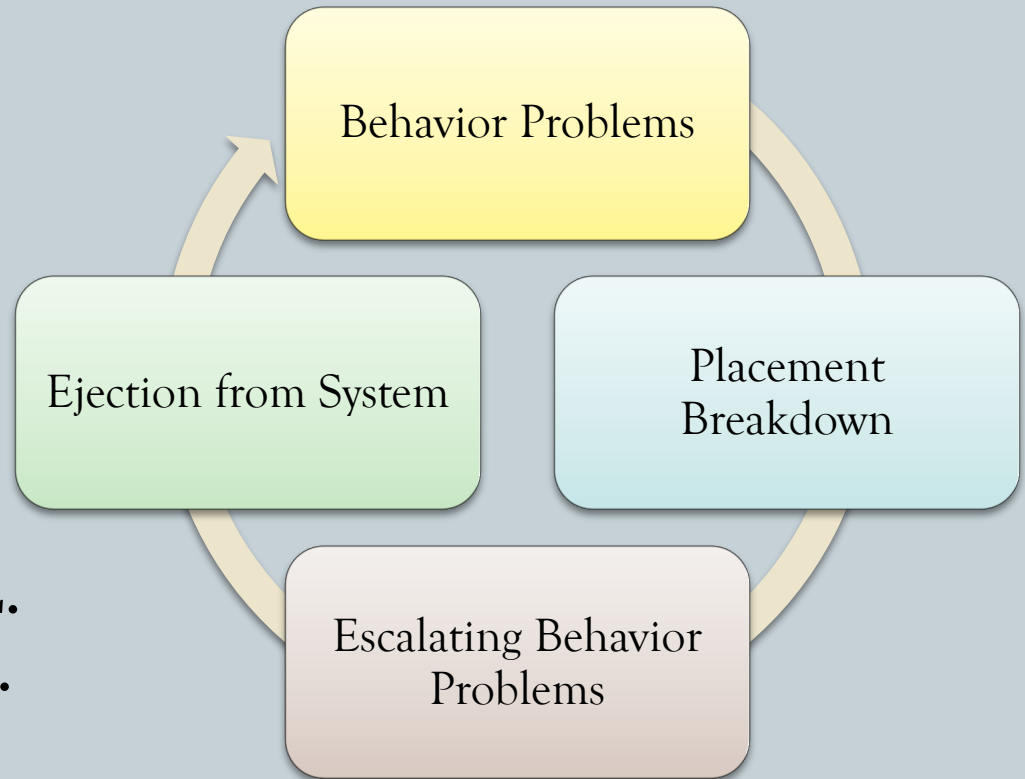


The SFU Department of Psychology Adolescent Health Laboratory
Concentrates on Understanding the Mental Health Needs in Youth.



Foster/Out of Home Placements Not Just Young Children

- 35% placements in USA for teens
- 25% are 1st time placements (Children's Bureau, 2016).
- Behavior problems primary in 45% of placements (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015).
- Placements for teens unstable

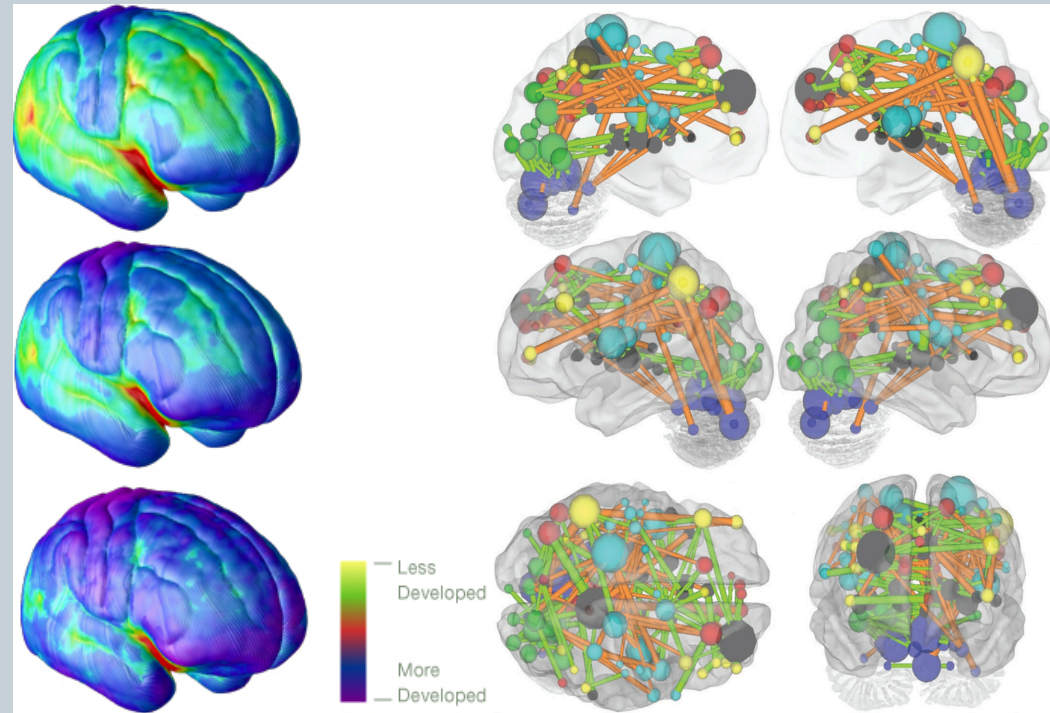


Adolescence - Transitions & Turning Points



Adolescence: Social Neurodevelopmental Sensitivity

- Reduction of grey matter volume & cortical thickness
- Pruning 'from back to front'
- Specialization of neural networks
- Sensitive to social context

