Fostering the Strengths and Successes of Structurally Marginalized Youth

Presenters:

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- In the past 24 months, Melissa Tremblay has no relevant financial relationships with the manufacturer(s) of commercial services discussed in this CME activity
- I do not intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in my presentation.

10th International Meeting on Indigenous Child Health

March 24-26, 2023 – Tulsa, Oklahoma

Background

- Importance of social-emotional wellbeing

- Structurally marginalized students
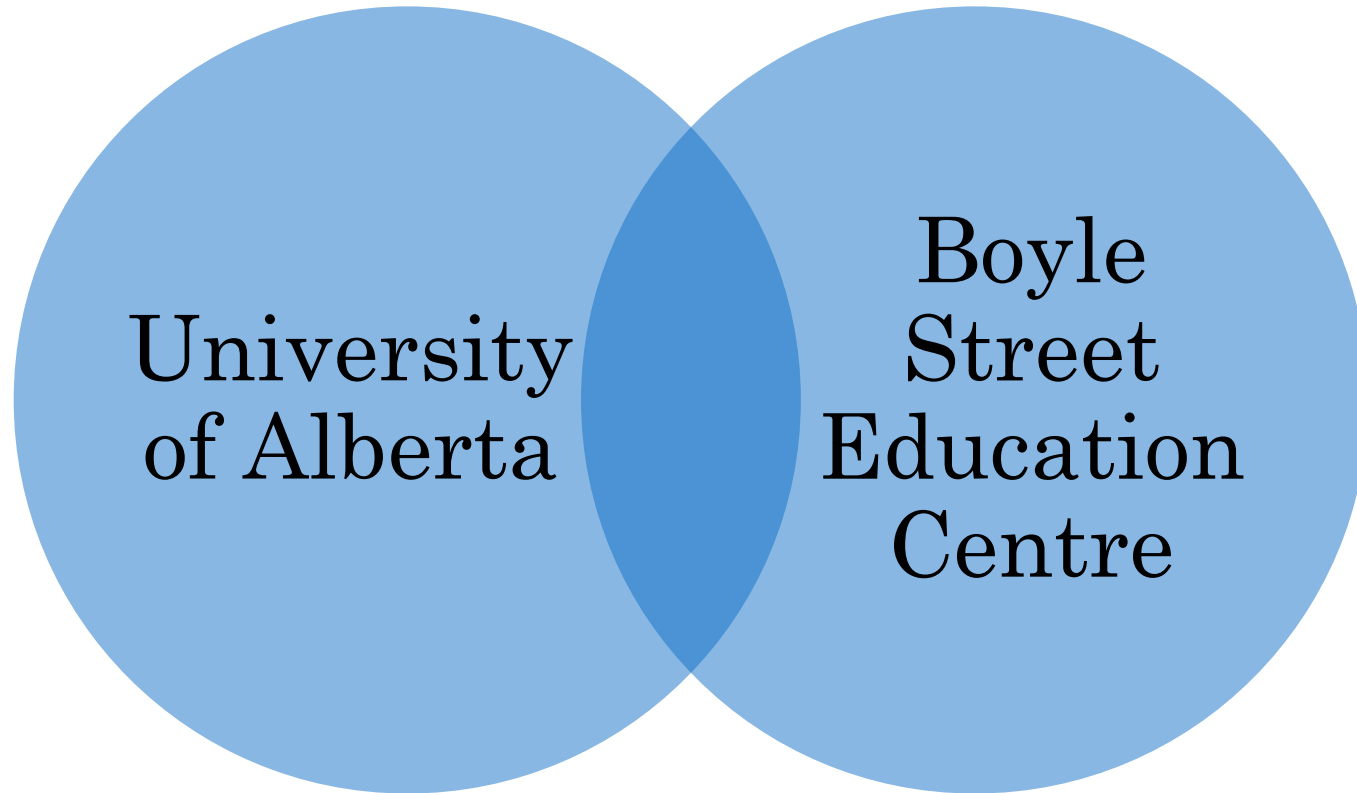
- Deficit-based → Strength-based

Impetus For This Work

- Lack of consensus re: constructs that make up social-emotional competence
  - Students from diverse backgrounds

