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FAMILY RISK FACTORS RELATED TO ADOLESCENT ADJUDICATION

by
Jennifer M. Del Russo

A Thesis

Submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
At Rowan Univeristy
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Approved by

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ABSTRACT
Jennifer M. Del Russo
FAMILY RISK FACTORS RELATED TO ADOLESCENT ADJUDICATION
2003/04
Dr. Katherine Perez-Rivera
Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling and Applied Psychology

Family and social relationships have been identified as risk-factors for adolescent adjudication. Ninety-five participants between the ages of 13 and 19 were recruited from the Youth Empowerment System (YES) Shelter & Residential Treatment Facility, Camden Day & Residential Treatment Center, and Camden Catholic High School in Camden County, New Jersey. The participants were administered a survey designed by the experimenter and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. Chi-square analyses showed significant relationships between adjudication and who the legal guardian was, marital status of their biological parents and legal guardian, their relationship with their legal guardian, biological parents' criminal record and drug/alcohol addictions, households on welfare, and race. Two-parent households, preferably consisting of the biological parents, and positive parental relationships may help prevent adolescent adjudication and delinquent behaviors.

Acknowledgment

Thank you to the Youth Empowerment System (YES) Shelter & Residential Facility, Camden Day & Residential Treatment Center, and Camden Catholic High School for their participation in this study.

Thank you to Katherine Perez-Rivera, Ph.D. for all your dedication and patience in throughout the year.

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Mostly, thank you Mom, Dad, Eddie, Chrissy and John. Without your support and love this would have never been possible.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Problem

Adolescents have always engaged in rebellious behaviors, such as breaking curfew, consuming alcohol at parties, and smoking cigarettes. Experimentation in these behaviors is often seen as normal rebellious teenage behaviors. However, in recent years, the deviant behaviors of adolescents have become severe. Today, youth detention centers, shelters, and alternative schools have little or no vacancies for adolescents brought to court by family, neighbors, peers, or the police. The “normal” and “rebellious” behaviors of breaking curfew and smoking cigarettes have been replaced by drug addiction, grand theft auto, assault, and sexual crimes. Today, it is not uncommon or even shocking to hear that a group of teenagers entered their school with guns and attempted to murder their classmates and teachers.

The severity and frequency of adolescent criminal activities appear to be getting progressively worse. The attitude of these adolescents is one of disinterest and apathy. They seem to be unconcerned with the direction of their lives or the consequences of their behaviors. Even the prospect of being placed in residential treatment for a period of six months to two years and being removed from their schools, neighborhoods, and friends does not deter the deviant actions.

The most unnerving problem associated with this social trend is not the behaviors of the adolescents or their apathetic attitude. It is the lack of understanding as to the cause of the behaviors. Parents, teachers, therapists, social workers, and government

officials have been unable to determine the reason for the increase in adolescent deviant behaviors. The media portrays it as part of the decline of society, but makes no attempts to offer solutions to the problem. In order to correct and prevent the participation of adolescents in deviant behaviors, the cause and motivation of those behaviors must be understood.

Purpose of Study

One of the biggest societal changes in the past 15 years is the disruption of the households. More than ever, families are being separated, sometimes on multiple occasions, and single-parent households are more common. With these societal changes taken into consideration, the purpose of the current study is to assess whether factors related to the parent-adolescent relationship are correlated with the likelihood of adolescents becoming adjudicated into the court system.

Hypothesis

This study hypothesizes that adolescents who receive little or no supervision from their parents, legal guardian, or another adult are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents who receive supervision from adults. This includes adolescents whose parents or legal guardians have been convicted of a crime and/or were addicted to drugs or alcohol. This study also hypothesizes that adolescents who come from disrupted households are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents who come from intact households. Finally, this study also hypothesizes that adolescents who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and who live in households that have been on public assistance, such as welfare, are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents who live in

average or high socioeconomic neighborhoods and households that have never been on public assistance.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Presently, the number of crimes committed by juveniles is increasing. According to the U.S Department of Justice- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) 1999 National report, the juvenile courts reported a 49% increase of caseloads between 1987 and 1996 (OJJDP, 1999). The reason for the increase of juvenile delinquency remains unknown. However, with the recent media focus of children and adolescents engaging in antisocial behaviors, such as school shootings, drug dealing, violent behavior and increased adjudication, there is a greater need to understand what causes these behaviors and what can be done to prevent them (Bullis, Walker & Sprague, 2000). Juvenile delinquency and antisocial behaviors in children and adolescents has been linked to two types of risk-factors: individual factors, such as temperament and intelligence, and contextual factors, such as family life, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Chamberlain, 2003). Antisocial behaviors in adolescents has been linked to poverty, ineffective parenting, drug use, rejection by peers, peer pressure, academic failures, inadequate schooling, parent relationships, community alienation, association with others who engage in antisocial behavior, mental and physical illnesses, abuse or neglect, temperament, intelligence, race, gender, (e.g. Bullis et al., 2000; Coleman, 1999; Petrocelli, Callhoun & Glaser, 2003; Scott et al., 2002; Leech et al., 2003; Chamberlain, 2003; Smith et al., 1995).

Difficult temperaments, low IQ, and mental illnesses in children are all risk factors for future delinquent behaviors (Leech et al., 2003; Chamberlain, 2003; Smith et

al., 1995). Leech et al. conducted a self-reported longitudinal study of 460 pairs of mothers and children. The mothers were interviewed when their children were born and both the mothers and children were interviewed 10 years later. The study showed that 10-year-olds who commit delinquent acts have an IQ of eight points lower than children who do not commit delinquent acts. The study also found that children were more likely to commit delinquent acts if they possessed a less shy temperament and disruptive behaviors at age three. Higher levels of self-reported depression and anxiety were “significantly and directly” related to delinquent behaviors. Finally, substance use by children and their peers was strongly correlated to delinquent behaviors.

The results of the study conducted by Leech et al. are corroborated by other sources. Chamberlain (2003) states that adolescents who participate in delinquent behaviors are more likely to have difficult temperaments, mental illness, specifically ADHD, and low IQs. Chamberlain also states that these adolescents also have early attachment problems and emotional regulation problems, especially in impulse control, self-soothing activities and focusing attention.

Dr. John Toumbourou, of Melbourne University’s Centre for Adolescent Health, is currently studying risk factors related to “crime, sexual risk-taking, self-harm, and substance abuse.” His preliminary results, based on a sample of 468 “year 9 students” from 30 schools across the country, suggests that adolescent adjudication is more likely to occur if the adolescent is “exposed to family conflicts, failure at school and alienation from the community,” (Coleman, 1999). Community alienation is a strong predictor of juvenile delinquency. Smith et al. (1995) state “once rejected by peers, the child becomes a target for further aggression.” These peer rejected adolescents tend to

develop relationships with other peer-rejected youths and with others who are aggressive and/or deviant. This continues the cycle of community rejection and increases the likelihood of participation in deviant activities themselves.

Bullis, Walker & Sprague's (2001) study on social skills training for at-risk and antisocial youths report "children and youth who either are at risk for or display antisocial behavior tend to be rejected by peers and adults and are less socially skilled compared with peers who are not at risk or antisocial." Their study suggest that participating in social skills training programs that foster positive social relationships at a young age (i.e., first grade) significantly reduces the likelihood of engaging in antisocial behaviors. Participants in these programs also form a stronger attachment bond with the schooling process, which results in less school misbehaviors and higher academic performance.

The idea of inadequate social relationships is a common theme in predictive factors of adolescent adjudication. Munson & Estes (2002) suggests youths with weakened or broken societal bonds are at a greater risk for engaging in delinquent behaviors. This may be because of a lack of attachment, commitment, involvement or positive beliefs. Munson & Estes conducted an archival study of 521 Northeastern High School students and found that students who participated in neither athletics nor service-leadership activities were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors than students in participated in one or both of these activities.

Zigler (1994) also suggests that a lack of social skills may be related to juvenile delinquency. In his 1994 review, Zigler reports that "preschool programs and parent educational services that improve school readiness help to set a pattern that prevents delinquency in later years." Zigler goes on to say that social skills training in school, in

addition to “teaching alternatives to aggressive behaviors,” shows promise in preventing juvenile delinquency. Such programs have shown to reduce impulsive behaviors in preschool children. However, it is unclear if these programs will prevent juvenile delinquency.

Scott et al. (2002) report on the effectiveness of positive behavioral support (PBS) on decreasing problem behaviors in school and its application as a preventative program for at-risk youth. PBS, a multi-level prevention system, teaches its participants a variety of appropriate social skills appropriate to the participants’ “level of personalization, relative to the strengths, needs, and preferences of the student and his or her family.” Scott et al. suggest that the application can be a preventative tool against antisocial behaviors because it fosters positive social skills.

Another important factor in predicting adolescent adjudication is family relationships. Like Dr. Toumbourou (Coleman, 1999), Petrocelli et al. (2003) emphasized the important role families can play in preventing adolescent adjudication. Petrocelli et al. report that the “relationship between parents and adolescents contribute to the development of delinquent behavior.” Their research goes even further to say that in African-American females, family interpersonal conflict may be the number one contributor to delinquent behavior. However, Petrocelli et al. note that little research has been conducted on the role adolescent and parent relationships play in delinquent behaviors. Munson and Estes (2002) reiterate the importance of family by stating that weak affectional relationships between parents and children are associated with antisocial behavior.

