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Aimie Jalbert
The Role Of Personality And
Prior Criminal Offenses In
The Prediction Of Perceived
Helping Alliance Of
Nonsexual Offending
Adjudicated Adolescent
Males In Residential
Facilities

ABSTRACT

There has been limited research conducted looking at the variables affecting helping alliance within the therapeutic relationship. This study examined the relationship between personality and delinquency with the perceived helping alliance of non-sex offending male adolescents with their residential staff. Confidential data were collected from 161 male youth with nonsexual offenses in 6 residential facilities in a midwestern state using the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI), the Self Reported Delinquency Measure, and the Helping Alliance Questionnaire-II (HAQ-II). The average age of the sample ($N = 161$) was 16.51 years ($SD = 1.23$ years). The results revealed that the variables which significantly predicted helping alliance were conforming, robbery and public disorderly behavior with $F(95) = 9.95, p < .001$. While the MACI Conforming scale and public disorderly behavior positively predicted helping alliance, robbery was a negative predictor of helping alliance. Implications for future research are discussed.

THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY AND PRIOR CRIMINAL OFFENSES IN THE
PREDICTION OF PERCEIVED HELPING ALLIANCE OF NONSEXUAL OFFENDING
ADJUDICATED ADOLESCENT MALES IN RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Previous studies have examined the relationships of personality development with delinquency, types of crime committed, and recidivism and have found that there are correlations that can act as predictors (van Dam, De Bruyn, & Janssens, 2007). A study by Le Blanc and Kaspy (1998) showed that one of the major predictors of active delinquency through adolescence and into adulthood is the age of onset and the type of deviance, problem behavior, and delinquency acted out. These same authors also reported that in their study early onset with serious offenses predicted recidivism.

Previous studies have also examined the importance of the helping alliance in terms of the outcome of psychotherapy (Bolton Oetzel & Scherer, 2003). However, there has been very limited research conducted on the prediction of the therapeutic alliance in relation to crimes committed and personality traits. This study examined the relationship of personality and delinquency with the perceived helping alliance of non-sex offending male adolescents with their residential staff.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been limited research conducted that examined the variables affecting the helping alliance within the therapeutic relationship. The following chapter presents the existing research on personality, delinquency, and helping alliance in order to provide a framework for the current investigation into the predicted interconnectedness of these variables.

Personality

Personality development is a continuous process over a person's lifespan that can be influenced by physical environment, parents' personalities and parenting styles as well as peer relationships (Branje, Van Lieshout, & Gerris, 2007; Ge & Conger, 1999; Heinze, Toro, & Urberg, 2004). Personality characteristics that develop during late adolescence are those related to moral reasoning, ego development, and identity exploration (McCrae, Costa, Terracciano, Parker, Mills, De Fruyt, & Mervielde, 2002). Ruchkin, Eisemann, and Hagglof (1999) studied parenting styles and delinquency and found that negative parental rearing was scored higher by delinquents. It is therefore important during

childhood and earlier adolescence to lay the groundwork in order for these personality traits to develop in a way that is healthy and stable.

During the period of adolescence, teens begin to move away from their parents and family members for support and validation. They become more aware of themselves, the impact they have on others, and the impact others have on them. The pressure to conform to the group identity of their peers has a great impact on their personality development (Mak, Heaven, & Rummery, 2003). Researchers have also revealed that male adolescents who have high scores in extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism on the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) are more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviors (Forrest, 1977; Mak, Heaven, & Rummery, 2003; van Dam, De Bruyn, & Janssens, 2007). This can greatly impact an adolescent's peer group in that peer groups that exhibits high rates of deviance and antisocial behavior will increase the same personality characteristics and behavior of adolescents within that group (Heinze, Toro, & Urberg, 2004).

Adolescents who have not been taught or do not acquire coping skills that aid them in managing the ways they express their emotions, particularly anger, may have a greater tendency to externalize their internal experience. Silver (1977) compared personality traits of delinquents and drug misusers and reported that one of the major differences between the two groups was that delinquents viewed themselves as being much stronger and active than drug misusers. It is possible that delinquents not only perceive themselves as needing to physically act to express their internal experience but

also have an increased impulsivity that limits their ability to control their aggressive behavior (Howell, Reddon, & Enns, 1997; Parker & Morton, 2009).

