



Council on Crime and Justice

# **The Juvenile Offender Study: A Retrospective Examination of Youth Offenders**

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**Prepared by the Council on Crime and Justice**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was undertaken to retrospectively examine the effects of the juvenile justice system on those juvenile offenders who did *not* go on to commit serious offenses as adults. In addition, this study uniquely examined what the juveniles themselves identified as having helped them avoid continued involvement in illegal activities. Furthermore, results of this study are compared with those of a past study from the year 2000 (which examined those juveniles who continued to offend as adults) in order to provide a more encompassing analysis of juvenile offenders and system interventions.

This study involved a sample of 25 males with juvenile delinquency histories. These males were also identified as having no serious adult crimes (felonies or gross misdemeanors) indicated on their records. Data were collected from both Court and Probation case files from Hennepin County in order to construct a more encompassing perspective of these juveniles. Variables included in the analysis involved family environments, criminal histories, chemical dependencies, school performances, and system responses (treatment, sentencing, and so forth). Quantitative analysis was limited; however, general descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation were employed to provide summaries of the overall patterns presented by the data. For instance, possible factors which may have served to help these individuals avoid further involvement in criminal activities include:

- Minimal involvement in drug related crimes coupled with minimal drug use
- Lack of weapon use during criminal acts
- Low school expulsion rates

The criminal histories of the juveniles in this study were comparable to those presented in the 2000 study. No significant differences were seen when examining dispositional outcomes and demographic factors (including race). However, it appears that this sample was less likely to be sentence to out-of-home placements and more likely to be placed in treatment (when compared to the previous 2000 study of those juveniles who continued to offend as adults). It also appears that both chemical dependency and psychological assessments were provided inconsistently to these juveniles.

Quantitative analysis was further expanded upon in a qualitative manner with a small sub-sample of in-depth interviews. These interviews generally consisted of open-ended questions concerning the role of the juvenile justice system, their education, family dynamics, and social support. Interestingly, all three of the juveniles interviewed expressed feelings of disenfranchisement from both the juvenile justice system and their treatment process. Therefore, they all indicated that the role of the juvenile system in their rehabilitation process was minimal. Instead, these juveniles looked to personal life changing events, extended family support, parenthood, and changed peer affiliations as having facilitated their now changed lives.

Recommendations resulting from this study primarily involve consistency in chemical dependency assessments, psychological assessments, and treatment placements. In addition, recommendations concerning peer affiliations, educational needs, and the development of individualized treatment opportunities are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken in response to a series of questions that arose from a 2000 research study conducted by the Council on Crime and Justice which examined juvenile offenders with serious adult criminal records. The 2000 study sought to identify and examine interventions with juvenile offenders whose criminal involvement continued into adulthood, in order to guide future policy decisions. Overall, the 2000 study identified delinquency amongst siblings, child maltreatment, early initiation of violent behavior, and habitual truancy as risk factors exhibited in the sample. Due to these and other findings, the report proposed three key recommendations: (1) the implementation of early interventions with high-risk children to specifically address various family risk factors, (2) an examination of the ability of the Court to become more family-centered, and (3) an evaluation of the role of both chemical and psychological assessments.

However, findings from the 2000 study were limited as there was no control group in which to compare results. Therefore, the current study sought to examine those juvenile offenders who did *not* go on to commit serious offenses as adults. This study's main tasks were to identify possible protective factors and examine the juvenile justice system's response by comparing results with those of the 2000 study. Specific questions to be considered included:

- What types of crimes did this sample commit as juveniles?
- Were multiple charges brought against these youth on a single petition? Does this depend on the type of crime that was committed?
- Were those juveniles who were habitually truant and/or struggled in school at an increased risk of committing more serious offenses?
- Which juveniles received psychological and/or chemical assessments? Were these assessments consistently provided to offenders?
- Does the positive relationship between age of onset and extent of criminal involvement hold true with this sample?
- What type of juveniles had petitions adjudicated, amended, or dismissed?
- What type of punitive and/or treatment centers were these juveniles sentenced to?
- What do these juveniles themselves identify as having protected them from future involvement in criminal activities?

These questions and others are discussed in more detail throughout the study. Section One provides a general summary of the existing literature concerning this topic. Section Two discusses data collection and methodology. Section Three reviews the results, and finally Section Four provides a conclusion and discussion of recommendations.

## SECTION ONE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on juvenile offenders encompasses a wide variety of paradigms. The research often examines the disparate number of minorities in the juvenile justice system as well as looking at the factors which may contribute to juvenile criminal activity. The family situation, the effect of peers and the transition to adulthood are all identified as factors contributing to delinquency. The literature also investigates how a juvenile's educational, mental and physical health may affect their criminal activity, as well as, comparing risk factors for adults to those of juveniles.

A trend throughout the literature concerning juvenile offender re-entry and recidivism focuses on the disproportionate representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system (Sullivan, 2004; JJC 2001; Bishop et al., 1996). According to the Juvenile Justice Coalition (2001), approximately 1 in 17 African American males will be incarcerated across the nation before reaching the age of 18. This is compared to 1 in 45 Latino males and 1 in 91 White males. This general pattern of racial disparity is further exhibited here in Minnesota. According to the Minnesota Department of Corrections (2002), 18.6% of the state's juvenile institutional population is American Indian while only 1.1% of the state's population is American Indian. Similarly, African American youth make up 17.7% of the state's juvenile institutional population although they represent only 3.5% of Minnesota's overall population. Latinos were 4.7% of the state's juvenile institutional population and only 2.9% of the state's population. These national and local figures clearly show a racial disparity within the juvenile justice system.

The family situation has been shown to have an impact on a whether a juvenile is likely to offend. According to Benda et al. (2001), adolescents who lived most of their lives with their biological parents in the same home had a 63.6% chance of re-offending. However, those adolescents who did not meet this criterion had an 82.9% chance of re-offending. To add to these figures, the rise in non-nuclear families in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2000) has many youth living in non-dual parent homes (Beck et al., 1988). The following gives a breakdown of the average institutionalized youths' family (Beck et al, 1998):

- 54% lived in a single parent family
- 10% lived with their grandparents
- 52% had at least one parent who had served time in prison or jail (25% had a brother or sister, 24% a father, 9% a mother, 13% another relative)
- 20% had two or more family members that had served time in prison or jail.

The preceding numbers not only show that the majority of institutionalized youth are from single parent families, but that they have also personally experienced the collateral effects of incarceration on their family. These studies suggest that the presence of a dual-parent home and the absence of criminal involvement within the family may assist in preventing an adolescent from criminal involvement.

In addition to the family environment, peer influence has also been identified as an important factor for juvenile offenders. An affiliation with deviant peers is strongly

associated with violent crime, property crime, alcohol abuse, cannabis abuse, and nicotine dependency (Fergusson et al., 2002). A longitudinal study by Fergusson and Horwood (1999) found that children with socially disadvantaged backgrounds and dysfunctional families have a higher risk of forming deviant peer affiliations. In addition, Warr (2005) found a strong association between the kinds of friends an adolescent makes and the type of parental supervision (direct or indirect). These studies demonstrate that monitoring who a youth's peers are may be a factor in preventing delinquency.

The developmental changes of committed youth and their transition of re-entering society are also currently key discussions in re-entry literature. According to Altschuler and Brash (2004), a developmental transition takes place during adolescent and teen years. This transition from childhood to adulthood, coupled with the transition of re-entering into the community from a correctional facility, is known as the "double transition" (Altschuler and Brash, 2004 p. 72). For instance, one key developmental transition that occurs and is considered by some to be a protective factor for re-entry juveniles is the formation of relationships. According to Sullivan (2004), courtship, intimate relationships, and parenthood, are important for the development of adolescents to young adults. Although early unplanned parenthood is often associated with educational problems and delinquency (Lerman, 1993), the normative act of having an intimate partner and children, if done successfully, has been associated with individual pride and community approval (Sullivan, 2004).

Education is considered by many researchers as an important factor to successful reentry. School involvement is thought of as a "master social status", affecting everything youth do, including their social relationships (Sullivan, 2004). For instance, learning disabilities occur at a higher rate among juvenile offenders and have therefore been identified as a significant risk factor (Brier, 1989; Morrison and Cosden, 1997). On the other hand, Cotle et al. (2001) found that neither school attendance nor reports of academic achievement were significant predictors of recidivism. This research suggests that there are risk factors involving education; however, all variables related to school and education cannot uniformly be thought of as associated with criminal involvement.

However, there is association between the education needs of institutionalized youth and their recidivism. White (2002) argues that little attention is given to the educational needs of institutionalized youth. Wilson (1994) gives vocational programs as an example. The recidivism rates for those who were enrolled versus those who were not enrolled in a vocational program were 51.2% and 78.3% respectively. Wilson recommended that vocational programs (which require mandatory participation and are under the supervision of educational authorities) should be offered to all institutionalized youth.

The impact of physical and mental health problems of juvenile offenders is also important discussions in the literature; although, the current knowledge of mental health issues among young offenders is inadequate (Sullivan, 2004). According to the Columbus Children's Research Institute (2004) institutionalized juveniles show higher rates of substance abuse, acute illnesses, sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies, and psychiatric disorders than the general population. This shows that having a physical

and/or mental health problem may be regarded as a risk factor for juvenile offenders and research suggests that proper treatment may create resiliency among youth offenders.

There is also debate concerning the importance of employability within the juvenile offender population. While employment with regard to adults is associated with lower recidivism (Uggen, 2000) the effects of employment on juvenile offender recidivism rates is unclear. Uggen and Piliavin (1998) maintain that while employment decreases recidivism in adults, unemployment does not necessarily trigger criminal activity in juveniles. In essence, the absence of risk factors associated with continued adult criminal activity cannot always be seen as preventative assets for juveniles.

