



**CHILD WELFARE CLIENTS'  
PERCEPTION OF THE  
THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE**  
It's Existence and Importance

# THE CHALLENGES OF CHILD WELFARE

- Invasive
- Court and law enforcement dominated
- Mandated
  - Arbitrary expectations, time limited, client resistance
- Extremely subject to personal bias
  - Societal norms of safety and risk are always changing
  - Multicultural considerations
- Worker struggles
  - High caseloads
  - Educational inconsistency
  - Burnout/turnover



# REDRESSING THE PROBLEM

- Client- and family-centered services

Team Decision Making

Wraparound



- Service Heavy

Dominated by professionals

Reliant on available services



# WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR CHANGE?

- Type of Service: 15%
  - Therapy modality (CBT, narrative, SFT, etc.)
  - Service model (Wrap, TDM, etc.)
- Client Strengths & Resources: 55%
  - Material Resources
  - Social Supports
  - Hope & Expectancy
- Therapeutic Alliance: 30%
  - Mutual establishment of **GOALS**
  - Clear understanding of **TASKS** and responsibilities
  - Personal **BOND** (trust, rapport, sense of partnership)



# INTEGRATIVE PRACTICE APPROACH

- Manipulation of proven change factors constitutes the “Integrative Practice Approach”
  - Putting time and energy into those factors that can be readily influenced
- “Therapeutic alliance” second only to “hope and expectancy” in predicting change
- Hypothesis: Clients’ perception of an alliance will be directly correlated to their perceived level of hope and expectancy
  - Higher = hope
  - Lower = worry



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do current clients perceive an alliance with their workers?
- What is the relationship of said alliance to their personal feelings of hope or worry regarding potential case outcomes?