Any disruptions in the parent-child relationship are risk factors for future delinquent behaviors. Smith et al. (1995) state that “family disruptions, such as that engendered by early separations, institutional experiences, many transitions, and absence of both natural parents from home, are related to subsequent delinquency.” Chamberlain (2003) states that the greater number of parenting transitions in the family, the more likely the youth is to participate in delinquent acts.

In addition to the role the family relationships play on the likelihood of adolescents becoming adjudicated, the manner in which parents monitor and discipline children has been suggested to be a factor that contributes to juvenile delinquency. Unsupervised time spent with peers and participation in negative activities are both positively correlated with juvenile delinquency (Munson & Estes, 2002). In the same respect shared leisure activities between parents and children are an important prevention against antisocial behavior (Munson & Estes). Petrocelli et al. (2003) state “family management practices (poor or proactive) are directly related to the development of violent behavior.” Furthermore, “violent juvenile behaviors can be partially attributed to inadequate parent-adolescent communication, discipline, and inadequate engagement in cooperative leisure activity,” (Petrocelli et al.).

The research suggests that adolescent adjudication and deviant behaviors are strongly related to the family composition and relationship. The current study is designed to assess whether factors related to the parent-adolescent relationship are correlated with the likelihood of adolescents becoming adjudicated into the court system.

This study hypothesizes that adolescents who receive little or no supervision from their parents, legal guardian, or another adult are more likely to be adjudicated than

adolescents who receive supervision from adults. This includes adolescents whose parents or legal guardians have been convicted of a crime and/or were addicted to drugs or alcohol. This study also hypothesizes that adolescents who come from disrupted households are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents who come from intact households. Finally, this study also hypothesizes that adolescents who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and who live in households that have been on public assistance, such as welfare, are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents who live in average or high socioeconomic neighborhoods and households that have never been on public assistance.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants

A power analysis was conducted to determine the correct number of participants needed for this study. The analysis was run at an alpha level of .05 and with an effect size of .30. Based on the analysis, this study required 85 participants to have an 80 percent chance of detecting the hypothesized main effect.

Ninety-five adolescents from Camden County, New Jersey (29 males and 66 females) volunteered to participate in this study. Participants were recruited from the Youth Empowerment System (YES) Shelter & Residential Treatment Facility, Camden Day & Residential Treatment Center, and from Camden Catholic High School. The sample consisted of 16 participants who had previously been adjudicated into the juvenile justice system, and 79 participants who had not been adjudicated into the juvenile justice system.

Participants ranged in age from 13 to 19 years old (mean age = 16.48 years old). The sample consisted of 59 Caucasians, 9 African-Americans, 13 Hispanics, and 14 multi-racial persons.

Materials

Two self-report measures were employed to gather information. The first measure was a survey designed by the examiner. The second measure was the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The survey and the MCSD were counterbalanced.

Survey. The survey was divided into three sections (see Appendix A). The first section assessed the participants' involvement with the juvenile justice system and participation in illegal activities. The second section assessed participants' relationship with their legal guardian and biological parents, and the participation in illegal activities by the biological parents and legal guardians. The third section was a demographic survey that assessed the participants' gender, age, race, type of schooling received (i.e., public, private, charter, or home school), participation in extracurricular activities, religion, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood (i.e., urban or suburban). The purpose of the later section was to note similarities and differences between the groups.

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD). The MCSD (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) is a 33-item scale designed to assess social desirability (see Appendix B). The questions are answered using a true/false format. Question numbers 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 31, and 33 are scored in the TRUE direction. Question numbers 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 22, 23, 28, 30, and 32 are scored in the FALSE direction. Each response that is congruent with the responses above (i.e., response is true for items scored in the TRUE direction) receives a point of 1. Each response that is discordant with the responses above (i.e., response is true for items scored in the FALSE direction) receives a point of 0. Therefore, scores can range from 0 – 33 on the MCSD. Higher scores indicate a greater probability of the participants responding in a socially desirable manner.

Procedure

Informed consent was obtained from the legal guardian of all participants prior to administering the survey. For the participants volunteering from the Camden Day &

Residential Program, legal guardian consent forms were given to the program's therapists to give to guardians during family sessions, meetings, or visits. However, during the three week period of time that the therapists were asked to gather legal guardian consent forms, no guardians responded. Therefore, no one from the Camden Day & Residential Program completed the measures for this study.

For the participants volunteering from the YES Shelter and Residential Facility, informed consent forms were given to the legal guardians either in person when the legal guardian came to the facility for a visit, meeting, or family therapy session, mailed with a letter of explanation and a self-addressed and stamped return envelope, or faxed to the Camden County Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) Office if the participant's legal guardian was the state of New Jersey. The legal guardians were given two weeks to sign and return the informed consent forms. Guardian consent forms were placed in a labeled envelope.

After collecting the guardian informed consent forms, the investigators went into the facility and administered the measures to all the participants whose guardians had given informed consent. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants who were then asked to sign the participant informed consent forms and place them in a labeled envelope. This was done to ensure confidentiality. Upon completion, the investigators collected all the measures, handed out debriefing forms, which the participants kept, and again explained the purpose of the study and how the results would be analyzed and reported.

For the participants volunteering from Camden Catholic High School, four classes (i.e., one from each grade level) were chosen to participate in the study by the

Vice Principal based on the relevance of the coursework to the study. The Vice Principal asked the Health and Sociology teachers to administer the measures because he felt that the measures could be best related to the curriculum of those courses. The investigators did not administer the measures themselves. The teachers chosen to administer the measures were given written instructions from the investigators to send the guardian informed consent forms home with the participants. The signed informed consent forms were returned to school and collected by the teachers. The teachers were given two weeks to collect the guardian consent forms.

The investigators delivered the surveys, participant informed consent forms, envelopes for the informed consent forms, and debriefing forms after the guardian consent forms were collected by the teachers. Guardian informed consent forms were not collected at this time. The teachers were given written instructions to administer the surveys only to the students whose legal guardians gave informed consent. The teachers were instructed to read a statement of purpose, which had been written by the investigators, and collect signed informed consent forms from the participants. The measures were administered and collected by the teachers. The teachers were instructed to read another statement of purpose and a statement explaining how the results would be analyzed and reported. The surveys and signed participant and guardian informed consent forms were sent to the school's main office and collected by the investigators.

Chapter 4

Results

Sixty-four guardian consent forms were sent to the legal guardians of participants in the Youth Empowerment System (YES) Shelter & Residential Treatment Facility and the Camden Day & Residential Treatment Center. Thirteen guardians (19%) gave consent for their child to participate in this study, although one child was discharged from the facility before being administered the measures and, therefore, did not participate. Six guardians (9%) did not give consent for their child to participate in the study, and 46 guardians (72%) did not respond.

One hundred and twenty-one guardian consent forms were sent to the legal guardians of the participants from Camden Catholic High School. Twenty-three participants (19%) were over 18 years of age and did not require parental consent. Seventy-seven (64%) guardians gave consent for their child to participate in this study. Two (1%) guardians did not give consent for their child to participate in this study. Nineteen guardians (16%) did not respond. However, there is a possibility that some or all of these 19 consent forms were misplaced, as the Vice Principal reported that the teachers only administered the measures to students whose guardians gave consent. It is also possible that some or all of these 19 students stated having returned guardian consent forms when they did not.

Chi-Square analyses showed significant relationships between several factors. There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and the participants' legal

guardian ($\psi^2_{(3)} = 42.542, p < .000$). One hundred percent of participants whose legal guardian was the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) were adjudicated. Thirty-three percent of participants whose legal guardian was an adoptive parent(s) were adjudicated. Thirty percent of participant's whose legal guardian was their biological mother were adjudicated. Six percent of participants whose legal guardian was their biological parents were adjudicated (see figure 4.1). This supports the hypothesis that adolescents from disruptive households are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents from intact households.