- SE programs and tools tend to be focused on the early school years

- Field of assessment as a whole is deficit-focused
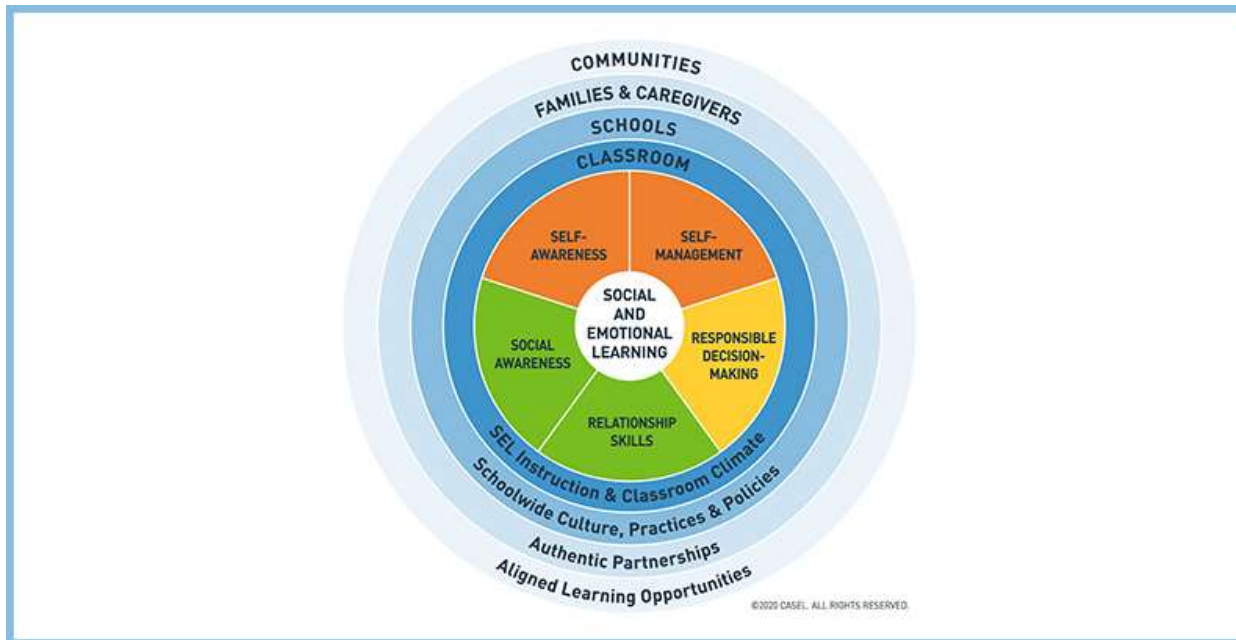
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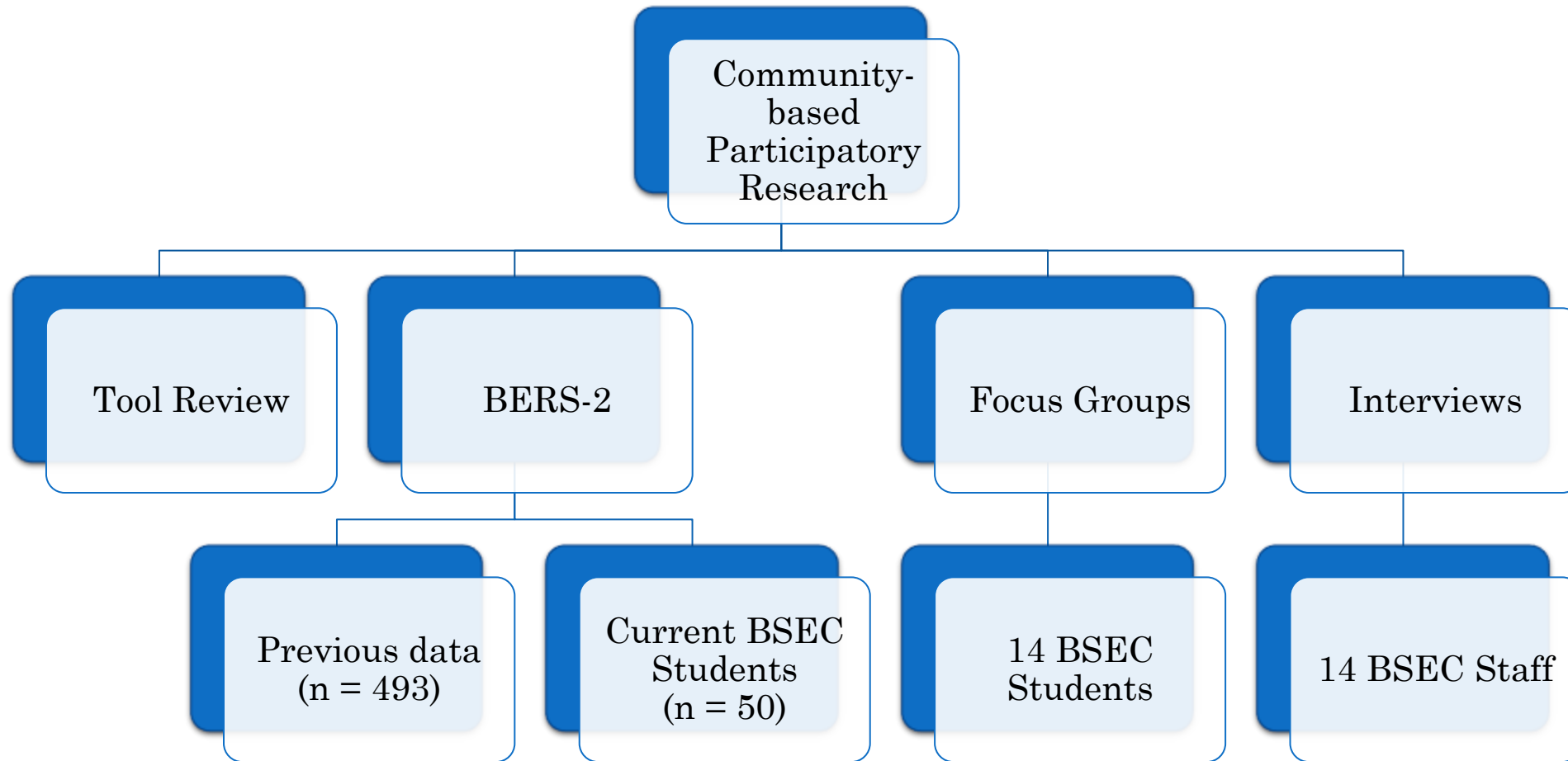
Boyle Street Education Centre

Research Objectives