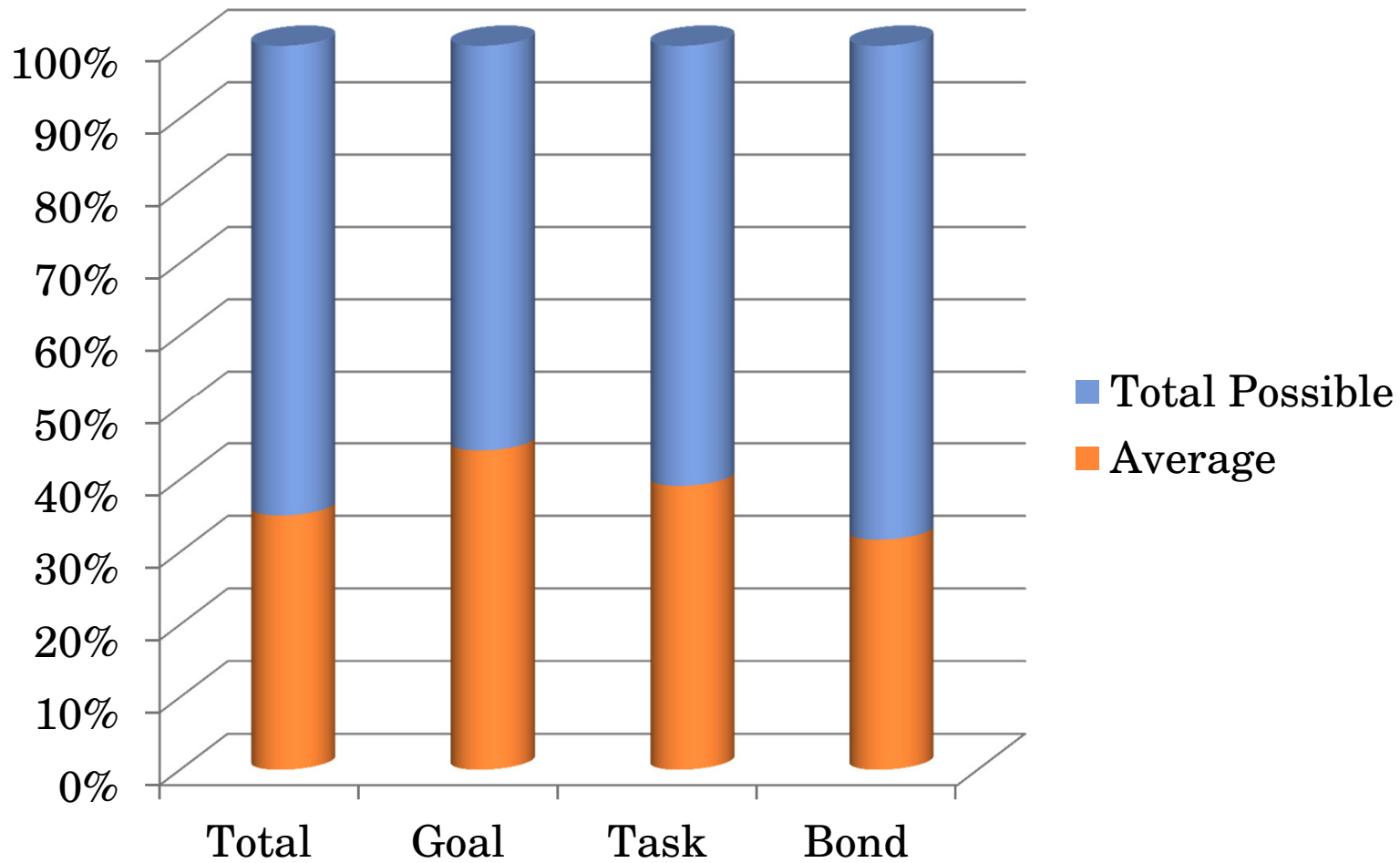


# DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

- Exploratory
- Quantitative
- Working Alliance Inventory
  - 36 item questionnaire (Likert scale)
  - Client perceptions
  - Subscales: *Goal, Task, Bond*
- 12 client participants
  - Telephone
  - In-person
  - Mail



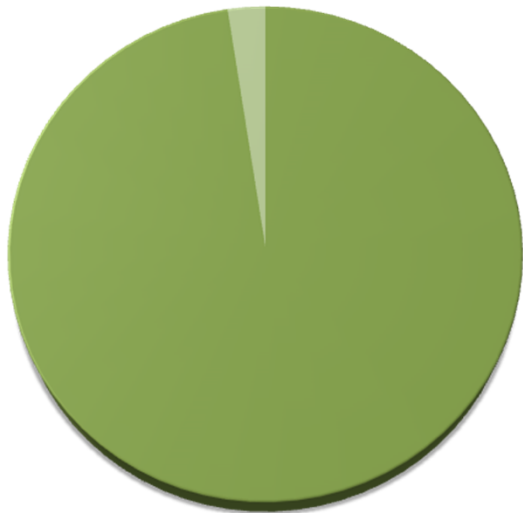
# RESULTS: OVERALL SCORES





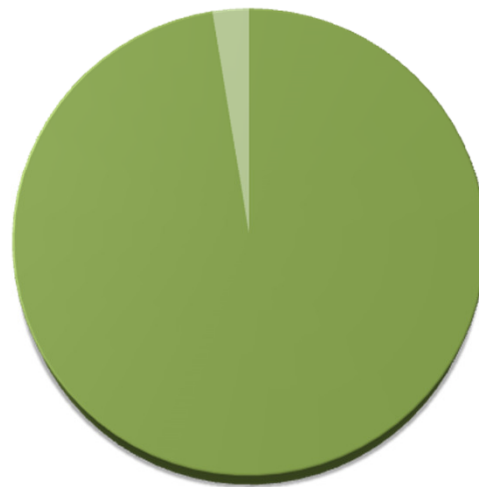
# RESULTS: HIGHEST SCORING QUESTIONS

**The goals of our meetings are important to me**



■ Avg Response  
■ Total Score = 7

**I find what my social worker and I are doing in our meetings is unrelated to my concerns**



■ Avg Response  
■ Total Score = 7



# HYPOTHESIS

- Is there a correlation between the therapeutic alliance and clients' sense of hope and expectancy?
  - YES
  - .79 – statistically significant
  - 62% of hope is attributed to the therapeutic alliance
- Might answer the question “why”: As the alliance is developed and maintained, clients' improved attitudes/moods motivate participation and increase effort



# IMPLICATIONS

## ○ PRACTICE

- CWS workers may not be focusing on alliance building
  - No reciprocity
  - Decreased fulfillment, increased burnout
- More training in alliance building needed
  - MSW programs
  - Agency training
  - Supervision

## ○ POLICY

- Change in focus: from service provision to relationship
- No more “soft cop”
- Collaboration in praxis

