Social Skills Training for Adolescent Youth: Measurement of Skill Acquisition

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Social Skills Training for Adolescent Youth: Measurement of Skill Acquisition

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis
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Keywords: adolescent training, adolescents in foster care, life skills training, social skill acquisition, foster care

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a classroom based training in teaching social skills to four adolescent females between the ages of 13-17 years old and residing in foster care. The training took place over a three week period, one night a week, for three hours at a time and utilized a Behavioral Skills Training format. The assessments were conducted via role play scenarios; pre- and posttraining. The results show each participant demonstrated an overall increase in skills from pretraining to posttraining indicating that youth in foster care were capable of learning the skills taught.
Introduction

Children in foster care often have many obstacles to overcome due to their histories of neglect, abuse, or lack of well-trained caregivers. Many are placed in foster care due to abuse or neglect. This can be a traumatizing experience for any child; being removed from their natural home and placed in a home and environment that is unfamiliar and unknown. Through these experiences children may display many behavioral deficits, including social skills, hygiene and academic performance (Iglehart, 1994; Stoutimore, Williams, Neff & Foster, 2008). The general population has about seven to 20% prevalence of emotional and behavioral disturbances, compared to that of foster children, which ranges from 33 to 85% (Leathers, 2002). According to those statistics foster children are much more likely to experience emotional or behavioral problems, with the addition of traumatic histories thus increasing the likelihood for maladaptive behaviors to occur (Glisson, 1996). The presence of maladaptive behaviors can also cause the time spent in foster care to be more difficult on the child and caregivers. For example, a child with behavioral problems may be more likely to change placements due to stress on the caregivers. Leathers (2002) also reported that problem behaviors could persist into adulthood, causing antisocial behavior and increasing the likelihood for experiencing depression and other social or emotional difficulties as adults. Children in foster care are also more likely to be prosecuted for crimes, experience homelessness and unemployment (Leathers, 2002; McDonald, Allen, Westerfelt, &

Kates, Johnson, Rader, and Strieder (1991) reported that children in foster care may experience more trauma just from being in foster care as these children may be conflicted by unclear roles of parents and have confusion about parental guidance. They also added that the trauma experienced in foster care could also come from being placed in many different homes and expected to fit in successfully in each one. If the child displays problem behaviors, this could be difficult for the foster parents as well and could lead to placement disruptions, thus the child being excessively moved from home to home. There can be multiple harmful effects in moving from home to home for the child. These can be anything from decreasing self-esteem to lacking the opportunities to form solid, lasting relationships with caregivers or peers within each home due to the shortened time they are placed there and the strained relationship that problem behavior could cause with caregivers (Bowlby, 1973; Clark & Crosland, 2009).

Cooper, Peterson, and Meier (1987) described five areas that have been reported multiple times as problems that children in foster care display. They are: (a) atypical behaviors such as showing little affect and deficits in play skills with peers; (b) lacking the ability to form relationships with adults and peers; (c) aggression, such as tantrums, physical attacks or destructive behaviors; (d) withdrawal from social interaction; and (e) deficits in school performance. Establishing a repertoire of acceptable social skills would likely decrease the long term dampening effects of these problems and in turn, increase the reinforcing effects of social interactions (Cooper, Peterson, & Meier, 1987).
Some areas of concern that are commonly reported with children in foster care transitioning to independence are high rates of unemployment, poverty, educational failure, out-of-wedlock parenting, mental illness, housing instability and victimization (Courtney, 2009). Courtney (2009) also reported that only 12% of teens in care are living in family-based foster care with the majority in group homes or residential facilities. These facilities often have little to no success in keeping youths connected with family and having the support of family members can increase the likelihood of a successful transition to independent adulthood.

**Social Skills Training for Youth**

Social skills’ training has been effectively taught to youth in prior studies (Nangle, Erdley, Carpenter, & Newman, 2002; Ollendick, & Hersen, 1979; Stewart, Carr, & LeBlanc, 2007; Thompson, 2008). Training has focused on teaching the ability to achieve success in social situations and to recognize appropriate discriminative stimuli for social opportunities. Spence (2003) defines social skills as “a range of verbal and non-verbal responses that influence the perception and response of other people during social interactions” (p.84). This ability, to experience success in social interactions, could have a major impact on an individual’s life. Lochman and Dodge (1994) showed that children with aggressive behavior tendencies commonly misinterpreted the behavior of others and were likely to respond with aggression. If those children had been able to interpret the social discriminative stimuli accurately it could be hypothesized that a decrease in aggressive behavior would have occurred. Youth can benefit from such skills in numerous ways, whether it is requesting help on a task, asking questions in class, seeking
participation, or offering invitations. Each of these social tasks can lead to forming closer relationships with others.