Delinquency

There are varying levels of acting out behaviors that may or may not lead to delinquency especially when age of onset and type of deviance are examined. As defined by Loeber, Keenan, and Zhang (1997), a group of renowned researchers, there are three pathways that lead to boys' problem behavior and delinquency. The first of these pathways is *authority conflict* that starts with stubborn behavior and defiance (refusing to do things, disobedience) as the first stage and authority avoidance (staying out late, running away) as the second and third stage. The *covert pathway* is the second of the three pathways and includes minor covert behavior (lying, shoplifting) as the first stage, property damage as the second, and moderate to serious forms of delinquency as the third (selling drugs, stealing a car, breaking and entering). The third and last pathway described is the *overt pathway*. The first stage is aggression (bullying, annoying others), the second stage is physical fighting, and violence (attacking someone, forced sex) as the last stage. The earlier the age of onset results in more serious first offenses. When crimes committed are both covert and overt, there is a greater risk for recidivism (Brame, Mulvey, & Piquero, 2001; Loeber, Keenan, & Zhang, 1997; Nijhof, de Kemp, Engels, & Wientjes, 2008).

Other indicators of delinquency are parental status, socioeconomic status, and race. Race in particular is an indicator of authority avoidance and single parent homes

with low socioeconomic status were associated with more persistent delinquency (De Haan & MacDermid, 1999; Loeber, Keenan, & Zhang, 1997; Nijhof, de Kemp, Engels, & Wientjes, 2008).

Helping Alliance

The helping alliance, also called the therapeutic alliance, is related to a successful outcome when treating delinquents (Oetzel & Scherer, 2003; Florsheim, Shotorbani, Guest-Warnick, Barratt, & Hwang, 2000; Richards & Sullivan, 1996). Some staff characteristics that promote a helping alliance include interactions that are respectful, trusting, and open that also recognize the adolescent's capability, awareness, and maturity. Adolescents want to be treated as equals in the therapeutic relationship and made to feel that staff members want to spend time with them (Martin, Romas, Medford, Leffert, & Hatcher, 2006). There is also a need for the therapeutic relationship to be dynamic. Staff need to have the ability to be flexible and willing to, often by trial and error, establish the best ways to interact with different types of adolescents during a variety of situations and emotion dysregulation (Holmqvist, Hill, & Lang, 2007; Moses, 2002; Scholte & Van Der Ploeg, 2000). These staff/adolescent relationships, especially in residential care settings, are essential where staff often assume the role of primary caregiver.

The manner in which staff attempt to engage adolescents in treatment, whether positively or negatively, is directly correlated with ratings on the level of how much the staff like or dislike the adolescents they are working with (Holmqvist, Hill, & Lang,

2007; Moses, 2002). It is not the relationship the staff or clinician has with the adolescent that is key in the helping alliance. Rather, the critical factor is the way in which the adolescent feels about the staff that predicts engagement in treatment. Holmqvist, Hill, and Lang (2007) also found positive outcomes when adolescents perceived 1) the treatment to be collaborative and useful, 2) the staff were task oriented and 3) the staff did not display excessive amounts of positive or close feelings toward the adolescent. In addition, the helping alliance was facilitated when adolescents perceived that the relationship was active, supportive and provided direct communication, boundary differentiation, and the ability to withstand testing (Richards & Sullivan, 1996; Scholte & Van Der Ploeg, 2000).

It is hypothesized that personality will be the primary predictor of helping alliance and crime committed as the secondary predictor. Further, personality traits as defined by the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (Millon, 1993) associated with Oppositional, Unruly, and Forceful Scale will negatively predict helping alliance.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The main objective of this study is to analyze the interaction between personality and crime committed on helping alliance. This study is a non-experimental cross sectional investigation that examined the relationship between personality and delinquency with the perceived helping alliance of non-sex offending male adolescents with their residential staff. The hypothesis for this study is: oppositional, antisocial, and forceful behavior will negatively predict helping alliance. A stepwise multiple regression was used because no a priori literature exists to suggest the relationships between variables. This methodology was chosen due to the difficulty in researching delinquent adolescents who reside in residential facilities because of ethical (often under 18 years of age) and logistic reasons such as being difficult to monitor during and after treatment.