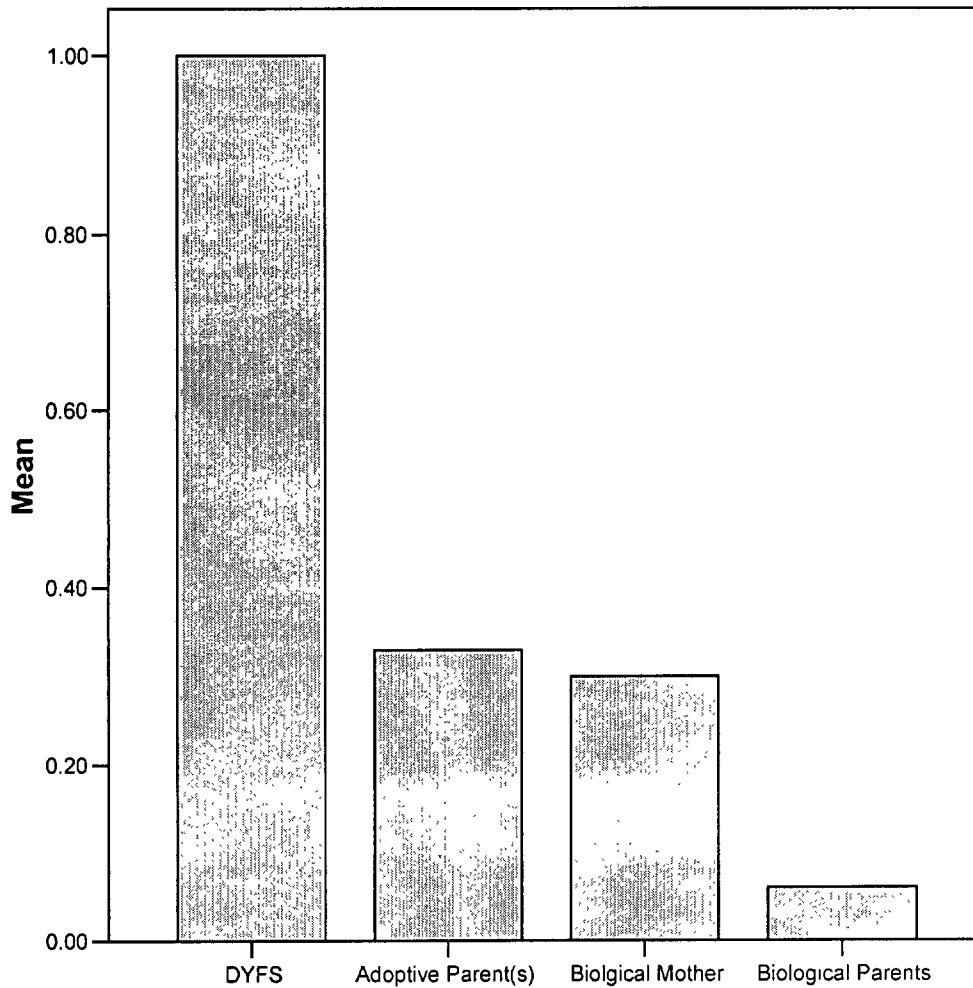


Figure 4.1 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on legal guardian.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and the marital status of the participants' biological parents ($\Psi^2_{(5)} = 16.590, p = .005$). One hundred percent of participants who responded as not knowing the marital status of their biological parents were adjudicated. Sixty-six percent of participants whose biological parents were separated were adjudicated. Sixty percent of participants whose biological

parents were widowed were adjudicated. Twenty-five percent of participants whose biological parents were never married were adjudicated. Fourteen percent of participants whose biological parents were divorced were adjudicated. Nine percent of participants whose legal guardians were married were adjudicated (see figure 4.2). This also supports the hypothesis that adolescents from disruptive households are more likely to be adjudicated than adolescents from intact households.

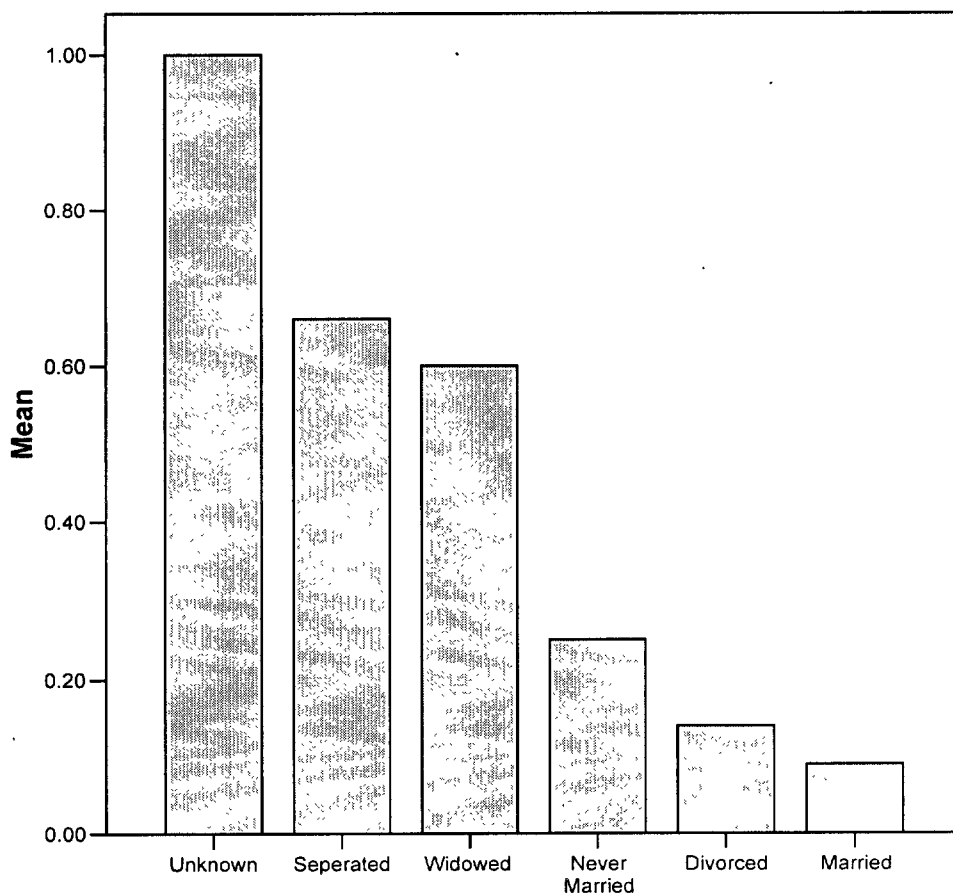


Figure 4.2 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on marital status of biological parents.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and the marital status of the participants' legal guardians ($\Psi^2_{(7)} = 19.129, p = .008$). One hundred percent of participants who responded "non-applicable" on this question, all of whose legal guardian was DYFS, and those whose legal guardians were never married, but were residing together were adjudicated. Fifty percent of participants whose legal guardians were widowed and separated were adjudicated. Forty percent of participants whose legal guardians were never married were adjudicated. Nine percent of participants whose legal guardians were married were adjudicated. None of the participants whose legal guardians were divorced were adjudicated (see figure 4.3). This disproves the hypothesis that adolescents from disrupted households are more likely to be adjudicated, but does show that intact households provide a better environment than government guardianship and guardians who never married.

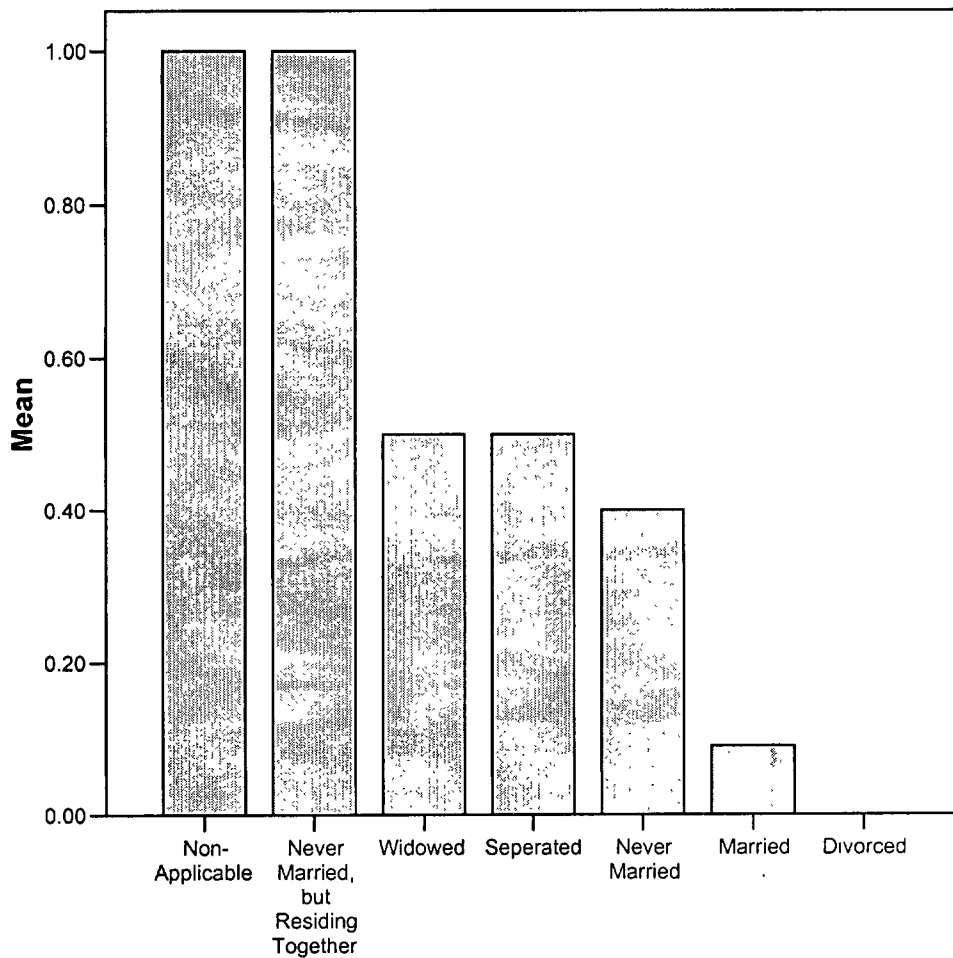


Figure 4.3 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on martial status of legal guardian.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and participants reporting that they have a positive relationship with their legal guardian ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 4.957, p < .026$). Sixteen percent of participants who reported having a positive relationship with their legal guardian were adjudicated, while 50% of participants who reported not having a positive relationship with their legal guardian were adjudicated (see figure 4.4).