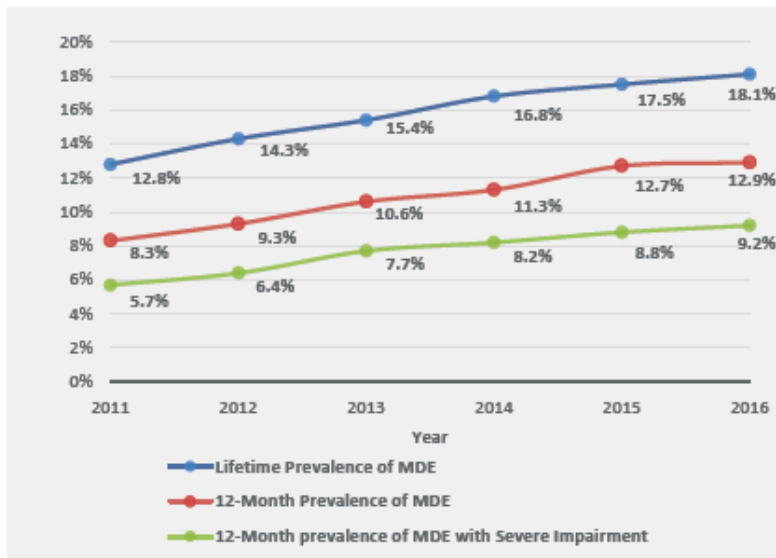


Kendall Powell Neurodevelopment: How does the teenage brain work? Nature 442, 865-867 (24 August 2006)

Blakemore, S., & Mills, K. L. (2014). Is adolescence a sensitive period for sociocultural processing?. Annual Review Of Psychology, 65187-207.

Growing Rates of Adolescent Depression

Figure 1
Weighted Prevalence of Lifetime MDE, 12-month MDE, and 12-month MDE with Severe Impairment among Adolescents in the NSDUH 2011-2016 (N = 95,856)



- Adolescent specific – not in adults
- Girls – 14% in 2010 vs. 23% in 2017 major depression episode
- 17% ages 10-19 have mental health disorder - WHO, 2018

Lu, W. (2019). Adolescent Depression: National Trends, Risk Factors, and Healthcare Disparities. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 43(1), 181–194.

Majority of Psychiatric Disorders Present During Adolescence

Tomá Paus, Matcheri Keshavan & Jay N. Giedd

Nature Reviews Neuroscience **9**, 947-957 (December 2008)

Emergence and peak in mental disorders during adolescence

One in five adolescents have a mental illness that will persist into adulthood

ADHD, conduct disorder

Anxiety disorders

Mood disorders

Schizophrenia

Substance abuse

Any mental illness

0 5 10 15 20 25

(Kessler et al., 2005)

70% of adult mental health disorders present before age 25

75% of youth and their families experience barriers to accessing age relevant services

2019 Moretti U. Haifa

Neuroplasticity Brings Opportunity

- Faster information processing
- Capacity for representational thought increases – view the self from multiple perspectives
- Mentalizing increases
- Expanding social network

Crone, et al. (2016) Annual Research Review: Neural contributions to risk-taking in adolescence--developmental changes and individual differences.

Celebrating Adolescence

“... the teen brain is not a broken or defective adult brain. It’s been exquisitely forged by the forces of our evolutionary history to be a very good teen brain.” Giedd, in Conan (2012)

Autumn Peltier, Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island



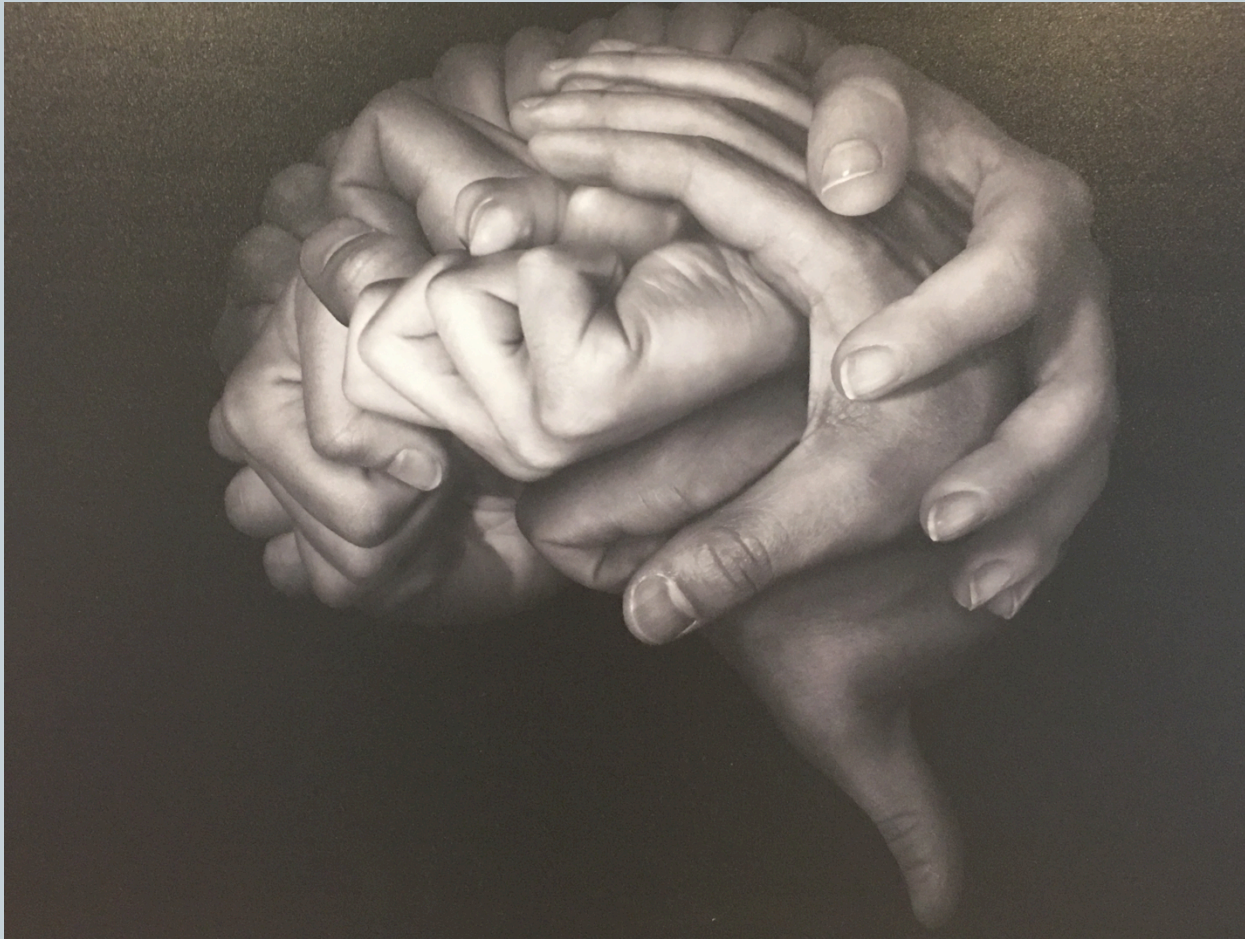
Greta Thunberg’ outside of Sweden’s parliament building



“... at the very least this evidence indicates that a society substantially in the hands of young people would not necessarily be headed for disaster, and reinforces the principle that human societies have survived because of the capacities of the adolescent brain, not in spite of them”

Sercombe, Howard (2014). "Risk, Adaptation, and the Functional Teenage Brain". CINAHL (Brain and Cognition 89): 61–69.

