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Family Structure and the Criminal Behavior of Juveniles in Tennessee

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Ronald D. Pickard

August 2008

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Keywords: Juvenile, Family Structure, Criminal Behavior, Tennessee Juvenile Courts,  
Juvenile Delinquency

## ABSTRACT

### Family Structure and the Criminal Behavior of Juveniles in Tennessee

by

Ronald D. Pickard

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between family type and criminal behavior of juveniles in Tennessee who were referred to Juvenile Court in 2006. The population used in the study comprised the juveniles who were referred to the Tennessee Juvenile Courts as reported by the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in 2006.

This investigation focused on the criminal behavior as indicated by number and type of referrals to the Juvenile and Family Court system in Tennessee. The data were analyzed by family-of-origin type, age group, and geographic region in Tennessee.

The findings of this study indicate there was a difference in criminal behavior of children referred to the Juvenile and Family Court system in Tennessee in 2006 according to family-of-origin type with referrals. For the family-of-origin types with referrals to the juvenile courts (TCJFCJ), 20,734 (26.2%) of the referrals came from married couples, 5,899 (7.5%) of the referrals came from fathers only, 33,802 (42.8%) of the referrals came from mothers only, and 18,620 (23.6%) of the referrals came from other family-of-origin type. For all family-of-origin types in Tennessee (TN 2006) with referrals to the juvenile court system, 20,734 (4.4%) of the married couples had referrals, 5,899 (11.3%) of the fathers only had referrals, 33,802 (17.8%) of the mothers only had referrals, and 18,620 (3.2%) of the other family-of-origin type had referrals.

The findings also show that as children approach the age of 18, there is a dramatic increase in illegal conduct and a less dramatic increase in status offenses. The number of referrals for offenses against persons and offenses against property tend to have a constant increase as children approach age 19.

The results also show that in East Tennessee, status offenses had the highest number of offenses and offenses against persons had the lowest number of offenses. In West Tennessee, offenses against persons had highest number of referrals and status offenses had the lowest number of referrals.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wife, Sheilah, for her willingness to allow me years of study devoted to obtaining a doctorate. She has also served as my source of encouragement when the going was rough.

I would also like to dedicate this study to many educators who have assisted me in learning the academic skills necessary to conduct this study.

I would especially like to dedicate this study to the late Dr. West who was responsible for my enrolling in the cohort program at ETSU.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Genesis* 4: 9 New International Version). These were the words of the first murderer, Cain, when confronted about his actions. There had been a domestic disturbance regarding a religious issue. Cain was a fruit and grain farmer while his brother Abel was a cattle farmer. Cain felt that his offering to God was as good as his brother Abel's offering. As a result of his jealousy over the type of offering, Cain killed his brother.

Cain came from a hardworking farm family. He grew up with his biological mother and father. His father appeared to be an animal lover who gave names to the animals in his care. His mother developed an eye problem that led to an eating disorder, causing his parents to be forced from the Garden of Eden (*Genesis* New International Version).

Thousands of years later, our society is still faced with criminal behavior and criminals are still asking if they are their brothers' keeper.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Criminal behavior by juveniles continues to take place in our society. The Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (2007) reported that during 2006 more than 161,631 referrals were made to the Tennessee juvenile courts.

The traditional family continues to be altered. From 1960 to 1998, the number of households in the United States with children under the age of 18 decreased from 50% to 34%, the number of children living in traditional nuclear families declined from 88% to 68%, and the percentage of children living with a single parent increased from 9% to 28% (Duquesne University Family Institute, 2006a).

According to a study by Lugaila (as cited in Thornberry, Smith, Rivera, Huizinga, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1999), the number of African American children living with both parents

declined from 64% to 37% between 1970 and 1997 and the number of Caucasian children living with both parents declined from 90% to 74% in the same period. In Bray and Hetherington's study (as cited in Thornberry et al.) the projected percentage of Caucasian children who will experience divorce or separation of their parents before the age 16 was 40%, whereas for their African American counterparts the estimate was as high as 75%.

The family plays an important part of determining who we are. In a presentation made at the Duquesne University Family Institute (2006b), it was stated:

Families teach the first lessons of relationships among persons, some of which are essential not only to private life but to public life as well. Within the family, one learns to act upon others and to be acted upon. It is in the family that we learn to identify ourselves with others or fail to learn to love. It is in the family that we learn to give and take with others – or fail to learn to be reciprocal. It is in the family that we learn to trust others as we depend on them or learn to distrust them. We learn to form expectations of others and to hold them accountable. We also learn to hold ourselves accountable. These lessons of reciprocity, trust, discipline, and self-restraint are important to the forming of relationships in public life. (n. p.)

