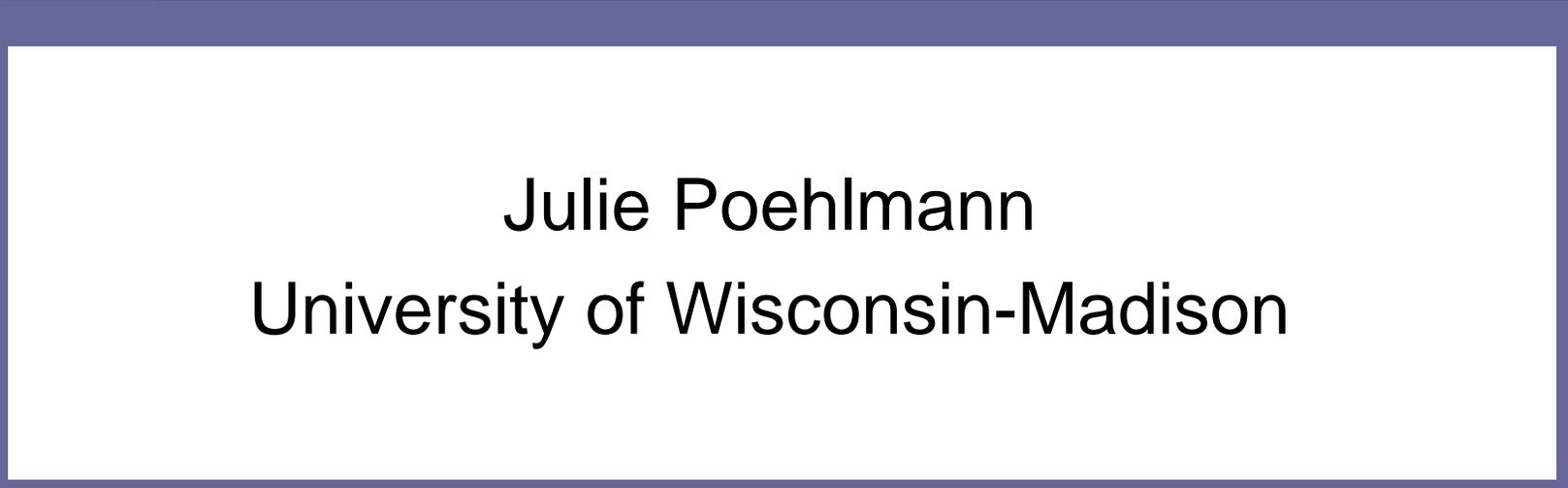




Risk and Resilience in Young Children of Incarcerated Mothers



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- Despite the increase in the number of young children with incarcerated mothers that has occurred in the U.S. during the past decades, there are relatively few published **developmental** studies focusing on this population.
 - Young children (less than 10 years old) comprise the largest percentage of affected children

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- The study described here investigated family characteristics and key areas associated with developmental competence in 60 children between the ages of 2 and 7 years during their mothers' incarceration
 - attachment relationships
 - intellectual outcomes
 - behavior problems
 - caregiving quality

Children of Incarcerated Mothers Study

- 96 mothers and 60 families participated (31 boys, 29 girls)
- Multiple methods were used to collect data
 - interview with the mother in prison
 - home visit
 - caregiver interview and observations
 - child assessments (standardized, videotaped interviews)
- Inclusion criteria:
 - Mother incarcerated for at least 2 months
 - Mother retained legal rights to the child
 - Child was placed with kin
 - Child was between 2.5-7.5 years
 - Family lived in Wisconsin