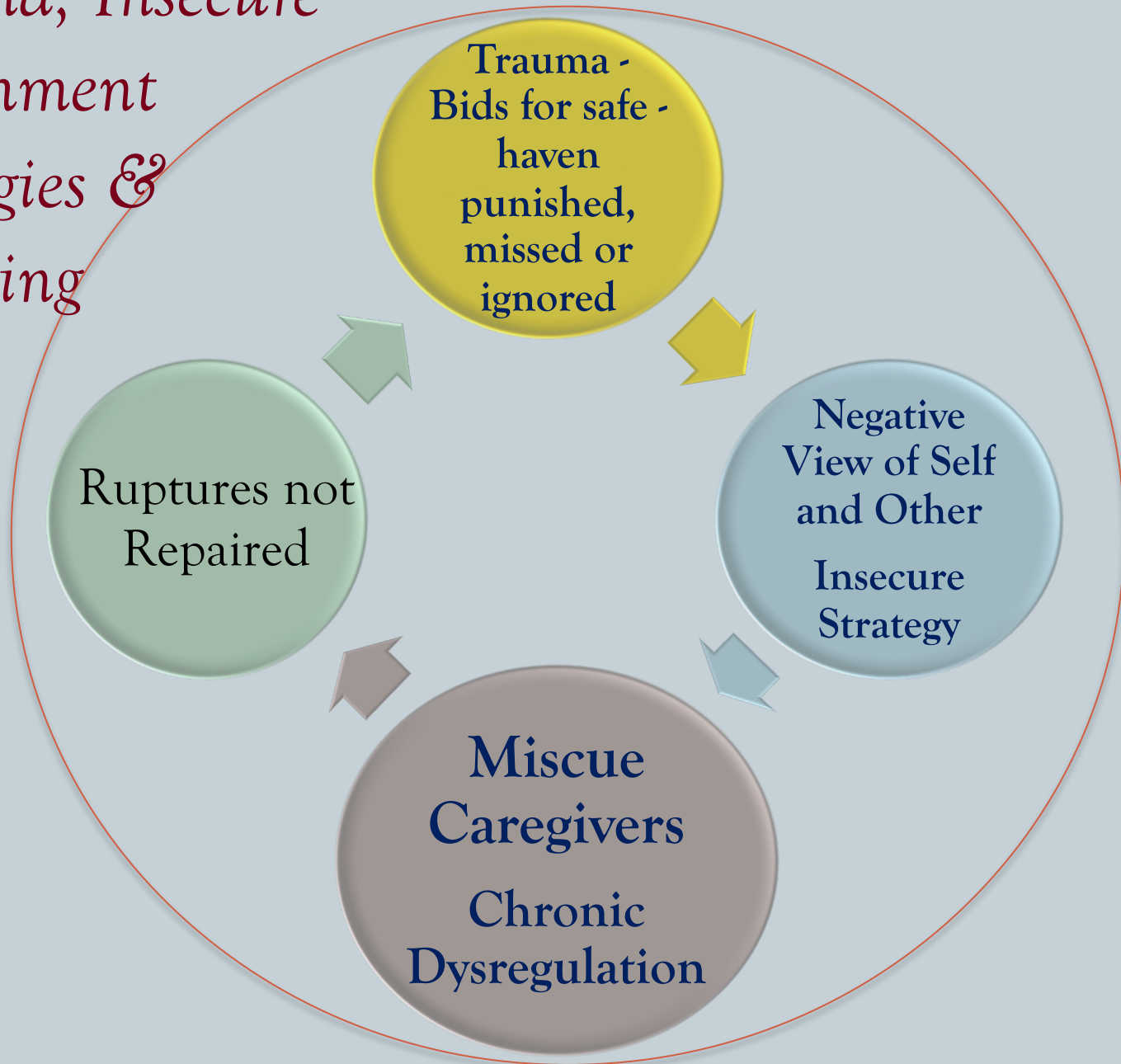
Caregivers & Adults Matter



ATTACHMENT SECURITY BUFFERS TEENS FROM RISK

- Less aggressive and violent behaviors
 - Less experimentation with substance use and risky sexual behavior
 - Greater capacity for managing frustration (affect regulation)
 - Better able to manage transition to high school
 - Reduced risk (direct and indirect pathways) to adult mental health problems
-
- Protective benefit is similar across culture (Hilario, Saewyc, Johnson & Vo, 2013).

*Trauma, Insecure
Attachment
Strategies &
Miscuing*



Insecurely Attached Teens in Care Form Secure Attachments with Foster Parents

	Biological Mother	Foster Mothers
Secure	9%	46%
Dismissing	55%	42%
Preoccupied	2%	---
Disorganized	35%	12%

Increased Security = Fewer behavioural problems.

Joseph, M. A., et al. (2014). The formation of secure new attachments by children who were maltreated: An observational study of adolescents in foster care. *Development and Psychopathology*, 26, 67–80

Attachment Based Programs to Support Teens, Parents & Caregivers



Few Attachment Based Treatments for Teens & Parents

Attachment Based Family Therapy (ABFT)

- Diamond et al. 10-16 weeks manualized & directive therapy with youth, parent and dyad.

Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT) & Mentalization-Based Integrative Treatment (AMBIT)

- MBT - Rossouw & Fonagy; Bevington & Fuggle. Individual alone or in combination with family therapy.
- AMBIT - Systems approach supporting caseworkers of teens/young adults to promote reflective function

Need for Highly Scalable Program



Attachment focused, responsive to trauma

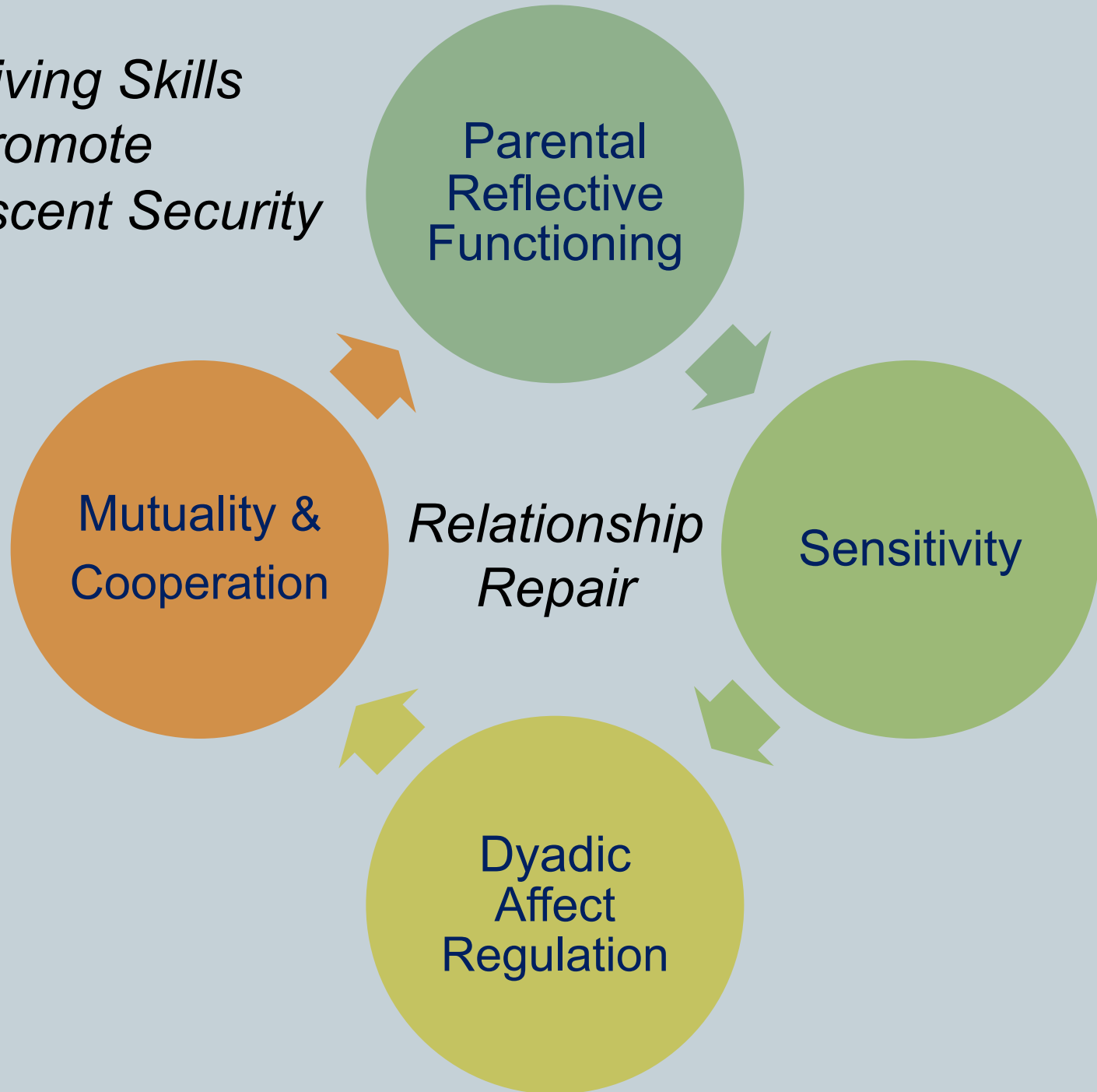
Strength focused – autonomy promoting.

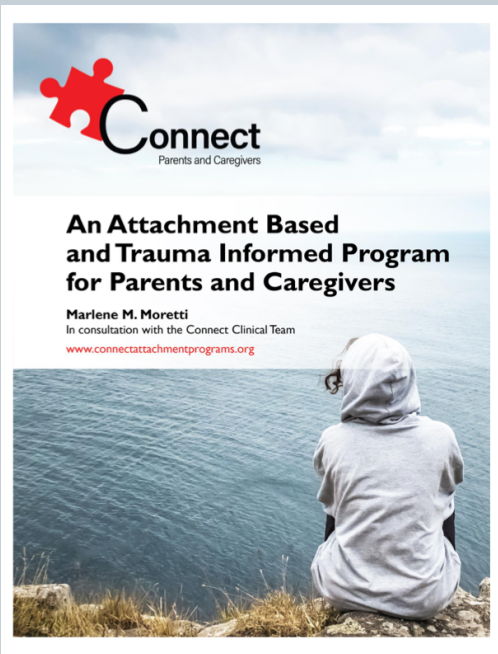
Flexible across communities but retains treatment fidelity

Highly scalable across diverse health and education professionals and diverse communities

Clear and effective training and certification model to build community capacity

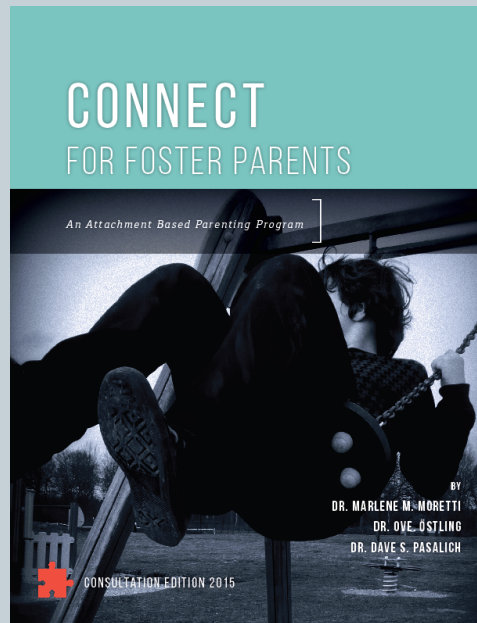
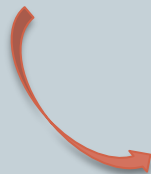
*Caregiving Skills
that Promote
Adolescent Security*



