Connecting With Youth: Building a Therapeutic Relationship – Examining the Contributions of Youth and Teacher/Counselors

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Day School Youth: Background Characteristics

Data used in analyses collected during 2002/2003 school year.

- Age: 5 to 20 years of age, mean age: 14 years
- Race/Ethnicity:
  - Caucasian
  - African American
  - Hispanic Origin
- 72% of Day School students have multiple diagnoses
- Prevalent diagnoses
  - Conduct disorder: 32%
  - Bipolar: 16%
  - ADHD: 30%
  - Depression: 15%

Mean Youth Resistance Ratings (With Mean Score Range) By Teacher/Counselor

Mean Youth Alliance Ratings (With Mean Score Range) By Teacher/Counselor

Stability of Youth Alliance Ratings Across Time

Resistance Score Over Time

Approximately 80% of the Day School youth rated the quality of the alliance with their teacher/counselor within a .25 point score range.

Approximately 50% of the Day School youth maintained stable ratings of resistance within a .25 point score range.

23% of the the rated the quality of the Day School youth had resistance score changes that were between 1 and 2 points.

A change from significant resistance to mild resistance and vice versa.

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The Relationship Between Youth Resistance And Favorable Alliance

![Graph showing the relationship between youth resistance and favorable alliance.](image)

R-square = .412

Stability of Youth Ratings Across Time: Alliance and Resistance

- Youth ratings of alliance across teacher/counselors do vary
- Youth do not appear to generalize across teacher/counselors
- Youth ratings of alliance are fairly stable across time
- Youth ratings of resistance are subject to change across time
- Youth ratings of resistance are associated with their ratings of alliance
  - More resistance → lower alliance

Selected Teacher/Counselor Characteristics

Selected 16 PF Factor Scale Dimensions

**LEFT MEANING:**
- Reserved, impersonal
- Concrete
- Reactive
- Cooperative, avoids conflict
- Serious, restrained
- Utilitarian, objective
- Grounded, practical
- Genuine, forthright
- Easy-going, tolerant of disorder
- Unrestricted

**FACTOR:**
- Warmth
- Reasoning
- Emotional Stability
- Dominance
- Liveliness
- Rule-Consciousness
- Social Boldness
- Sensitivity
- Vigilance
- Abstractness
- Privateness
- Appreciation
- Perfectionism
- Tough-Mindedness

**RIGHT MEANING:**
- Warm, outgoing, soft-hearted
- Abstract
- Stable, adaptive, mature
- Assertive, forceful, competitive
- Lively, animated
- Rule-conscious, dutiful
- Venturous, thick-skinned
- Sensitive, sentimental
- Suspicious, skeptical
- Imaginative, idea-oriented
- Discreet, non-disclosing
- Self-assured
- Tense, inflexible standards

Interpreting The 16PF Data

- Scores are on a standardized continuum from 1 to 10
  - High scores: 8 – 10
  - Average scores: 4 – 7 (7 = high average, 4 = low average)
  - Low scores: 3 - 1
- The direction of the score is neither positive nor negative
- Both low and high scores are interpreted
  - Example:
    - Low Warmth scores is interpreted as caution about involvement with people and a preference for working alone
    - High warmth is interpreted as being outgoing, a “people person”, friendly, etc.

Pressley Ridge 16PF Scores (Range)
Teacher/Counselor 16PF Scores And Youth Alliance Ratings

- 16PF profile scores
  - More directly associated with youth resistance than with youth rating of alliance
  - Consistency of alliance across time is associated with 16PF

Teacher/Counselor 16PF and Youth Resistance

- High rule consciousness → High youth resistance (r = .762)
  - Strict adherence to rules, regulations
- High dominance → High youth resistance (r = .790)
  - Assertive, forceful, competitive, argumentative, overbearing
- High independence → High youth resistance (r = .801)
  - Need to maintain a sense of control over over social activities
- High perfectionist → High youth resistance (r = .781)
  - Disciplined, difficult dealing with unpredictability, preoccupied with tasks and outcomes
- High social control → High youth resistance (r = .758)
  - Autocratic, not a “team player”
- High impression management → Low youth alliance (r = -.636)
  - Tendency to manipulate in order to create impression that things are going well

Selected Youth Characteristics

Youth Characteristics – Associations With Resistance and Alliance

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Youth Reported</th>
<th>October 2002</th>
<th>June 2003</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social Competence</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>248*</td>
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<td>Total Problems</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>237*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalizing</td>
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<td>201*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Problems</td>
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<td>257*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical/sexual Abuse</td>
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<td>214*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Reported</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalizing</td>
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<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *P < .05
- **P < .005

Resistance, Alliance, and Youth Characteristics

- Social competence continues to be associated with alliance over time
  - Negatively correlated with resistance – resistance increases, social competence declines
  - Positively correlated with alliance – alliance increases, social competence increases
- Externalizing behavior problems are positively associated with resistance at the end of the school year as reported by both teachers and youth
- Alcohol and drug use is no longer significantly correlated with resistance or alliance at the end of the school year
- Youth report of sexual and/or physical abuse is no longer significantly correlated with resistance or alliance at the end of the school year
The Importance of Considering How Youth and Adult Characteristics Affect Alliance

- A key value of Re-Education, Pressley Ridge’s guiding philosophy, is that youth can be re-educated to be competent and manage their own behavior with the help of a professional Teacher/Counselor (Hobbs, 1985).
- Alliance is both an end in itself as well as a prerequisite to re-education.
- Building relationships is a two-way process.
- History has shown that Teacher/Counselors who work well together, achieve consistently high alliance scores with their students.

How Is Therapeutic Alliance Demonstrated on a Day-to-day Basis?

- Supervision to help Teacher/Counselors build alliances.
- Alliance ratings factor into Teacher/Counselor classroom assignments.
- Teacher/Counselors can be evaluated using an observation form designed from the 16pf.
- Therapeutic Alliance serves as a type of “quality assurance” to ensure that the Teacher/Counselors know what is expected of them.

Why Are We Concerned About Therapeutic Alliance and Teacher/Counselors?

- Recruitment of Teacher/Counselors
- Selection of Teacher/Counselors
- Value of Tenured Teacher/Counselors
- Skills Training in building relationships

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Pressley Ridge

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