Context of Multiple Risks for Children

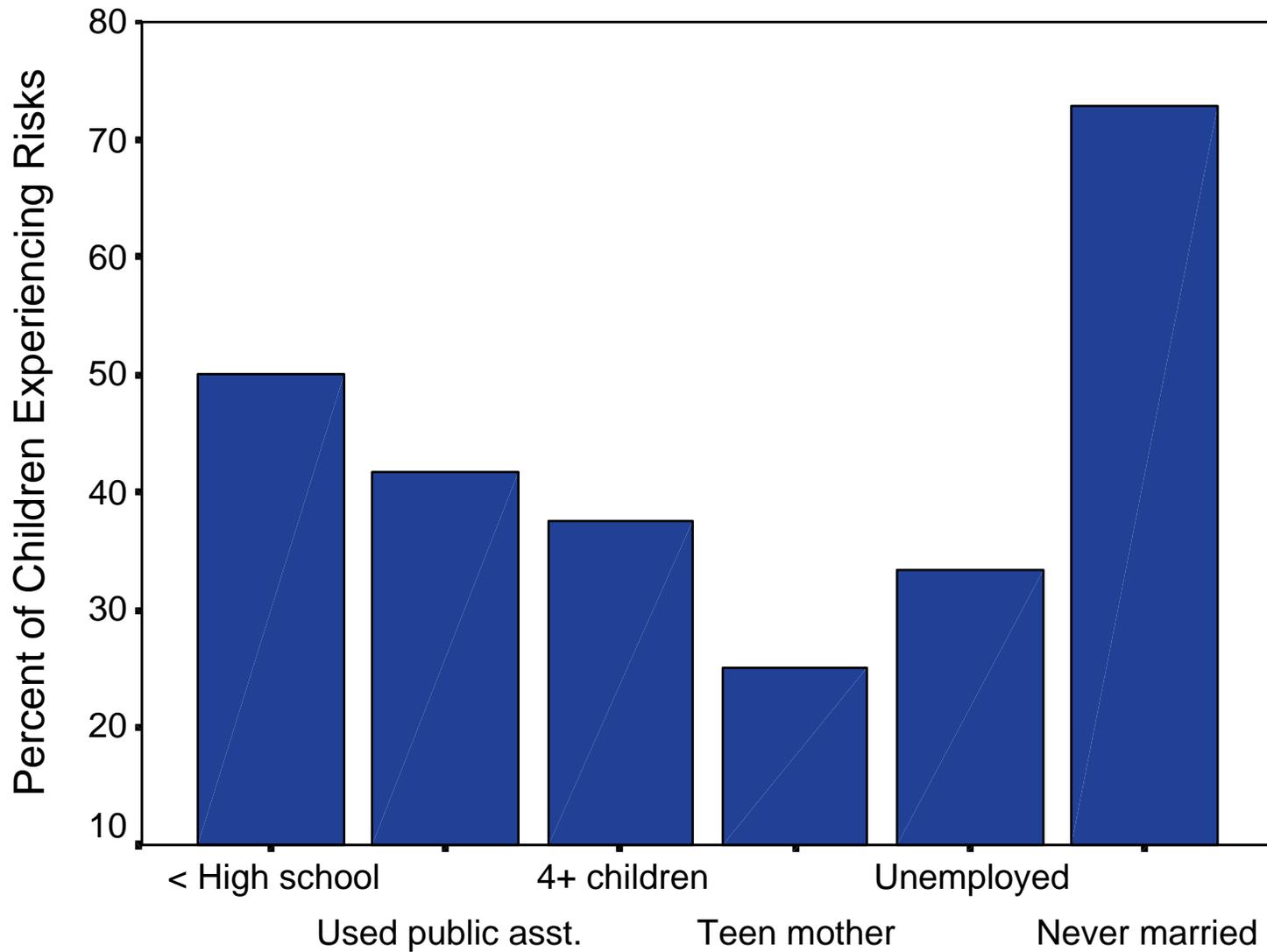
■ Children

- Most children experienced one or more risks that threatened their core developmental competencies
 - 48% were prenatally exposed to substances
 - 35% had both parents incarcerated
 - 40% had changed caregivers 2 or more times
 - 20% had witnessed the mother's arrest

■ Caregivers

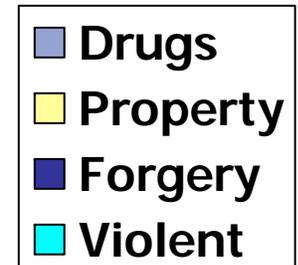
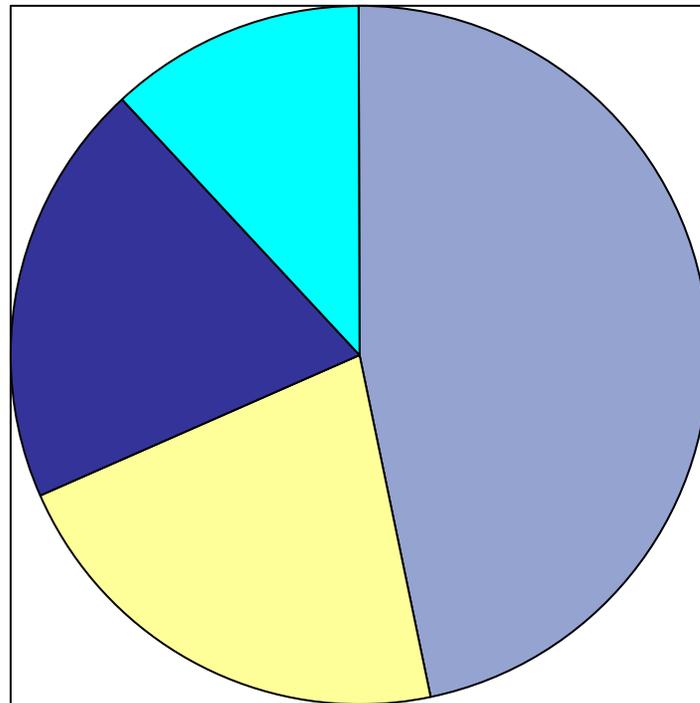
- 60% of caregivers were grandparents
- 40% of caregivers had fair to poor health
- 40% of caregivers had elevated depression
- Most lived in poverty

Frequency of Maternal Risks



Poehlmann, J. (2005). Children's family environments and intellectual outcomes during maternal incarceration. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 1275-1285.