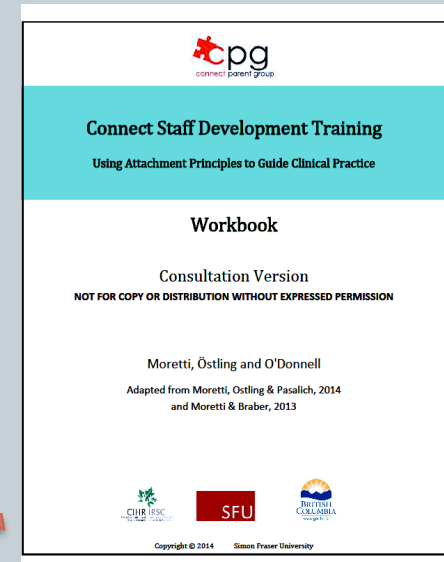
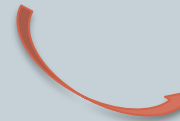


Connect Attachment Programs

English, French,
Swedish, Italian &
Spanish
forthcoming



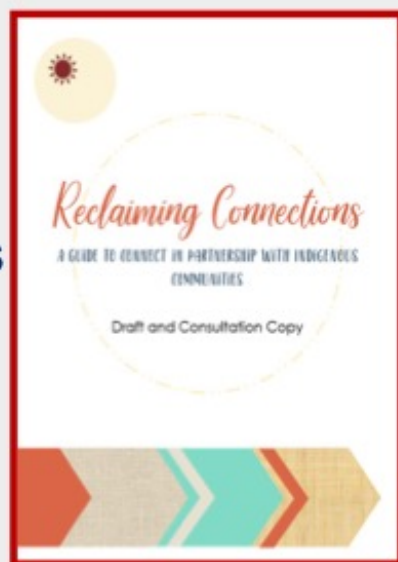
Kinship & Foster
Families English,
French & Swedish



English & Swedish

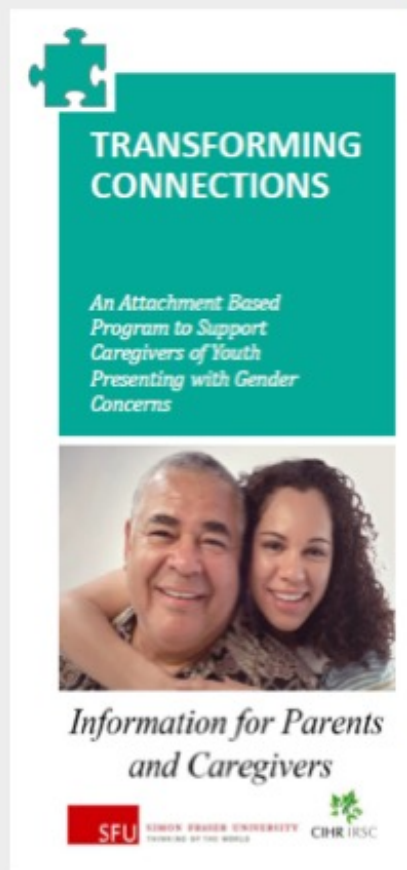
Emerging Programs

Reclaiming Connections



- Shaped through collaboration with Indigenous communities
- Recognizes trauma of colonialism, historical and continuing dislocation
- Focus on resilience and strength based in cultural, traditional wisdom and healing practices

Transforming Connections



- Shaped through dialogue with families & community stakeholders.
- Recognizes the impact of discrimination and marginalization experienced by transgender youth and their families.
- Supports parents in supporting their teen through sensitivity, responsiveness & communication.

Connect – Sessions



Connect Program Structure

Each session:

Structured around an attachment principle.
Reflection exercises, role plays and skill-based practice.

Format: Experiential, emotion-focused learning.

Sequenced therapeutic exercises that promote reflective function.
Integrates caregivers' personal experiences, with structure and safety.

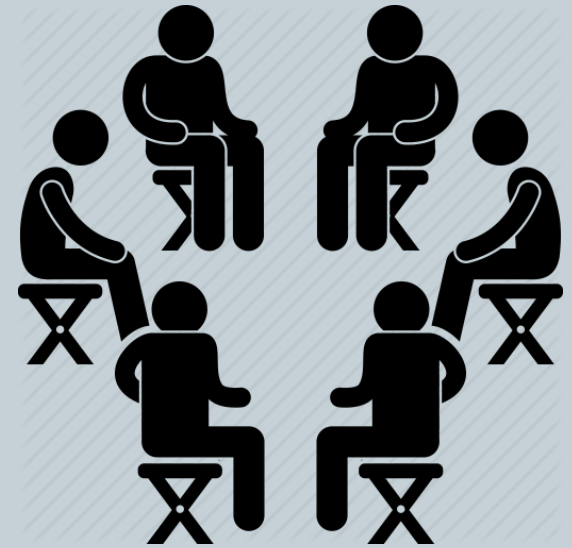
Collaborative, Strength Focused Promotes Autonomy.

Never prescriptive. Avoids “teaching the right way to parent”.

Helps parent build an attachment toolkit for understanding, responding and repairing relationships.

Reflective Practice is an Organizational Principle

- Group acts as a “Reflecting Team”
- Role plays provide flexible, emotionally provocative yet safe context for parents to practice reflection, stepping away from their own family challenges.
- No “Hollywood” endings or “easy fixes” in role plays – focus is always on where the interaction left the relationship.



Connect Research

(<http://connectattachmentprograms.org/>)



Obsuth, I., Moretti, M. M., Holland, R., Braber, K., & Cross, S. (2006). Conduct disorder: New directions in promoting effective parenting and strengthening parent-adolescent relationships. *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 15, 6–15.



Moretti, M., & Obsuth, I. (2009). Effectiveness of an attachment-focused manualized intervention for parents of teens at risk for aggressive behavior: The Connect Program. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(6), 1347-1357.



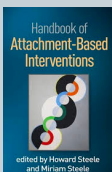
Moretti, M. M., Obsuth, I., Mayseless, O., & Scharf, M. (2012). Shifting internal parent-child representations among caregivers of teens with serious behaviour problems: An attachment-based approach. *Journal of Adolescent Trauma*, 5, 191-204.



Moretti, M.M.; Obsuth, I.; Craig, S. G.; Bartolo, T.(2015). An attachment based intervention for parents of adolescents at risk: Exploring mechanisms of change. *Attachment & Human Development*, Vol 17, 119-135.