While much of the literature revolves around the importance of preventative factors in reducing delinquency and recidivism, applying this knowledge is rather difficult. According to Shader (2003), “one question confronting those who would develop delinquency prevention programs based on risk factor research is whether a given risk factor can be easily changed [i.e. socioeconomic status]” (p. 8). Minimizing the risks and increasing the preventative factors of juveniles appears to be a difficult endeavor in that successful re-entry must include programs that target the entire individual, their competencies, their family, and their community (Spencer and Jones-Walker, 2004).

Understanding transitional challenges and how they affect communities, peers, and families are of importance to the development of comprehensive correctional programs and policies. For instance, academics maintain that focus should be placed on programs which specifically address the double transition, in particular, increase educational and work opportunities. These programs are thought to help youth transition developmentally and ease the re-entry experience. However, it is important to note that it is currently argued that the double transition is made more difficult by various institutional philosophies of the juvenile justice system (Altschuler and Brash, 2004).

While this review briefly outlined the research involving juvenile recidivism and those factors which could lead an offender to cease and desist criminal activity (such as family structures, peer affiliations, education and mental health), there is little research which tests these factors against one another. Which factors are the most protective and, more importantly, what do youth themselves identify as risk factors? Research addressing these questions would not only help with the development of juvenile offender literature but would also give policy makers a more comprehensive perspective of the problems faced by juveniles upon re-entry.



## SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

The Juvenile Offender Study's primary goal was to investigate interventions and experiences that may have played a role in the discontinuation of criminal behavior among serious youth offenders as they enter adulthood. This study is exploratory in design, without a true dependent variable in the sense that only one outcome was investigated, the absence of serious adult criminal activity. A previous study conducted by the Council, in 2000, explored the converse of this group, those who continued their path of serious felonious crimes. As this study is not aimed at determining causal inference, selection on the outcome does not pose a problem. Rather, it is an exploratory study intended to learn more about the experiences of this somewhat unusual group of individuals, those with a rough start who have steered away from their path of criminal behavior. The purpose was to explore system and individual related factors that may have influenced the turn in behavior. To be able to move to assumptions about what caused a behavior change, follow-up work would be necessary with a quasi-experimental design.

The methodological approach needed to meet this goal entailed a fairly involved sampling process, followed by a three-stage data collection process and finally both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

### *Sampling*

Locating an appropriate sample for the study proved to be complicated, largely because we sought to identify young adults with a juvenile criminal history who did not have adult criminal records. The sampling criteria required that the individuals must be:

- Male
- 15 to 17 years old in the year 2000 and at the time of their offense
- Adjudicated delinquent for a felony offense heard in the Hennepin County District Court during 2000.
- Have no adult gross misdemeanor or felony offenses in Minnesota by the time of data collection in 2004 (adult misdemeanor offenses were included in the study).

There were two substantial obstacles to overcome in order to meet these criteria: (1) information had to be gathered on individuals across two different data systems, juvenile and adult, that were not integrated and did not use the same ID coding, and (2) the adult sample needed to be identified through the *absence* of records. To accomplish this, we conducted a five-stage sampling process:

1. Used the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) system to establish the sampling frame: identified Hennepin County males who were 15 to 17 years old in 2000 *and* were convicted of a felony offense as a juvenile in the year 2000. There were 166 matches that the BCA were able to identify.
2. Collected Minnesota Supreme Court adult felony 2004 data. Searched for matches between these records and the juvenile BCA records on name, race, birth date, and aliases. We then removed all matches.

3. Collected Minnesota Supreme Court adult misdemeanor 2004 data. Matched the misdemeanor records with the felony records to determine who among the misdemeanor group should be removed because they also had a felony conviction. Removed gross misdemeanor convictions.
4. Identified two groups from the original sample of 166 with no felony charges: 30 individuals with adult misdemeanor charges or convictions and 21 with no adult charges or convictions of any kind in Minnesota.
5. Reviewed files. This was actually part of the data collection, but, as anticipated, many of the 51 individuals identified (in #4 above) were eliminated because:
  - No court or probation paper records indicated a juvenile felony offense
  - A different birth date was found that did not meet the age criteria
  - Assignment to Extended Juvenile Jurisdiction lasting into early adulthood occurred and consequently limited future opportunities to commit other crimes
  - Certification into the adult system occurred and limited future opportunities to commit other crimes.

The remaining sample size was 25. While this may seem quite small as it comprises only 15% of the original sampling frame, it is not surprising when considering that most youth do not commit a felony in isolation, as was demonstrated in the data collection progressed. Rather, it is more typically a steady progression of criminal behavior that increases in both frequency and severity. In essence, the passage into adulthood alone is not enough to interrupt this cycle for most individuals.

### ***Data Collection***

Data collection occurred in three stages, taking the form of both quantitative administrative file reviews as well as qualitative in-person interviews. The first two stages involved administrative data collection, and the third was in-person interviews. Two sources were used for administrative data collection: (1) juvenile court records and (2) juvenile probation records. Both sources were used to confirm the basic demographic information already provided by the BCA and some additional information about the youth's family.

The file review process proved to be an enormous undertaking. The probation files in particular were extensive, many four inches thick or more. While the relative order of documents was similar across files, it could not be counted on to locate key documents. Additionally, incomplete information (e.g., treatment start dates but no exit dates or ordered assessments with no associated report) and contradictory information were common.

Juvenile court records provided detailed information on all petitions and hearings. The petitions documented the offenses the youth was charged with, when they occurred and a description of the offense. The dispositional hearing documents revealed which offenses were dismissed, amended, or led to the youth being adjudicated delinquent for the stated charges. The hearing statements indicated the judge's orders for punitive or treatment

actions. Also in these files were indicators that the youth had received psychological and/or chemical dependency assessments.

While the court records were helpful in providing information on what the youth was ordered to do in terms of treatment, sentence-to-serve (STS), placement, electronic home monitoring, or other orders, these records did not present the complete picture needed to answer the research question. For example, they did not state whether or not the youth actually followed through with the orders, if they received treatment when it began and how long it lasted, and if the outcome was positive (e.g. successful completion) or negative (e.g., they ran away). Finally, while the orders for assessments were in the court records, the assessment reports themselves were often not (limiting our ability to review the impact of assessments).

All the papers in each file were examined to some degree, though more focus was given to the summons form, disposition orders, pre-sentences investigation reports, treatment program progress and discharge reports, and assessments from chemical dependency counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and child guidance specialists when available.

The juvenile probation records provided the needed follow-up information, more information on the youth's family, and often held assessment reports. The probation files gave detailed accounts of the youth's regularity of attendance at probation meetings, progress reports from residential or outpatient treatment, compliance with STS, as well as school attendance and parent statements on home behavior.

Finally, we sent letters to all of the 25 young adults requesting an interview concerning their experiences with the juvenile justice system and its impact on them. A stipend was offered of \$25. Not surprisingly, most of the addresses were no longer valid as youth had long since moved. However, three individuals responded and were interviewed. This will be described in detail below.

### ***Variables***

Extensive arrays of variables were collected through the administrative files. Charged offense, convictions, family, and sentenced interventions were obtained through the court files. Specific data collected on delinquent behavior included offense charged, offense adjudicated, hearing outcome, and disposition. Any placement recommendations were also noted. All types of program placements were examined, including, day treatment, chemical, psychological, correctional, and out of home placements. Program data collection focused on the length of the placement and outcomes. Results of psychological, chemical, or educational assessments were also noted along with the date of such assessments. A complete list of the variables collected appears in Appendix A.

It was unclear through the court files what interventions the juvenile ultimately attended and whether or not the juvenile successfully completed the intervention. Also, some of the family, school, and chemical/mental health information was incomplete or contradictory. We then turned to probation files in order to fill in the incomplete or inconsistent data from the court files. However, even upon merging these two data sets,

in order to decrease missing data, certain variables were still left largely unreported or incomplete.

Child Protection Services (CHIPS) Files were also examined for those juveniles who had CHIPS cases. Those files were examined to find information that was not included in the court or probation file. For the most part it was simply noted on the juvenile's file that they at one time had a CHIPS case.

## **Qualitative Interviews**

The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to learn former juvenile offender's perspectives on what they believed were helpful interventions to preventing them from committing further crimes as an adult. The interviews focused not only on interventions with the juvenile justice system, but also interventions outside of the system. The interviews also afforded us the opportunity to learn if there were any familial and/or other personal life-changing events that may have contributed to the cessation of criminal behavior.

### ***Interview Sample***

The interviews were conducted with a subset of samples used for the administrative data collection. The participants who were juveniles in the quantitative portion were now young adults and no longer in the juvenile or adult system. Juvenile probation provided us with last known addresses of the juveniles based on what address was on their driver's license. Letters were sent to those addresses. Those who did not have driver's licenses or a known address were searched on the internet through different search engines. There was no noticeable feature that would describe all three interview participants beyond the initial sampling criteria. They all had very different stories to share, and different life experiences, though, as will be described in the findings sections, there were some commonalities in terms of factors that may have contributed to their adult life outside the justice system.

### ***Interview Format***

The interview format was loosely structured to both ensure a few key questions were answered regarding (1) their views on their juvenile justice experiences and thoughts on their lives since then, and (2) to allow for other unanticipated information to be disclosed. The participants appeared to be quite comfortable sharing information once we assured them of their privacy and the confidentiality of information. Through these interviews, we learned what they thought of their treatment and consequence activities, their probation officers, and their perceptions of their own motivations for their behavior. In particular, they were very insightful about what motivated them to start a different trajectory as young adults, personally, spiritually, and from family influence.

## SECTION THREE: RESULTS

This section outlines the results of our analysis and is divided into four parts. Part one describes the basic demographics and family environments of the sample. Parts two and three contain quantitative analysis of variables relating to the petition and dispositional information. In these two sections criminal history, family factors, chemical use, court responses, and sentencing are discussed. Part four contains the results of qualitative in-depth interviews used to enhance and expand upon the findings from our quantitative analysis. Comparisons between this study and the 2000 examination of those juvenile's who went on to offend as adults are provided when applicable.