Nature of Mothers' Offenses



Children's Developmental Outcomes

1. High frequency of negative attachment relationships
 - Measured with Attachment Story Completion Task (Bretherton et al.)
 - Assessed representations of relationships with caregiver and with mother
2. Elevated rates of cognitive delays
 - Measured with Stanford-Binet Scales of Intelligence, 4th edition (Thorndike et al.)
 - Assessed verbal and nonverbal intellectual skills
3. Elevated rates of behavior problems
 - Measured with the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock)
 - Total Problems, Internalizing, Externalizing

Caregiver Measures

- Quality of the home and family environment
 - HOME, 2nd edition (Caldwell & Bradley)
 - FES (Moos & Moos)
- Sociodemographic risks
 - Multiple risk index (Sameroff et al.)
- Caregiver well-being
 - Perceived health
 - CES-D (Radloff)
- Caregiver social support
 - SSQ (Crnic et al.)
- Perceived relationship with mother and child
 - IFF (Lowman)

Maternal Measures

- Sociodemographic risks
 - Multiple risk index (Sameroff et al.)
- Maternal well-being
 - Interview with mother (Gilfus; Garcia-Coll)
 - CES-D (Radloff)
- Perceived relationship with caregiver and child
 - IFF (Lowman)
- Incarceration related variables
 - Interview with mother

Children's Attachment Relationships

- Attachment Story Completion Task
 - (Bretherton et al., 1990; subset of MSSB)
- 4 story stems with attachment related content
 - Spilled juice, hurt knee, monster, separation/reunion
- Content and structure coded
 - 9 codes (3 negative content, 3 positive content, 3 structure)
 - Kappas ranged from .64-.86
- Cluster analysis on 9 codes

Features of representations of secure relationships

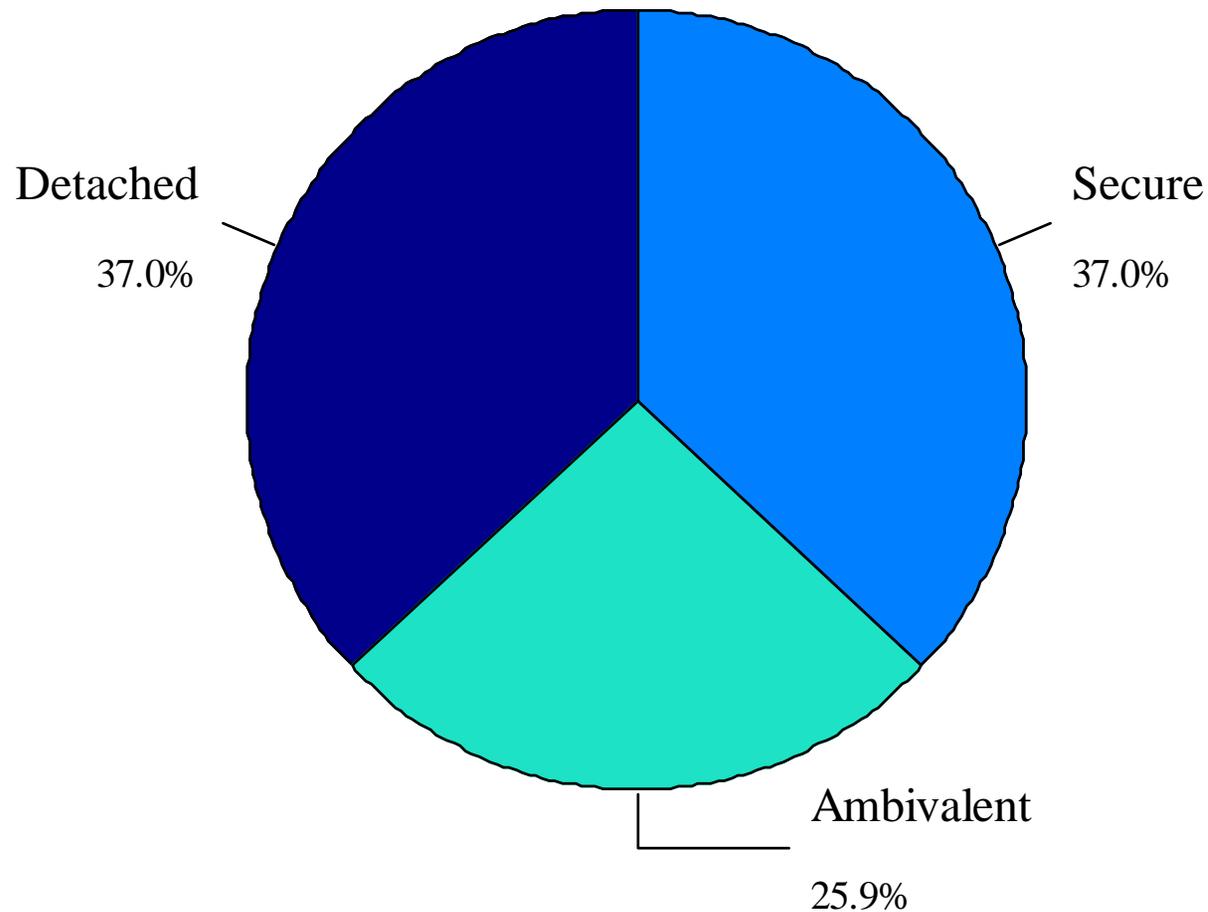
■ Content

- Adults portrayed as nurturing and responsive
- Lack of violent, traumatic or chaotic content
- Self portrayed as competent
- Adults portrayed as authority figures

■ Structure

- Organization and clarity in descriptions
- Story is resolved and coherent
- Willingness to talk about or enact sequences about relationships

Three Clusters of Attachment



Poehlmann, J. (2005). Representations of attachment relationships in children of incarcerated mothers. *Child Development, 76*, 679-696.

