

Using Multi-level Modeling to Better Understand Improvements and Predictors in Wilderness Therapy

Katie Massey, MSW, MSPH

Steve Javorski, Ph.D.

Matt Hoag, Ph.D.

Sean Roberts, MS

Second Nature Wilderness Programs

Research Questions

- What predicts adolescent improvements?
- Does change last after OBH treatment?
- Are there predictors for lasting change?

Methods

- Enrollment:
 - June 2011–June 2012
 - N=659, Participation rate was 85%
 - Four wilderness therapy programs
- Data collection:
 - 4x during treatment
 - 6 & 18 months post-treatment
- Measures: Youth Outcome Questionnaire (parent and self-report)
- Analysis: Multi-level Model to assess trajectories of change and identify predictors

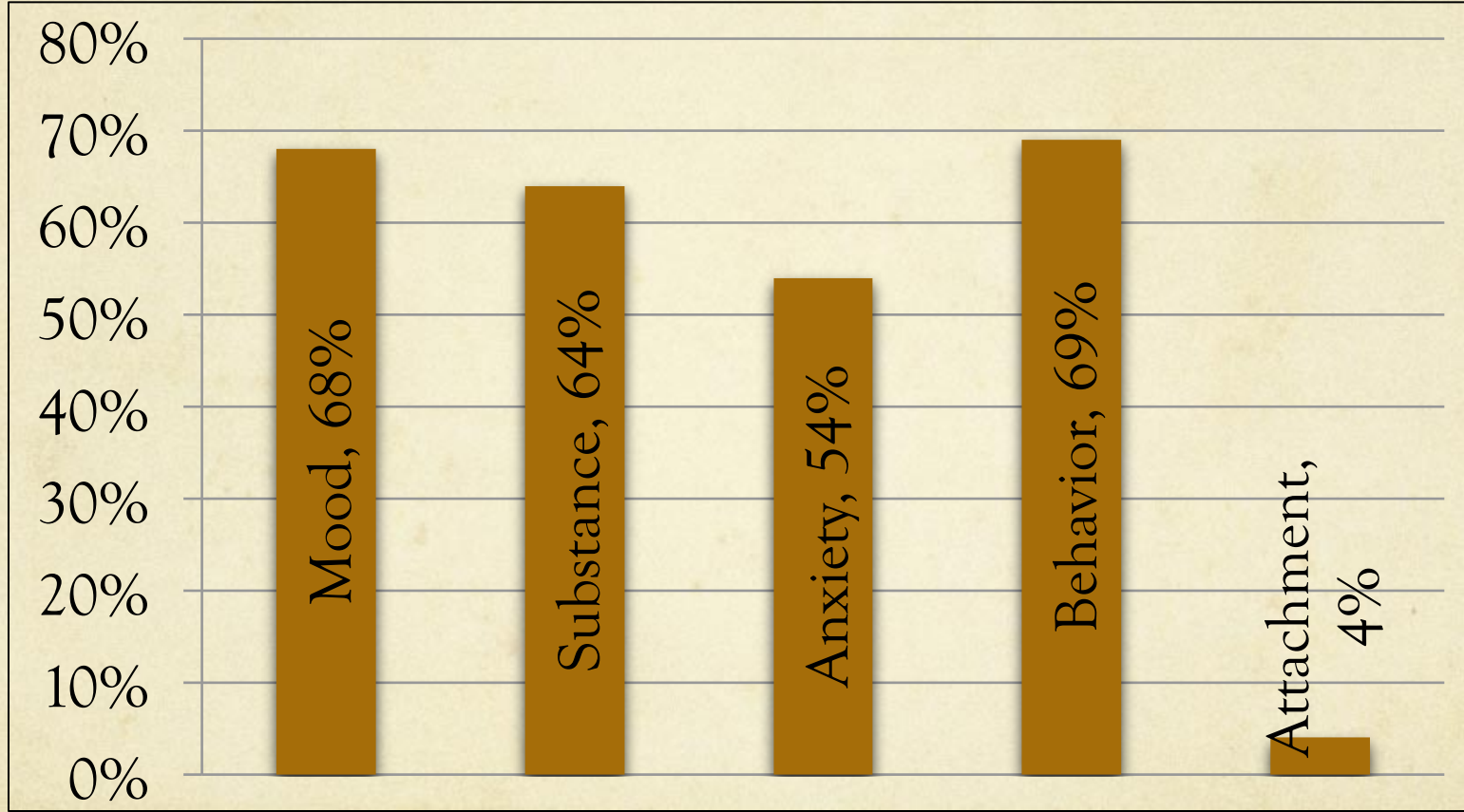
Why Multi-level Models?