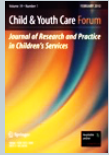
Moretti, M. M., & Obsuth, I. (2013). Reducing risk of adolescent aggression and violence: A brief attachment-focused treatment program for parents and caregivers. In D. Pepler & H. B. Ferguson (Eds.), *Understanding and addressing girls' aggressive behaviour problems: A focus on relationships*. (pp. 159–180). Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.



Moretti, M. M., Pasalich, D. S., & O'Donnell, K. A. (2018). Connect: An attachment-based program for parents of teens. In H. Steele & M. Steele (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment-based interventions*. (pp. 375–400). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse— Level 2

International Studies & Publications



Giannotta, Ortega & Stattin (2012). An attachment parenting intervention to prevent adolescents problem behaviors: A pilot study in Italy. *Child Youth Care Forum*.



Stattin, H., Enebrink, P., Özdemir, M., & Giannotta, F. (2015). A National Evaluation of Parenting Programs in Sweden: The Short-Term Effects Using an RCT Effectiveness Design. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.



Högström , Olofsson, Özdemir, Enebrink & Stattin (2016), Two-year Findings from a National Effectiveness Trial: Effectiveness of behavioral and non-behavioral parenting programs on children's externalizing behaviors. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.



Ozturk, Y., Moretti, M., & Barone, L. (2019). Addressing parental stress and adolescents' behavioral problems through an attachment-based program: An intervention study. *International Journal of Psychology & Psychological Therapy*



Osman et al., (2017). A Support Program for Somali-born Parents on Children's Behavioral Problems. *Pediatrics*, 139 (3) e20162764; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-2764



Rooth et al. (2017). An assessment of two parenting training manuals used in Swedish Parenting Interventions.

Connect: Clinical Wait List Control Trial



Clinical Population	Outcomes		Effect Size	Follow-Up & Gender	
Birth parents of adolescents referred to provincial mental health center for serious conduct disorder and complex mental health problems	Aggressive behaviour	↓	.27	Effects retained & additional significant gains post-treatment to follow-up	
	Conduct Problems	↓	.46		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >50% threatened or harmed others; or threatened to kill others 	Internalizing problems (e.g. depression)	↓	.63	Similar outcomes for girls/boys
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 50% threatened or harmed self 	Parenting Satisfaction and Efficacy	↑	.45-.86	

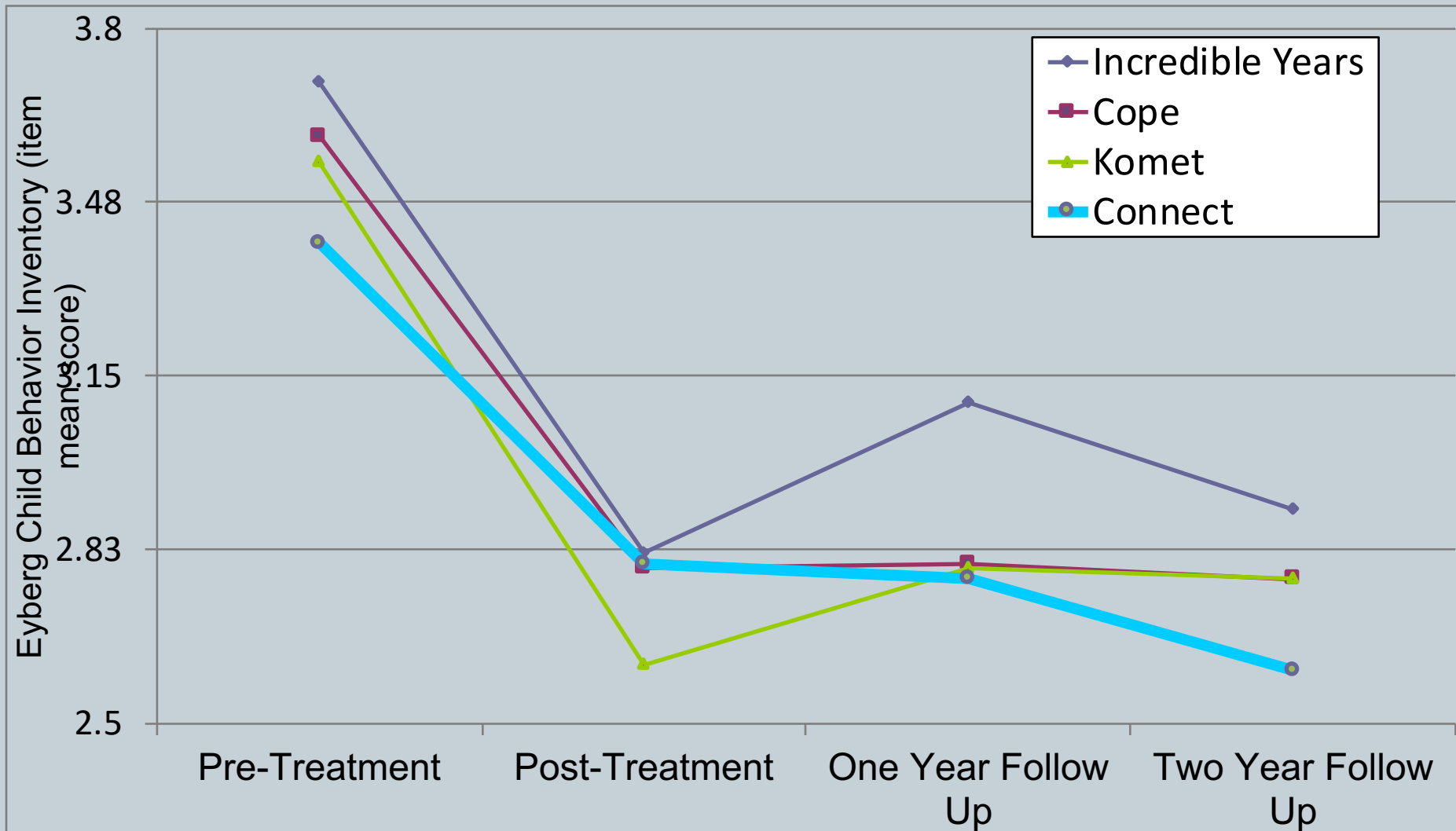
Moretti, M., & Obsuth, I. (2009). Effectiveness of an attachment-focused manualized intervention for parents of teens at risk for aggressive behavior: The Connect Program. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(6), 1347-1357. 2019 Moretti U. Haifa