Children's Representations of Relationships

- Most children had representations of negative relationships with caregivers and mothers
- However, about 28% of children could be considered resilient because they had:
 - a representation of a positive relationship with the mother and
 - a representation of a positive relationship with the caregiver

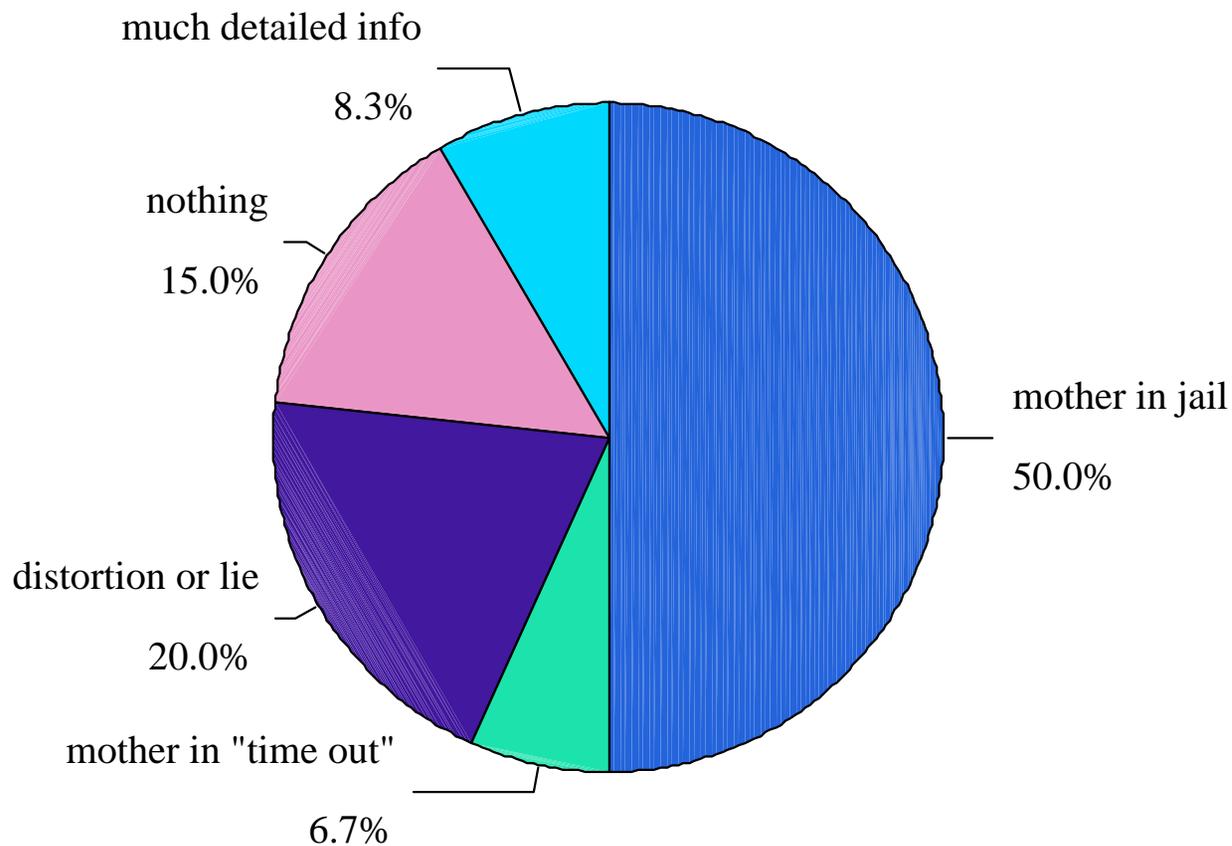
Poehlmann, J. (2005). Representations of attachment relationships in children of incarcerated mothers. *Child Development, 76*, 679-696.