A youth’s learning history will play a great role in those youths’ social skill ability, as it is likely that youths will demonstrate the social skills that caregiver or adult influences demonstrated for them. It is unknown what types of social skills are modeled for many youth in foster care; therefore, it is unknown what social skills have been learned. Providing youth with an appropriate model of social skills is one step to training the acquisition of social skills (Spence, 2003). Behavioral Skills Training (BST) is a widely used teaching method for training social skills (Gardner, 1972; Hanley, Heal, Tiger, & Ingvarsson, 2007; Johnson, et al., 2005; Stewart, Carr, & LeBlanc, 2007). BST consists of: (a) instructions, where the participant is told what they should do; (b) modeling, where they are shown an example of what they are to do; (c) rehearsal, when they are given an opportunity to practice what they were told and shown; and (d) feedback, where the participant is given specific feedback on what they did correctly and what they were missing during the rehearsal. This method has been shown to be effective in teaching the short term and long term acquisition of skills (Gresham, 1985; Johnson, et al., 2005; Stewart, et al., 2007; Thompson, 2008).

Previous research has been conducted on social skills training with typically developing teenagers, developmentally disabled individuals, and juvenile delinquents (Ollendick & Hersen, 1979; Stewart, et al., 2007; Thompson, 2008). Thompson (2008) conducted a social skills training for typically developing adolescent females. This was done in a one day classroom training incorporating instructions, modeling, role-playing and feedback. The participants were taught three skills/tools from a behavior skills
training curriculum that was modified from a successful parent training program curriculum. The youth were taught specific tools based on basic behavior analysis principles. Through pre- and postassessment role plays, it was found that typically developing adolescents demonstrated an increase in the accuracy of their tool use following training. These skills also maintained during follow-up assessments.

Stewart, et al. (2007) utilized BST to train social skills to a ten year-old boy diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. This child showed deficits in communication skills; therefore, these types of skills were targeted for training, including making eye contact and choosing an appropriate conversation topic. The four components of BST, instructions, modeling, rehearsal and immediate feedback, were implemented by family members to train these targeted skills. From pretraining to posttraining, the child demonstrated an increase in accuracy for each skill.

Ollendick and Hersen (1979) evaluated the effects of social skills training with juvenile delinquents. The 27 participants were 13 to 16 year-old male adolescents who were incarcerated. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: social skills, discussion or control. The social skills group consisted of instruction, feedback, modeling, behavior rehearsal, social reinforcement and graduated home work assignments. The discussion group met on a weekly basis and discussed what their goals were and how to achieve them. The control group only received already existing programs that everybody participated in, which consisted of a token economy and individual behavioral contracting. Social skills training was effective in teaching the acquisition of skills to these teens, hence this training appeared to be effective with
juvenile delinquents. Social skills were achieved at a higher accuracy with Social Skills Training (SST) than with the discussion or control groups. One adverse finding was that the teens did initially have a negative reaction toward participating in the role plays; however, most reluctantly participated and reported the role-plays were helpful in learning the skills (Ollendick & Hersen 1979).

As noted, in prior studies BST has been used to successfully teach social skills to a variety of populations of youth. However, no known studies on social skills training have been conducted with youth in the foster care system. As described earlier these youth are at great risk for deficits in social interactions skills. Massinga and Pecora (2004) suggest that more should be done for older children in foster care to help with life-skills and building relationships that may be helpful when transitioning to independent living. The current study will address this void in the literature by examining the effects of social skills training with youth in foster care.
Method

Participants and Settings

An Institutional Review Board approved this study. The participants were four typically functioning female youth in foster care, ages 13-17, residing at a group home operated by a local child welfare organization. The following are pseudonyms for each participant. Rhianna was 16-years-old and had resided in foster care for five months. Karly was 17-years-old and had resided in foster care for six months. Britney was 15-years-old and had resided in foster care for 11 months. Britney’s sister, Paris, also participated in the study; she was 13-years-old and had also resided in foster care for 11 months. Many adolescents in foster care reside in group home environments, as there is often a lack of placement options in family home settings for this age range. All youth had a legal guardian or biological parent that signed informed consent. Personnel at CHS referred youth to the training. All participants were female to maintain a single gender classroom due to the findings of Hannon and Ratliffe (2007), which concluded that having a single gender in the class may lead to increased skill acquisition by allowing for maximum opportunities for participation. All youth did also agree to participate and signed an assent form prior to beginning the training.

Training & Skills

The participants attended a classroom style training. The training was spread out across three sessions, occurring once a week for three hours at a time. The curriculum
followed a Behavioral Skills Training (BST) format. The chairs in the classroom were arranged in a “u” shape around the front of the classroom where the Power Point presentation was displayed. The first day began with each person introducing herself, and then participating in the pretraining role plays. The beginning of the second and third trainings began with a review of the previous week’s material. The participants were taught how to avoid using negative interactions as well as five additional tools. Each tool was task analyzed into multiple steps. The checklists of steps for each tool are located in Appendix A. The training involved lecture style instructions on each step of each tool, followed by the trainer modeling the correct implementation of the tool. Each participant then had an opportunity to role play the use of the tool, and the instructor provided feedback on the participant’s performance. When this had been completed for each tool scheduled during the training, posttraining role plays were conducted. There were also positive consequences provided contingent upon classroom participation. These consequences were delivered on an intermittent schedule for participants who asked questions or made comments relevant to class material. There was also a consequence provided on a FR1 schedule for the completion of each role play the participant engaged in. The positive consequences included candy, beaded necklaces, pens, journals, lotion, lip-gloss, bracelets, and locker magnets. Dinner was also provided as the class took place in the evening.

