

SyMap: Social Systems Mapping with Youth

Robert Palmer, M.Ed. &
Katherine Philp, Ed.D.,
M.P.H.

Presenter Bios

Katie Philp, Ed.D., M.P.H.

UCF Parramore Education and
Innovation District (PEID)

Program Manager

Katherine.philp@ucf.edu



Responsibilities and Expertise:

- Research & Evaluation for Collective Impact initiative
- Community connections and capacity building
- Informal learning & community-based research

Additional Experience:

- Secondary science educator
- Public health modeling and simulation

Robert Palmer, M.Ed.

UCF Center for Community Schools
Program Manager

Robert.Palmer@ucf.edu



Responsibilities and Expertise:

- Statewide Community Partnership Schools (CPSs) technical assistance
- UCF programs liaison with local CPS (5 sites)
- School Counseling/College Access

Additional Experience:

- Comprehensive High School Guidance
 - School Counselor
 - Guidance Department Lead
 - College and Career Specialist

Yay!

- OR -

Boo!

What is SyMap?

Systems Mapping: visual representation of a system, including relationships and feedback loops, actors and trends.

Program Goals

- Examine complex social systems using mapping and modeling tools
- Understand inequities from a systems perspective
- Spend time on college campus, exploring careers and learning with and from higher education professionals

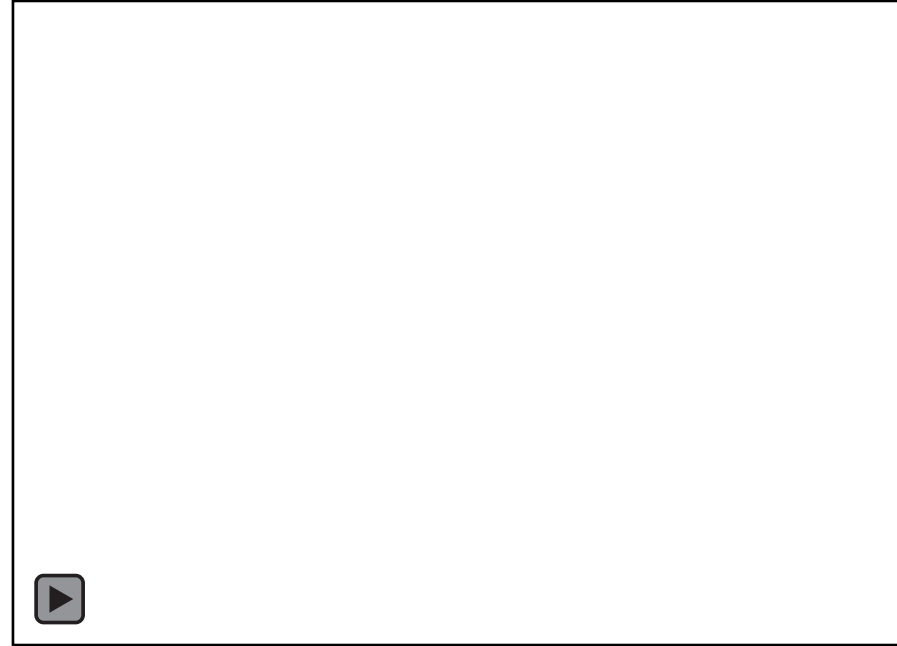
Keys to Systems Mapping with Youth

- Understanding Community Context
- Developing Rapport
- Co-Creating a Collaborative
- Scaffolding to Elevate Understanding
- Flexibility