Children with Secure Relationships

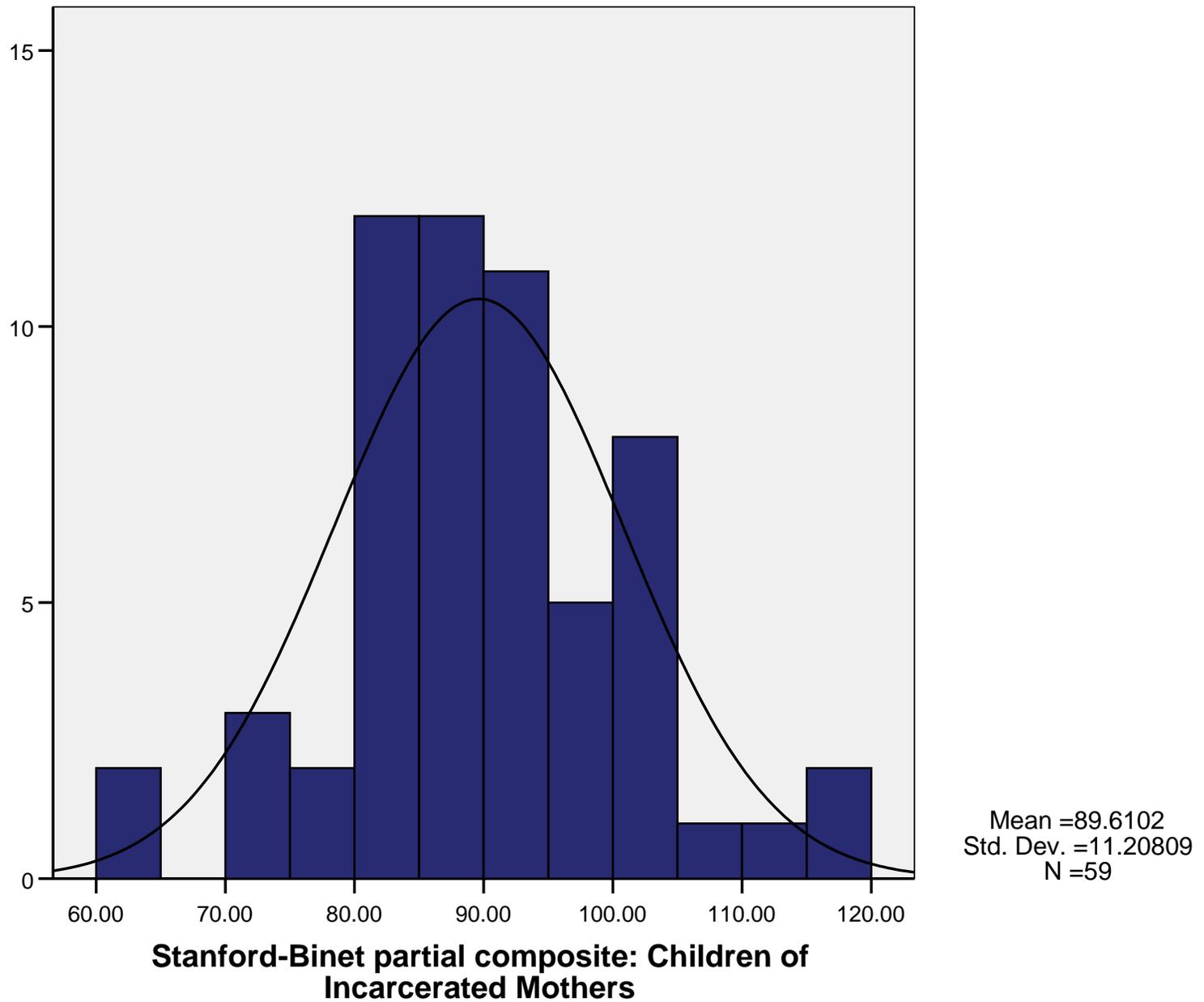
- Lived with one caregiver since mother's incarceration (had not moved among caregivers)
- Experienced sadness but not anger at time of separation from mother
- Were older
- (trend) Were told about the mother's incarceration in an honest, simple, developmentally appropriate manner
- (trend) had not visited mother at prison in past 2 months

Poehlmann, J. (2005). Representations of attachment relationships in children of incarcerated mothers. *Child Development*, 76, 679-696.