The breakdown of the family has arguably led to increased criminal activity in this country (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000). The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between family type and criminal behavior of juveniles in Tennessee who were referred to Juvenile Court in 2006.

### *Significance of the Study*

Criminal behavior can be the result of many different factors. A father's discipline of a child could influence the child's tendency for criminal behavior (Lundman, 2001). The child's involvement with sexual abuse could lead to his or her use of illegal drugs and promiscuity (Wallerstein et al., 2000).

This study should provide social workers, counselors, parents, school administrators, and teachers with insights regarding the association among the family-of-origin types and the numbers and types of juvenile referrals made to Tennessee juvenile courts. The study might assist in family and child counseling to prevent criminal behavior. It might provide assistance in

developing treatment programs. It could assist juvenile treatment programs in providing appropriate counseling for students from various family types.

### *Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions*

The limitations of this study include the lack of family history and detailed and accurate information about the homes of the juveniles. Lack of consistent reporting and recording of the criminal behavior of some of the children was another limitation.

This study was delimited to the reported juvenile behavior in Tennessee. It was also delimited by the data reported in 2006; data previously reported using a different format.

It was assumed that reporting the data was consistent and information was kept confidential. It was also assumed that all of the referrals were reported. There was also the assumption that family types were functioning within the norms of the family types provided within the reports.

### *Research Questions*

This study addressed two sets of questions. The first set of questions examined possible associations among the family-of-origin types and the number of referrals made to Tennessee juvenile courts, age groups of the children, and geographic regions in Tennessee.

The second set of questions addressed the family-of-origin types and the type of referrals made to Tennessee juvenile courts, age groups of children, and geographic regions in Tennessee. The following research questions were addressed:

1. To what extent, if any, does frequency of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ among family-of-origin types; (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age groups of children (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions (East, Central, West) in Tennessee?

2. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ between family-of-origin types?
3. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ between ages of children?
4. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ among geographic regions in Tennessee?

### *Definitions*

1. *Aggressive Behavior*: hostile, injurious, or destructive behavior or outlook especially when caused by frustration (Mish, 1997).
2. *Bullying*: occurs when a student is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. These negative actions can take the form of physical contact, verbal abuse, or making faces and rude gestures. Spreading rumors and excluding the victim from a group are also common forms (Olweus, 1993).
3. *Court Referral*: The term used to identify the alleged delinquent activity that results in juvenile court action. Activities include the following as defined by the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (2005):
  - (a) *Offenses Against Persons*: delinquent offenses such as criminal homicide, assault, rape, etc., that were committed against persons;
  - (b) *Offenses Against Property*: delinquent offenses such as burglary, arson, vandalism, etc., that were committed against property;
  - (c) *Illegal Conduct*: delinquent offenses such as possession or sale of controlled substances, disorderly conduct, criminal trespass, etc.;
  - (d) *Status Offenses*: offenses committed by a child that if committed by an adult would not be considered an offense or unlawful act. These can include such actions as runaway, truancy, unruly behavior, etc.;
  - (e) *Dependency or Neglect*: issues that affect the safety and well being of the referred child such as abuse, dependency, neglect, termination of parental rights, etc. This is a non-offense category as the referred child is the victim, not the offender;

- (f) Parentage: issues that affect custody of the child such as visitation, determining parentage, and child support;
  - (g) Other Violation Proceedings: violation of pretrial diversion and violation of informal adjustment;
  - (h) Special Proceedings: Judicial reviews, administrative reviews, and foster care reviews that are conducted by the court. This is also a non-offense category. (n. p.)
4. *Family-of-Origin Types*: the term used to define the living arrangement of the child at the time of the referral. For this study, there were six family types: both biological parents, a father and stepmother, mother and stepfather, mother only, father only, and other (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2005).
5. *Geographic Regions of Tennessee*: the regions and metropolitan areas in Tennessee that are recognized by the Juvenile Court System. The state is divided by the following regions based on counties and metropolitan areas:
- (a) East: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Granger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, and Union;
  - (b) Mid-Cumberland: Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, and Wilson;
  - (c) Northeast: Bristol City, Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson City, Sullivan Division 1, Sullivan Division 2, Unicoi, and Washington;
  - (d) Northwest: Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Johnson, Lake, Obion, and Weakley;
  - (e) South Central: Bedford, Coffee, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Moore, Perry, and Wayne;
  - (f) Southeast: Bledsoe, Bradley, Franklin, Grundy, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk, Rhea, and Sequatchie;
  - (g) Southwest: Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, and Tipton;
  - (h) Upper Cumberland: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White;
  - (i) Davidson: Nashville;
  - (j) Shelby: Memphis;
  - (k) Hamilton: Chattanooga; and