It is important to keep three points in mind when interpreting the descriptive statistics and results. First, the sample size of 25 is small. Second, we do not have a control group of similarly situated juvenile who were *not* involved with the juvenile justice system. In other words, this study did not examine the juvenile lives of young adults who had never committed a criminal offense. Finally, there were many instances where information on particular variables was simply not reported consistently. For instance, information concerning the disposition of offenses was particularly inconsistent. The dispositional outcome of petitions was only available, on average, 54% of the time. In other words, for each juvenile in the sample an average of 46% of the dispositional information was not recorded in the files (ranging from a minimum of 20% to a maximum of 75%). In research it is expected that data is found missing during data collection due to human error. However, this error generally constitutes 1-3%. Therefore, this large percentage of missing data cannot be merely attributed to data collection practices and human error, but is also a product of inconsistent record keeping in probation and court files.

### DISCRIPTIVE DEMOGRAPHICS

Although the sample was small, the juveniles nonetheless presented diverse demographic backgrounds (See Table 1). The majority of the sample was Caucasian (40%) and African American (36%) although there were also individuals who identified as Asian, Bi-Racial, Native American, and Latino. It is important to note, that this sample contains a higher percentage of Caucasians than the 2000 study (40% verses 26%). This may indicate that Caucasians, due to elevated social status and increased resources, may experience lower rates of re-offending. However, proper analysis of this observation is not within the scope of this research study.

Family information was limited as many variables concerning these juveniles' parents were not consistently reported (as shown in Table 1). However, we can glean from those few cases in which information was provided, that these juveniles may have been slightly less likely to have absentee fathers, chemically dependent parents, and parents with criminal histories when compared to the results from the 2000 study. For instance, in this sample 48% of the juveniles' fathers were present which is slightly higher than the 40% reported in the 2000 study. Additionally, chemical dependency problems were reported for 8% of this sample's mothers and 16% of the fathers. When compared to the 2000 study these figures appear to be small, as the previous study reported 40% of the mothers and 43.3% of the fathers were chemically dependent. In the 2000 study we reported that

parental criminal activity was low, yet in comparison to *this* sample (of juveniles who did not go on to offend as adults) it is markedly higher. For instance, in the previous study from 2000, reported father and mother criminal involvement was 23.3% and 13.3% respectively. These figures are significantly higher than the 4.0% father and mother criminal involvement exhibited by this sample. It appears that parental criminal involvement may have been more influential than previously thought, when compared to results of the 2000 study.

**Table 1 : Descriptive Demographics**

<b>Race</b>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<b>Mother Ever Arrested</b>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Caucasian	10	40	Yes	1	4
African American	9	36	No	6	24
Asian	2	8	Blank, Not Reported	18	72
Biracial	2	8	Total	25	100
Latino	1	4			
Native American	1	4			
Total	25	100	<b>Mother Chemical Use</b>		
				<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>Father Present</b>			Yes	2	8
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	No	6	24
Yes	12	48	Blank, Not Reported	17	68
No	6	24	Total	25	100
Blank, Not Reported	7	28			
Total	25	100	<b>Father/Significant Male Chemical Use</b>		
				<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>Father/Significant Male Ever Arrested</b>			Yes	4	16
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	No	2	18
Yes	1	4	Blank, Not Reported	19	76
No	4	16	Total	25	100
Blank, Not Reported	20	80			
Total	25	100			

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

As the sample was small, statistical analysis was limited. Therefore, the research team's approach to analysis was to examine general patterns. Supportive charts and tables are provided throughout these sections.

### Petition Data

The male juveniles in this sample present very diverse criminal offense histories. For instance, many of these individuals were involved in multiple types of crimes during their

adolescents (i.e. crimes against a person, property offenses, status offenses, drug charges, etc.) and had more than one felony offense on their record. For a comprehensive list of the petitions filed and frequencies see Appendix B. Furthermore, the average number of petitions filed against a juvenile was slightly over eight (see Chart 1). This average is identical to that reported in the 2000 study, suggesting that the extent of criminal involvement between these two samples is comparable. In general, they became involved in criminal activities early on as the average age at their first court date was approximately thirteen (see Chart 2). Again, this figure is comparable to the 2000 study, which reported 14 as the average age of onset. Additionally, fifteen of these juveniles had chemical use reported in their record (60%).

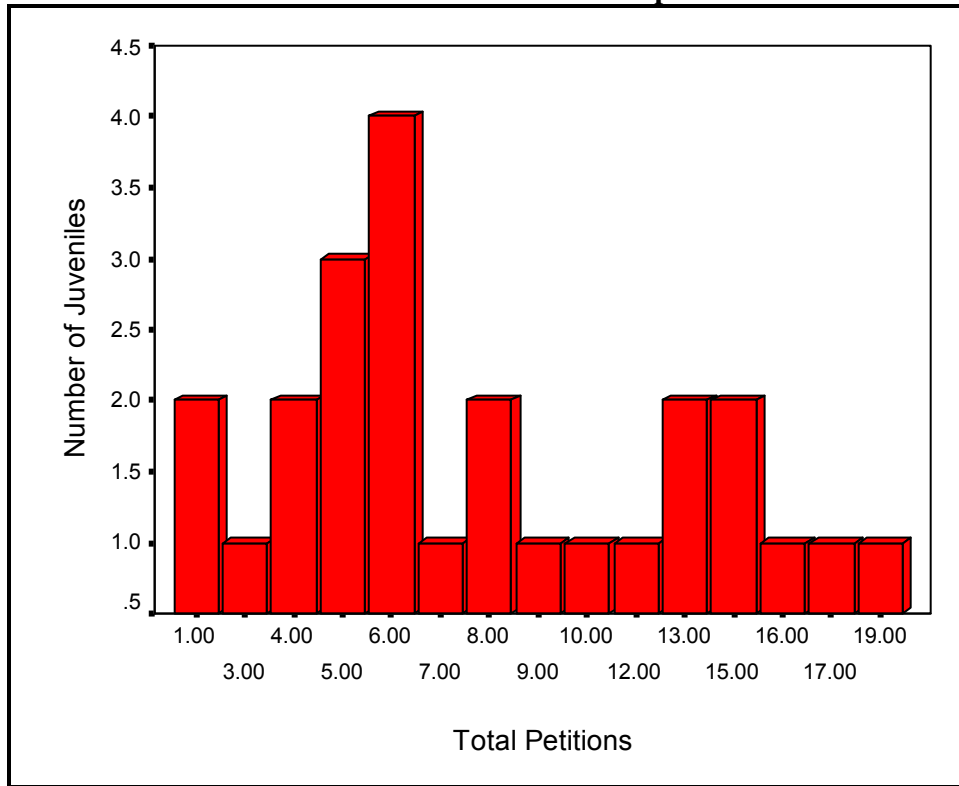
However, given the overall extensive criminal histories, young onset of problematic behavior, and drug use presented by these cases, there are many apparent trends that seem to have protected these juveniles from involvement in serious criminal activities as adults. For instance, the following factors may have been protective in nature to the individuals in this sample and are discussed in more detail below.

- Minimal Involvement in Drug Related Crimes coupled with Minimal Drug Use
- Lack of Weapon Use During Criminal Acts
- Low School Expulsion Rates

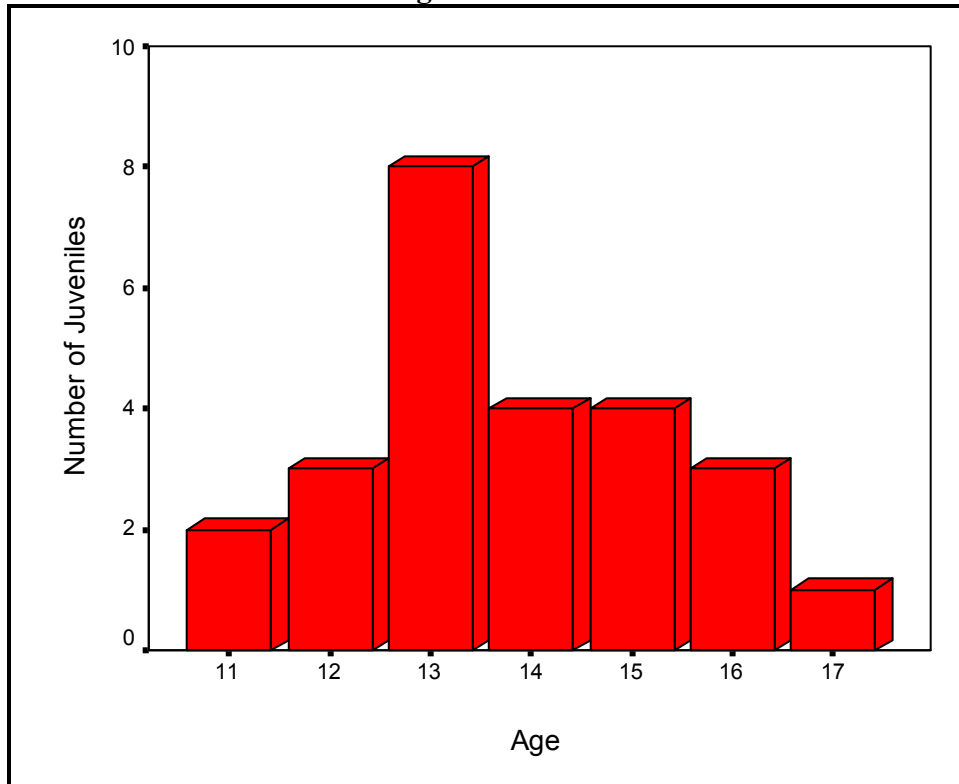
As reported in the 2000 Juvenile Offender Study, weapon use was found to be a risk factor associated with continued criminal activity. This finding is further supported by the examination of this sample of juveniles who did not go on to offend as adults, as only seven of the twenty-five had weapons use reported in their files (28%, See Table 2). However, upon close examination of their records it appears that five of the seven did not actually *use* a weapon during a criminal act, but rather were charged with possession of a weapon on school property. Given that schools nationwide have broadened safety statutes to include more items within the definition of a weapon (in response to heightened concern of juvenile crime on school campuses) these charges may not have actually involved guns or knives, but may rather be the result of possession of a lesser weapon, such as a pocket knife. Overall, it appears that only two out of twenty-five actually used a weapon during their involvement in criminal activities (8%).