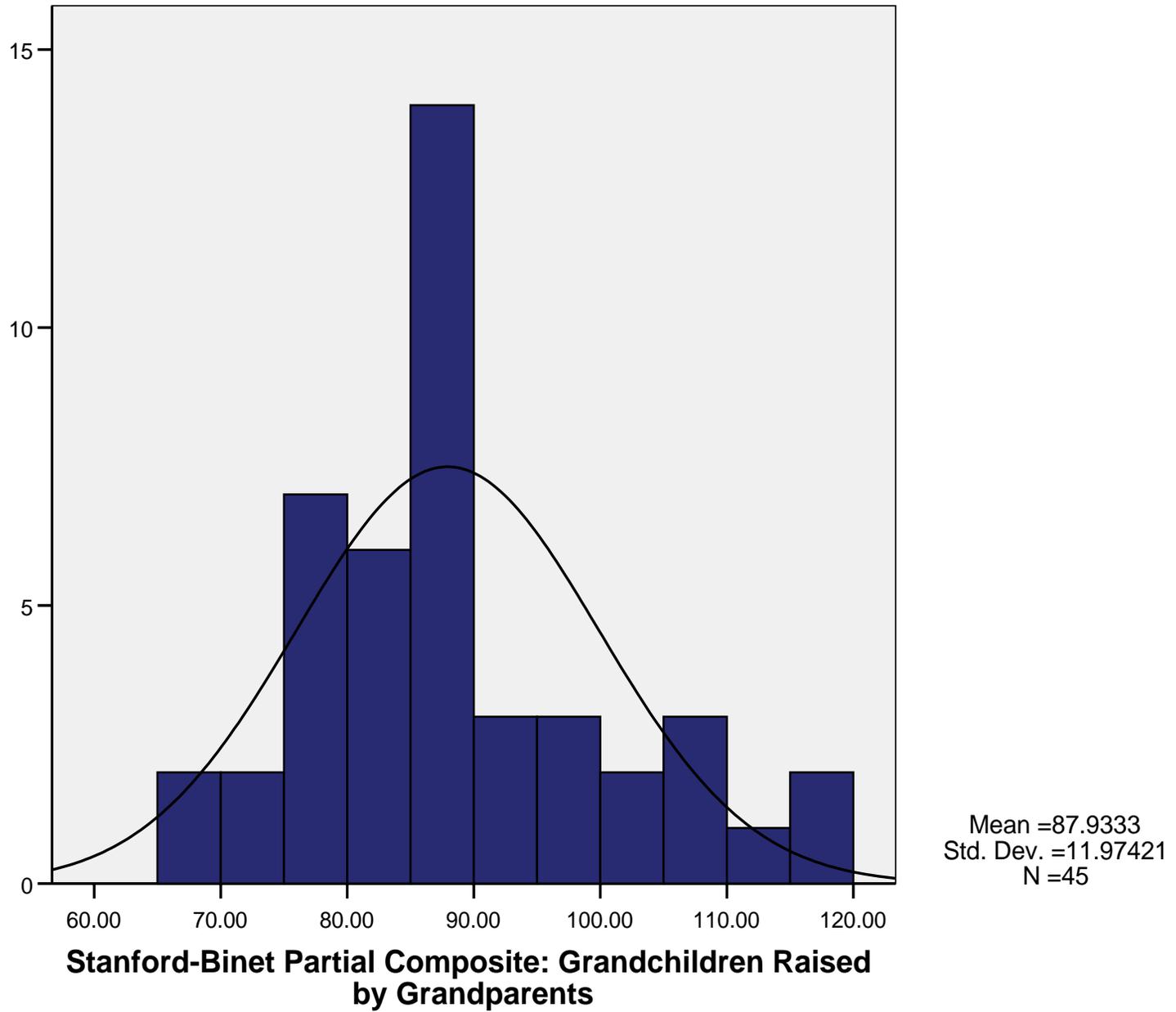
What Children were Told about Their Mother's Incarceration



Poehlmann, J. (2005). Representations of attachment relationships in children of incarcerated mothers. *Child Development, 76*, 679-696.



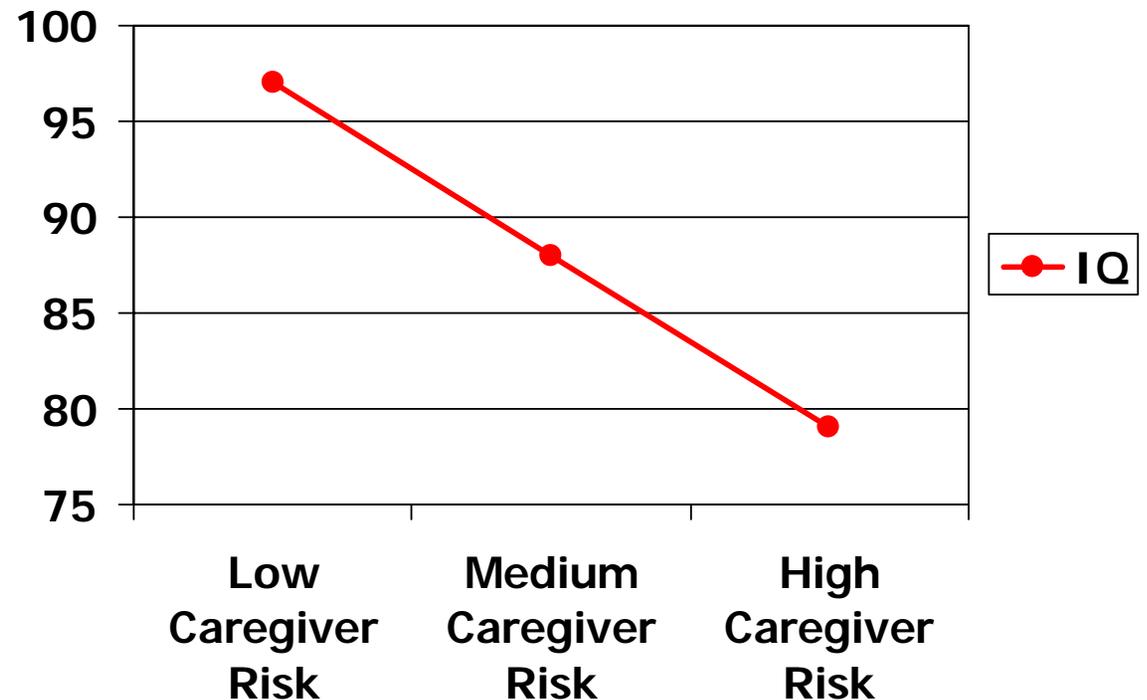
Poehlmann, J. (2005). Children's family environments and intellectual outcomes during maternal incarceration. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 1275-1285.