The curriculum utilized for this training was slightly modified from a parent training curriculum called the *Tools for Positive Behavior Change*, which was developed by the Behavior Analysis Services Program (BASP). The BASP was a statewide funded program designed for foster parents to increase placement stability among foster children.
by providing training of behaviorally based skills or tools to caregivers (Stoutimore, Williams, Neff, & Foster, 2008). This training curriculum includes teaching the definition of behavior; identifying specific behaviors; categorizing them into appropriate, junk (any age-typical inappropriate behavior that may be annoying, but that is not physically harmful to themselves, other people, property, and animals or is illegal) or harmful behavior; twelve common negative interactions and how to avoid using them; as well as five additional tools (*Stay Close, Use Reinforcement, Negotiating, Pivot* and *Redirect*) (Van Camp et al., 2008). The twelve common interactions were referred to as *Debbie Downers* during the training, so these might be more easily remembered by youths. Each of these tools was adapted from the parent training curriculum to be more situation specific for youth. For example, a Stay Close role play scenario for an adult caregiver might be “your child comes home from school and looks sad.” The caregiver is then asked to show the trainer what they would do; whereas, a Stay Close role play scenario for an adolescent might be “a friend tells you they failed a math test, or they got into a fight with their parents.” The adolescent is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. A Use Reinforcement scenario for an adult caregiver might be something like “a child just washed the dishes.” The caregiver is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. For an adolescent this scenario may look like “a friend just loaned you a pen in science class or they helped you with a project.” The adolescent is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. The Negotiating tool was modified from a tool called *Set Expectations*. The Set Expectations tool for an adult caregiver involves stating the expected behavior and stating the consequences for if the child meets or does not meet the expectation. In order to modify this for adolescents, the Negotiating tool
involves stating what a youth would like to see happen and suggestions for accomplishing that. Therefore, a Negotiating scenario might be something like “you have been home on time for the past two weeks and would like to stay out a half hour later on Friday night”; whereas, a Set Expectations scenario for an adult caregiver might involve “having a child put their seatbelt on as soon as they enter a vehicle”. A Pivot scenario for an adult caregiver might look like “a child is whining and complaining about completing homework.” The caregiver is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. For an adolescent a Pivot scenario might be something like “a friend just called you stupid for answering a question wrong in class.” The adolescent is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. An adult caregiver uses the Redirect tool for more serious or physically harmful behaviors, these scenarios would be similar to “a child is sticking a pen in an electrical outlet or hitting another child.” The caregiver is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. This has been modified to be more appropriate for adolescents by incorporating a step of “leave the scene” if it is something that can be physically dangerous or something they may not be able to easily redirect, like two peers fighting with weapons or someone threatening them. A scenario for an adolescent to use the Redirect tool might be something like “you are standing outside of school in the morning with a group of friends and one friend starts talking about skipping school today.” The adolescent is then asked to show the trainer what they would do. In each of the scenarios the participants were then taught to proceed with each step of the corresponding tool. The steps of each tool are task analyzed and attached in Appendix A. A description of each tool is described below.
**Stay Close.** Stay Close was taught in the first class. The Stay Close tool is used to build relationships between people by establishing the participant or youth utilizing the tool as a conditioned reinforcer; thus making attention and consequences delivered by the participant more valuable and effective. Stay Close is essentially the use of noncontingent reinforcement, thus building up a rapport with a person, and increasing the likelihood of advice and subsequent instructions to be followed. This can be accomplished by getting close to a person, asking open-ended questions and listening to them, and providing an empathy statement all while avoiding negative interactions.

**Use Reinforcement.** The material for the second class included the tool Use Reinforcement. This tool is an effective way to shape or differentially reinforce a person’s desirable behavior, this is done by providing positive consequences for desirable behavior; thus, increasing the future occurrence of desirable behavior. To use this tool, specific verbal praise should be given (identifying the specific behavior to increase with verbal praise). An additional potentially reinforcing consequence could be added and might include one or more of the following: social interaction, appropriate touch, a break, a privilege, or a tangible item. This positive consequence should also be delivered immediately after the behavior is observed.

**Negotiating.** The second session also included the tool Negotiating. This tool involves making a situation better for the participant by clearly stating what is desired, in terms of a specific behavior, why it is desired, and also offering suggestions or
consequences to help the desired situation happen. By offering consequences, this potentially acts as a reinforcement procedure for agreement. Another step of this tool is to have the other person restate the agreed upon plan to make sure both individuals have the same understanding. By setting clear expectations and including a contingency this is likely to serve as a differential reinforcement procedure for peers and other people to agree and/or work with the youth participant.

**Pivot.** The material for the third session began with the tool Pivot. This tool utilizes differential reinforcement by withholding attention for junk behavior, any age-typical inappropriate behavior that may be annoying, but that is not physically harmful to themselves, other people, property, and animals or is illegal. Then the participant is instructed to deliver attention for the absence of the junk behavior or for other appropriate behavior. When junk behavior occurs the participant was taught to respond by not saying or doing anything in reaction to the junk behavior and to continue the conversation or engage themselves in another activity until either the junk behavior stops or the person does something appropriate, then they will turn back to them and provide attention for appropriate behavior which serves as a potentially reinforcing consequence. This tool is intended to decrease the future probability of junk behavior, while increasing the probability of more desirable behavior.