(1) Knox: Knoxville. (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2005)

### *Overview of the Study*

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study and includes the statement of the problem; the significance of the study; limitations, delimitations, and assumptions; the research questions; and an overview of the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of literature showing the supporting literature and previous findings relative to the topic. The literature review also includes information about the effects of the family on children as they develop into adults. It also includes literature about criminal activities and various activities that lead to criminal behavior. Chapter 3 presents the methods and procedures used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 includes a presentation and analysis of the data used in the study. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings and conclusions as well as recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many risk factors might contribute to the probability that a young person will become violent. These risk factors are not static in that they may occur at various times during an individual's development. Some could occur very early in childhood, whereas others might occur in adolescence. These risk factors might become strong during one stage of an individual's life and weak during other stages of life. They might be from family, community, or peer groups. According to Youth Violence (2006), "Risk factors that predict the onset of violence are not necessarily the same as those that predict the continuation or cessation of violence" (n. p.).

#### *Family*

Historically, marriage and family have played an important part in forming the history of America. In the formative years of the country, the roles of the family members were well defined: The husband was the breadwinner and the wife was the caretaker of the household. Most families were farmers and worked long hours each day to provide a living. Children assisted the family by helping with the chores around the home and farm. Those who did not live on farms were usually artisans who used their skills to support the local community. The children learned the family trade and continued with the family business (Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, 2007).

From the legal standpoint, marriages have changed substantially over the past 30 years (Mason, Fine, & Carnochan, 2003). Married couples were considered to be a single legal identity with the husband responsible for the finances of the family. The husband was responsible for the wife's debts and was required to pay alimony in the event of a divorce. In the

1970s, with the push for equal rights for women, domestic crimes began receiving attention as spouses were allowed to testify against each other (Mason et al.).

The parents shaped the lives of the children. DeGenova and Rice (2002) said parents' affirmations of their adoration, love, value, approval, and acceptance of the children were among the most important contributions they could make to the children's development. Such affirmation gives children healthy self-esteem and self-acceptance. DeGenova and Rice also pointed out that among children in environments where anger and conflict exist, there were greater risks of behavioral and emotional problems.

### *Divorce*

Mason et al. (2003) related the following regarding divorce:

The shift to a partnership model of marriage was accompanied by a change in how the partnership could be dissolved. The past 30 years ushered in what has been termed a *divorce revolution*. Drastic changes in divorce law rendered divorce a unilateral decision not based on fault. This made divorce far easier to obtain and in most states created a fundamentally different framework for the distribution of property and the allocation of support following divorce. (p. 78)

There were many studies found concerning the effects of divorce on the delinquency of children. Siegel and Senna (1997) cited two different early studies that established the relationship between broken homes and delinquency: a study by Weeks in 1950 ("Predicting Juvenile Delinquency") and another by Glueck and Glueck in 1943 ("Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency").

Price and Kunz (2003) said the Texas Youth Authority in 2001 reported that "three out of four adolescents committed to state correctional facilities come from homes that have experienced divorce, parents never married, or separation" (p. 110). Price and Kunz further reported, "Juveniles from broken homes are processed through the system at higher rates than peers from intact families" (p. 110).

Other researchers have concluded that the effects of divorce on delinquency are inconclusive. Wallerstein et al. (2000) maintained there was a misconception concerning the effect of divorce on delinquency. Wallerstein et al. stated:

The belief that the crisis [divorce] is temporary underlines the notion that if acceptable legal arrangements for custody, visiting, and child support are made at the time of the divorce and parents are provided with a few lectures, the child will soon be fine. It is a view we have fervently embraced and continue to hold.