Sample

After consents were obtained, confidential data were collected from male youth with nonsexual offenses in 6 residential facilities in a midwestern state. Multi-paged pencil and paper surveys were collected from 161 adjudicated delinquent youth. The average age of the sample (N = 161) was 16.51 years (*SD* = 1.23 years). On average they were in

the 9th grade ($SD = 1.32$ grades). In terms of race, 53.9 % of participants selected African American, 33.9% of participants selected Caucasian, 6.0 % of participants selected Other, and 6.2% of participants did not select any option for race.

Surveys

The surveys used in gathering information about personality, delinquency, and helping alliance of the adolescent males were the The Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI), the Self Reported Delinquency Measure, and the Helping Alliance Questionnaire-II (HAQ-II). These measure are not difficult to administer, have good validity (Kermarrec, Kabuth, Bursztejn, & Guillemin, 2006; Penney, Moretti, & Silva, 2008).

Personality

The MACI (Millon & Davis, 1993) was designed for youths in treatment or correctional facilities. The instrument was normed on 579 adolescents in similar facilities, with two smaller cross-validation samples. The scales were derived from the 160 true-false items are based on Millon's theory of personality (Millon, 1997). The manual describes a base rate score greater than 60 on any scale. A score over 75 (present) or 85 (prominent) indicates a great likelihood that a given youth has severe problems. There are twelve personality pattern scales on the MACI. These personality patterns include: Introversive, Inhibited, Doleful, Submissive, Dramatizing, Egotistic, Unruly,

Forceful, Conforming, Oppositional, Borderline Tendency, and Self-demeaning tendencies.

Delinquency

Elliot, Huizinga and Ageton's (1985) Self Reported Delinquency Measure (SRD) was used to assess the type and severity of delinquency. The scale has 32 questions using a 7-point frequency scale from 1 (never) to 7 (2-3 times per day) on questions ranging from drug use to aggression. The instrument has several subscales including General Delinquency, Property Damage, Public Disorderly, Felony Assault, Felony Theft, Robbery, Alcohol Use, Drug Use, and Selling Drugs. However, for the purposes of this study, the scales were collapsed to create a Violent Crime subscale and a Non-Violent Crime subscale. All of the subscales have acceptable to good internal consistency in this study. Cronbach's alphas on the five SRD subscales range from .63 (Violent Crime) to .91 (Total Delinquency).

Alliance

The Penn Helping Alliance Scales were developed from a psychodynamic perspective through Luborsky's formation of theorizing and researching alliance (Luborsky, 1976). Piloted research was conducted (Marziali, Marmar, & Krupnick, 1981) to create the initial *Helping Alliance Questionnaire* (HAQ-I) (Luborsky, McLellan, & Woody, 1985), which since has been modified and improved in the HAQ-II (Luborsky et al., 1996). The HAQ-II is a frequently used assessment of the alliance strength between client and

therapist and consists of 19 items rated on a six point Likert scale. The measure is self-report entailing versions for the client and therapist.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was conducted to explore the determinants of helping alliance for non-sex offending adolescent males. A stepwise multiple regression was used because no a priori literature exists to suggest the relationships between variables. The use of multiple regression to examine and analyze the relationship between personality, crime committed, and helping alliance allowed the data to inform which variables are statistically significant and therefore most valuable as predictors of helping alliance .