**Redirect.** Also taught in the third session was the Redirect tool. This tool should be used when an uncomfortable situation is encountered, and this situation can be redirected by changing the topic, suggesting another activity, or if necessary, leaving the situation to remain safe. This tool utilizes differential reinforcement by continuing to engage the person in conversation for desirable topics and discussions, and withdrawing
attention for inappropriate or undesirable conversations. To increase the likelihood of redirecting to an appropriate topic, a suggested topic or question should be posed, and then as soon as the other person engages in appropriate conversation or begins the suggested activity, social interaction should be provided as a form of a potentially reinforcing consequence.

**Assessment Procedures & Response Measurement**

All participants completed pre and posttraining assessments. The pretraining assessments occurred prior to the start of the training; this included role play assessments for each tool. Additional pretraining assessments occurred at the end of subsequent trainings; this included role play assessments for the tools that had not yet been trained. All posttraining assessments occurred immediately following each session. These posttraining assessments included role play assessments of each tool the participants had just been trained on or tools that had been trained during a previous session (according to a multiple baseline format—see experimental design section below). These assessments included specific role plays, in which the participant was read the scenario and then instructed to act it out with a trainer as they would in a typical situation. Following each role-play the trainer recorded a ‘yes,’ ‘no’ or ‘N/A’ in response to whether each step of the tool was demonstrated. The trainer marked ‘yes’ if that step was demonstrated in the role play, a ‘no’ if that corresponding step was not demonstrated or an ‘N/A’ if the participant was not given the opportunity to complete that step. For example, the trainer role-playing did not display any junk behavior; therefore, the step of ‘do nothing to react to junk behavior’ would be scored as ‘N/A’ because the participant was not given an opportunity to respond to junk behavior. This was scored a total of 17 times, commonly for
responding to junk behavior during the Use Reinforcement tool with an adult as there was less opportunity for junk behavior in these scenarios. This was also scored in a couple Negotiating scenarios, in which the participant was not given an opportunity to complete the step of setting the stage due to the nature of the scenario being a roommate or staff initiated the conversation. A scenario for example is, “your roommate approaches you and asks to borrow a pair of jeans to wear to the movies tonight.” In this scenario the participant responds to the request using the Negotiating tool, but did not have the opportunity to set the stage. Preassessment role plays were conducted before the first class session. Role play scenarios took place after Session One (Stay Close), Session Two (Reinforcement and Negotiating), and finally following the conclusion of Session Three (Pivot and Redirect). All of the role play scenarios vary throughout both baseline and intervention phases, some of the posttraining role plays were novel scenarios and some posttraining role plays were scenarios repeated from baseline. During these role plays the participant did not receive instructions or feedback on their performance. As stated earlier, the role play scenarios that were used for this training are attached in Appendix B. The trainer read the participant the scenario, noted which tool corresponds to that scenario and used that tools’ checklist to record the participant responses. The number of steps scored as ‘yes’ was then divided by the total number of steps, multiplied by 100 to get the percentage of steps completed correctly for each tool.

**Experimental Design**

The experimental design was a concurrent multiple baseline across tools. Since there were five tools taught across three sessions, the first tool (Stay Close) was taught while the other four tools remained in baseline. Then in Session Two, Use Reinforcement
and Negotiating were trained, so participants were in the posttraining phase of Stay Close (from session 1) and now Use Reinforcement and Negotiating, while Pivot and Redirect still remained in baseline. Finally in session three, the participants received training on the Pivot and Redirect tools thus completing the training.

**Interobserver Agreement (IOA)**

Two trainers observed and independently scored the Tools’ checklists during participant role play scenarios for 71% of the total number of role plays across all participants. IOA was calculated for each role play by determining the number of steps agreed upon by both observers divided by the total number of steps multiplying by 100 to create the percentage of IOA. Agreement is determined by whether or not both observers agreed upon the occurrence or nonoccurrence of each step, so if both observers checked ‘yes’ for a step, or both scored ‘no’ for a step, or both scored ‘N/A’ for a step, as long as they scored the same on an individual step that was counted as an agreement. If they did not score the corresponding step the same, this was counted as a disagreement. The average IOA score was 84% for all role play scenarios. The score was also calculated by tool. For Stay Close, the average interobserver agreement was 83%. For Use Reinforcement, the average IOA was 80%. For Negotiating, the average IOA was 87%. For Pivot, the average IOA was 85%. For Redirect, the average IOA was 88%.