But it's misguided. Our willingness to believe this notion has prevented us from giving children and adults the understanding they need to cope with the divorce experience over the long haul. It has kept us from making long-term plans for our children and from acknowledging the fact that their needs change as they grow older. It has prevented us from listening to their serious complaints and easing their suffering. (pp. xxiv-xxv)

Price and Kunz (2003) summarized the findings of a longitudinal study conducted by Amato and Booth in 1997 by saying, "If children are unaware of pre-divorce hostility, they are more likely to be harmed by divorce" (p. 111). They also cited five studies that concluded, "Divorce has negative consequences for children's involvement with delinquency" (p. 111). At the same time, Price and Kunz noted six studies that "demonstrate[d] participation in delinquent behavior by children of divorced parents does not differ from children in intact homes" (p. 112).

Wallerstein et al. (2000) in studying adults who went through divorce as children concluded that their parents' divorces were not as critical as what they experienced in the years following the divorce. According to Wallerstein et al.:

It's the many years living in a post-divorce or remarried family that count...It's feeling sad, lonely, and angry during childhood. It's traveling on airplanes alone when you're 7 to visit your parent. It's having no choice about how you spend your time and feeling like a second-class citizen compared with your friends in intact families who have some say about how they spend their weekends and their vacation. It's wondering whether you will have any financial help for college from your college-educated father, given that he has no legal obligation to pay. It's worrying about your mom and dad for years – will her new boyfriend stick around, will his new wife welcome you into her home? It's reaching adulthood with acute anxiety. Will you ever find a faithful woman to love you? Will you find a man you can trust? Or, will your relationships fail just like your parents' did? And most tellingly, it's asking if you can protect your own child from having these same experiences in growing up. (p. xxv)

### *Family Structure and Delinquency of Children*

Americans for Divorce Reform (2006) examined published empirical research of 23 studies that considered the relationship between family structure and crime or delinquency. Of these studies, 20 concluded that the family structure did have an effect on crime or delinquency. Eight of the studies examining family structures determined that the children of single-parent or nonintact family structures were more apt to commit criminal or delinquent acts. Other studies indicated that changes in family structure also were associated with an increase in crime rate.

#### *Biological Two-Parent Families*

For generations, child rearing was the responsibility of the biological mother and father. Tift (2006) defined the parenting role as "...teaching, nurturing, supporting, communicating, disciplining, and caring for offspring" (n. p.).

Because of the Industrial Revolution, fathers began to work in factories and in other businesses located away from the home rather than working in their homes and on farms. Consequently, the commitment of fathers began to decrease and the concept of fathers assisting with the parenting of the children began a downward spiral (Tift, 2006).

Luis Laosa, a research scientist at Princeton University (as cited in Tift, 2006), defined the father as having three significant facets: (a) supportive role, (b) gender development role, and (c) mediator role. In the supportive role, the father supports the mother throughout the pregnancy and through the separation experience of the children. He serves as a second person for the child to learn from and seek support (Tift).

According to Tift (2006), the gender identity development role requires both a healthy male and a healthy female to provide role models for their sons and daughters to help them develop their sexual orientation. This is also important in the development of masculinity and femininity. Tift pointed out the importance of modeling right behavior from wrong and good from bad. Tift stated that in the mediator role, the parent teaches the child by identifying

problems and developing a resolution to conflict. According to Tift, modeling this behavior could assist children in coping with conflict.

Obsatz (2001) cited 18 messages conveyed to children by the presence of a strong father:

1. validation for being a child. I love you for who you are;
2. clear limits and boundaries about acceptable behavior. You are doing well. I applaud your behavior and performance;
3. coping mechanisms for dealing with disappointment, loss, change, and failure. You can cope with loss. You can cry and hurt. You will get over this;
4. empathy skills – how to treat and care for others. How one’s behavior affects others. Think about how others feel about what you say or do before you act or speak;
5. skills for dealing with authority. Treat authorities with respect, but challenge them if they seem destructive or abusive;
6. an appreciation of the work ethic. Work hard. Do your best. It will pay off in the end.
7. logical and rational problem-solving techniques. You can solve problems using your mind. You can find creative solutions to difficult situations;
8. healthy ideas about sexuality and spirituality. Your sexuality is a spiritual gift. Use it to bring more love into the world rather than just to satisfy physical needs;
9. skills for dealing with anger and other emotions. You have a right to be angry, but don’t hurt others with you anger. You have a right to feel all of your feelings---joy, sadness, hurt, love, fear;
10. permission to be vulnerable and ask for help. You can’t do everything by yourself. Everyone needs support and help;
11. skills for balancing work, play, and rest. You can work hard, but you also need to play and relax;
12. skills for successful leadership. Stand tall. You have ideas and skills that you can share with others;

13. skills for combining humility with good self-esteem. Be proud of what you are and what you do, but also acknowledge your limits and imperfections;
14. assertiveness skills and not aggressiveness. Stand up for yourself. Ask for what you need – Do not trample over others;
15. skills for self-care. It is important that you take care of you body, your appearance, and your soul;
16. awareness about treating both genders with respect. Boys and girls and men and women deserve your kindness, consideration, and respect;
17. information about ways to meet sexual needs without hurting or using others. Never impose your sexuality on anyone in a forceful or aggressive manner; and
18. awareness of your right to fair and respectful treatment by others. You deserve to be treated well by others. (n. p.)