SyMap Summer Program Overview

- One-week paid opportunity
 - Hosted on Valencia/UCF Downtown campus
 - 5 rising sophomores & juniors from Parramore
 - 2 rising sophomores at Valencia
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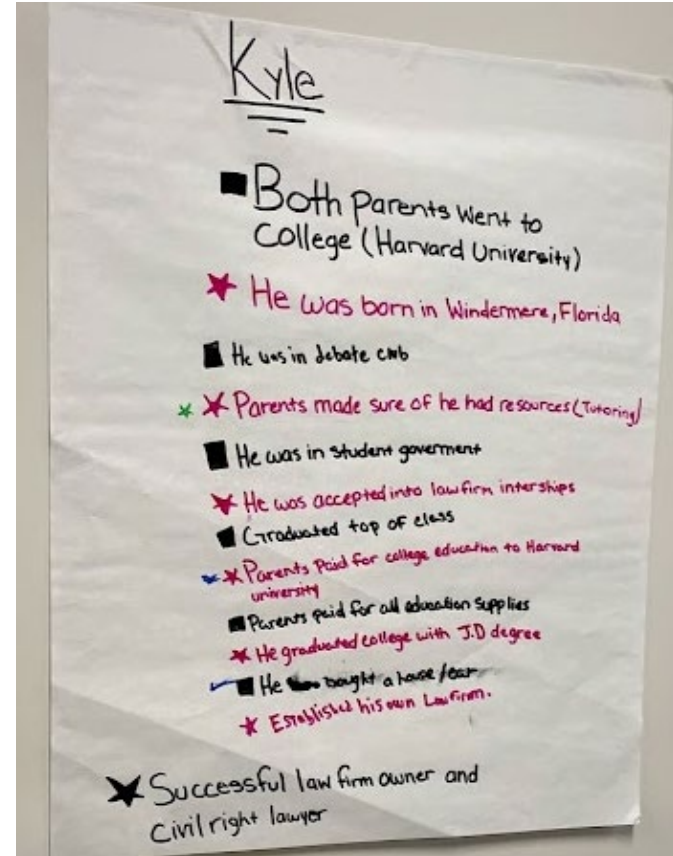
How we started

Students were asked to generate explanations for the following outcomes:

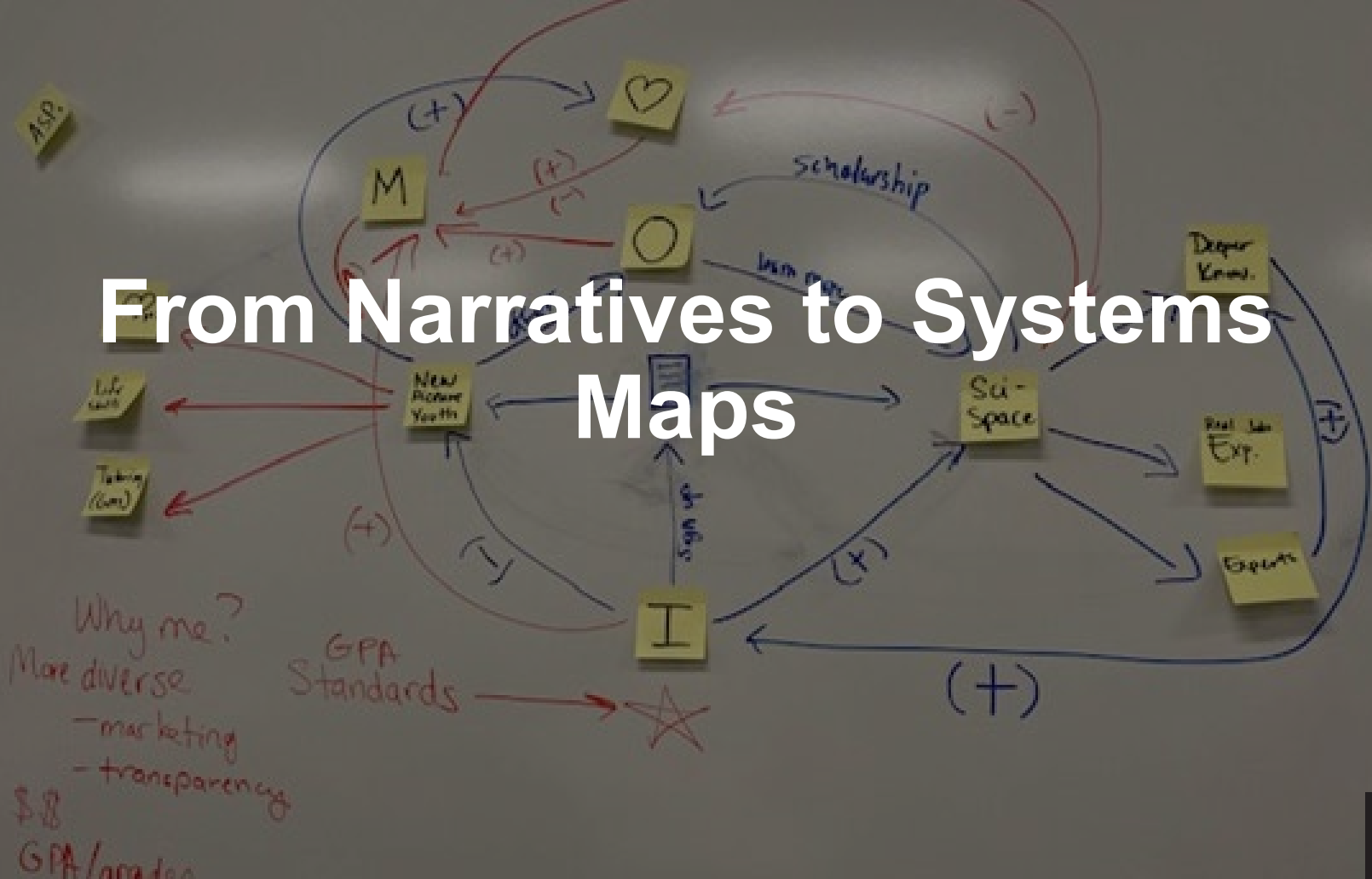
- Children from low-income families are three times less likely to participate in after-school programs.
- By sixth grade, middle-income students will have spent nearly 4,000 more hours in after-school and summer learning programs than their lower-income peers.
- And parents in low-income and minority households are more likely to report a lack of available learning opportunities on offer in their communities.
- Children consistently involved in extracurriculars are 400 percent more likely to go to college than kids who cannot access these programs.

Narratives as models

- SyMap students were asked to create detailed narratives about two individuals that helped explain the data presented
- *“By giving them a story to tell, by letting them tell the narratives of those two individuals, they were able to put together a causal pathway that explained the data in ways that made sense to them. We were able to come back to those stories and use them as explanatory tools for these broader systems conversations. We spent the rest of the week toggling back and forth across individuals and systems.”*



From Narratives to Systems Maps



Connecting to the real world

- Does our model help us understand our local systems?
- How can this help us understand system-level causes of inequities?

For Fun
Exercise
Learning
Make Friends

To reduce drop outs
+ crime rates

To close the
achievement
gap

Connecting to the real world

- What is the importance of programs that deepen student interests?
- How can we explore ways to increase access to programs offering diverse experiences?



Lessons Learned

- High school youth can engage deeply with highly complex systems issues
- Systems mapping is a helpful tool for supporting understanding of complex social issues
- Collaboration with youth as facilitator vs. instructor



Feedback

- HS freshman: “This really got me thinking.”
- Middle schooler: “I feel, like, 110% confident in figuring out a pathway for myself now.”
- Adult mentor outside of SyMap: “It’s piqued their interest in going to college. Like, they [are] really excited now, they feel like they can do it. They are... more focused on academics.”



Implications, Challenges, & Future Research

- Complex systems are challenging for anyone to understand!
- Logistical challenges
- Need to continue examining the use of mapping and modeling as tools for understanding inequity
- Preliminary evidence of shift from individual perspectives on inequity to systems perspectives
 - Aligns with other published work (Bañales et al., 2021)
- Continue explorations with larger groups, different ages, and more diverse backgrounds
- Test and refine ways to measure changes in knowledge and beliefs

Questions