Portability to Community Practice

Clinical Population	Outcomes		Effect Size	
~300 high risk parent-teen dyads rural & urban mental health sites	Conduct Problems	↓	.36	Invariant across gender, caregiver status and controlling for other services.
	Oppositional	↓	.65	
	Internalizing	↓	.34	
	Parenting Satisfaction and Efficacy	↑	.71-.74	
	Parenting Strain		.70-.98	
	CTS Aggression -Teen to Parent	↓	.94	
	Parent to Teen		.74	
	Teen Affect Dysregulation	↓	.46	

2019 Moretti U. Haifa

Högström , et al. (2016). Two-year Findings from a National Effectiveness Trial: Effectiveness of behavioral and non-behavioral parenting programs on children's externalizing behaviors. JCCP



Recent Randomized Trials



Osman et al., (2017). A Support Program for Somali-born Parents on Children's Behavioral Problems. *Pediatrics*, 139 (3) e20162764; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-2764

- **Somali born parents in Sweden.**
- **Reductions in aggressive behavior, social problems and externalizing problems (large effect sizes)**



Ozturk, Y., Moretti, M., & Barone, L. (2019). Addressing parental stress and adolescents' behavioral problems through an attachment-based program: *International Journal of Psychology & Psychological Therapy*

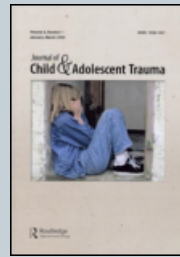
- **Reduction in externalizing behavior (large effect size) mediated through reductions in parental stress**








Dave Pasalich, Australian National University. In progress.

Shifting internal parent-child representations

Moretti, M. M. & Obsuth, I. (2012). Shifting internal parent-child representations among caregivers of teens with serious behavior problems: An attachment based approach. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 5, 191-204.

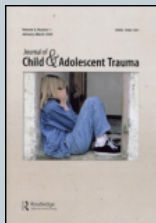


Pre- Post Assessment	Parenting Representation of Parent-Adolescent Relationship		
Parenting Representations Interview – Adolescent version (PRI-A; Scharf & Mayseless, 1997/2000)	Effect Size		
	Partnership & mutuality		.95
	Acceptance of parental authority		.67
	Parental monitoring		.53
	Autonomy granting		.95
	Secure Base		.86

Did Connect influence you? If so, how...

Father:

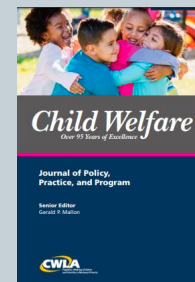
“Quite a bit, actually. It gave me a different insight into how to deal with Sandy, how to react with him and how to see what was actually in his mind, you know, like try to see it through his eyes, and I think that helps a lot. ... it gives me food for thought whenever I see him doing something or seeing him getting upset, I try and figure out why or what's he doing, what's he thinking sort of thing. Instead of just going in and saying, don't be angry, don't be upset. That doesn't work that well, so it's helped a lot.”






Moretti, M. M., Obsuth, I., Mayseless, O., & Scharf, M. (2012). Shifting internal parent-child representations among caregivers of teens with serious behaviour problems: An attachment-based approach. *Journal of Adolescent Trauma*, 5, 191-204.

Connect: An Attachment-Based and Trauma-Informed Program for Foster Parents of Teens

Moretti, O'Donnell & Kelly, Child Welfare Journal 2020



-  Significant reduction in problem behavior
-  Significant decrease in caregiver strain
-  Significant increase in family satisfaction

“I will think of the suitcase metaphor every time a kid comes through the door”

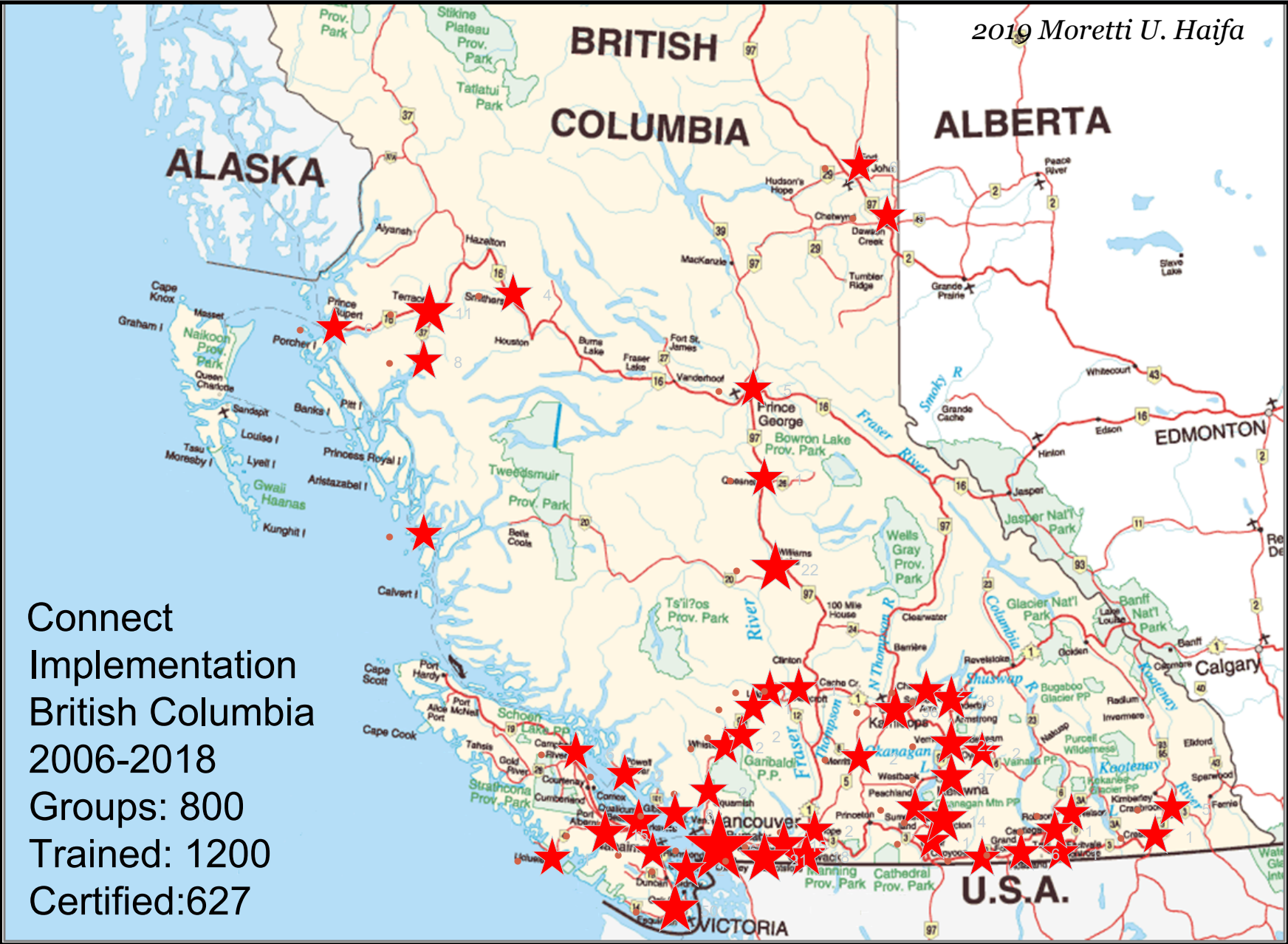
“... helped me to remember it is not all about the children it is about me as well ... how I approach the child does matter, and they helped remind me that my past get in the way at times”.