Explore how to define the successes and strengths of students put at risk in culturally sensitive ways, with a focus on social-emotional strengths.
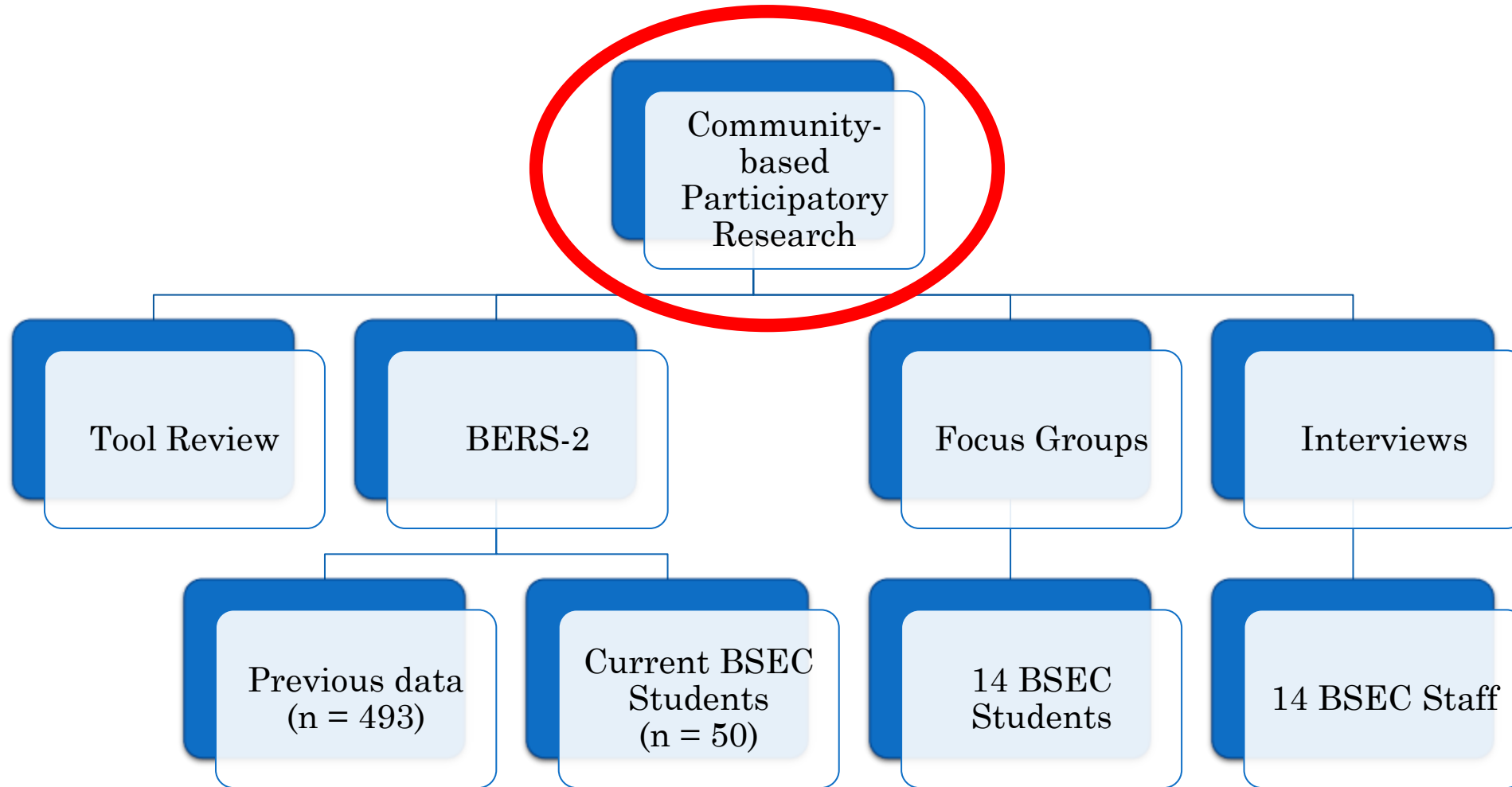
Examine how the social-emotional strengths of students put at risk are being measured in culturally sensitive ways.