Analysis

Table 1: MACI: Descriptive Statistics (Scales are presented as they are in the instrument)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Introversive Scaled Score	131	1.00	93.00	40.1069	24.95357
Inhibited Scaled Score	126	1.00	97.00	37.6667	25.18952
Doleful Scaled Score	125	1.00	90.00	37.9840	26.82469
Submissive Scaled Score	126	1.00	93.00	46.5952	21.51099
Dramatizing Scaled Score	126	1.00	109.00	49.3571	26.96856
Egotistic Scaled Score	126	1.00	89.00	47.5079	23.14329
Unruly Scaled Score	126	1.00	107.00	52.6508	26.11094
Forceful Scaled Score	126	1.00	107.00	34.8889	25.57537
Conforming Scaled Score	126	1.00	104.00	46.1429	23.58397
Oppositional Scaled Score	126	1.00	83.00	45.9603	25.16804
Self-Demeaning Scaled Score	126	1.00	90.00	33.0159	22.24266
Borderline Tendency Scaled Score	126	3.00	86.00	30.4683	19.81663
Valid N (listwise)	125				

Table 2: SRD: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HAQ Total Score	115	0.00	162.00	63.0087	20.16924
Self reported Delinquency					
General Delinquency	130	0.00	15.00	2.9385	3.67635
Property Damage	135	0.00	12.00	0.8963	2.08861
Felony Theft	132	0.00	23.00	3.4470	5.09799
Public Disorderly	135	0.00	10.00	0.4815	1.49053
Alcohol Use	135	0.00	12.00	2.7778	3.71095
Drug Use	133	0.00	14.00	2.8120	3.30094
Robbery	136	0.00	6.00	0.6838	1.57622
Felony Assault	133	0.00	12.00	1.1429	2.13251
Sell Drug	132	0.00	12.00	3.1439	4.48600

Due to a lack of a priori expectation stepwise multiple regression was used to conduct an analysis of helping alliance with staff in facilities, as understood by general delinquent youth (that is, no sexual offenders) was undertaken. Personality scales from the MACI (i.e., Introversive (Schizoid), Inhibited (Avoidant), Doleful (Depressive), Submissive (Dependent), Dramatizing (Histrionic), Egotistic (Narcissistic), Unruly (Antisocial), Forceful (Sadistic), Conforming (Compulsive), Oppositional (Negativistic or Passive-Aggressive), Self-Demeaning (Masochistic or Self-Defeating) and Borderline Tendency (Borderline)) were entered in the first block and then crimes types from the SRD (general delinquency, property damage, felony theft, public disorderly behavior, drug use and drug sales and felony assault) were entered into the second block (see Tables 1 and 2).

The variables which significantly predicted helping alliance were conforming, robbery and public disorderly behavior with $F(95) = 9.95, p < .001$. While the MACI Conforming scale and public disorderly behavior positively predicted helping alliance, robbery was a negative predictor of helping alliance (see Table 2 and 4).

Table 3: Multivariate Table of Personality and Crime Type onto Helping Alliance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6778.753	1	6778.753	20.329	.000 ^a
	Residual	31344.206	94	333.449		
	Total	38122.958	95			
2	Regression	8102.783	2	4051.391	12.551	.000 ^b
	Residual	30020.176	93	322.798		
	Total	38122.958	95			
3	Regression	9340.990	3	3113.663	9.953	.000 ^c
	Residual	28781.969	92	312.847		
	Total	38122.958	95			

a. Predictors: (Constant), conforming scaled score

b. Predictors: (Constant), conforming scaled score, robbery

c. Predictors: (Constant), conforming scaled score, robbery, public disorderly

d. Dependent Variable: haqtot

Using a stepwise regression of all of the crimes scales from the SRD (general delinquency, property damage, felony theft, public disorderly behavior, drug use and drug sales and felony assault) and all of the primary personality scales from the MACI (Introversive (Schizoid), Inhibited (Avoidant), Doleful (Depressive), Submissive (Dependent), Dramatizing (Histrionic), Egotistic (Narcissistic), Unruly (Antisocial), Forceful (Sadistic), Conforming (Compulsive), Oppositional (Negativistic or Passive-Aggressive), Self-Demeaning (Masochistic or Self-Defeating) and Borderline Tendency (Borderline)) helping alliance HAQ total score) was predicted ($F(95) = 9.95, p < .001$) by the MACI Conforming scale and the SRD Robbery and Public Disorderly scales (see Table 1, 2, 3, & 4). No other scales held in the equation.