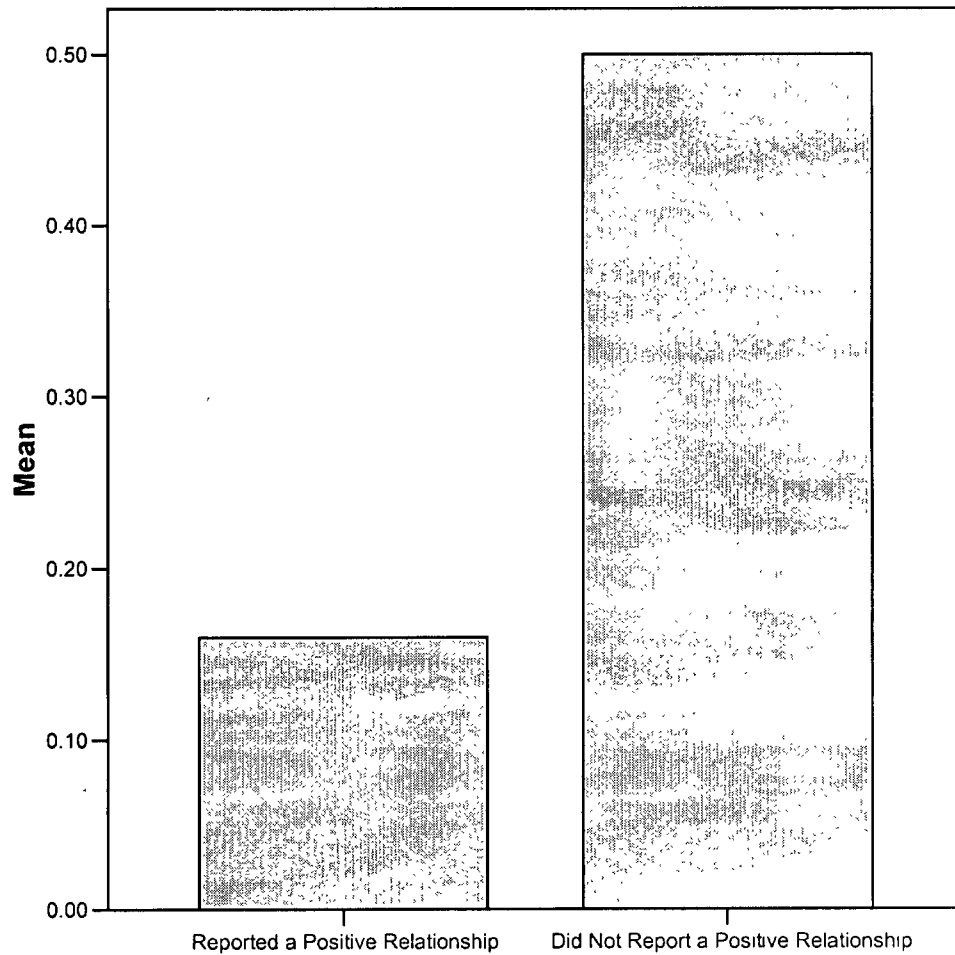


Figure 4.4 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependent on participants reporting a positive relationship with their legal guardian.

There is a significant relationship between being adjudicated and participants reporting that other people would state they have a positive relationship with their legal guardian ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 8.373, p = .004$). Eleven percent of participants who reported that others would state they have a positive relationship were adjudicated, while 50% of participants who reported that others would not state they have a positive relationship with their legal guardian were adjudicated (see figure 4.5).

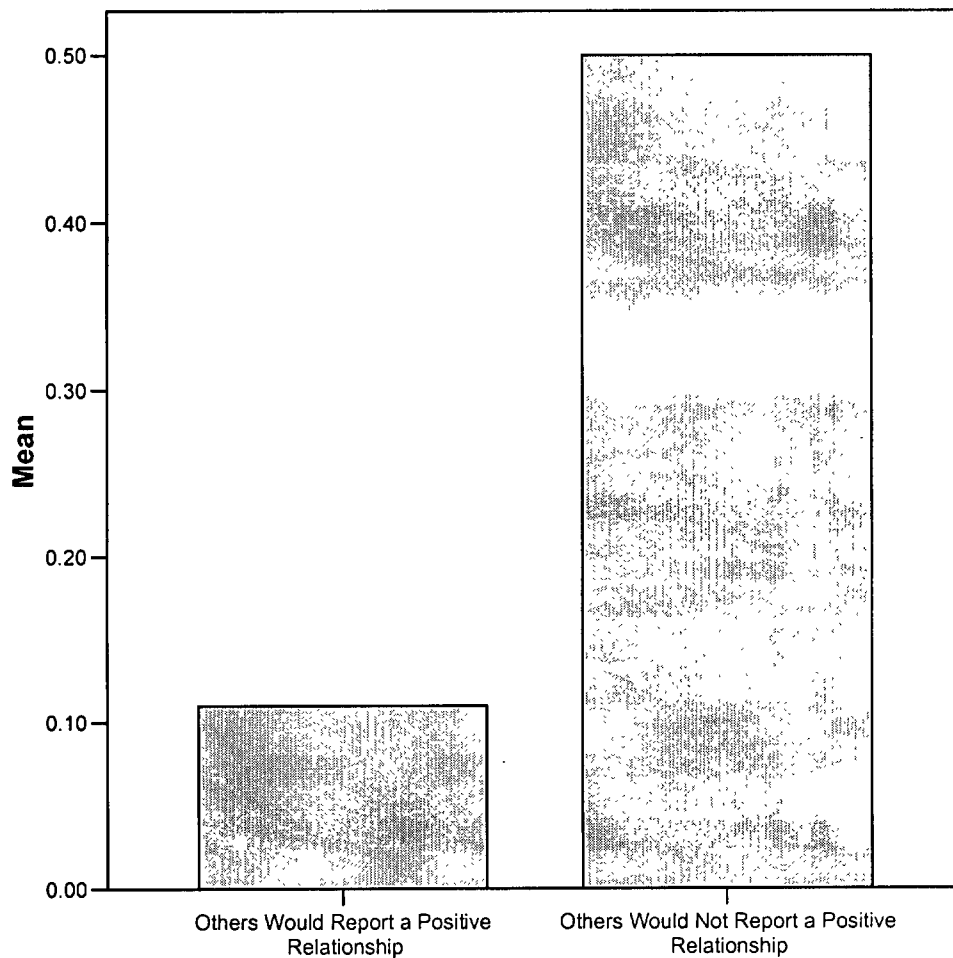


Figure 4.5 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on other people reporting a positive relationship between participants and their legal guardians.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and participants whose biological parents have been convicted of a crime ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 25.648, p < .000$). Fifty-five percent of participants whose biological parents have been convicted of a crime were adjudicated, while 6% of participants whose biological parents were never convicted of a crime were adjudicated (see figure 4.6). This supports the hypothesis that adolescents who do not receive adult supervision are more likely to be adjudicated.

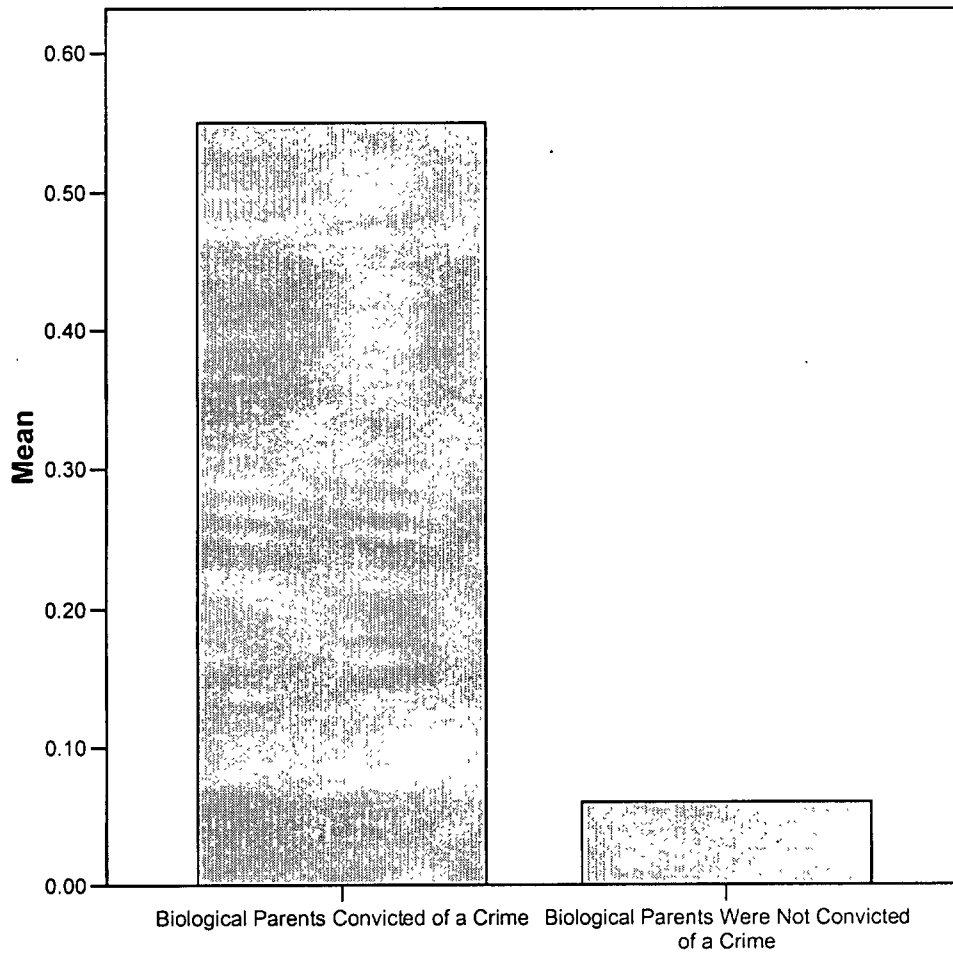


Figure 4.6 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependent on whether or not biological parents were convicted of a crime.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and participants whose biological parents were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 6.216, p = .013$). Thirty-five percent of participants whose biological parents were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol were adjudicated, while 11% of participants whose biological parents were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol were adjudicated (see figure 4.7). This also supports the

hypothesis that adolescents who do not receive adult supervision are more likely to be adjudicated.