Build understanding of the factors that are important for school staff to consider in fostering the strengths and successes of students put at risk

Research Methods

Research Methods

Participatory approaches

Community Engaged Research Continuum
(clinical & social/behavioral)

Less Community Involvement ←———————————————→ Complete Community Involvement

| Investigator-Driven Research | Community-Placed Research | Community-Based Research | Community-Based Participatory Research | Community-Driven Research |

www.methods.sagepub.com

TCPS-2 (2018). Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada.

There Are Differences Between Research Conducted…

ON
populations/
communities

IN
populations/
communities

WITH
populations/
communities

CBPR Principles

- Partnership
  - Mutual benefit, capacity building
- Local, social justice focus
  - Community empowerment prioritized
- Actionable knowledge dissemination
  - Integrally involving partners
- Long-term commitment

Israel, B. A., Schulz, A. J., Parker, E. A., & Becker, A. B. (2008). Critical issues in developing and following community based participatory research principles. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 46-66). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

What CBPR is NOT

1. "Community-placed/based" research

2. Sporadic or symbolic inclusion of communities

3. A specific method or research design

Hearney, C. (2014). *What is community-based participatory research? And how to tell if it's real CBPR or not?*

Tool Review Methods

- Consulted a research librarian

- Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, PROQUEST databases

- Searched compendiums for relevant tools

- Inclusion criteria

- Identified as measuring some aspect of social-emotional functioning;
- Designed for high school age youth, defined as grades 9-12 and/or ages 14-19;
- Administered in English;
- Identified in the description of the tool as strength-based; and
- Published in a peer-reviewed journal, book, or online format.

Tool Review Findings

2 normed with Indigenous populations

8 normed with "at-risk" youth

15 Tools

- Tools varied widely with respect to…
  - Number of items (20-244)
  - Number of constructs measured (1-12)
  - Types of constructs measured (~60)
 - Descriptions of psychometric properties
- Conclusion:
  - Significant heterogeneity exists in terms of the measurement of SE strengths among high school-age youth
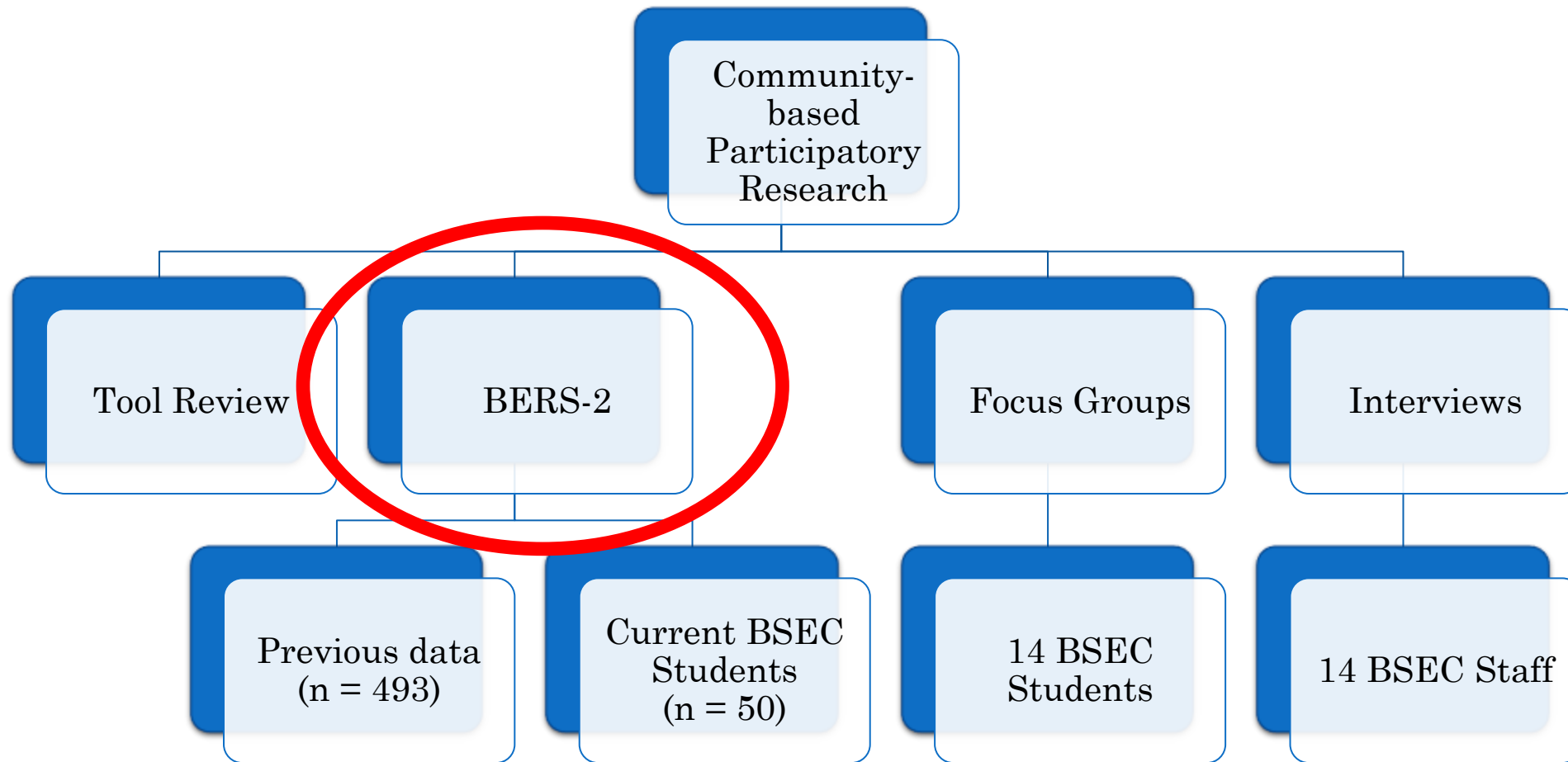
BERS-2 Data Collection