Furthermore, a very small percentage of the petitions filed against these juveniles involved drugs. For instance, only eight out of the twenty-five juveniles were charged with an offense related to drugs (representing only 7.94% of the overall petitions filed, See Tables 2 and 3). These charges generally involved possession of marijuana (only one individual was arrested for loitering with intent to sell narcotics) suggesting that while these juveniles did use drugs they were generally not involved with distribution and did not consume more serious substances (such as heroin or cocaine). In fact, the only controlled substance mentioned within these juveniles' records was marijuana. These findings indicate that these juveniles were not heavily involved with drug distribution and appeared to consume a drug that is considered to be more minor than others.

**Chart 1 – Total Number of Petitions per Juvenile**



**Chart 2 – Age at First Court Data**





**Table 2: Criminal History**

<b>Status Petitions</b>			<b>Ever Expelled From School</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	20	80.0	Yes	2	8.0
No	5	20.0	No, Not Reported	23	92.0
Total	25	100.0	Total	25	100.0
<b>Property Petitions</b>			<b>Weapons Involved</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	22	88.0	Yes	7	28.0
No	3	12.0	No, Not Reported	18	72.0
Total	25	100.0	Total	25	100.0
<b>Person Petitions</b>			<b>Received Chemical Dependency Assessment</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	17	68.0	Yes	4	16.0
No	8	32.0	No, Not Reported	21	84.0
Total	25	100.0	Total	25	100.0
<b>Other Petitions</b>			<b>Drug Use on Record</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	15	60.0	Alcohol	2	13.3
No	10	40.0	Marijuana	6	40.0
Total	25	100.0	Marijuana & Alcohol	3	20.0
<b>Drug Petitions</b>			<b>Received Psychological Assessment</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	8	32.0	Yes	8	32.0
No	17	68.0	No, Not Reported	17	68.0
Total	25	100.0	Total	25	100.0
<b>All of Above Types of Petitions</b>			<b>Medication on Record</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	4	16.0	Yes	4	50.0
No	21	84.0	No	4	50.0
Total	25	100.0	Total	8	100.0
<b>Learning Disability Reported</b>			<b>Age of First Court Date</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>			
Yes	10	40.0	Range	11-17	
No, Not Reported	15	60.0	Mean	13.72	
Total	25	100.0	Median	13.00	
			Standard Deviation	1.59	

**Table 3 – Petition Descriptions**

<b>Total Number of Petitions (N=214)</b>		<b>Type of Petition (N=214)</b>		
<i>Range</i>	1-19	<i>Status</i>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Mean</i>	8.56	<i>Property</i>	67	31.31
<i>Median</i>	7.0	<i>Person</i>	57	26.63
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	5.1	<i>Other</i>	46	21.50
		<i>Drugs</i>	27	12.62
		<i>Total</i>	17	7.94
			214	100.0
<b>Counts per Petition</b>		<b>Total Number of Counts Across All Petitions (N=271)</b>		
<i>Range</i>	1-7	<i>Range</i>	1-26	
<i>Mean</i>	1.26	<i>Mean</i>	10.84	
<i>Median</i>	1.25	<i>Median</i>	8.0	
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	.28	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	7.24	

In addition, these juveniles were not expelled from school as often as one would perhaps think. For instance, only two juveniles were expelled (8%, See Table 2). However, that is not to say that these youth did not experience difficulties in school. For instance, thirteen of the twenty-five had irregular school attendance and/or truancy problems (52%). Three were reported to have aggressive behavior, two were failing or significantly behind in course work and three had past suspensions. Ten had learning disabilities reported in their records (40%, See Table 2). This indicates that although these adolescents were not model students and appeared to have struggled in school; their behavior did not often escalate to the point that they were expelled.

When compared to the 2000 study it is apparent that both samples struggled significantly in school and were habitually truant. However, in the 2000 study over 53% of the juveniles had been expelled at one time. This figure is much higher than that exhibited within this sample (8%). This further suggests that while these children nonetheless had difficulties in school, they were not as likely to be expelled as those youth offenders that continued to offend as adults.

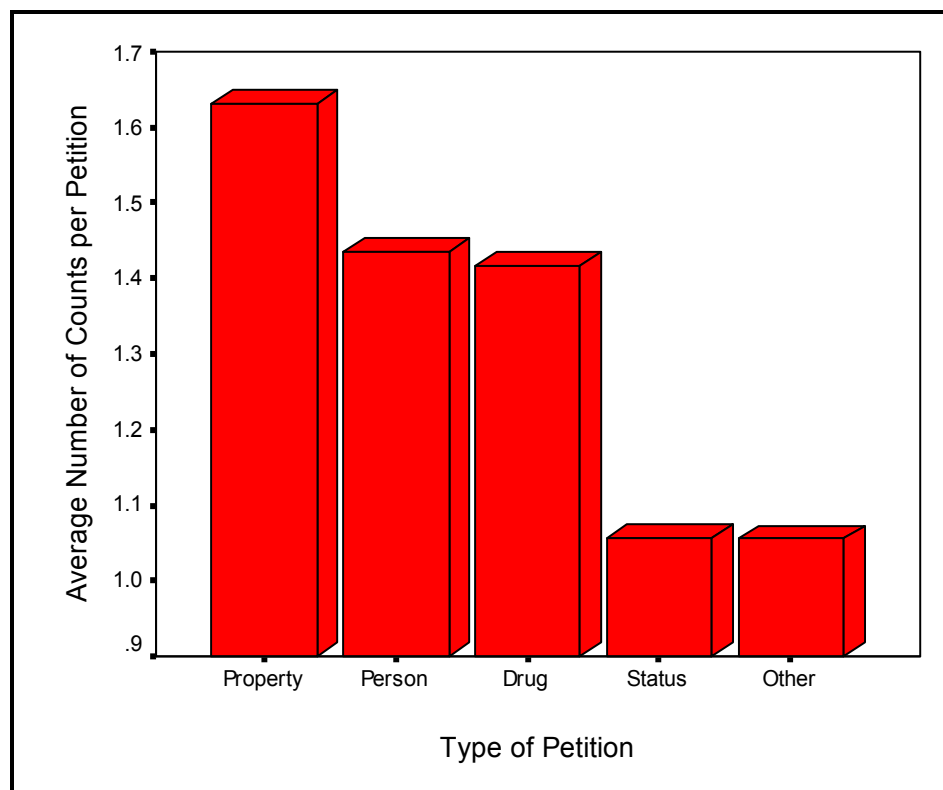
***Other Findings of Interest***

Overall, it appears that psychological and chemical dependency assessments were inconsistently given to youth offenders. For instance, using cross-tabulation there was no apparent relationship between those who committed crimes involving drugs and chemical dependency assessments. Only one of the eight individuals that had a drug related petition received a chemical dependency assessment. On the other hand, those who had a chemical assessment also tended to have a psychological assessment, so there was a slight relationship between the two assessments themselves. Furthermore, when cross-tabulating the number of petitions that each offender accrued and if they received a psychological assessment it appears that there is a slightly positive association. In other

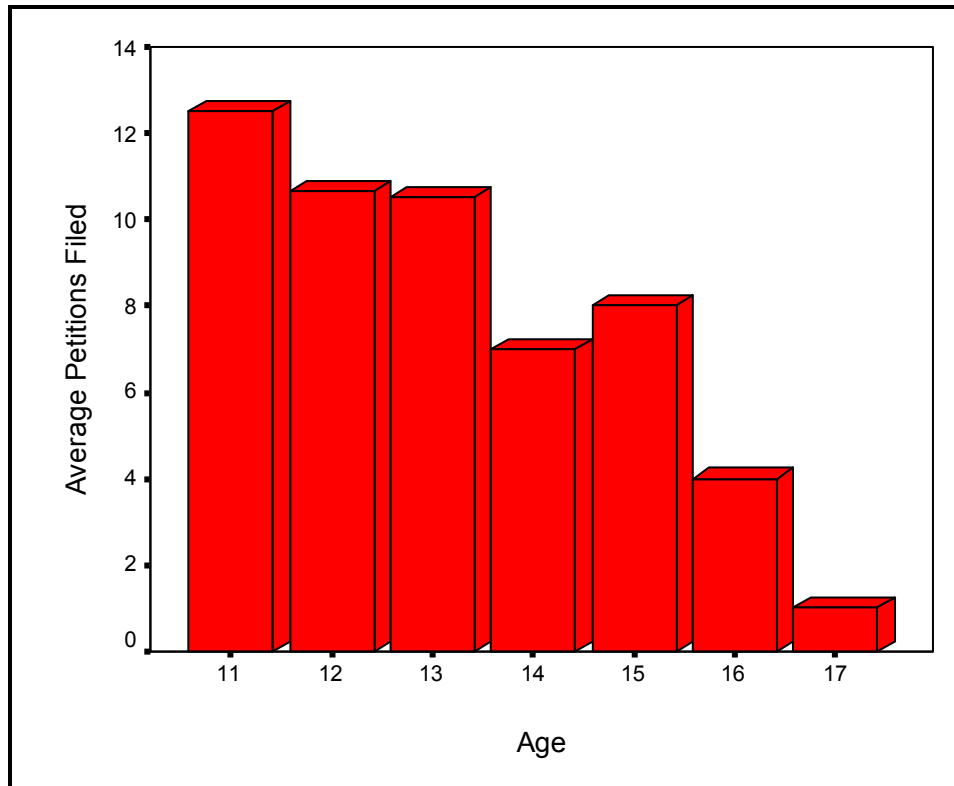
words, those offenders that had more extensive criminal histories were slightly more likely to receive a psychological assessment. However, even given this association there were exceptions. For instance, one juvenile who had only one petition on his record, involving theft, was given a psychological assessment while another individual that had fifteen petitions on his record did not. In addition, there was little evidence of a relationship between those that committed violent crimes against a person and psychological assessments, as only a little over half of those that had committed a crime against a person received an assessment. Overall, this suggests that assessments are not consistently provided.