Table 4: Stepwise Regression Table of Personality and Crime Type onto Helping Alliance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	42.860	5.067		8.459	0.000
	Conforming Scaled Score	0.407	0.090	0.422	4.509	0.000
2	(Constant)	47.765	5.543		8.618	0.000
	Conforming Scaled Score	0.342	0.094	0.355	3.625	0.000
	Robbery	-3.180	1.570	-0.198	-2.025	0.046
3	(Constant)	45.668	5.557		8.218	0.000
	Conforming Scaled Score	0.368	0.094	0.381	3.921	0.000
	Robbery	-4.448	1.672	-0.277	-2.660	0.009
	Public Disorderly	2.344	1.178	0.202	1.989	0.050

a. Dependent Variable: haqtot

The results did not support the hypothesis of oppositional, antisocial, and forceful behavior negatively predicting helping alliance. Robbery was the only negative predictor of helping alliance while as predicted the less violent crime was a positive predictor.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The study's hypothesis that personality would result in greater predictors of helping alliance than crime committed was not supported by the findings. In fact, it was the variable, crime committed, that predicted better predicted helping alliance. This finding suggests that certain crimes might be indicators of the ways in which people interact with others and the world in general. Robbery, which negatively predicted helping alliance, is a crime that is marked by violence and intimidation as the means to deprive someone of their property. This act is a clear violation of interpersonal connectedness and concern for the victim. In contrast, public disorderly is a crime that is not necessarily characterized by violence and instead is often distinguished by unreasonable noise in a public place. A rambunctious adolescent making too much noise is rather different than an adolescent violently taking something from someone that does not belong to them.

In retrospect the Conformity Scale on the MACI could have been a hypothesized positive predictor for helping alliance. This scale has five sub-scales which include interpersonal restraint, emotional rigidity, rule adherence, social conformity, and

responsible conscientiousness (McCann, 1999). An adolescent who scores high on this scale tends to think before they act, follow the rules of society, and have a secure sense of self. Further research needs to be conducted to evaluate whether these attributes could be seen as potential for promoting positive helping alliance.

It is interesting that more of the MACI scores were not found to be significant predictors of helping alliance. Heinze, Toro, and Urberg (2004) found that antisocial personality characteristics within a peer group to be predictors of deviant behavior and a higher frequency of maladaptive behaviors. This would suggest that adolescents with antisocial personality traits would have greater difficulty forming relationships with others which would seem to negatively effect helping alliance.

The mean results from the MACI for this study (ranging from 30.47 to 52.65) reveal scores below the base rate score of 60 which suggests a lack of pathology (Millon, 1993). However, the mean standard deviation is 24.26 with a usual standard deviation being 15. This means that though the mean scores were below or within limits there was greater deviation from this within individual scores (see table 1). Further, the mean high individual score was 95.67 with a maximum score on the MACI being 115. Base rate scores above 75 indicate a characteristic is clinically present in a given subject while scores above 85 indicate a characteristic is clinically prominent. This suggests that though the average does not demonstrate characteristics as clinically present in the group as a whole, one needs to look more closely at the individual scores which clearly show evidence of being clinically prominent. This implies that the high scoring youth are in need of more intense treatment in several areas of personality development.

Helping alliance is a key component of administering successful treatment when working with delinquent adolescents. Understanding traits and behaviors that aid and/or inhibit the therapeutic relationship are crucial for creation and implementation of treatment programs for this population. Future research should continue to explore the way in which personality and crime committed predicts helping alliance in order to better structure therapeutic interventions.

Some of the limitations to this study was that it did not use the section of the HAQ-II intended for therapists. This may have been useful to better understand helping alliance as seen by the therapists who were treating the adolescents. This could have provided us with information on the treatments being used that nurture or hinder alliance. Another limitation is that there was no assessment done of the adolescents reading level or comprehension. It is possible that there were questions they could not fully read or understand making it difficult to answer parts of the questionnaires. It is also feasible that some of the participants may not have answered the questions honestly.

This study brings into question the predictors of helping alliance. Studies have shown that therapeutic/helping alliance can be an attribute to the therapeutic relationship and therefore treatment as a whole. Van Der Geest and Bijleveld (2008) found that failed treatment to juveniles further increased the risk for a criminal career. It is therefore important to further study crime and personality as they relate to helping alliance within delinquent adolescents in order to better serve them while ordered into treatment in hopes of reducing recidivism.

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