- OBH data and longitudinal data is clustered in groups and related to each other.
- Traditional regression methods assume that observations are independent and can lead to an overstatement of statistical significance.
- MLMs better account for missing data

Participants

- Average age = 16.3 years
- Gender: 29% Female, 71% Male
- Parents living together = 65%
- Adopted = 18%
- Average length of stay = 10.4 weeks

Presenting Issues



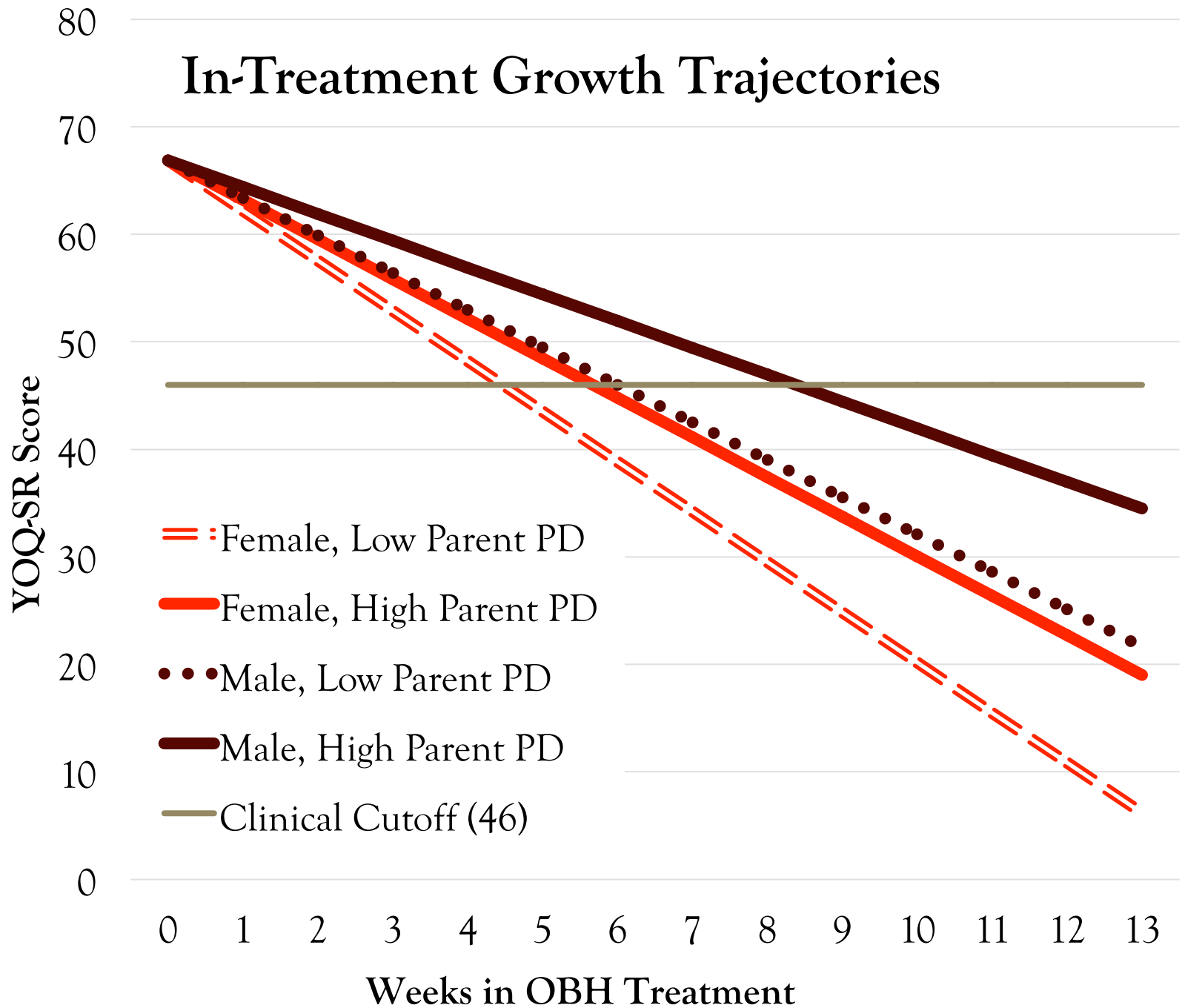
General Results

- Participants entered with high levels of dysfunction and made significant improvements during treatment.
- Clinically & statistically significant change on parent and self-report, and discharged within the “normal” range of functioning.
- At 6 and 18 months post-treatment, clients remained in the normal range of functioning.