Park, J., Bouffiou, L., Poehlmann, J., & Manthe, B. (November, 2006). Risk and resilience in families of grandparents raising grandchildren. Presented at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

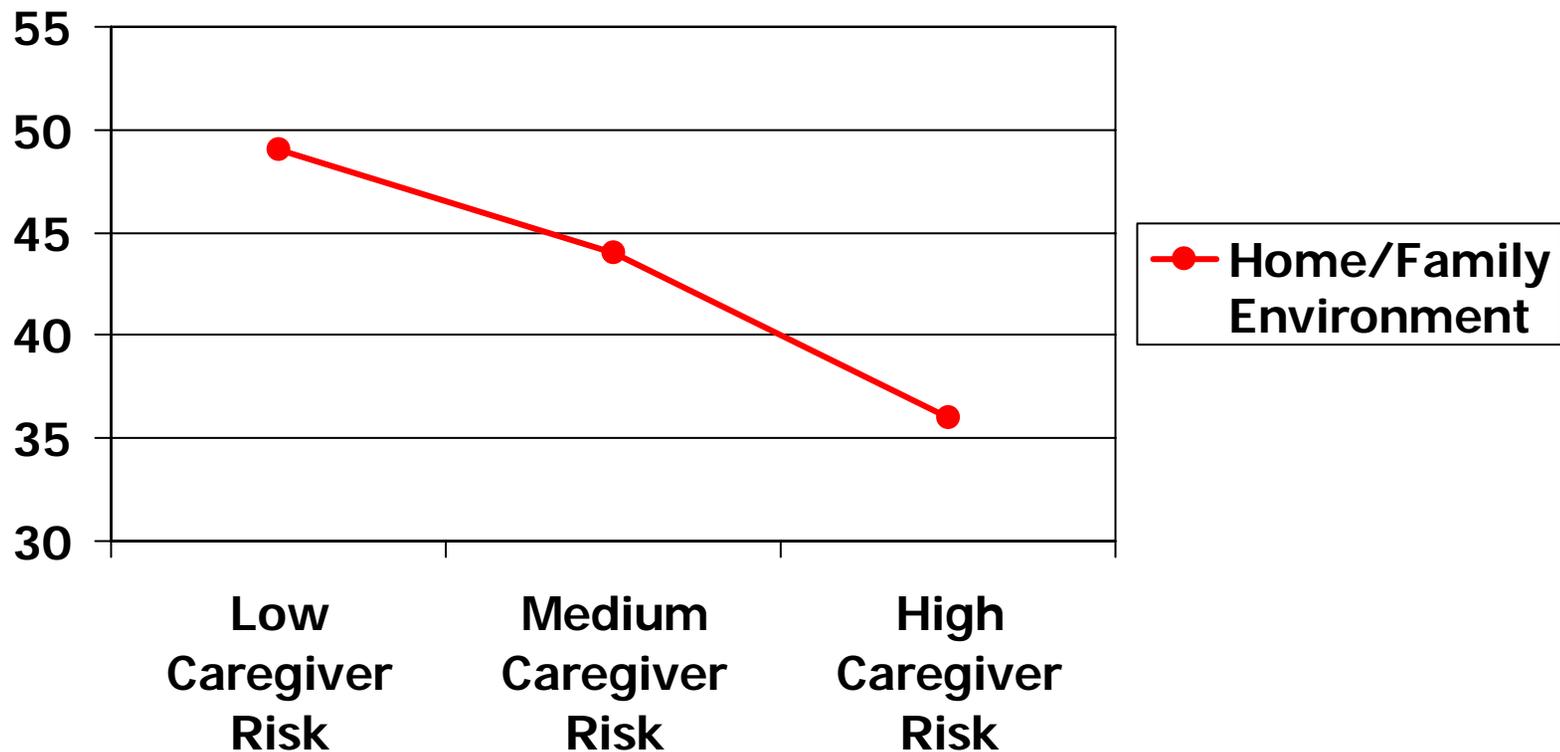
SES Risks and IQ scores

- Elevated caregiver SES risks were associated with below average cognitive outcomes
- Caregiver SES risks were more important than maternal SES risks or biological risks