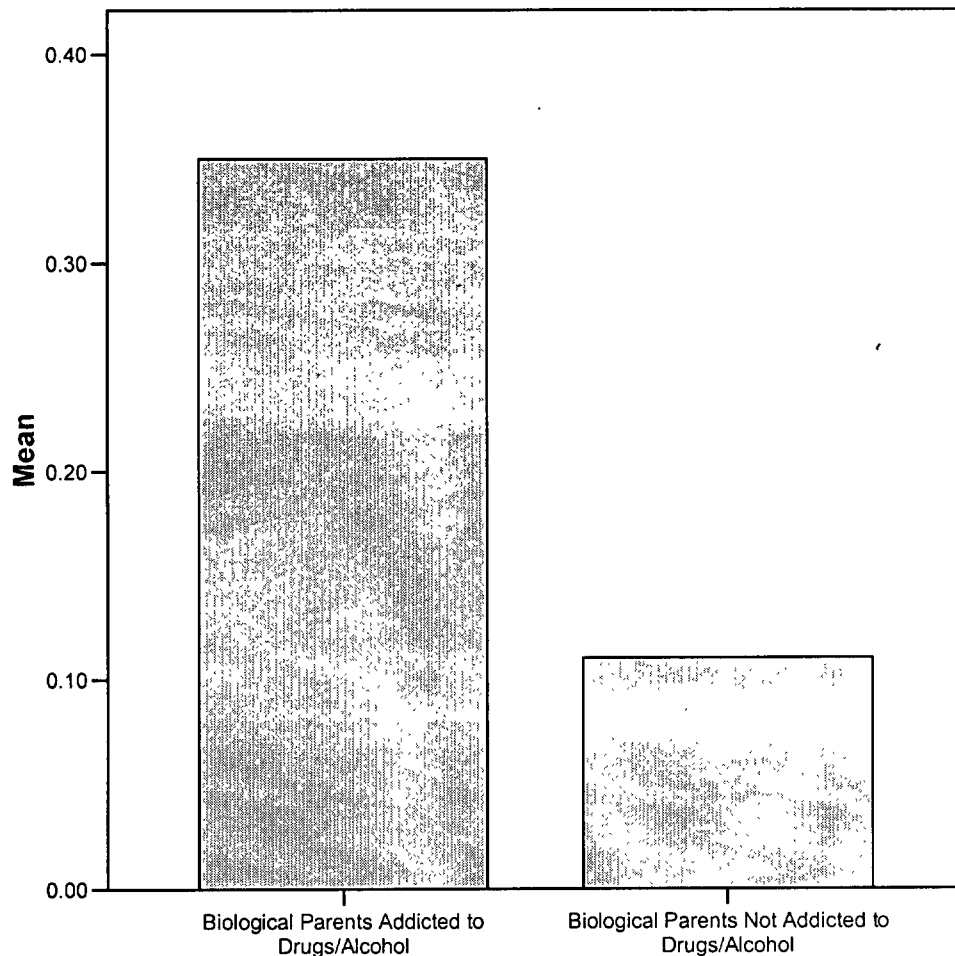


Figure 4.7 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on whether or not biological parents are addicted to drugs/alcohol.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and participants having contact with one or both of their biological parents $\Psi^2_{(1)} = 17.368, p < .000$.

Sixty-six percent of participants who did not have contact with their biological parents

were adjudicated, while 12% of participants who did have contact with their biological parents were adjudicated (see figure 4.8).

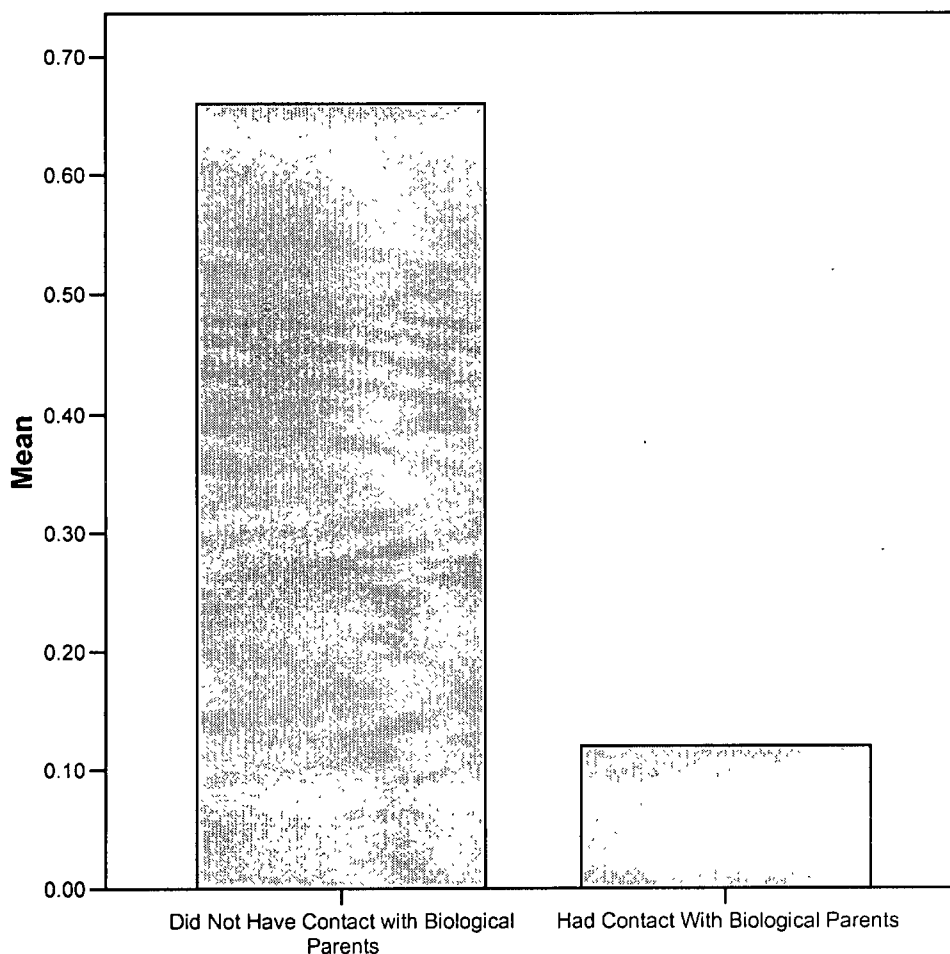


Figure 4.8 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on participants having contact with their biological parents.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and participants whose households have been on public assistance for any length of time ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 18.276$, $p < 0$). Seventy-one percent of participants whose households have been on public assistance were adjudicated, while 10% of participants who families have never been on

public assistance were adjudicated (see figure 4.9). This supports the hypothesis that adolescents from households that have been on public assistance such as welfare are more likely to be adjudicated.

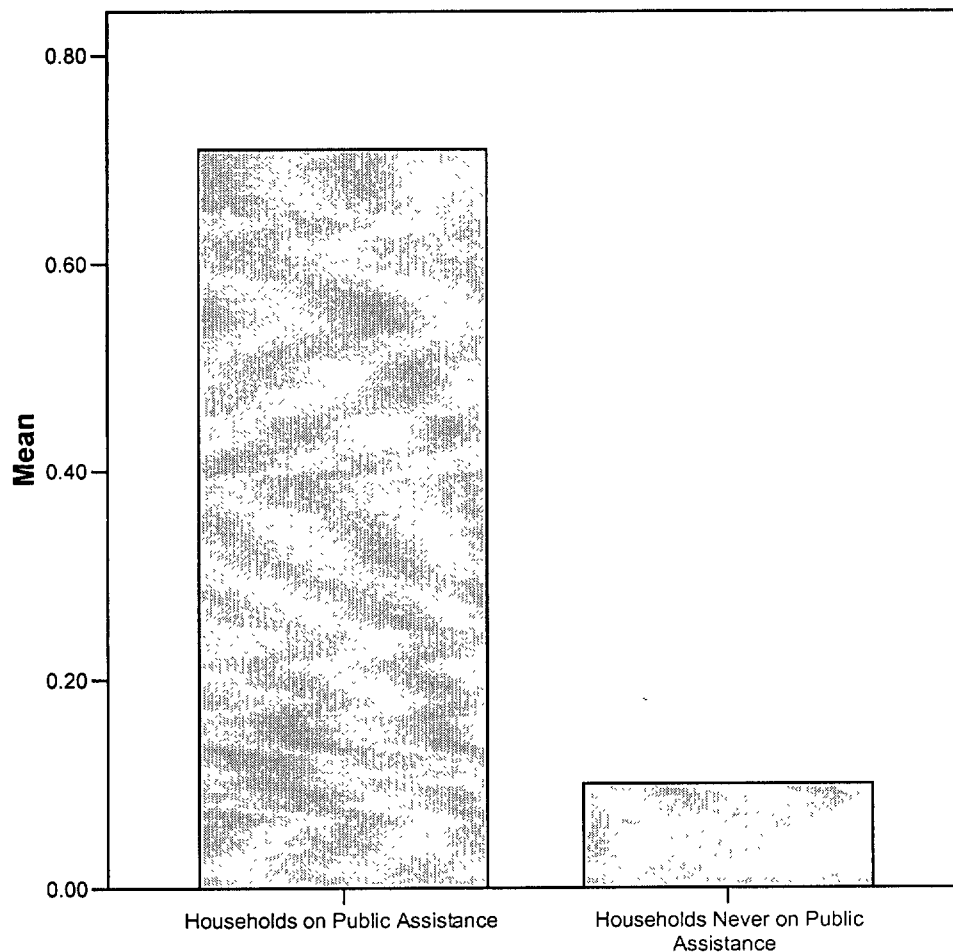


Figure 4.9 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on whether or not participants' household were on public assistance.