When examining petition data, a pattern appears indicating that the lesser the crime the fewer the counts involved with the petition (See Chart 3). Status offenses and other crimes (which typically involved disorderly conduct or other misdemeanor charges) were likely to involve only one count. However, when compared to more serious offenses, such as crimes against a person, the rate of counts per petition jumps substantially to almost two counts per petition. This pattern could indicate any number of things. For instance, police officers and prosecutors may be more likely to “throw the book” at those juveniles who commit serious offenses and use everything they can to fully punish the given individual. On the other hand, when committing more serious offenses a juvenile may be more likely to violate more laws.

**Chart 3 – Counts per Petition Based on Type of Crime**



**Chart 4 – Age of Onset**



The data also indicates a relationship between the age of onset for problematic behavior and the extensiveness of criminal histories (See Chart 4). As expected, we see that the earlier the juveniles become involved in criminal activities the more petitions they were likely to accrue over time. However, what is interesting is that this pattern is evident in those offenders that do *not* go on to re-offend in addition to those that continually engage in criminal activity as adults. One would think that this sample would exhibit more unique behavior given that they eventually removed themselves from continued serious criminal involvement as an adult. This indicates that age of onset and extent of criminal involvement alone cannot be used as predictors of re-offending.

### **Dispositional Data**

The highest percentages of adjudicated crimes were property offenses. Property offenses accounted for 30% of all adjudication (See Table 4). Examples of property crimes that were adjudicated were damage to property, theft of a motor vehicle, and burglary. Property crimes were generally amended to a lesser degree offense. Petitions involving property crimes were amended 40% of the time. This was the highest percentage all types of petitions amended. Damage to property was most often amended to another crime. In the court and probation files, however, it was difficult to identify what the original charge of damage to property was amended to. While property crimes had a high percentage of being adjudicated and amended, they were also the highest percentage of dismissed crimes as well. Overall, 53% percent of property crimes were dismissed. It is important

to note that property petitions represented the most petitions filed for this sample, which could serve to explain the high representation in all three categories.

In this sample, status offenses were the type of crime least often adjudicated. Only one percent of status offenses were adjudicated. The low adjudication rate could be due to the fact that many juveniles petitioned with a status offense often had another more serious petition on their case as well. In essence, the status offense was often dropped from the case while the more serious petition was kept. Fifteen status offenses were dismissed in total, representing 34% of all dismissals. These offenses included such things as curfew violation, underage consumption and/or tobacco use. Truancy was the only status offense for which a juvenile was adjudicated. It was also uncommon for status offenses to be amended. Only 16% of status offenses were amended. This low percentage makes sense given the fact that status offenses are generally the lowest level of crime juveniles can commit (i.e. there are few options to amend down to when a juvenile is charged with a status offense). Within this sample, a status offense was more commonly dismissed than amended.

Out of all the drug petitions, over half of them were dismissed (62%). None of the juveniles in this sample were ever adjudicated on a drug disposition; in contrast, the 2000 study reported that drug offenses accounted for almost 7% of all adjudications. The other 38% of juveniles in this sample had drug dispositions amended to a lesser offense. As noted in the petition data section, many of these juveniles were charged with possession of marijuana but few were charge with selling or using other serious drugs, such as cocaine. The fact that the majority of juveniles in the sample were using less serious drugs or were less likely involved in selling could be one explanation why no juveniles in this sample were ever adjudicated on a drug petition. The less serious drug crimes are not adjudicated as often as the more serious drug crimes. See Table 4 for expanded information on overall percentage of all dispositions.

### ***Dispositions by Race***

There were no significant differences in the dispositions by race (See Appendix C). We know from previous research and literature that African Americans are disproportionately represented at many points within the juvenile justice system (Sullivan, 2004; JJC 2001; Bishop et al., 1996). It appears that within in this sample of juveniles, once they got into the juvenile justice system, case outcomes for African Americans and Caucasian were similar. Similar findings were found in the Disproportionate Minority Contact Study which examined extended jurisdiction juvenile (EJJ) and adult certification in Hennepin County (CCJ, 2004). The study found no significant racial difference in the number of juveniles who were EJJ or certified to stand trial as an adult.

In particular the current study showed no striking differences in dispositions between African Americans and Caucasians. For all types of crimes African Americans and Caucasians had similar outcomes when considering percentage of adjudications, amendments, and dismissals. However, Caucasians were slightly more likely to have property dispositions either amended to a lesser offense or completely dismissed. For the most part, however, figures were similar across races for all types of crimes.

**Table 4 – Dispositions Based on Type of Offense**

<b>Status Dispositions</b>			<b>Adjudicated</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Adjudicated	15	71	Status	15	34
Amended	1	0.04	Property	13	30
Dismissed	5	23	Person	11	25
			Drug	0	0
			Other	5	17
<b>Property Dispositions</b>			<b>Amended</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Adjudicated	13	25	Status	1	0.02
Amended	22	42	Property	22	40
Dismissed	17	32	Person	15	27
			Drug	5	0.09
			Other	12	22
<b>Person Dispositions</b>			<b>Dismissed</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Adjudicated	11	33	Status	5	16
Amended	15	45	Property	17	53
Dismissed	7	21	Person	7	22
			Drug	8	25
			Other	12	38
<b>Drug Dispositions</b>			<b>Other Dispositions</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Adjudicated	0	0	Adjudicated	5	17
Amended	5	38	Amended	12	41
Dismissed	8	62	Dismissed	12	41

***Sentencing & Treatment Outcomes***

Information concerning sentencing and treatment was limited. As mentioned previously, this information was inconsistency reported. Furthermore, while an individual may have been ordered to attend some sort of treatment, we do not know whether this actually occurred and if the juvenile completed it successfully (as our research only encompassed court records this information was not available).

Based on the information that was available it appears that juveniles in this sample were sentenced to out-of-home placements *slightly* less frequently than the 2000 sample. However, in general both the 2000 study and the current study had adjudicated

dispositions result in out-of-home placement approximately 30% of the time. Additionally, many of the juveniles in this study were sentenced to the County Home School or Thistledeew, whereas in the 2000 study there was a greater range of placements for juveniles. See Appendix D for a complete list of out-of-home placements.

Juveniles in this study were sent to treatment almost as much as they were sentenced to out-of-home placements. They were sent to a chemical treatment program 30 times. This is interesting, as none of the juveniles in this sample were actually adjudicated on a drug petition. It would appear that the juvenile justice system uses treatment facilities even for those juveniles not adjudicated on drug petitions.

Furthermore, it is interesting that while juveniles in this study were equally sentenced to treatment (30 times) and out-of-home placement (39 times); this ratio is not exhibited in the previous 2000 study sample. In the 2000 study juveniles were sentenced to out-of-home placement over five times as frequently as they were to treatment facilities. This finding is interesting as these two samples had comparable juvenile criminal histories, suggesting that this considerable difference in sentencing is not due to dissimilarities in criminal involvement.

Other types of sentences were most commonly used for the juveniles in this sample. For instance, many of the juveniles had to complete Sentence to Serve (STS), which generally involves performing some type of community service. It is not surprising that many juveniles in this sample were sentenced to STS, as 60-80% of all juveniles appearing in court are sentenced to STS as a direct sanction for their offense or as a condition of their probation (Hennepin County). Furthermore, a large number of juveniles were also sentenced to electronic home monitoring (EHM). This may serve to explain the slightly lower number of out-of-home placements (when compared to the 2000 study).

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Three juveniles from the sample participated in in-depth interviews in order to expand upon our quantitative findings. These interviews also provided researchers with a unique opportunity to examine what the juvenile themselves identified as having been helpful in avoiding future involvement in criminal activities. Overall, they provided interesting perspectives and share many common themes. For instance, it appears that their engagement in school was minimal and they felt disenfranchised from both the juvenile justice system and their treatment process. It is remarkable that these three men all looked to life changing events within their families and a change in peer association as protecting them from future involvement in crime. Following are general summaries of the information covered in these interviews along with basic demographics from the available quantitative data.

### *Daniel*

#### **Delinquency History & Demographics**

Daniel is a white male and was raised primarily by his mother. His biological mother and father did not have criminal records themselves; however, Daniel reported that they were both addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine. His criminal involvement was undoubtedly the most extensive within the sample. From the age of thirteen he was involved with cocaine, methamphetamines, and marijuana, both as a dealer and a user. Daniel had extremely irregular school attendance, although he was never expelled. This sporadic attendance may have been the result of his extensive criminal involvement (discussed further below). He was officially charged with two felonies, one for assault and one for terrorist threats. Most of the misdemeanor petitions filed against him involved minor consumption, possession of controlled substances, and/or possession of drug paraphernalia. None of these crimes involved the use of a weapon and all were committed within a two year span in his early teens.