- In September 2019, an RA administered the BERS-2 to 50 students
  - Part of BSEC's regular registration process
  - Students received a gift card for their time
  - Age 13-19 (mean = 16.8)

- Secondary BERS-2 data
  - Data collected from 493 students in Alberta schools as part of a previous project working with students who have confirmed or suspected FASD
  - Age 10-18 (mean = 14.9)

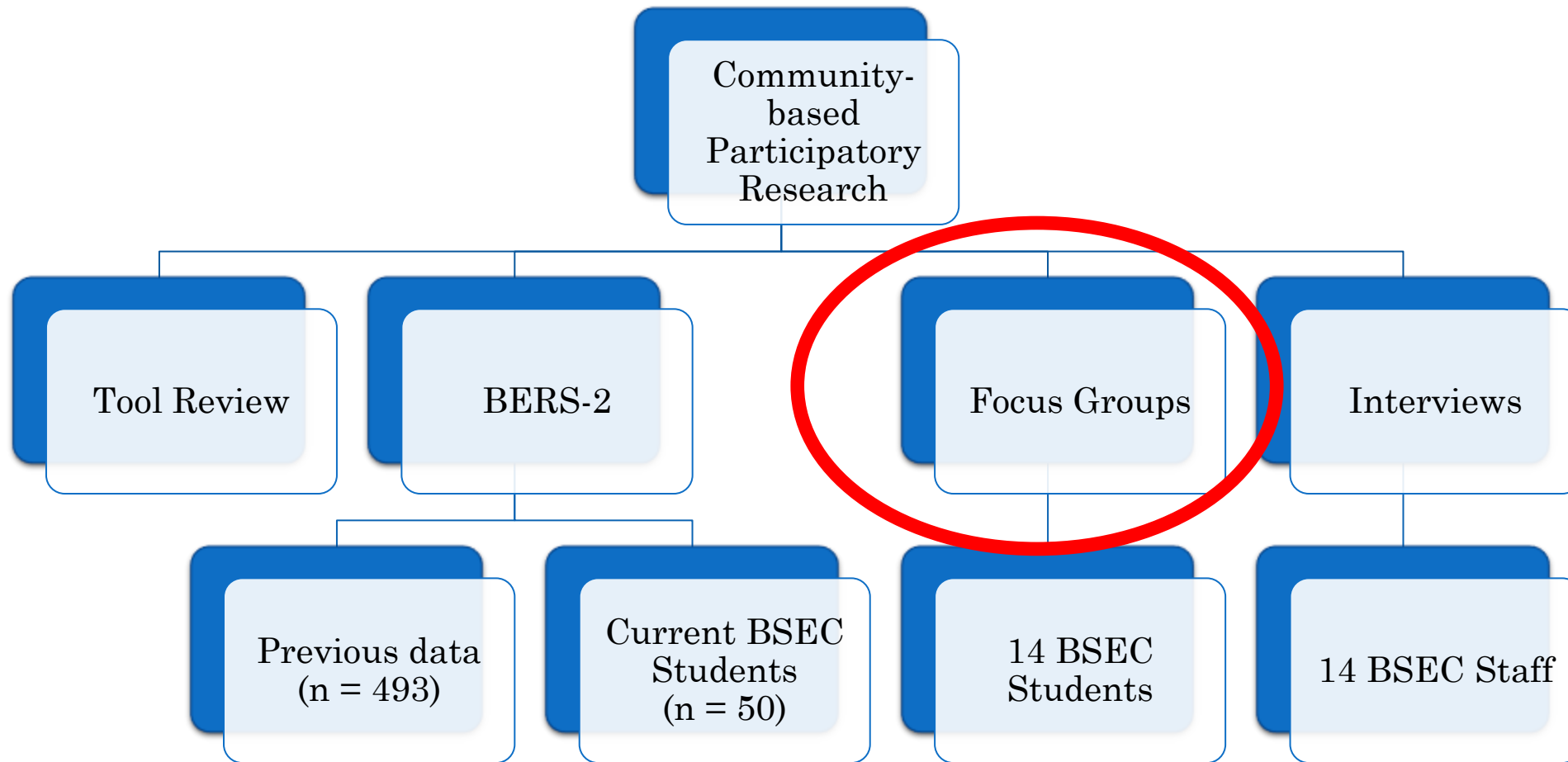*Number of BSEC Students Scoring in Each BERS-2 Category (n = 50)*
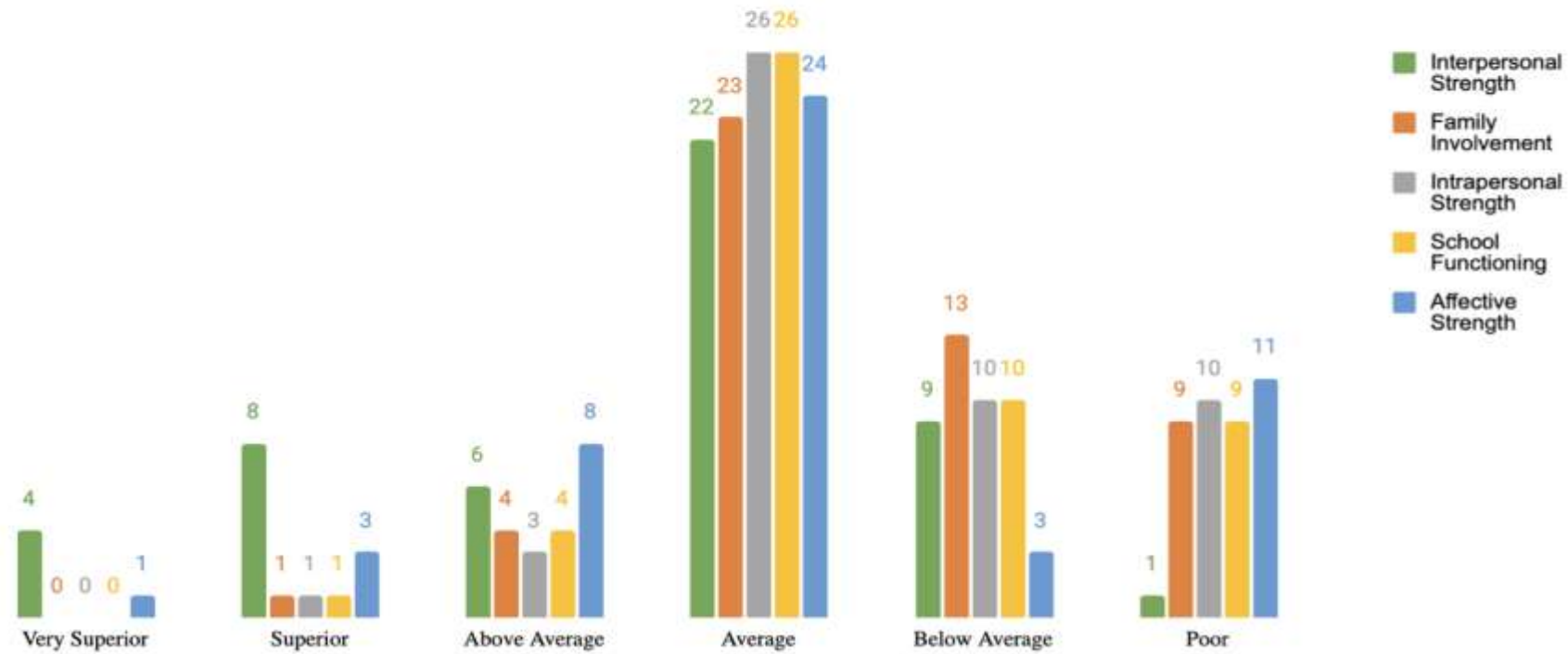
BERS-2 Mean Scaled Scores for Youth, Teacher, Parent, and Coach Raters (n = 493)