There was a significant relationship between being adjudicated and race ($\Psi^2_{(3)} = 17.023, p < .001$). Fifty percent of biracial participants were adjudicated and 50% of

biracial participants were not adjudicated. Thirty-three percent of African-American participants were adjudicated. Fifteen percent of Hispanic participants were adjudicated. Seven percent of Caucasian participants were adjudicated (see figure 4.10).

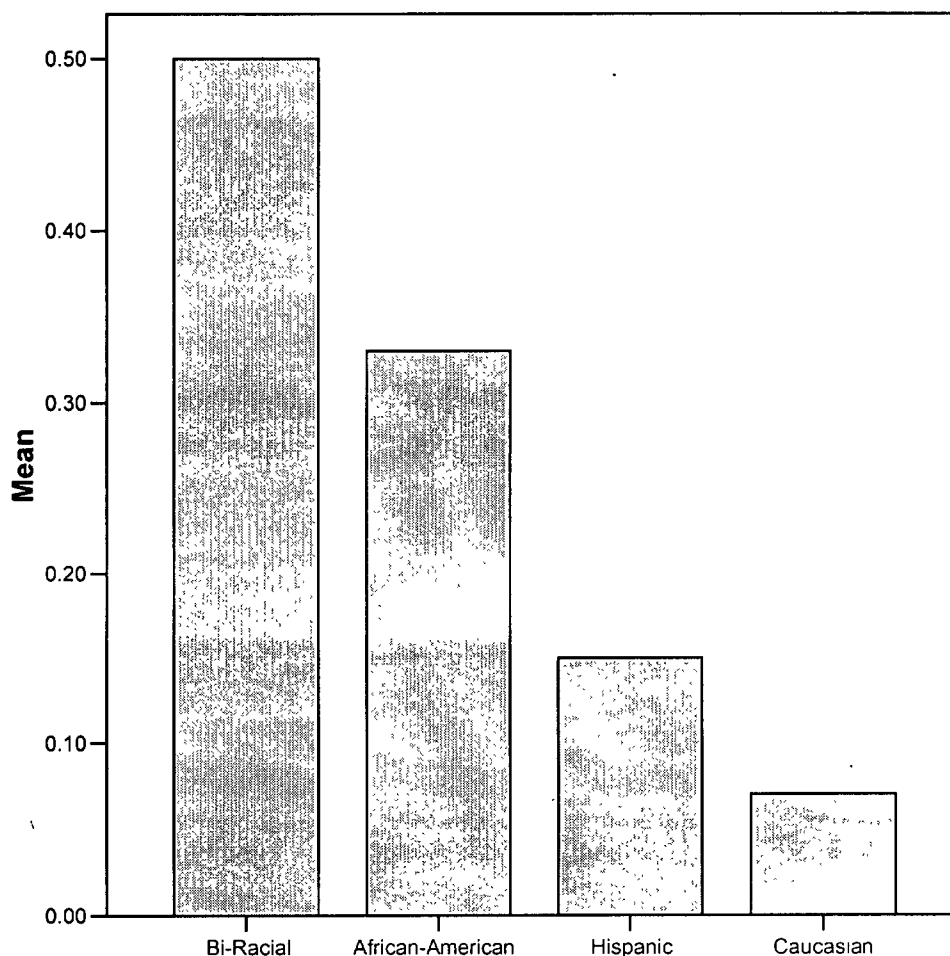


Figure 4.10 Percentage of participants adjudicated dependant on participant's race.

There was a significant relationship between committing a crime without getting arrested and participants whose legal guardians who worked full-time ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 9.130, p < .003$). Fifty-six percent of participants whose legal guardians worked full-time were adjudicated, while 0% of participants whose legal guardians did not work full-time were

adjudicated (see figure 4.11). Although these adolescents were not adjudicated, this does support the hypothesis that adolescents who receive little or no adult supervision are more likely to be adjudicated. These participants may not have been adjudicated, but they have participated in criminal activities.

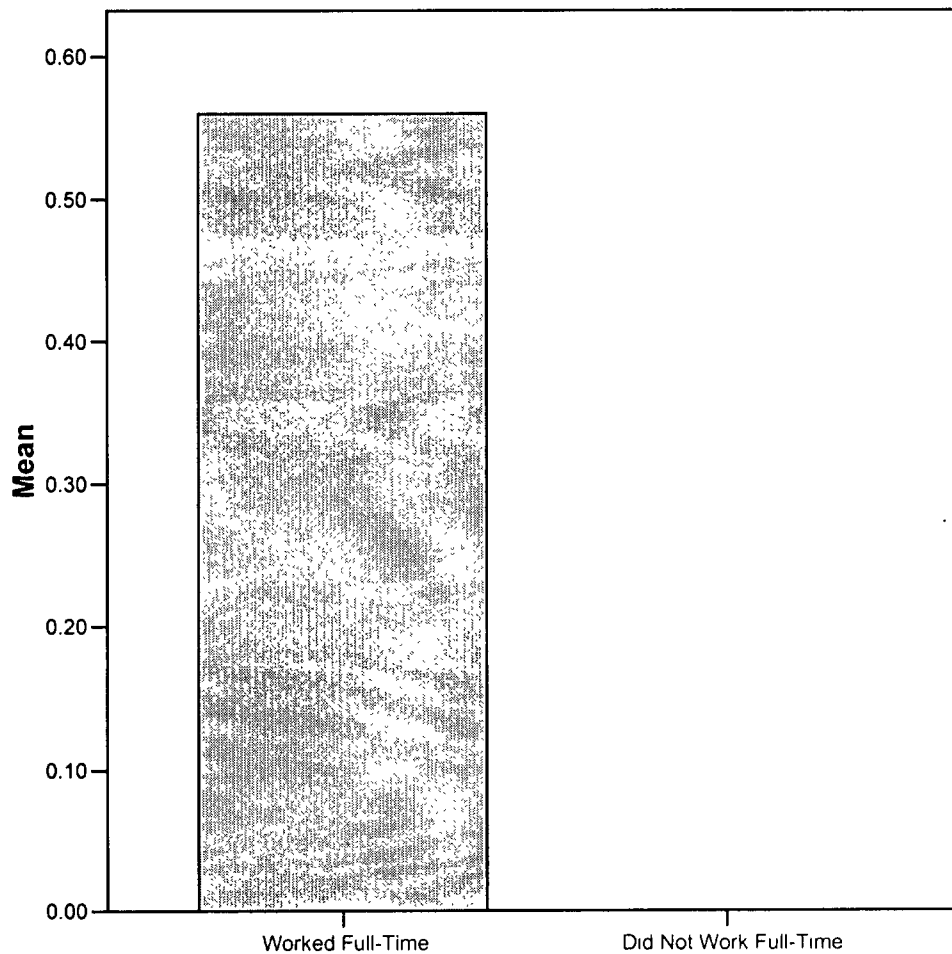


Figure 4.11 Percentage of participants who committed a crime without being arrested dependent on whether or not their legal guardians work full-time.

There was a significant relationship between committing a crime without getting arrested and participants whose biological parents were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol

($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 4.945, p < .026$). Seventy-six percent of participants whose biological parents were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol were adjudicated, while 46% of participants whose biological parents were not addicted to drugs and/or alcohol were adjudicated (see figure 4.12). Again, these participants did were not adjudicated, but they did participate in criminal activity. Therefore, this supports the hypothesis that adolescents who receive little or no adults supervision are more likely to be adjudicated.