**Social Validity Survey**

All participants were given a survey to complete prior to the start of class. This was the *Tell Us What You Think!* Survey developed by Thompson (2008). It includes the most relevant questions from the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA). The ACLSA is a survey designed to measure life skills of youths. Agencies can use these
results to help create learning plans so that youths in foster care learn the skills they need to exit care. There are nine life skill categories of the ACLSA, the fifteen questions used in the *Tell Us What You Think!* Survey were from the Social Relationships, Communication, Work Life, Work and Study Skills and Knowledge and Behavior sections. Each participant scored each question with a *definitely, I guess* or *not so much* response. A *definitely* response counted as three points, an *I guess* response counted as two points, and a *not so much* response counted as one point for a total possible of 45 points. This same survey was administered to each participant following the training; it also had some additional questions as feedback for the training. These responses were also measured with a *definitely, I guess, or not so much* and the same point scoring, for a total possible of 75 points. With 45 points coming from the same questions as baseline survey and an additional 30 points from the questions referring to feedback from the training. The baseline *Tell Us What You Think!* Survey is located in appendix C, the posttraining *Tell Us What You Think!* Survey is located in appendix D.
Results

Overall, the results showed an increase in percentage of steps correct from pretraining to posttraining. Figures 1-4 display the percentage of steps completed correctly across each role play assessment. The open data points in posttraining represent a role play scenario that was repeated from pretraining assessments; whereas, the filled posttraining data points represent a novel scenario.

Rhianna had scores for Stay Close pretraining averaging 54%, and an increase in posttraining scores up to 84% (see Figure 1). For Use Reinforcement and Negotiating pretraining assessments, Rhianna’s scores were relatively high, yet variable, with corresponding averages of 64% and 74% accuracy. In posttraining, these averages increased to 79% for Use Reinforcement and to 84% for Negotiating. Pivot and Redirect scores are at a low level during pretraining, both with averages of 25% accuracy. In posttraining, these averages increased to 67% for Pivot and a perfect 100% for Redirect.

Karly’s scores showed an increase in accuracy of each tool from pretraining to posttraining (see Figure 2). Stay close pretraining averaged 63% and increased to 78% accuracy in posttraining. For Use Reinforcement, Karly’s pretraining scores averaged 49% with an increase to 71% accuracy in posttraining. Negotiating scores averaged 49% pretraining with an increase to 69% accuracy in posttraining. Karly’s Pivot scores averaged 25% pretraining with an increase to 58% accuracy in posttraining. And the last
tool, Redirect, seeing the largest increase from 31% in pretraining to 75% accuracy in posttraining.

Britney showed averages of 61% accuracy during pretraining for Stay Close and increased to 80% accuracy in posttraining (see Figure 3). For Use Reinforcement and Negotiating, Britney’s average scores were pretty high for pretraining, with 73% accuracy and 67% accuracy respectively. These increased in posttraining to averages of 83% accuracy for Use Reinforcement and 94% accuracy for Negotiating. Pivot and Redirect were Britney’s lower scoring tools in pretraining with averages of 13% accuracy and 31% accuracy respectively. These increased in posttraining to averages of 75% accuracy in Pivot and a perfect 100% accuracy in Redirect.

Paris also showed increases in accuracy from pretraining to posttraining (see Figure 4). For Stay Close, Paris’ average pretraining score was 44% accuracy, this increased to 85% accuracy during posttraining. For Use Reinforcement, the average pretraining score was 53% accuracy, this increased to 74% accuracy during posttraining. Pretraining averages for Negotiating were 57% increasing to 74% accuracy during posttraining. For Pivot, the average pretraining score was 44% accuracy, increasing to 67% accuracy during posttraining. And finally, for Redirect, the average pretraining score was 31% accuracy, increasing to 83% accuracy during posttraining.

Each participant completed the baseline and posttraining Tell Us What You Think! Surveys. The individual scores are displayed in Table 1. An increase in posttraining survey scores were seen with each participant. Rhianna scored a 64% with 29 out of 45 points possible on the baseline survey and increased to a 76% with 34 out of 45 points on the posttraining survey. Karly’s baseline survey score was 87% with 37 out of 45 points
and posttraining survey score was 98% with 44 out of 45 points. Britney scored an 82% with 37 out of 45 points on the baseline survey and increased to an 84% with 38 out of 45 points on the posttraining survey. Paris scored a 76% with 34 out of 45 points on the baseline survey and increased to an 87% with 39 out of 45 points on the posttraining survey. The total averages across all participants increased from a 77% on the baseline survey to an 86% on the posttraining survey. The social validity section of the posttraining Tell Us What You Think! Survey was also fully completed by each participant, with scores ranging from 87%-100% reflecting point values of 26, 28, 29, and 30 out of 30 possible points. The average social validity score across all participants was 94%. 
Figure 1. Rhianna Percentage of Steps Correct per Role Play Assessment. The open data points represent repeated scenarios from baseline.
Figure 2. Karly Percentage of Steps Correct per Role Play Assessment. The open data points represent repeated scenarios from baseline.
Figure 3. Britney Percentage of Steps Correct per Role Play Assessment. The open data points represent repeated scenarios from baseline.
Figure 4. Paris Percentage of Steps Correct per Role Play Assessment. The open data points represent repeated scenarios from baseline.
Table 1. Average percentage results from the *Tell Us What You Think!* Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Baseline (%)</th>
<th>Posttraining (%)</th>
<th>Social Validity (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhianna</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karly</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britney</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Averages</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
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Discussion

The results show that these five skills; Stay Close, Use Reinforcement, Negotiating, Pivot and Redirect, can be acquired by adolescent females through this classroom style training. Similar results were found by Thompson (2008) with youths outside of foster care, where participants acquired the skills in demonstrating three of these tools (Stay Close, Use Reinforcement, Pivot) through a classroom training also utilizing a BST format. Anecdotally, the youths seemed to enjoy the training, and shared personal stories including how one of the tools could have been applied or how they actually used the tool. Staff reported they thought participants really enjoyed training as the girls talked about it and would ask throughout the week if the training was still scheduled to occur. On the social validity surveys, there was an open space to allow for participants to write in their own comments about training. Some comments written were that they enjoyed the trainers examples and role plays; class was awesome.