IS = Interpersonal Strength; FI = Family Involvement; IaS = Intrapersonal Strength; SF = School Functioning; AS = Affective Strength

BERS-2 Findings

- BSEC Students
  - Area of relative strength: interpersonal functioning
  - Area of relative weakness: affective strength

- Wider sample (n = 493)
  - Youth rated themselves higher on each of the BERS-2 subscales than coaches, parents, and teachers; Success coaches > parents and teachers

Community-based Participatory Research

Tool Review

BERS-2

Focus Groups

Interviews

Previous data (n = 493)

Current BSEC Students (n = 50)

14 BSEC Students

14 BSEC Staff

Focus Group Data Collection

- Recruitment was planned collaboratively

- Drop-in format (1 school block)

- Experienced RA's → semi-structured, responsive format

- Initially planned to use arts-based methods
  - Followed students' lead

- 6 focus groups and 1 Fun Friday event

- 14 participants in total
  - 15-20 years old
  - 8 males, 5 females, 1 gender diverse participant
  - 8 participants attended >1 focus group

Data Analysis

- Initial focus group guide was revised
  - Data collection and analysis were iterative

- Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed

- Preliminary analysis after first 2 focus groups

- Initial coding framework evolved

- Our research focus shifted from investigating methods and developing a tool for measuring SE strengths→ developing a tool to assist school staff to reflect on their own practices in terms of fostering the strengths and successes of structurally marginalized youth
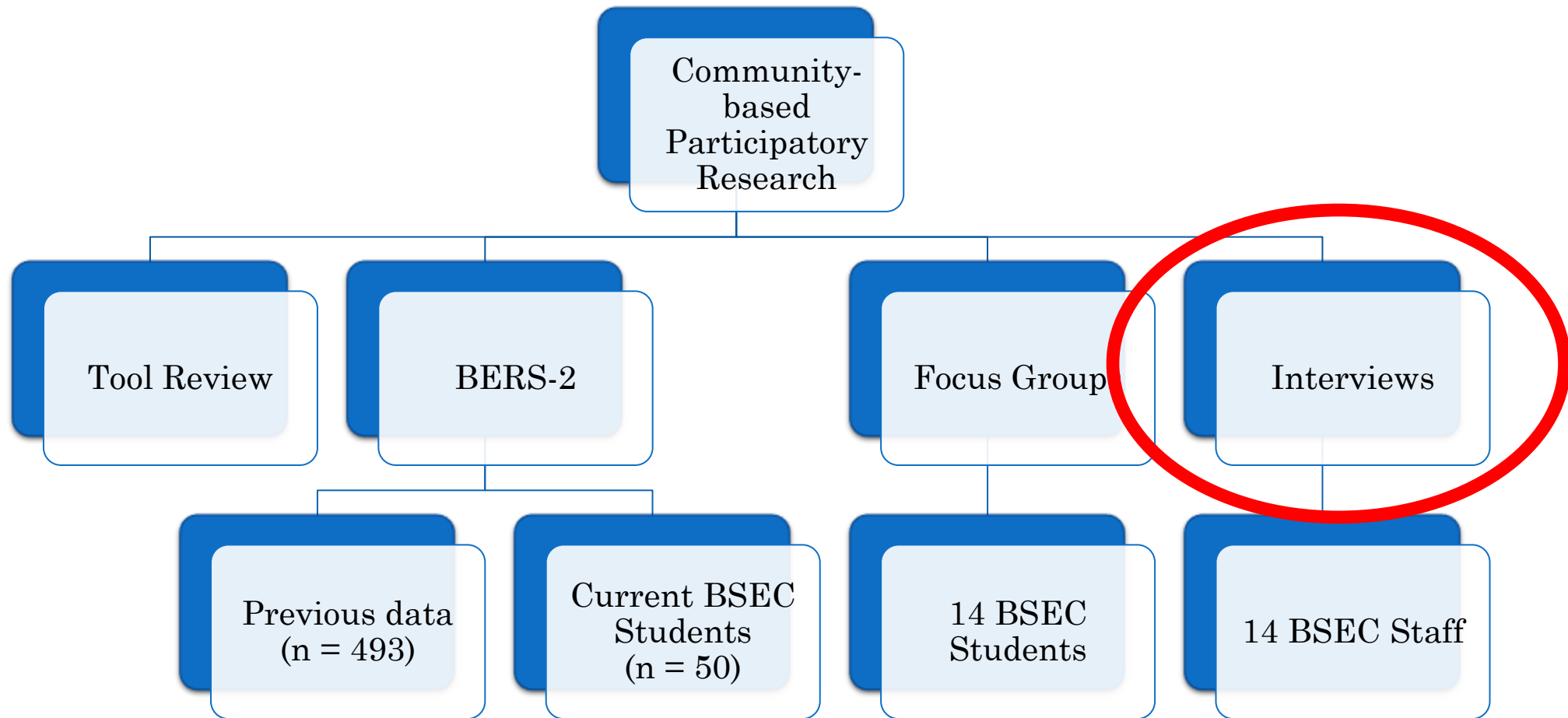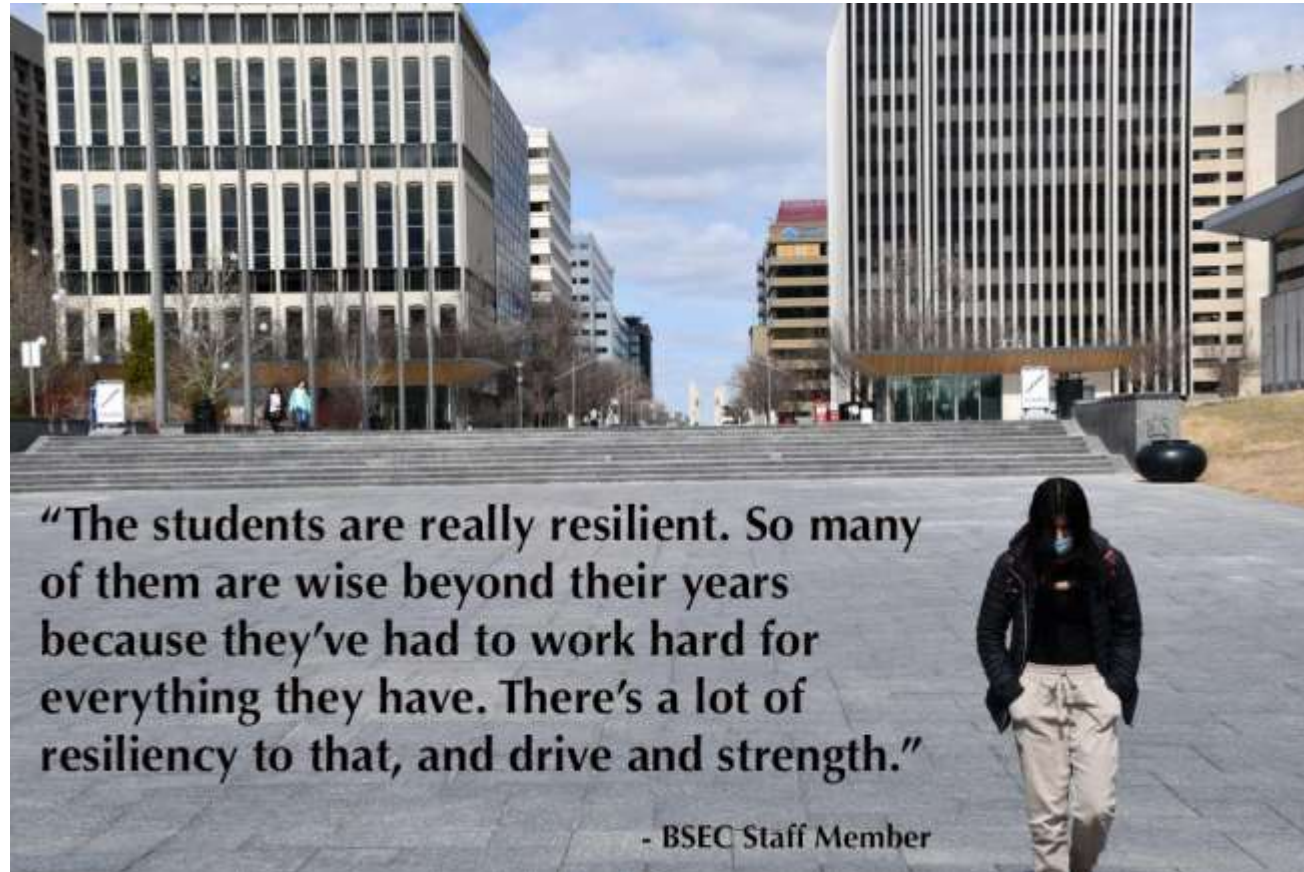
Participants