Implementation Scalability & Sustainability

BRITISH COLUMBIA

ALBERTA

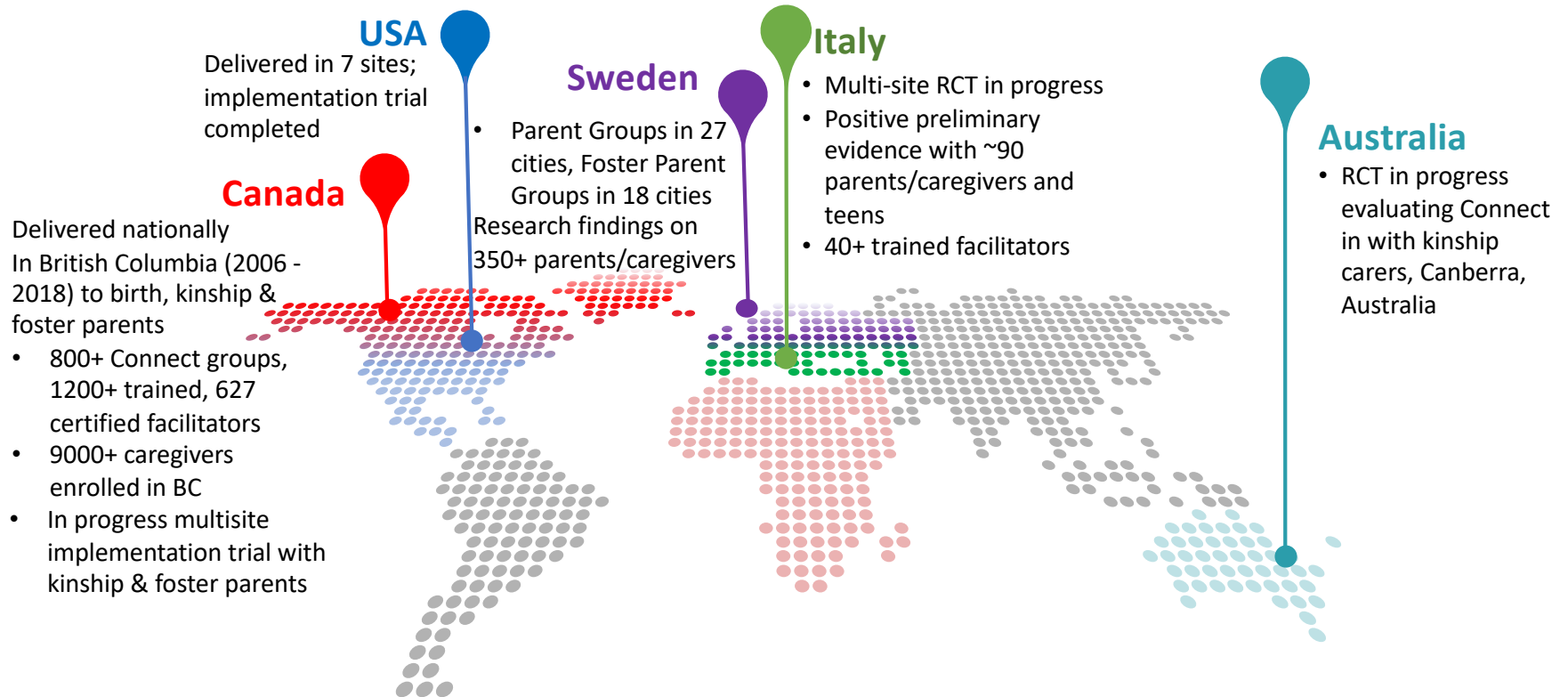
ALASKA



Connect
 Implementation
 British Columbia
 2006-2018
 Groups: 800
 Trained: 1200
 Certified: 627

U.S.A.

Connect Around the World



eConnect, an active group internet-based adaptation currently in testing with launch this summer

Challenges with Connect:

- Connect has a successful track record of effectively engaging a broad range of parents from different cultures and with different needs.
- The challenges can come in how referring sources interact with and serve parents.
 - How are angry/fed-up/rejecting parents seen? How are children with serious behavioral problems seen? As hopeless or hurting?
 - Do we rescue the child or try to heal a family?

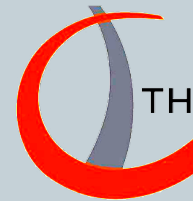
Successful Cases

- Outcomes of Connect:
 - Reduced stress/strain in the parent, replaced by an increased sense of confidence and hope.
 - Reduced behavioral and emotional problems in the children.
- Parents who have struggled with their own trauma and addictions and previously resisted other treatment or services come to appreciate how their healing can strengthen and rebuild strong relationships with their children.

Thanks to...

Generous parents, youth, practitioners and communities who have shaped Connect by sharing their experience and feedback!

MAPLES ADOLESCENT TREATMENT
CENTRE



THE ANNIE E. CASEY



Members of the Adolescent Health Lab at Simon Fraser University and our National and International Collaborators



For more information go to: <http://adolescenthealth.ca/> or www.connectparentgroup.org or contact Marlene Moretti at: moretti@sfu.ca