After the initial training including Stay Close, Karly and Paris both showed increases in scores of tools that had not yet been trained. This could be accounted for by steps learned from the Stay Close tool as some steps are similar to or the same as steps in other tools. For example, appropriate facial expressions, tone of voice and relaxed body language are steps of both Stay Close and Use Reinforcement. Along with avoiding use of Debbie Downers, which are common negative interactions, and avoid responding to junk behavior; these two steps are part of each tool taught.
Both novel scenarios and repeated scenarios from baseline were used during the post assessments. This was done to help rule out any testing effects and variations in the difficulty level of the role plays. The novel scenarios were also included to measure generalization of skills. All participants’ postassessment scores were similar between both novel scenarios or repeated scenarios. This would indicate the skills acquired were able to be demonstrated under multiple scenarios, novel or repeated.

The role play scenarios were designed to be lifelike scenarios for adolescent females in foster care. Yet each scenario is different; and some may be a better assessment of actual skills acquired versus a generalization issue to a novel scenario. One role play in particular grossed lower scores, this was a Pivot scenario in which the participant was told, “staff is conducting room checks tonight and your roommate has a mess all over your floor, so you ask her to pick it up and immediately she starts complaining about having to clean all the time.” Some participants may not have been able to discriminate this complaining as junk behavior and to respond with the Pivot tool and instead responded with the Negotiating tool. This scenario was the first Pivot postassessment, as shown in Figure 2, Karly scored a 0% on this scenario, but a 100% on the following scenario. Participants were not told which tool should be used for each role play scenario as part of learning the tools is determining when they are appropriately utilized. Therefore, this might have been a lack of generalization issue rather than a skill acquisition problem.

One participant, Rhianna, was absent for the last classroom training (Pivot and Redirect); therefore, she received one-to-one training on the material a few days after the rest of the participants. The posttraining scores for Redirect were very high; though Pivot
was more variable, the individual training could have impacted skill acquisition for her. On another note, with Rhianna absent from the training, the class size was only three adolescents; therefore allowing more opportunity for participation from the three in attendance. It is unknown if this had an effect on behavior because no data were collected on actual class participation. This type of data may be beneficial in future studies to examine if participation has an effect on skill acquisition.

No maintenance data or generalization data in the natural environment were collected as the skills were only demonstrated immediately following classroom training and in role-play scenarios. Although, follow-up data may still be collected. It is unknown if the skills would generalize to participants’ real life scenarios or maintain over time. Anecdotally, participants did describe situations in which they used the tools outside of class in their daily lives. Future studies could examine generalization or maintenance strategies to measure more long-term effects. Generalization data should be collected in multiple environments, for example at home versus in school. It would be difficult to accurately assess tool use in the natural environment due to reactivity to the presence of an observer and opportunities for use of some tools may be more limited than others. For example, the Redirect tool would be used during more harmful or uncomfortable situations and it could be these situations are more likely to occur when an observer is not present. Generalization data could also include measurement of who the participant utilized the tool with, for example, a friend versus a staff member. As interactions may vary between individuals based on their history. For example, participants verbally reported frustration in Using Reinforcement with staff as they felt staff did not use it with them. The Thompson (2008) study found that the skills (Stay Close, Use Reinforcement,
Pivot) did maintain in four week follow up role play assessments. It is important for future studies to assess maintenance over time, as research on parent training found the skills to decrease over time. Van Camp et al. (2008) found that with adults the skills decreased from the postassessment, but still remained higher than baseline. They then utilized a booster training which brought the skill accuracy back up to postassessment levels. Booster trainings would be another idea for future research with training adolescents.

The results of this study show that these four youth in foster care did acquire the specific social skills taught through a classroom training utilizing a BST format. Social skills have been shown to be important skills to acquire especially for adolescents. Helping to build relationships, communicate with others, and further education are just some benefits. Youth in foster care are more likely to experience social challenges and acquiring some additional social skills could be beneficial in overcoming these challenges.
References


Appendix A: Tool Checklists

**Reinforcement Tool Checklist**

Participant Name: ____________________________

Behavior Analyst: ____________________________ Date: _____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Use specific verbal praise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Provide a potentially reinforcing consequence | | | (Circle those provided): | • Social Interaction  
• Appropriate touch  
• Tangible item  
• Privilege  
• Break from task |
| 3. Immediately provide a positive consequence. | | | |
| 4. Sincere body language (facial expression, tone of voice and body language.) | | | |
| 5. Stay Focused (avoid junk behavior) | | | |
| 6. Stay Cool and use no Debbie downers | | | |

**Trainer’s Notes:**
1. Score “No” if there is any instance of inappropriate expression, tone of voice, or body language.
2. Step 6 is scored on its’ own and does not affect other steps in this tool.
3. If arms are crossed, count step 4 as No.
4. If the CG scores yes on 1 or 2, then if done immediately, score yes for 3.