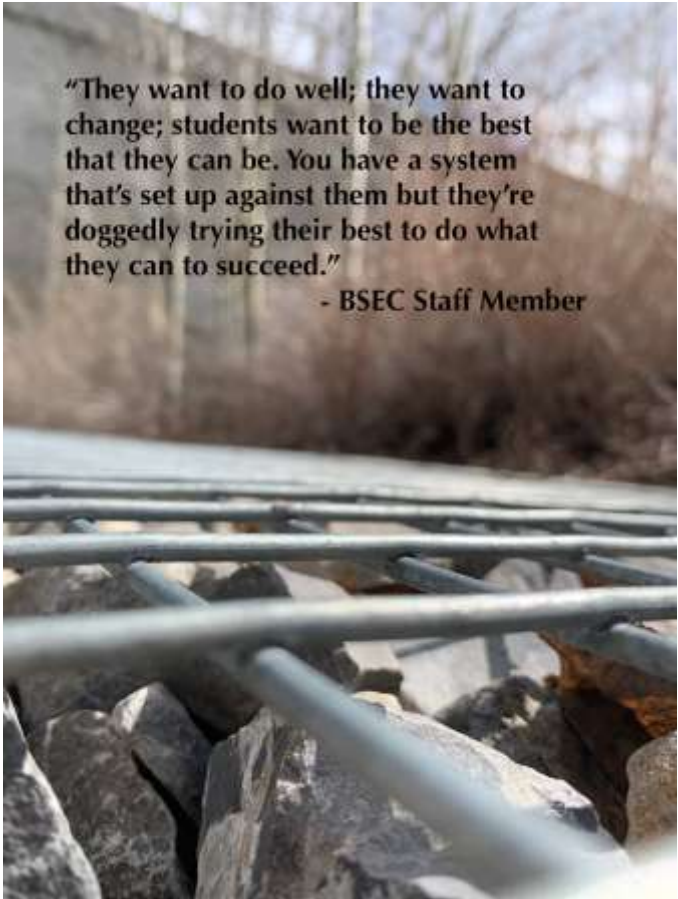## Interviews

- 14 staff

Focus Groups

- 16 staff

Resilience

"The students are really resilient. So many of them are wise beyond their years because they've had to work hard for everything they have. There's a lot of resiliency to that, and drive and strength."
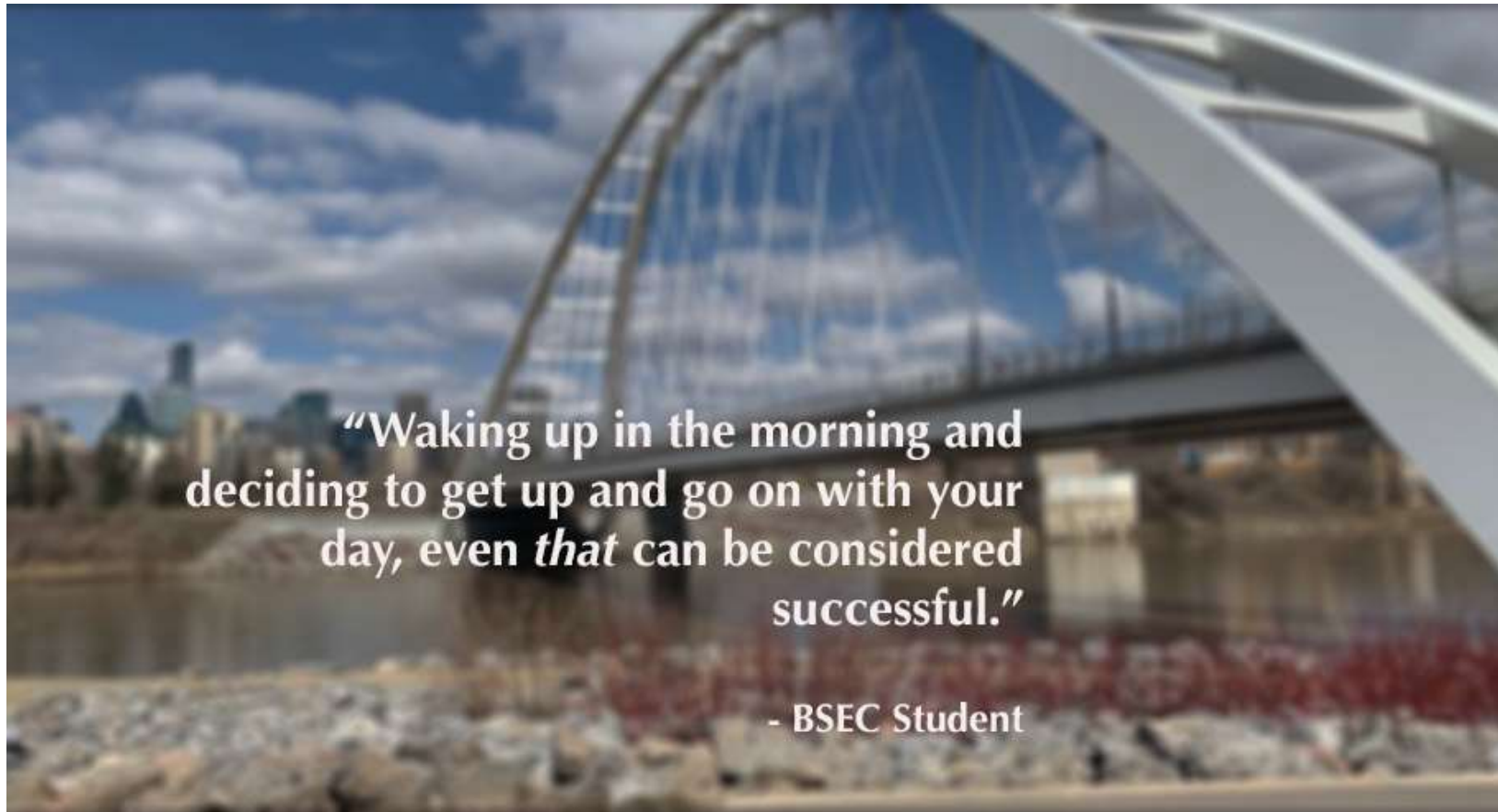
- BSEC Staff Member