#### **Family Dynamics**

Similar to the other participants, Daniel described an unstable family environment in which he and his many siblings were primarily raised by his mother and her boyfriend. Family dynamics were often unhealthy and even abusive as both his mother and her boyfriend were reportedly addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine. As Daniel described:

“They were drunks, at night. They were daily drunks. They would get sloshed at night. They were kind of partiers so they were laid back you know and I got my ass whopped a lot and yelled at all the time for doing things bad.”

Furthermore, Daniel reported that his first criminal involvement was with the encouragement and in the company of his mother’s boyfriend. His involvement with his biological father was minimal throughout most of his childhood. However, sometime after having been repeatedly involved with the juvenile justice system, Daniel decided to change his life and wanted to avoid the negative effects of living with his mother.



“I decided to change, okay and I was on house arrest for a month, I lived with my dad because my mom became a big crack head and I realized that and I didn’t really know him my whole life, you know, until he gave me a place to live cause he heard I was locked up...”

### **Apathy towards Education**

Education was repeatedly brought up by Daniel throughout the interview. It became apparent that issues pertaining to educational attainment were very important to his personal understanding of why and how he changed his life. During the peak of his criminal involvement Daniel often attended school merely to sell drugs and talk with his peers. After having been sent to a correctional facility for various drug charges he attended classes as part of his sentencing. However, he in no way felt that this was beneficial to him.

“I mean I did school in treatment and that was like idiot school I mean that must have been like 5th grade work they were giving us. It’s not very challenging any of the juvenile crap it’s for, I would say it’s for toddlers, I mean like for like 4th graders, 3rd graders, I mean it’s just really easy work. I mean, they were working on multiplication tables and I was like... (*Interviewer: How old were you?*) 17. I was like please I’m not going to do this. I mean I can do all that off the top of my head. I shouldn’t have to do it and they made me do the crap, the easy stuff. There is more challenging stuff, and I was alright look unless you guys want me to throw a fit and cause a scene you guys better start giving me more challenging work cause I’m not going to go to school because you guys are insulting my intelligence you know... I didn’t learn anything you know...”

This type of response was found in all three of these interviews. However, it is important to note that Daniel eventually went on to enroll in college and is now working on a degree in Criminal Justice while working full-time and raising two small children. The fact that Daniel personally sought out a greater education may in part explain why he ceased being involved in criminal activities. As discussed in the literature review, employment has been shown to decrease criminal involvement in adults (Uggen, 2000).

### **Transitional Peer Affiliations**

Daniel specifically changed his peer involvement throughout his various life stages. During his youth he predominantly associated with older criminally involved youth. His friends were drug users and were generally part of his illegal activities. However, after Daniel had a child, was married, and started to turn his life around his peer involvement drastically changed.

“I hang around with a calm group now. I’ve kicked out - my wife and I’ve taken out everyone that’s a bad Christian that we were friends with, anyone that’s bad, negative, steals, lies, we don’t hang out with them, and nobody we know does either. I’ve turned into a really decent person since my childhood. My conscience started working again.”

As shown above, Daniel reported intentionally avoiding peers from his past, in response to his changing values and life goals. Daniel attributed these changes to self motivation rather than his experience with the criminal justice system.

### **Reflections on the Juvenile Justice System**

When asked to discuss the impact that the juvenile justice system had on his criminal behavior, Daniel had much to comment on. In general, he felt that educational opportunities were not sufficient. The lack of challenging opportunities even affected the drug treatment programs that he attended. As Daniel stated:

“I mean it seemed like treatment for less educated people like I guess that’s just the stereotype and the reality that most people that are addicted to drugs, and you know have had things happen to them, and have anger problems aren’t well educated, you know.”

Furthermore, when asked what sort of relationship Daniel had with his probation officer it became apparent that his contact with probation officers had been extremely limited. This response was typical as all three of the juveniles interviewed had been frequently reassigned to various officers, and had therefore failed to develop a rapport with any of their officers. When asked what sort of relationship he had with his probation officers Daniel succinctly stated, “I had no relationship.” He had more than three parole officers within a year and was unable to remember any of their names. Due to this limited and varied contact he did not feel that his relationship with the probation officers was of any significance to his rehabilitation. As Daniel reported to have often failed urinary analyses, it is unlikely that this limited contact with probation officers was a result of his non-problematic behavior.

Additionally, feelings of disconnectedness from the juvenile justice system were consistently brought up throughout Daniel’s interview. For instance, when asked if he was placed on probation for one of the various crimes he committed Daniel stated:

“...no, yes, no...yes, no I wasn’t on probation, some how I got off. I think I went to jail for a week or something. I don’t know...you know”

This lack of inclusion and involvement continued on after sentencing and became imbued within Daniel’s treatment experience. He reported that he felt as if he was simply jumping through bureaucratic hoops that did not have anything to do with his individual issues or behavior problems. This response was common in that all three participants reported that they felt as if they were not actively involved in changing their own lives and were instead merely going through treatment programs which did not have the individual in mind. This further became apparent as Daniel found it difficult to even recollect what programs he had attended as part of his sentence.

There was only one exception to this apparent disenfranchisement that Daniel felt from his treatment programs. Daniel discussed how his awareness of his own behavior increased as he was made to write an autobiography.

“The reason I’m rather good at telling the story is in treatment I had to write my autobiography and that was like 8 pages and I wrote small so...*(Interviewer: What was it like to write your autobiography? Was it effective?)* I wanted to make a movie, I could make a movie [of] my life story... and the counselors was like yeah I would watch that movie, and I was like wow, that’s when it all settled in I was like, oh my gosh, I’ve lived such an insane life. I can’t believe it, you know?”

This treatment seems to have uniquely served to actively involve Daniel in his own treatment process.

Daniel also commented on feelings of discrimination and unjustified labeling by police officers. This notion corresponds with the sociological theory of labeling, which argues that individuals define themselves in terms of how others view them (Cote, 2002). Specifically, Daniel discussed his inability to escape the labels of past criminal charges:

“They [the police] still call me the “Women Beater” (mumbling). That’s offensive. No they don’t speak to me. They pulled me over in front of my house and said does the women beater still live there, I mean look at me I look like a Neanderthal why wouldn’t you think I beat my wife, you know. Well, I want to do something about it, but I just wish I could figure out (mumbling). I don’t think you’re allowed to bring back up old things if your cop and its more offensive because it didn’t happen you know. It really makes me feel like... my wife is not a push over; she would go after me if I hit her in one second you know.”

Daniel believed that his identity was limited due to police treatment and that his ability to exist within other social realms had become confined.

### **Overview**

Although Daniel had many insightful reflections on how the juvenile justice system served him during treatment it appears that personal life changing events were most instrumental in facilitating his changed behavior. In fact, the only beneficial moment within the correctional facilities that Daniel can recollect (aside from writing an autobiography as discussed above) occurred while watching television with one of the correctional guards. He describes it below:

“So I started talking to this guy about life and he said why are you doing this you know, this is just a teenage part of your life, you know you’re not going anywhere, and he said look, I do my (mumbling) now look at me, and I’m getting paid \$16 an hour to lay back to, like he had his legs kicked up on the table, and he’s laid back, and he’s like I’m getting paid \$16 an hour to do this 6 hours of my shift. He said it’s because I did it right, and he was like your life is just going to be hard unless you blah blah blah. And while after talking to him so much about things like that, that’s when I finally decided alright that’s a good point, I’m going to change.”

This indicates that having a shift in attitude was extremely important to initiating the many changes that occurred after Daniel's release.

After having been incarcerated Daniel experienced many life changing events that furthered his commitment to becoming a more responsible young adult. In particular, Daniel became a father and eventually married his girlfriend. He pursued higher education in order to provide for his children. He watched as his mother's life became consumed by drug use (which eventually resulted in multiple convictions), and he seemed to have developed a relationship with his biological father. Apparently, all of these events further served to push Daniel in his pursuit to change. What is significant is that the juvenile justice system was not seen by Daniel as being influential, as all of the above mentioned events were. In essence, it appears that the role of the juvenile justice system was seen by Daniel as being minimal. Due to the lack of challenging educational opportunities, negligible engagement in treatment programs, lack of individualized care and inconsistent legal responses it appears that the potential of the juvenile justice system was hindered.

### *Warren*

#### **Delinquency History & Demographics**

Warren is an African American male and was raised primarily by his mother. His father had a criminal record of his own, as discussed more below, and was also reported to be chemically dependent. Although never expelled, Warren had irregular school attendance. Warren had the least extensive criminal record within our sample as he was officially charged with one felony, involving robbery. Most of the misdemeanor petitions filed against him involved disorderly conduct, shoplifting, and underage possession of alcohol. None of these crimes involved the use of a weapon. He committed his first offense, disorderly conduct, at the age of thirteen. His last reported offense was underage drinking. Uniquely, Warren's criminal activities were more spread out than the other interviewees, as they spanned a four year period during his late teens.

When asked about his family Warren provided little information; however, he did mention that his family members felt that probation and sentencing programs were good for him. Warren also stated that he got along with his mother and some of his siblings. He saw them on a regular basis, even when he was being processed by the juvenile justice system. However, he had limited contact with his father growing up as he was incarcerated throughout much of Warren's youth.

#### **Apathy towards Education**

Warren rarely went to school once he became involved in criminal activities, despite the fact that he began at the young age of thirteen. Therefore, his records reflect difficulties in school throughout all of middle and high school. He reported that his attendance was inconsistent because he was working.

“I was busy, I was working, I had a job then I'd be tired so I wouldn't get up and go to school. I just hung out, that's about it.”

Warren's apathy towards involvement in school improved slightly when he made the high school basketball team. However, this improvement was short lived as he was not able to continue due to his poor grades.

"I played basketball in high school, I was supposed to do it, but I got side tracked. I was actually on the basketball team; I just didn't make the grades. I skipped around a lot. I just didn't do well, I just didn't come to school, that was stupid. I just don't like school."

Warren did not receive his high school diploma, due to low attendance and poor grades, although he did eventually receive a GED during his early adulthood.