In-Treatment Change

- Predictors of greater dysfunction at intake (YOQ-SR)
 - Mood Disorders***
 - Anxiety or Behavioral disorder*
 - Parents living together*
 - High parent dysfunction score*
- Predictors of greater rate of change during treatment
 - Gender**
 - Parent discharge*

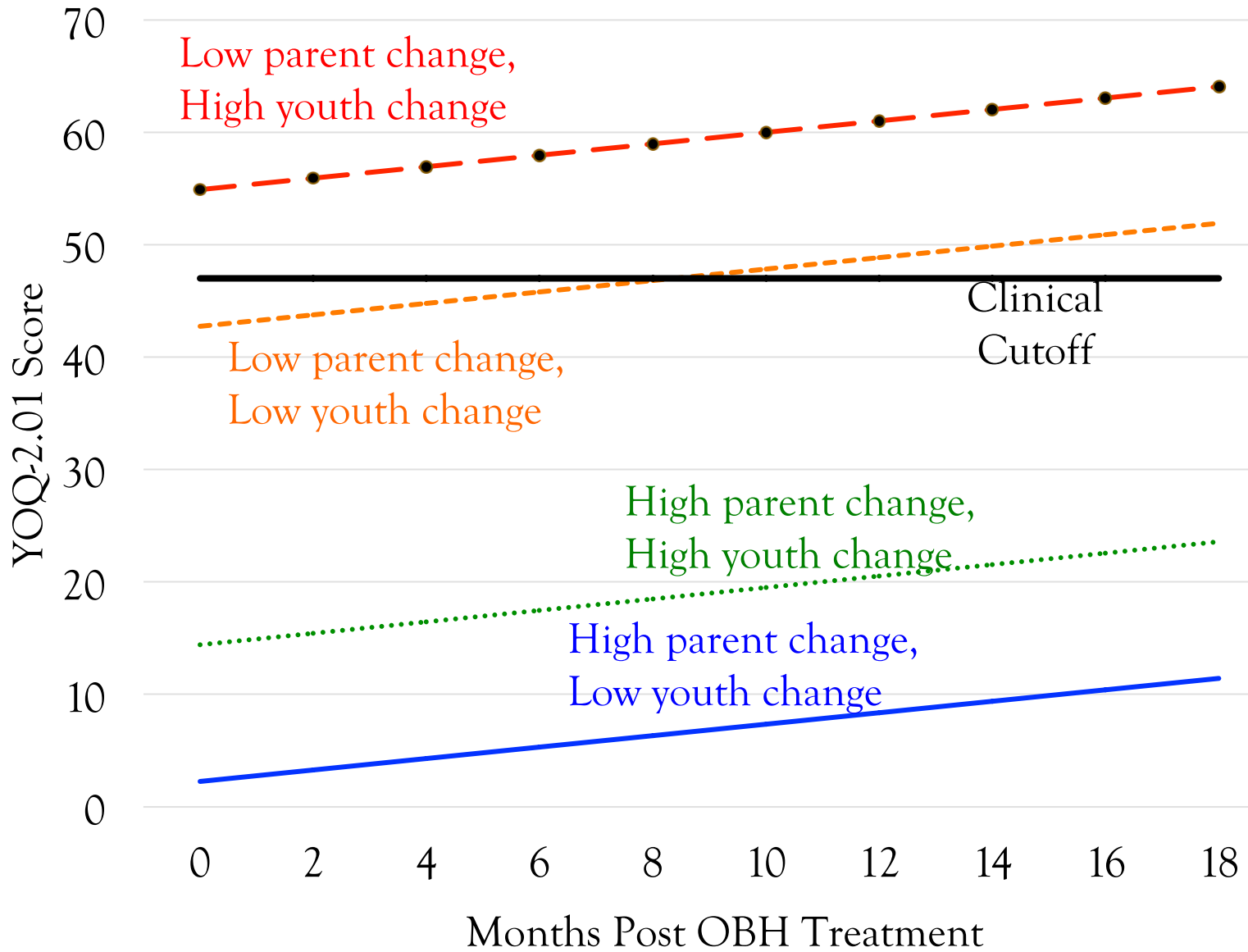
In-Treatment Growth Trajectories



Post-Treatment Change

- Predictors of healthier functioning post-discharge
 - Parent-reported change from intake to discharge during OBH treatment***
- Factors associated with parent change (intake - discharge)
 - Higher parent intake scores***
 - Attachment diagnosis (negative relationship)***
 - Higher youth-reported change intake to discharge*
 - Substance-related* or Anxiety diagnosis*

Post-Treatment Change Trajectories.



Limitations

- No control or comparison group.
- Post-discharge sample for adolescents was too small to model variation in rate of change following treatment.
- The four programs were connected by management and have traditional wilderness therapy models, therefore generalization to all OBH is limited.

Discussion

- Adolescents make significant improvements during treatment and maintain progress afterward.
- Females appear to gain more from wilderness than boys, though they represent less than 1/3 of the population.
- Presenting issue does not appear to have a significant impact for youth-change during treatment.
- Parent perception appears to have a great impact in outcome.