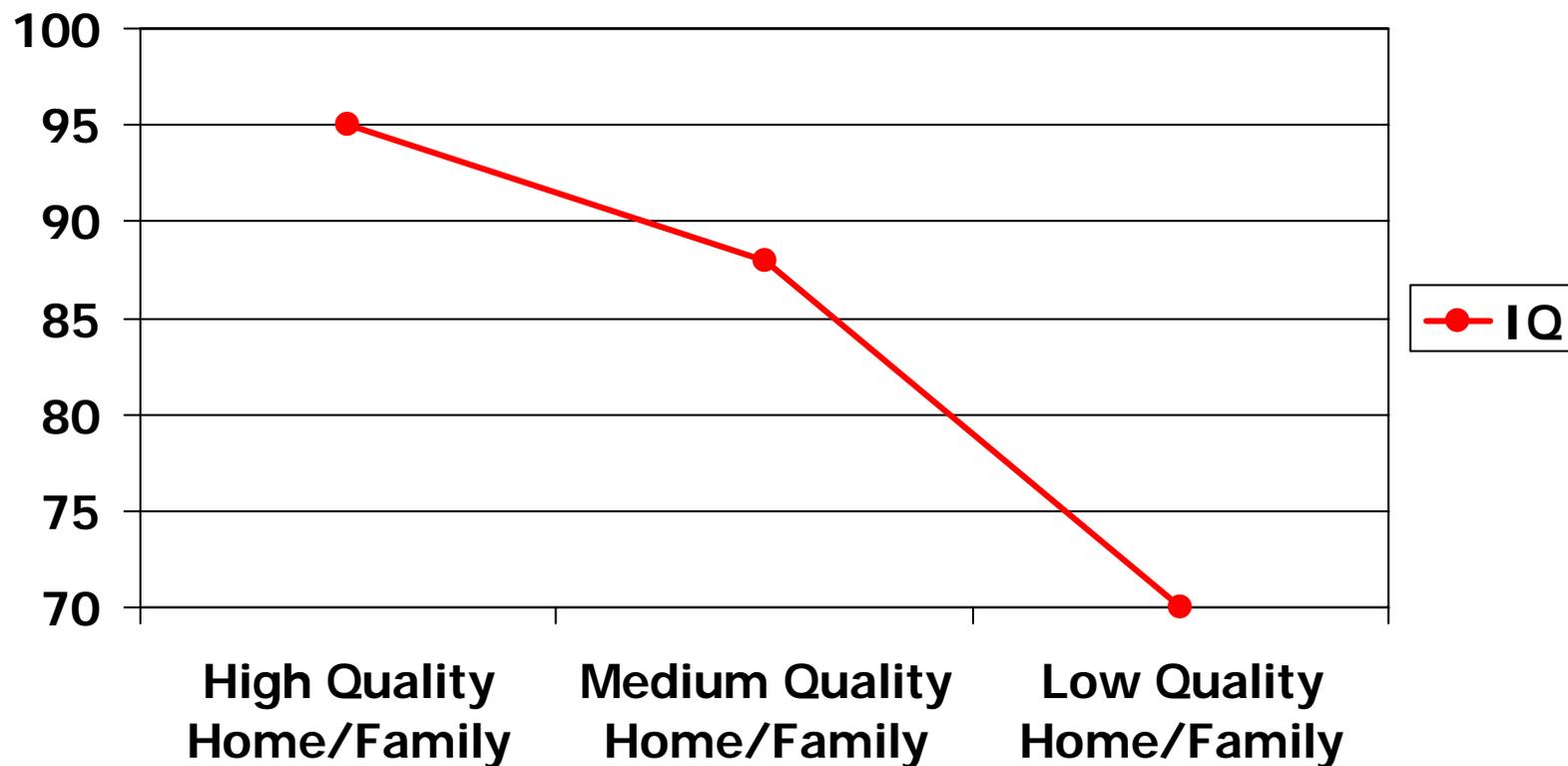
Poehlmann, J. (2005). Children's family environments and intellectual outcomes during maternal incarceration. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 1275-1285.

SES Risks and HOME scores



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Caregiver HOME scores and Children's IQ Scores



Poehlmann, J. (2005). Children's family environments and intellectual outcomes during maternal incarceration. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 1275-1285.

Caregiver Report of Children's Behavior Problems

- Elevated rates of problem behaviors
 - Total problem behaviors
 - 18% in clinical range (9% normative)
 - 22% in borderline or clinical range (16% normative)
 - Internalizing or Externalizing
 - 8% clinical range (9% normative)
 - 17% in borderline or clinical range (16% normative)
- More behavior problems related to elevated caregiver depressive symptoms

Children's Behavior Problems by Gender

- **Girls were more likely to show overall and borderline behavior problems**
- **Boys were more likely to show clinically significant externalizing behaviors**
 - Total problem behaviors
 - 16% boys clinical range
 - (16% borderline or clinical range)
 - 21% girls clinical range
 - (29% borderline or clinical)
 - Internalizing
 - 10% boys clinical range
 - 14% girls clinical range
 - Externalizing
 - 13% boys clinical range
 - 4% girls clinical range

Resilience was more likely when children's caregivers:

- were stable (cared for child continuously without moving child to different households)
- had economic resources
- were not depressed
- were able to provide high quality home environments
- had open communication about the incarceration in the family

Unanswered questions

- How does children's relationship quality change over time during a parent's incarceration?
- How do these children fare if and when reunification occurs? (especially if they have been living in a stable caregiving situation and are doing well)
- Are there differential outcomes for siblings? Why?
- Do the "resilient" young children continue to function well as they grow older? What systems need to be changed to promote continuing resilience?
- Need for high quality longitudinal investigations that focus on the cognitive, behavioral, and social emotional **development** of young children of incarcerated parents

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