### **Transitional Peer Affiliations**

As the other interviewees reported, Warren's peer affiliations changed during early adulthood. During the peak of his criminal involvement, Warren reported that he and his friends generally played basketball and occasionally smoked marijuana. However, during the time of the interview Warren's peer affiliations had changed significantly as he did not associate with those involved in illegal activities. Nonetheless, it is important to note, that he did not report that this distinct change in peers was due to a conscious effort on his part, but rather that many of his school friends had left the area.

### **Reflections on the Juvenile Justice System**

According to court records, Warren was charged with various crimes, as described previously. At one point, he was sentenced to probation after receiving stolen property and his assigned officer placed him into a drug program (it is important to note that this was without having seen or talked to Warren). When asked about his experience with the drug program, he stated:

"I didn't like, but it's cool with them, it took up most of my time. I'd rather be doing something else, but I completed all the programs they put me in though."

Although Warren reported having had little contact with his first probation officer, as discussed above, his case was eventually transferred to another officer with whom Warren had a positive relationship. In particular, he appreciated that this officer outlined everything that he needed to accomplish in order to get off probation. Therefore, Warren tended to comply with all demands in order to simply complete his sentenced probation. However, he also stated that some of the staff in the juvenile programs were hostile and at times they would provoke him or other juveniles.

Warren did not feel like the juvenile justice had any real impact in deterring him from continuing to commit crimes. He felt that the system could not stop him, or anyone for that matter, from doing what they really want to do. In essence, he chose to do what he wanted and it did not make a difference what program he was sentenced to.

"Truly, nobody can stop nobody from doing something they wanna do, no matter what the consequence is. If they feel strongly about something, they're going to

do it. That really determines [it], I have a baby now, so...I really don't need to be out there like that no more...this is just stuff I chose to do, truthfully, it don't make a difference if they had a program out there.”

Instead, Warren believed that the harsh reality of having personally experienced the collateral effects of incarceration, as his father served an eleven year sentence throughout much of his childhood, helped him avoid recidivism.

“I knew reality, my dad got into stuff so I know if you do something, you go to jail for a long time. I just know from that.”

This statement is significant in that it indicates that Warren had in no way normalized the concept of imprisonment. This is contrary to much of the literature concerning children of incarcerated parents. It is thought that children of certain socioeconomic and racial groups will adopt imprisonment as a measure of social status, in effect normalizing or even promoting incarceration (Hairston, 2002). However, Warren's statements do not support this theory, as was similarly found in CCJ's 2006 Children of Incarcerated Parents Study.

Additionally, Warren reported that having a child also deterred him from being involved in criminal activities. He wanted to be there for his son in a way that his own father never had. It was important to him that he saw his son everyday and was an actively involved parent.

“I want to be able to see him everyday pretty much, you know what I mean? The dad's supposed to be around and stuff like that”

At the time that we spoke to Warren he stated that he was trying to find a job but was unsuccessful. He was told by a few organizations that they could not hire him because he had probable cause narcotics on his arrest record, and although he was not convicted of this charge it appears on his record and discourages employers from hiring him. This struggle is particularly important as Warren reported that during his early adulthood maintaining employment had further enabled him to avoid involvement in illegal activities.

### **Overview**

It appears that while there were a few features of the juvenile justice systems that Warren reported having positively affected his life (namely a straightforward probation officer); the overall impact of the system appeared minimal. Instead, Warren emphasized the positive impact of personal events and employment. In particular, having his father incarcerated during much of his childhood seemed to have provided Warren with a rather harsh perspective of what his life would be like if he were to continue involvement in criminal activities, particularly in regards to how it would effect his own parenting capabilities. Employment also seemed to have kept Warren busy and financially stable, although it appears to have negatively impacted his educational attainment.

Similar to the other interviewees, and as expected from the literature, Warren's peer affiliations changed after his sentencing and may have served to protect him from further recidivism. Warren's comments were also remarkably similar to Daniel's in that he felt that an individual's attitude was extremely important to initiating change. Therefore, he placed little importance on the programs made available to youth. Overall, from Warren's perspective it appears that his turnaround had little to do with the juvenile justice system.

### *Jason*

#### **Delinquency History & Demographics**

Jason is a white male who was primarily raised by his biological parents. His mother and father did not have criminal records themselves and were not officially reported to have chemical dependencies. At the time of his criminal involvement it appears that he was placed in a special education program within his high school. Although Jason's criminal involvement does not seem remarkably extensive in his interview, a review of his records tells another story. Officially he was charged with two felonies, one gross misdemeanor, four misdemeanors, and three status offenses. The three status offenses involved running away from home. Most of the other petitions filed against him involved drug use, including possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, and minor consumption. However, Jason was also charged with theft of a motor vehicle, attempting to avoid apprehension, discharging fireworks, and disorderly conduct. None of these crimes involved the use of a weapon and almost all were committed within a one year period during his late teens, starting at the age of fifteen. Jason's life course presents a unique profile. As the other two interviewees reported that having children influenced their rehabilitation in relation to the positive impact of becoming a father, it is interesting to get an in-depth look at an individual that did not have children and presented very different explanations for having been able to avoid continued criminal activity.

#### **Family Dynamics**

Similar to the other participants, Jason's family life while growing up was described as unstable and unhealthy. In particular, Jason reported that his father was an alcoholic and physically abusive. He discussed one incident in detail where his father publicly assaulted him. After having been reprimanded for not attending classes, the school administration wanted his father to attend a few classes with him as punishment and the following transpired:

“This was sixth grade I think, maybe seventh or eighth grade so it was close to high school, old enough that you wouldn't want your dad sitting next to you in class and so I wouldn't go so he started beating me up in the hallway and then the teachers seen that and he got in trouble for it and I think he went to jail for a couple days because of shit. After that, he just wouldn't lay a hand on me ...he was a grumpy guy and he was angry and I don't know, he got mad real easy...like shit that shouldn't make a dad mad, he'd get mad about you know.”

After this incident, his father was diagnosed with depression and mandated to attend anger management classes. Additionally, contact with his mother appears to have been,

and continues to be, rather sporadic. In fact, at the time of the interview, Jason was not even aware of what state his mother was currently residing in.

However, non-immediate family members appeared to have taken a central role in his life and later rehabilitation. In particular, his paternal grandfather was actively involved in his life and often provided much needed support and advice. Furthermore, after much of Jason's family had withdrawn from him due to his criminal involvement, a distant Uncle became involved and later provided Jason with a good job in Wisconsin along with a place to live at his family's home. During the interview, Jason discussed his uncle and grandfather:

"I respect him [my grandfather] a lot because he's seen so much that I just think about all the stuff that has happened in the past 86 years that he's been alive for, you know what I mean. He's a nice guy. A lot of my family doesn't like me... a lot of them talk shit about me and everything... [They said] don't even do it, stay away from him, he's bad news, you know what I mean? And I don't know, my grandpa... he's a good guy to me. We go out to eat all the time, I don't know, he's a good man, I like my grandpa. My uncle, he's a good guy too, I can talk to him about just about anything."

The fact that Jason was uniquely provided with these opportunities was most likely instrumental in his avoidance of further criminal activity as many ex-offenders cite difficulties finding employment and adequate housing as contributing to their re-offenses (CCJ, 2006). Additionally, having moved to Wisconsin may have served to change Jason's peer affiliations, similarly to the other interviewees.

### **Reflections on the Juvenile Justice System**

Overall, Jason presented similar feelings of disenfranchisement from the system and his own treatment process. For example, after describing a particular criminal incident he was involved with, Jason was asked what he was officially charged with. The following was his response:

"Um, I think most of them got dropped... but a couple of them, I think did get in trouble for some of the stuff."

It appears that Jason was not even aware of what he was officially charged and sentenced for. This appears to be quite common, as all of the juveniles that we interviewed expressed similar experiences.

Furthermore, Jason's relationship with his various probation officers appeared to be limited. His case was often transferred to different officers and he therefore never met with any probation officer more than three times. Jason felt that this was most likely due to his good behavior and the fact that he never failed a urinary analysis. On a side note, it is important to note that Jason did not report feelings of disenfranchisement simply because he felt that he did not deserve to be punished. In fact, Jason was very frank about the need to own up to his behavior.



“I guess something had to be done and they [the juvenile justice system] did it.”

Similar to Daniel, Jason also commented on feelings of discrimination and unjustified labeling by police officers. He stated:

“That’s my only real problem with the justice system is that they harass people. Sometimes they pre-judge people, you know.”

This sort of labeling has been seen to be potentially damaging as it serves to confine an individual’s comprehension of themselves and often limits their ability to change (Cote, 2002).

### **Overview**

As indicated above, the effect of the juvenile justice system appears to have been minimal according to Jason. However, Jason described many life changing events that took place during his adolescence, which seem to have motivated some of the positive changes that he made. For instance, having his uncle take him in and provide other opportunities seemed to have a great effect on Jason and his ability to avoid criminal behavior. In addition, watching his father try to recover from alcoholism seemed to have provided a sort of reality check that was further intensified when his father died unexpectedly during treatment. As Jason comments:

“...when my dad died, I kind of felt I had to step up and really take responsibility for myself, like he wasn’t there to look over me...I realized from myself it’s not really hurting anybody but me. I just gotta take care of myself and work everyday.”

When asked about how his life changed he also stated:

“Definitely changed me seeing him trying to make an effort then dying when he was trying to change it around ...I’m glad he was tough because it made me tougher.”

Ultimately, it appears that life changing events and extended family support played key roles in protecting Jason from further involvement in criminal activities. Again, the role of the juvenile justice system appeared to have been minimal. This does not imply that there are no implications to be made concerning the juvenile justice system from this profile. It appears that the juvenile court system and treatment programs may benefit from adopting a more inclusive treatment process.