Resist Colonial and Oppressive Systems

"They want to do well; they want to change; students want to be the best that they can be. You have a system that's set up against them but they're doggedly trying their best to do what they can to succeed."
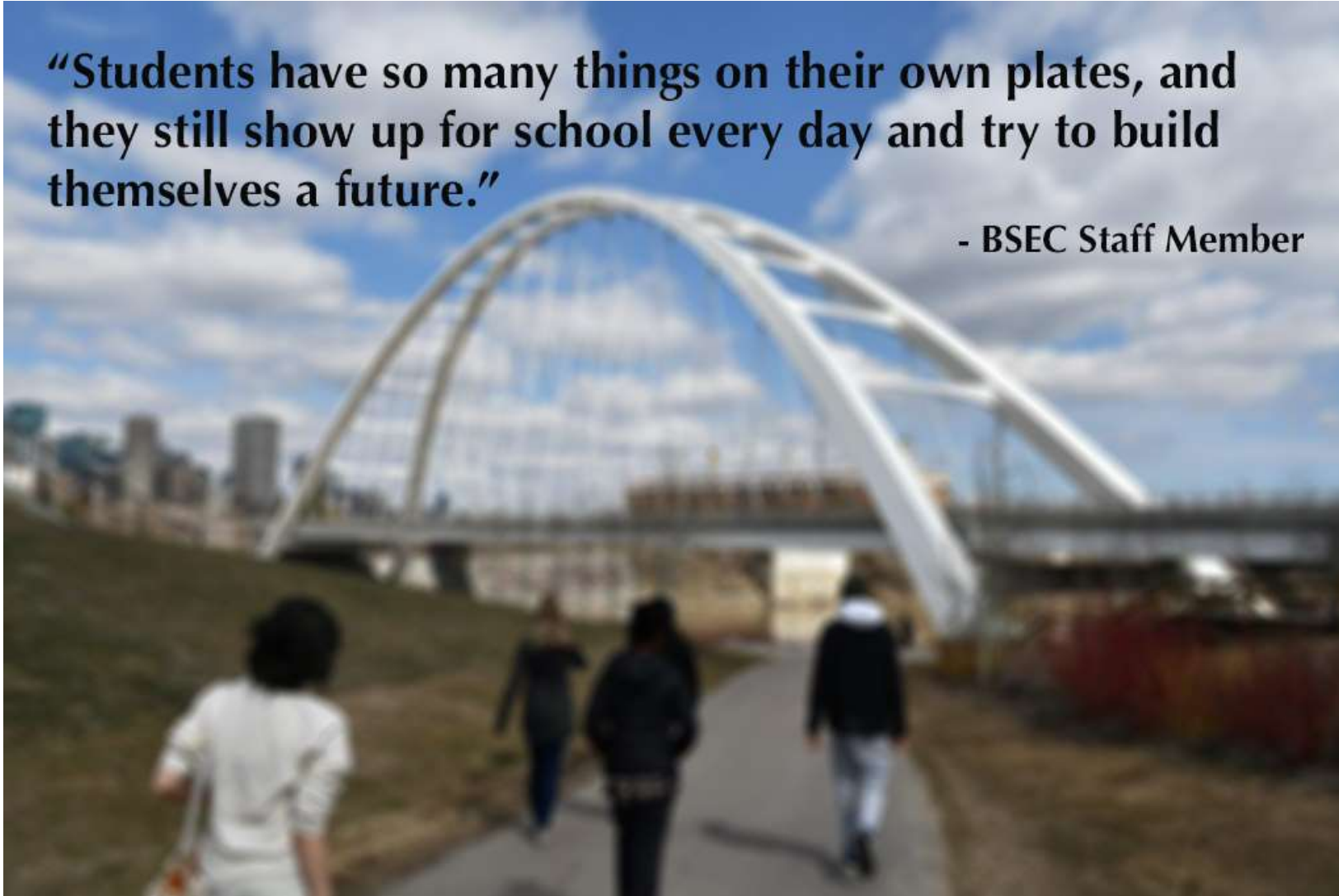
- BSEC Staff Member

Willingness to Attend School

"Waking up in the morning and deciding to get up and go on with your day, even *that* can be considered successful."

- BSEC Student

Work Ethic

"Students have so many things on their own plates, and they still show up for school every day and try to build themselves a future."

- BSEC Staff Member

Ability to Accept Help

"I used to feel like being independent...but now, realizing you need help, it's easier."

- BSEC Student

Peer Support and Empathy

"They're very understanding of one another. We have a wide range of students here and they all love one another; they've got no problem with one another. It's different than what I've seen in other school settings."

- BSEC Staff Member
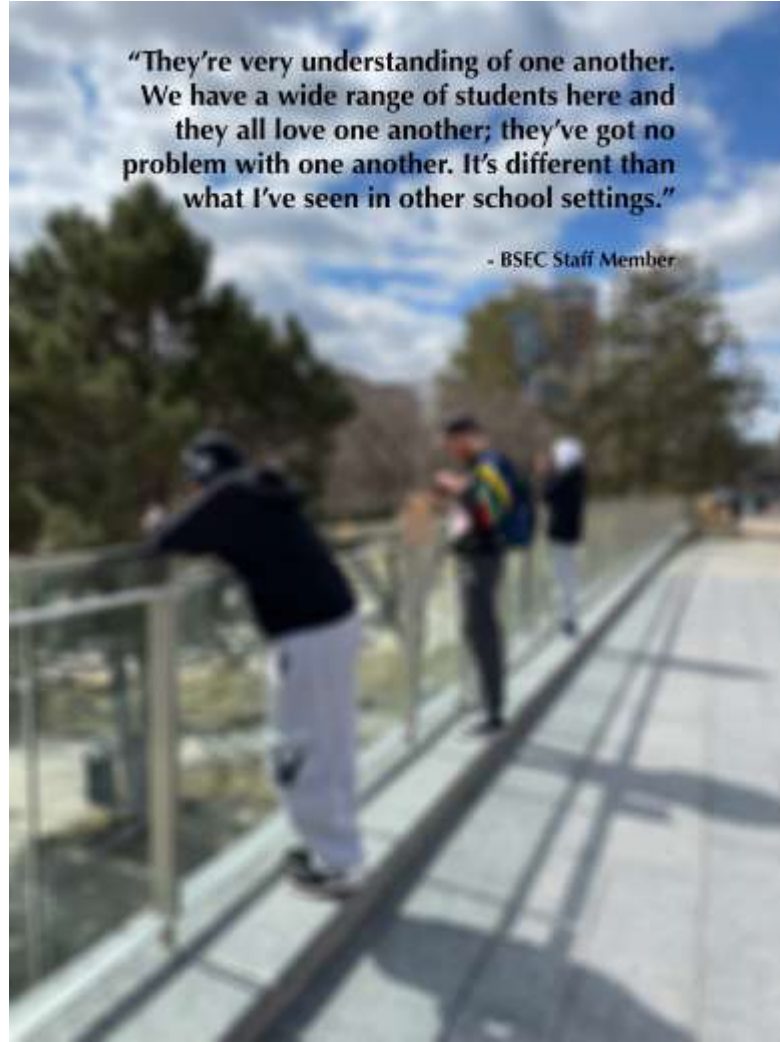
Implications

Tool Review
- Need for culturally appropriate assessment

BERS-2
- Approaches that view the whole person in relation

Focus Groups and Interviews
- Asking different questions and asking questions differently

← → Emphasis on development of certain skills that can create a unique profile of strengths and successes ← →

Impact

- How to more sensitively and accurately define and measure student successes and social-emotional strengths

- Inform development and enhancement of appropriate services and supports
  - Build on existing practices
  - Provide new insights

- School leadership decisions and planning

- Knowledge mobilization

Impact