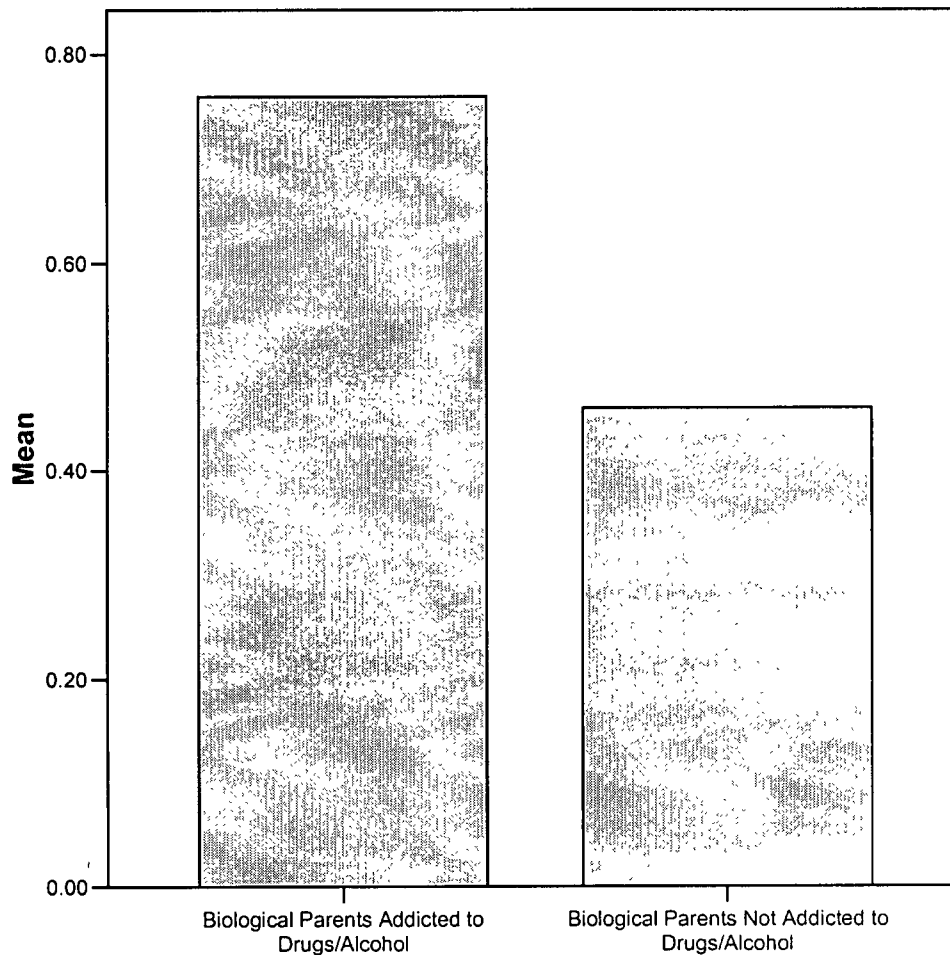


Figure 4.12 Percentage of participants who committed a crime without being arrested dependant on whether or not their biological parents are addicted to drugs/alcohol.

There was a significant relationship between committing a crime without getting arrested and participants who participated in extracurricular activities ($\Psi^2_{(1)} = 6.722, P = .010$). Sixty percent of participants who did participate in extracurricular activities were adjudicated, while 21% of participants who did not participate in extracurricular activities were adjudicated (see figure 4.13). This does not support the hypotheses of this study and actually contradict the current literature. Therefore, this variable should be reexamined to determine the validity of this analysis.

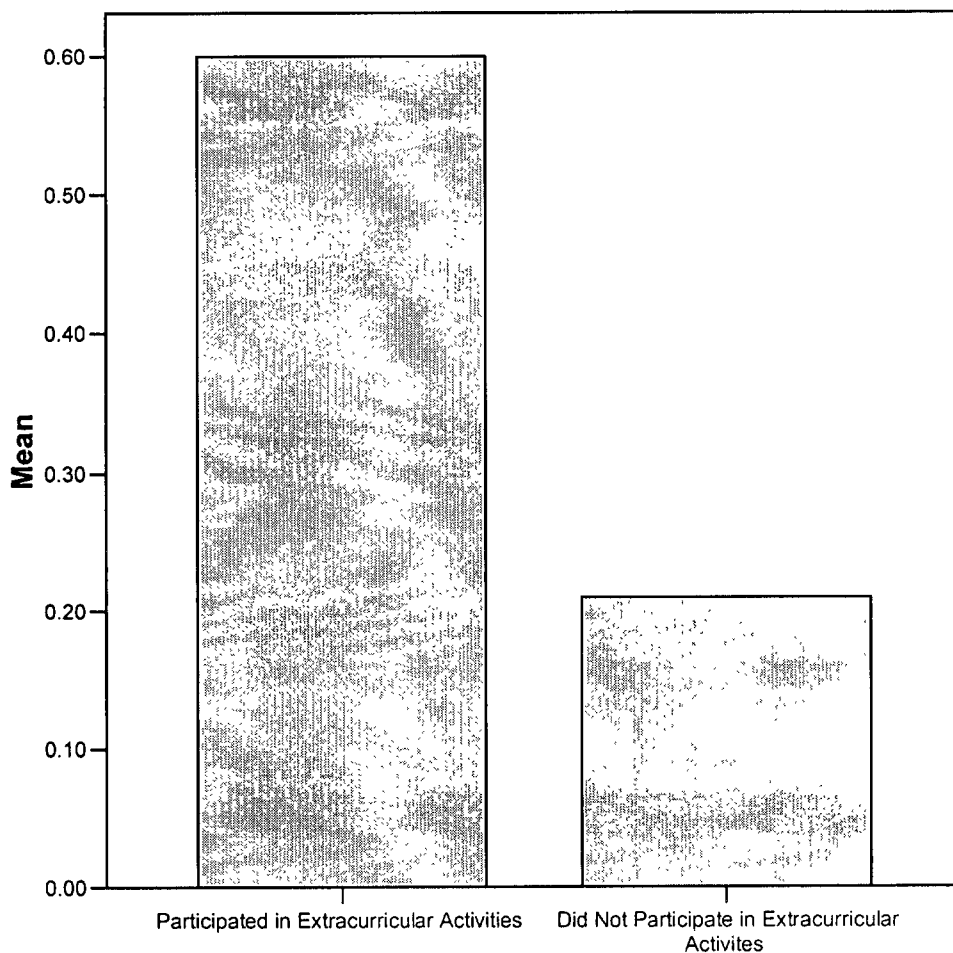


Figure 4.13 Percentage of participants who committed a crime without getting arrested dependant on whether or not they participate in extracurricular activities.

The scores on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) ranged from 1 to 26. The mean score was 12.96. This suggests that the participants in this study were likely responding honestly to the survey questions.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with the previous research on risk factors for juvenile delinquent behaviors. The results of this study offer much information for possible preventative techniques that parents and programs can offer, as well as a starting-off point for future research.

This study suggests that the involvement legal guardians take in the lives of their children is related to likelihood of adjudication. Seventy-two percent of legal guardians of participants who were in residential facilities did not respond to the letters, phone calls, or in-person requests for consent. Meanwhile, only a maximum of 16% of legal guardians from participants not in residential treatment did not respond to the letters requesting consent for participation. This suggests that parents the legal guardians of the participants in residential facilities are not involved with the day-to-day activities of their children. This lack of participation may also relate to a lack of discipline and supervision that allowed the adjudication to occur in the first place.

Households consisting of married, preferably biological, parents provide the best preventative environment adolescents. This may be related to the fact that these adolescents have frequent contact with the biological parents, which helps prevent adjudication. It may also be related to the fact that these adolescents experience less disruption in their households, which, as Smith et al. (1995) and Chamberlain (2003) state, is related to adjudication and deviant behaviors.

It is also important for adolescents to have positive relationships with their legal guardians. This may be due to the fact that these adolescents are least likely to disobey their parents, out of fear of disapproving them, or it may be related to the fact that these legal guardians provide more consistent discipline. As Petrocelli et al. (2003) consistent and proactive behavior management practices help decrease violent behaviors in adolescents.

The amount of supervision received from parents or legal guardians is related to adjudication and criminal activity. Adolescent whose biological parents have been convicted of a crime and whose biological parents were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol are more likely to be adjudicated. Also, adolescents whose legal guardians both work full-time are more likely to commit crimes without getting arrested. These findings suggest that supervision is critical for preventing adjudication and criminal behaviors, further supporting Petrocelli et al. (2003) and Munson and Estes (2002), who both state that parents who engage in shared leisure activities with adolescents and adequate communication help prevent criminal behavior.

This research suggests that providing parenting classes to at-risk populations that help parents foster positive examples and supportive, loving relationships may help prevent future adjudication. It is also important for adolescents to have supervision from a parent or guardian, other family, a friend's parent, or an after-school program. Regardless of who provides the supervision, it should be provided to help prevent participation in criminal activity.

This study has several caveats that may affect the results and that should be addressed in future research. The sample lacked external validity. The sample was small

and only representative of Camden County, New Jersey. Future research should expand the sample. Also, public schools were unwilling to participate in this study out of fear of offending parents. Therefore, part of the sample consisted of Catholic school students. Whatever motivated the guardians to send their children to a private school may be a factor that makes the participants more or less likely to participate in illegal activities. Finally in regards to the sample, the participants from Camden Catholic High School were chosen because they were currently enrolled in health or sociology classes. These classes were chosen because the curriculum was most related to the study. However, the fact that these students potentially have more knowledge on the subject matter may make them more or less likely to participate in illegal activities. Future research should control for these sample caveats.

Another caveat in this study was that obtaining permission from schools to participate in this study was very difficult, and thus made the sample small. As stated previously, the public schools that were asked to participate in this study refused out of fear of offending parents. The unwillingness of schools to cooperate in a descriptive study of this sort is a matter that could be addressed in research of its own. Also, future research, possibly some with more funding and credentials, may be able to overcome this problem and obtain different results.