**Overall Comments:** (Circle any caregiver traps used: sarcasm/teasing; criticism; threats; arguing; questioning; lecturing; despair (bribing, pleading, hopelessness; force; sudden subtraction; one up-man-ship; silent treatment; telling on them to others. Be specific.)

**Scoring:** (Circle One)

0/6= 0%  1/6= 17%  2/6= 34%  3/6= 50%  4/6= 67%  5/6= 83%  6/6= 100%
## Redirect Tool Checklist

Participant Name: __________________________

Behavior Analyst: __________________________ Date: __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make a change (suggestion of activity, statement of differing topic)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reinforce the change (social interaction, verbal statement)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. If a change does not occur, leave the situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Stay Focused (avoid junk behavior)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stay cool and use no debbie downers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Comments:** (Circle any caregiver traps used: sarcasm/teasing; criticism; threats; arguing; questioning; lecturing; despair (bribing, pleading, hopelessness; force; sudden subtraction; one up-man-ship; silent treatment; telling on them to others. Be specific.)

1. Score a yes for step 2 if the caregiver provides any verbal statement or comment about the appropriate behavior (i.e., yes, that’s right, thank you)

**Scoring:** (Circle One)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Negotiating Tool Checklist

Participant Name: __________________________________________

Behavior Analyst: __________________________________________

Date: ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Set the stage (Time away from the behavior and uninterrupted)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Start Positive (Provide praise or compliment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. State what you want clearly and specifically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Making it happen (offer suggestions or provide incentive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Confirm plan (restate agreed upon behavior and consequences)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Acknowledge and exit (ex. Thank you for listening)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stay Focused (avoid junk behavior)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Stay cool and use no Debbie downers</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Trainer’s Notes:**
1. Ask participant to describe when, where, and how setting expectations is occurring (i.e., time, place).
2. If the participant did not ask for a restatement, wait until the end of the conversation and then provide the restatement to be able to score step 6.
3. Score a yes for step 6 if the participant provides any verbal statement or comment about the appropriate behavior (i.e., yes, that’s right, you got it, thank you)

**Overall Comments:** (Were any caregiver traps used: sarcasm/teasing; criticism; threats; arguing; questioning; lecturing; despair; bribing, pleading, hopelessness; force; sudden subtraction; one up-man-ship; silent treatment; telling on them to others? Be specific.)

**Scoring: (Circle One)**

- 0/8 = 0%
- 1/8 = 13%
- 2/8 = 25%
- 3/8 = 38%
- 4/8 = 50%
- 5/8 = 63%
- 6/8 = 75%
- 7/8 = 88%
- 8/8 = 100%
# Stay Close Tool Checklist

**Participant Name:** ______________________________________________________

**Behavior Analyst:** ___________________________________________ **Date:** ____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Get physically close to the child (move toward the person and be within arms reach, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Touch appropriately (pat, hug, rub, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Appropriate body language (facial expression, tone of voice and body language.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Listen while the person is speaking. Talk less than them (Do not interrupt or abruptly change the topic.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Use empathy statements.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stay Focused (avoid junk behavior)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Stay cool and use no Debbie downers</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Trainer's Notes:** After step 3, steps do not have to be completed in any particular order.
1. A single instance of a punitive, disgusted or inappropriate facial expression, tone of voice or body language (step 3), during any part of the role play should be scored “no” for step 3.
2. Only one open-ended question is needed to score a "yes" for step 4.
3. If problem-solving is used without the child asking for it, score “no” for step 5. If two or more problem solving statements occur consecutively, score as lecturing. Score no for step 5, if they talk more than the child, interrupt the child, and/or change the topic. If the trainer does not provide an opportunity, count as N/A.

**Overall Comments:** (Circle any caregiver traps used: sarcasm/teasing; criticism; threats; arguing; questioning; lecturing; despair (bribing, pleading, hopelessness); force; sudden subtraction; one up-man-ship; silent treatment; telling on them to others. Be specific.)

**Scoring:** (Circle One)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0/8= 0%</td>
<td>1/8= 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/8= 75%</td>
<td>7/8= 88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Pivot Tool Checklist

Participant Name: ____________________________________________

Behavior Analyst: ____________________________________________ Date: ______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Say and do nothing about the junk behavior. (For example: Don’t say, “Stop that now!” or “Quit doing that!”)(^1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Casually turn away (to another person or activity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Immediately once the person who displayed junk behavior behaves appropriately; acknowledge the appropriate behavior of this person.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stay cool and use no debbie downers</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Trainer’s Notes:**

\(^1\,2\) Score "No" if there is any response to the junk behavior, including laughing or any change of expression.

**Overall Comments:** (Circle any caregiver traps used: sarcasm/teasing; criticism; threats; arguing; questioning; lecturing; despair (bribing, pleading, hopelessness); force; sudden subtraction; one up-man-ship; silent treatment; telling on them to others. Be specific.)