### ***Summary of Interviews***

All three of these participants felt that the impact of the juvenile justice system was minimal. In particular, feelings of disenfranchisement from court proceedings and treatment placements were continually brought up throughout the interviews. This lack

of informed involvement seemed to have created apathy towards any formal interventions.

However, it is important to note that these juveniles did present a few key positive instances of formal system interventions. Namely, engaging and individualized treatment programs, such as writing an autobiography as presented by Daniel, and personable, straightforward probation officers, as presented by Warren. Overall these interviewee's comments indicate that giving juveniles' ownership of their treatment process may serve to increase their participation and later success.

These juveniles instead looked to personal life-changing events, such as parenthood and marriage, as having facilitated the cessation of criminal activities. Often family members played a great role in providing these juveniles with an opportunity to change, such as employment and housing. However, it is interesting that familial support was also provided by extended and even estranged members, such as Jason's uncle.

These life-changing events also significantly served to provide these interviewees with an opportunity to change their peer affiliations. For instance, when Jason's uncle took him in he was forced to form new friendships in Wisconsin. Similarly, when Daniel was married, he and his wife specially affiliated with those from their church. These changes appeared to have been key in providing these youth with an environment in which to alter their behavior.

## SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to compare results of a previous 2000 study, examining those juvenile offenders who went on to commit serious adult offenses, with data concerning a sample of juvenile offenders who did *not* go on to re-offend as adults. While the results are limited in that the sample size is small, general patterns nonetheless become apparent.

Overall, it appears that these youth (who did not go on to offend as adults) were less likely to have committed crimes as juveniles involving the use of a weapon, experienced lower expulsion rates, were involved in fewer drug related offenses, and reported minimal drug use. Additionally, a few familial patterns emerged from the comparison, such as lower rates of parental criminal involvement and increased father involvement. These factors may have served to protect these youth from continued criminal involvement.

It is important to note, that dispositional outcomes did not appear to differ based on race and overall appeared to be consistent with those observed in the 2000 study. However, chemical dependency assessments, psychological assessments, and treatment placements were provided to juveniles inconsistently, as no apparent pattern was visible in the data. Despite these inconsistencies, it does appear that juveniles in this sample were more likely to have been sentence to treatment programs, when compared to the 2000 study.

Furthermore, in-depth interviews provided this study with an opportunity to access what the juveniles themselves identified as motivational factors for changing their lifestyles. It appears that the effects of the juvenile justice system were minimal, although those treatments that actively engaged the individual were viewed more positively than others. Instead, these youth looked to life-changing events as having facilitated their change. In particular, familial support, the formation of intimate relationships, parenthood, and changed peer affiliations seem to have been key in providing these juveniles with an environment in which to change.

General recommendations based on these youth's perspectives would involve:

- **Educational Assessments:** Juveniles may be given an educational assessment in order to gauge appropriate curriculum for schooling provided during institutionalization. This would ensure that juveniles are challenged and may minimize their apathy towards education.
- **Individualized Treatments:** Emphasis should be placed on those treatment opportunities that actively serve to involve juveniles, such as autobiographies.
- **Peer Affiliations:** The formation of positive peer affiliations may be supported informally. For instance, for high risk juveniles probation officers may look for ways in which to alter any existing negative peer affiliations.
- **Chemical & Psychological Assessments:** Increased consistency in providing both chemical dependency and psychological assessments may be beneficial.

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## Appendix A: Variables Collected & Source

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Source</u>
Sex	SC	Adjudicated Status Offense	JC & JP
Date of Birth	SC	Known Child	JC & JP & C/F
Race	SC	Maltreatment Found Child Protection Services Provided	JC & C/F
Father Present	JC & JP	Outcome of First CHIPS Petition	C/F
Mother Present	JC & JP	Child Protect Case File	C/F
Father/Significant Male Ever Arrested	JC & JP	Total Petitions	JC & JP
Mother Ever Arrested	JC & JP	Type of Petition & Counts	JC & JP
Father/Significant Male Ever Chemically Dependent	JP	Petition Level Main Count	JC & JP
Mother Ever Chemically Dependent	JP	Dates of Placement	JP
Earliest Age of Noted Behavioral Problems	JC	Placement Outcomes	JP
Where Living at Time of Offense	JC & JP	Correction Placements	JC & JP
Truancy Petitions	JC	Judges, Prosecutors, & Public Defenders	JC & JP
Ever Expelled from School	JP	Known Psychological Evaluation	JC & JP
Expulsion Involved Weapons	JP	Psychological Diagnosis	JC & JP
Learning Disability	JP	Chemical Dependency Evaluation	JP
Psychotropic Medications	JP		

<p><b>C/F</b> = Children &amp; Family Services  <b>SC</b> = Supreme Court  <b>JC</b> = Juvenile Court  <b>JP</b> = Juvenile Probation</p>
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## Appendix B – Offense Type & Frequency

Offense Type	Frequency of Counts
<b>Property Offenses</b>	<b>80</b>
Theft	20
Damage to Property	16
Burglary	13
Theft of Vehicle	10
Receiving Stolen Goods	5
Tampering with Vehicle	4
Aiding & Abetting Theft	4
Shoplifting	4
Trespassing	2
Possession of Stolen Vehicle	1
Arson	1
<b>Status Offenses</b>	<b>71</b>
Curfew Violation	33
Underage Consumption of Alcohol	14
Absent/Runaway	9
Underage Possession of Tobacco	5
Truancy	4
Habitual Truancy	2
Tobacco Use	1
Underage Possession of Alcohol	1
School Crime	1
Attempted Gambling	1
<b>Crimes Against A Person</b>	<b>54</b>
Assault	27
Domestic Assault	10
Terrorist Threats	6
Robbery	4
Aiding & Abetting Assault	3
Aggravated Robbery	2
Aggravated Assault	1
Criminal Sexual Conduct	1
<b>Other Offenses</b>	<b>45</b>
Disorderly Conduct	17
Escape from Custody	5
Possession of a Weapon	5
Obstruction of the Legal Process	5
Providing False Information to the Police	3
Fleeing Police Officers	2
Unlawful D.L. Acts	2
Interference	1
Rioting	1
Discharge of Fireworks	1
Indecent Exposure	1
Aiding & Abetting (unknown)	1
Attempt to Evade Apprehension in Vehicle	1
<b>Drug Related Offenses</b>	<b>21</b>
Possession of Marijuana	10
Possession of Drug Paraphernalia	7
Possession of a Controlled Substance	3
Loitering with the Intent to Sell Narcotics	1

### Appendix C – Dispositions by Race & Type of Crime

Property		Asian	Biracial	Black	Caucasian	Latino	Native American	Total
<i>Adjudicated</i>	Yes	0	1	2	3	1	0	7 (28%)
	No	2	1	7	7	0	1	18 (72%)
<i>Amended</i>	Yes	0	0	1	4	0	0	12 (48%)
	No	1	0	6	5	1	0	13 (52%)
<i>Dismissed</i>	Yes	1	2	1	4	1	1	10 (40%)
	No	1	0	8	6	0	0	15 (60%)

Person		Asian	Biracial	Black	Caucasian	Latino	Native American	Total
<i>Adjudicated</i>	Yes	0	1	3	5	0	0	9 (36%)
	No	2	1	6	5	1	1	16 (64%)
<i>Amended</i>	Yes	0	1	3	4	0	0	8 (32%)
	No	2	1	6	6	1	1	17 (68%)
<i>Dismissed</i>	Yes	0	0	2	4	0	1	7 (28%)
	No	2	2	7	6	1	0	18 (72%)

Status		Asian	Biracial	Black	Caucasian	Latino	Native American	Total
<i>Adjudicated</i>	Yes	1	0	0	0	0	0	1 (4%)
	No	1	2	9	10	1	1	24 (96%)
<i>Amended</i>	Yes	0	0	2	3	0	0	5 (20%)
	No	2	2	7	7	1	1	20 (80%)
<i>Dismissed</i>	Yes	0	1	3	3	0	0	7 (28%)
	No	2	1	6	7	1	1	18 (72%)



<b>Drug</b>		<b>Asian</b>	<b>Biracial</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Adjudicated</i>							
	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0 (0%)</b>
	No	2	2	9	10	1	1	<b>25 (100%)</b>
	<i>Amended</i>							
	Yes	0	0	1	3	0	0	<b>4 (16%)</b>
	No	2	2	8	7	1	1	<b>21 (84%)</b>
	<i>Dismissed</i>							
	Yes	0	0	0	3	0	0	<b>3 (12%)</b>
	No	2	2	9	7	1	1	<b>22 (88%)</b>

<b>Other</b>		<b>Asian</b>	<b>Biracial</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Adjudicated</i>							
	Yes	0	0	1	2	1	0	<b>4 (16%)</b>
	No	2	2	8	8	0	1	<b>21 (84%)</b>
	<i>Amended</i>							
	Yes	0	0	2	4	0	0	<b>6 (24%)</b>
	No	2	2	7	6	1	1	<b>19 (76%)</b>
	<i>Dismissed</i>							
	Yes	0	0	2	4	0	0	<b>6 (24%)</b>
	No	2	2	7	6	1	1	<b>19 (76%)</b>

## Appendix D: Sentencing Placements

<b>Sentenced to Out-of-Home Placements</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
County Home School Beta	14	35.8
County Home School	12	30.7
Thistledew	7	17
Other	6	15.3
Total	39	100
<b>Sentenced to Treatment</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Project Support	5	16.6
Rainbow Bridge Program	4	13.3
African American Family Services	3	10
Fairview Treatment Program	3	10
Other	15	50
Total	30	100
<b>Sentenced to Other</b>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
STS	22	36.6
Electric Home Monitoring	11	18.3
CAPS	4	0.06
Community Service	4	0.06
Gun Program	3	0.05
Paid Work Program	3	0.05
Other	13	21.6
Total	60	100