This study adds to the current research regarding adolescent adjudication and deviant behaviors. The need to understand the causes and motivation of adolescent deviant behavior is crucial to understanding how to prevent it. Future research stemming from this study may be used to further understand the family-related risk-factors of adolescent adjudication and how parents and society may avoid them.

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Appendix 1

Survey

The following survey will be used for research purposes only. Please do not place your name, or any other identifying information on this survey sheet.

Thank you for your participation.

Part 1

1. Have you ever been arrested and/or convicted of a criminal offense? (if no, skip to #4)

Yes _____ No _____

2. If yes, how many times?

3. If yes, what type of criminal offense were you arrested for or convicted of? (Check all that apply)

Arson _____
Drug/Alcohol related offense _____
Family in Crisis (FIC) _____
Sex Crime (rape, molestation) _____
Theft/Shoplifting _____
Vandalism _____
Violent, nonsexual crime (assault, murder, attempted murder) _____
Other _____

4. Have you ever committed a criminal offense and not arrested or convicted? (if no, skip to #6)

Yes _____ No _____

5. If yes, what type of criminal offense did you commit?

Arson _____
Drug/Alcohol related offense _____
Family in Crisis (FIC) _____
Sex Crime (rape, molestation) _____
Theft/Shoplifting _____
Vandalism _____
Violent, nonsexual crime (assault, murder, attempted murder) _____
Other _____

6. Have you ever committed a criminal offense after, regardless of whether or not you have been arrested or convicted for the act, after being in a residential treatment facility, detention, or jail? (If no, skip to Part 2)

Yes _____ No _____

7. If yes, what type of criminal act did you commit?

Arson _____
Drug/Alcohol related offense _____
Family in Crisis (FIC) _____
Sex Crime (rape, molestation) _____

Theft/Shoplifting _____
Vandalism _____
Violent, nonsexual crime (assault, murder, attempted murder) _____
Other _____

Part 2

1. Who is your legal guardian(s)?

Biological Parents _____
Biological Mother _____
Biological Father _____
Adoptive Parents _____
Adoptive Mother _____
Adoptive Father _____
Other Biological Family Member(s)(please specify) _____
Other Adoptive Family Member(s)(please specify) _____
DYFS _____
Other (please specify) _____

2. Who do you live with?

Biological Parents _____
Biological Mother _____
Biological Father _____
Adoptive Parents _____
Adoptive Mother _____
Adoptive Father _____
Other Biological Family Member(s)(please specify) _____
Other Adoptive Family Member(s)(please specify) _____
DYFS _____
Residential Treatment Facility _____
Other (please specify) _____

3. What is the marital status of your biological parents?

Married _____
Separated _____
Divorced _____
Never married _____
Never married, but living together _____
Widowed _____

4. If your biological parent(s) are not your legal guardian, at what age did another person become your legal guardian? _____

5. For what reason did another person(s) become your legal guardian? (check all that apply)

- Biological Parents deceased _____
- Biological Mother deceased _____
- Biological Father deceased _____
- Biological Parents incarcerated _____
- Biological Mother incarcerated _____
- Biological Father incarcerated _____
- Biological Parents deemed unfit by court _____
- Biological Mother deemed unfit by court _____
- Biological father deemed unfit by court _____
- Biological parents willingly gave up guardianship _____
- Biological Mother willingly gave up guardianship _____
- Biological Father willingly gave up guardianship _____
- Unknown _____

6. What is the marital status of your legal guardians?

- Married _____
- Separated _____
- Divorced _____
- Never married _____
- Never married, but living together _____
- Widowed _____
- N/A _____

7. If your biological parent(s) are not your legal guardian, and are still alive, do you have contact with them?

- Yes _____ No _____

8. If yes, with who?

- Both Biological parents _____
- Biological Mother only _____
- Biological Father only _____

9. How often do you have contact with your biological parent(s)?

- Daily _____ Weekly _____
- Monthly _____ 3 months _____
- 6months _____ 9 months _____
- Yearly _____ Sporadically _____
- Never _____

10. Do you feel you have a positive relationship with your legal guardian?

Yes _____ No _____

11. Would other people say you have a positive relationship with your legal guardian?

Yes _____ No _____

12. Would your legal guardian say you have a positive relationship?

Yes _____ No _____

13. Does one or both of your legal guardian(s) work full-time?

Yes _____ No _____

14. When you come home from school, is there an adult present in the house? (if yes, skip to #18)

Yes _____ No _____

15. If no, how long are you home without adult supervision?

Less than one hour _____

One hour _____

Two hours _____

Three Hours _____

Four hours _____

More than four hours _____

16. If no, is someone else present in the house with you?

Yes _____ No _____

17. If yes, who is with you? (specify ages)

Sibling(s) _____

Other family member(s) _____

Friends _____

Boyfriend/girlfriend _____

Neighbor(s) _____

Other (please specify) _____

18. Have either of your biological parents ever been arrested for or convicted of a criminal offense? (If no, skip to #21)

Yes _____ No _____

19. If yes, who was arrested or convicted?

Both parents _____

Biological Mother _____

Biological Father _____

20. If yes, what criminal offense did your biological parent(s) commit? (Check all that apply)

Arson _____

Drug/Alcohol related offense _____
Family in Crisis (FIC) _____
Sex Crime (rape, molestation) _____
Theft/Shoplifting _____
Vandalism _____
Violent, nonsexual crime (assault, murder, attempted murder) _____

21. Is one or both of your biological parents a drug addict or alcoholic?

Yes _____ No _____

22. Has your legal guardian(s) ever been arrested for or convicted of a criminal offense?
(If your legal guardian is one or both of your biological parents skip to #25)

Yes _____ No _____

23. If yes, what criminal offense did your legal guardian(s) commit? (Check all that apply)

Arson _____
Drug/Alcohol related offense _____
Family in Crisis (FIC) _____
Sex Crime (rape, molestation, prostitution) _____
Theft/Shoplifting _____
Vandalism _____
Violent, nonsexual crime (assault, murder, attempted murder) _____
Unknown _____

24. Is your legal guardian(s) a drug addict or alcoholic?

Yes _____ No _____

25. What is the highest level of education completed by your biological mother?

Some High School _____
High School _____
Associates Degree _____
Bachelors Degree _____
Masters Degree _____
Doctoral Degree _____
Vocational Degree _____
Unknown _____

26. What is the highest level of education completed by your biological father?

Some High School _____
High School _____
Associates Degree _____
Bachelors Degree _____
Masters Degree _____
Doctoral Degree _____
Vocational Degree _____

Unknown _____

27. What is the highest level of education completed by your legal guardian(s)?

Some High School _____

High School _____

Associates Degree _____

Bachelors Degree _____

Masters Degree _____

Doctoral Degree _____

Vocational Degree _____

Unknown _____

N/A _____

28. Has your residence ever been on public assistance?

Yes _____ No _____

29. If yes, for how long?

Less than 1 year _____

1 year _____

2 years _____

3 years _____

4 years _____

5 years _____

More than 5 years _____

Part 3

1. What is your gender?

Female _____ Male _____

2. What is your age?

3. What is your race? (Check all that apply)

African-American _____

Asian _____

Caucasian _____

Hispanic _____

Indian _____

Middle Eastern _____

Native American _____

Pacific Islander _____

3. What type of school do you attend?

Charter _____

Home School _____

Public _____

Private/Religious _____

4. Do you participate in extracurricular activities?

Yes _____ No _____

5. If yes, how many hours a week do you spend participating in extracurricular activities?

Less than 5 _____

5-10 hours per week _____

10-15 hours per week _____

15-20 hours per week _____

More than 20 hours per week _____

6. What is your religion?

Agnostic _____

Atheist _____

Buddhist _____

Christian _____

Hindu _____

Jewish _____

Muslim _____

Mormon _____

Scientology _____

Spiritual, but not religious _____

Other (please specify) _____

7. Are you an active participate in your religion?

Yes _____ No _____ N/A _____

8. What is the socioeconomic status (SES) of your household?

Low _____

Medium _____

High _____

9. What type of neighborhood do you live in?

Urban _____

Suburban _____

Appendix 2

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

•

Directions: Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you.

T = TRUE

F=FALSE

- ___ 1. Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.
- ___ 2. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
- ___ 3. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.
- ___ 4. I have never intensely disliked anyone.
- ___ 5. On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.
- ___ 6. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
- ___ 7. I am always careful about my manner of dress.
- ___ 8. My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
- ___ 9. If I could get into a movie without paying for it and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.
- ___ 10. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
- ___ 11. I like to gossip at times.
- ___ 12. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
- ___ 13. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
- ___ 14. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.
- ___ 15. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
- ___ 16. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
- ___ 17. I always try to practice what I preach.
- ___ 18. I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud, obnoxious people.

T = TRUE

F=FALSE

- ___ 19. I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.
- ___ 20. When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it.
- ___ 21. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
- ___ 22. At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.
- ___ 23. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
- ___ 24. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.
- ___ 25. I never resent being asked to return a favor.
- ___ 26. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
- ___ 27. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.
- ___ 28. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
- ___ 29. I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.
- ___ 30. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.
- ___ 31. I have never felt that I was punished without a cause.
- ___ 32. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only get what they deserved.
- ___ 33. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.