**Scoring:** (Circle One)

- 0/4 = 0%
- 1/4 = 25%
- 2/4 = 50%
- 3/4 = 75%
- 4/4 = 100%
Appendix B: Role Play Scenarios by Tool

Stay Close:

- A friend tells you her Mom and Dad are getting a divorce.
- Your favorite math teacher just pulled into the parking lot and is walking the same direction you are.
- Your Mom walks in the door and says “I got a promotion today!”
- You are waiting to meet a friend, as soon as she walks around the corner toward you, you can see that she is crying.
- A friend tells you she gets to go visit her dad in two weeks.
- You are sitting in the living room with a friend she gets a phone call and seems really excited after hanging up.

Use Reinforcement:

- You teacher just gave you an extension on a big homework assignment since it’s a holiday weekend.
- You are really cold and a friend offers to loan you a sweater.
- It is raining outside and a staff member just gave you a ride home from school.
- You are trying to buy a coke and the machine won’t take your dollar, as you keep trying to put the dollar in a girl comes over and offers to trade you four quarters.
- It is your birthday, when you get home you see your mom has cooked your favorite dinner.
- One of your housemates is always barging into your room; today she knocks on the door first.
- You walk into math class for a test today and you realize you forgot a pencil, the person you sit next to offered you their extra one.

Negotiating:

- You have been home on time for the past two weeks and would like to stay out later this Friday night.
- Your assigned chore today is cooking; you aren’t feeling up to it and your housemate likes cooking but her assigned chore today is vacuuming.
- You are struggling on some math problems, you have a housemate is doing great in your math class, but she is having a hard time with the English paper which you have already finished.
- Your roommate is always asking to borrow your clothes and returns them dirty, today she asks to borrow a sweater and you think its ok, if she washes the sweater after she wears it.
- You ask your favorite staff if she will play cards with you, she says she is busy because she has to clean up the whole kitchen.
• Every time you need to use the computer one housemate is always hogging it; she has been asking to listen to your iPod lately.
• You would like to borrow a pair of your roommate’s jeans to wear to the movies tomorrow; she has mentioned before that she really likes your blue shirt.

Pivot:

• Your teacher just handed back an assignment, she was really picky and counted a lot of questions wrong, but she wrote ‘much improved’ with a smiley face at the top.
• While eating lunch in the cafeteria, a friend starts making mean comments about a quiet girl sitting by herself, but the other friends sitting at the table are talking about a TV show.
• Your mom comes into your room and starts asking you lots of questions about a boy who had called you earlier.
• You ask your roommate to clean up her mess on your floor before the staff person comes to check your room and immediately she starts complaining about cleaning.
• You were running late this morning and missed your first period class, you ask two of your friends in that class if they will email you the assignment, one friend says sure, the other makes comments about you always being late.

Redirect:

• You are standing outside of school in the morning and your group of friends starts talking about skipping school today.
• Two boys standing right next you start arguing and one throws a punch at the other one.
• Two of your housemates start talking about a plan to runaway tonight.
• Your friend just got in trouble in math class, you are walking with her out of class and she starts talking about egging the teacher’s car.
• After watching a movie at the theater you and your group of friends are walking out and two of them start throwing popcorn down the stairs at people.
Appendix C: Baseline Tell Us What You Think! Survey

We’d like to know how you feel about a couple of things. Please circle the response for each line that best fits you.

• I clearly present my ideas to others.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I ask questions to make sure I understand something someone has said.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• When I disagree with someone, I try to find a compromise.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I show appreciation for things other people do for me.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I deal with anger without using violence.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I am part of a group besides my family that cares about me.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I show others that I care about them.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I am comfortable with the number of friends that I have.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I can usually receive feedback without getting angry.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I get along with co-workers or schoolmates.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I thank people when they do things for me.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I tell my problems to an adult.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I pay attention when others talk.
  Definitely       I guess       Not so much

• I can get mad without hurting others.
Definitely     I guess     Not so much

• I work well with others.
Definitely     I guess     Not so much

Want to tell us anything else? We’d love to hear what you have to say, go on,

Fill us in!

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Posttraining Tell Us What You Think! Survey

We want to know how you liked the class and what you feel like you learned from taking it. We’d also like to know how you feel about some other things too. Please circle the response for each line that best fits you.

About our class:

• I really enjoyed the class.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I would tell my friends that they should take the class.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I feel more comfortable around people after taking this class.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I act differently toward people now.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• People act differently toward me now.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I get along better with my friends now.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I learned some cool new stuff from class.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I have made some new friends since I first started class.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I think this class could help other young adults get along better with other people.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

• I feel like the class was helpful and worth my time.
  Definitely    I guess    Not so much

What did you like the best about class?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

What could we do better for our next class?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Other Stuff:

- I clearly present my ideas to others.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I ask questions to make sure I understand something someone has said.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- When I disagree with someone, I try to find a compromise.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I show appreciation for things other people do for me.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I deal with anger without using violence.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I am part of a group besides my family that cares about me.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I show others that I care about them.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I am comfortable with the number of friends that I have.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I can usually receive feedback without getting angry.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I get along with co-workers or schoolmates.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I thank people when they do things for me.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I tell my problems to an adult.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I pay attention when others talk.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I can get mad without hurting others.
  Definitely  I guess  Not so much

- I work well with others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely</th>
<th>I guess</th>
<th>Not so much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Want to tell us anything else? We’d love to hear your feedback, so go on, fill us in!