### *Stepfamilies*

Leman (1994) stated, "...43% of all marriages now are remarriages for at least one of the adults. About 65% of the remarriages involve children from previous marriages, and thus form stepfamilies" (p. 8).

According to the Stepfamily Association of America (2006), there are many common myths that can become stumbling blocks for stepfamilies. They listed eight myths that are common among stepfamilies:

1. love occurs instantly between the child and the stepparent;
2. children of divorce and remarriage are forever damaged;
3. stepmothers are wicked;
4. adjustment to stepfamily life occurs quickly;
5. children adjust to divorce and remarriage more easily if biological fathers (or mothers) withdraw;
6. stepfamilies formed after a parent dies are easier;

7. part-time stepfamilies are easier; and
8. there is only one kind of family. (n. p.)

According to the Stepfamily Association of America (2006), believing these myths can often lead to hurt that will lead to resentment and anger. In some cases, the child or the adult may want to develop a relationship but a stepmember refuses.

Stepfamilies normally go through five stages as they develop. Persing (2006) described those stages as:

1. fantasy stage: The family joins together with unrealistic expectations of how they will get along. The family members need to grieve the past loss and explore expectations of each other;
2. confusion stage: Two families with different beliefs, values, rules, and discipline share the same household. The family must begin to develop new rules, roles, and traditions;
3. crisis stage: When differences remain, family members may panic into a time of chaos. Adolescents may act out while younger children may do poorly in school or have physical pains or illnesses;
4. stability stage: Family members begin practicing what they have learned. The family begins to create its own traditions and memories; and
5. commitment stage: The stepfamily chooses to work hard to stabilize the relationship. Adults must forgive their former partners and themselves for the past failed marriages. (n. p.)

Working through these stages may take from 4 to 7 years to complete. However, only 4 out of 10 stepfamilies make it (Persing).

### *Cohabitation*

Woods and Emery (2002) conducted a study of cohabitation and its effect on divorce. The results of their study indicated that family attitudes, delinquency, education, religion, and ethnicity differed significantly between noncohabitators and cohabitators. Cohabitation was associated with higher incidents of delinquency and divorce.

### *Single Parent and Coparenting*

Single parents are the result of the permanent absence of a parent or partner because of divorce or death. Free (1991) examined literature regarding the single-parent family and delinquency of the children. In his study, he cited the work that Wadsworth had conducted when he compared British males raised in broken homes where the parent did not remarry to those raising children in stepfamilies. The children from the families that did not remarry were less prone to engage in violent activity than were the children from stepfamilies (Free).

Coparenting takes place when the absent parent shares the responsibility of parenting with the custodial parent. Ideally, this is done without either of the parents using the child as a weapon by controlling access to the child by the other parent or by controlling the child with verbal manipulation rather than having face-to-face communication with the other spouse. Failure to coparent puts the child at risk of delinquent behavior because of the potential for anger, resentment, disappointment, and pain (NDSU Extension Service, 1996).

### *Tennessee Families in 2006*

The U.S Census Bureau estimated the census for Tennessee for year 2006 and indicated that Tennessee had 1,292,187 families with children under the age of 18. Of those families, 476,625 (36.9%) were married couples, 52,250 (4.0%) were male without a wife present, 190,169 (14.7%) were female without a husband present, and 573,143 (44.4%) were from other family-of-origin types (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

### *Family Conflict and Delinquency*

DeGenova and Rice (2002) reported the following concerning conflict and children:

When children are involved, conflict necessitates additional considerations. How are children affected by conflict? Are older children and adolescents affected to the same extent as younger children? Should parents quarrel in front of the children? Is it best to try to hide marital problems from the children? These are all questions of great significance for families' and children's well-being. (p. 426)

Conflict can result from several sources. According to DeGenova and Rice (2002), "The family environment is meant to be a place of love, warmth, faith, trust, consideration, and empathy" (p. 426) but frequently becomes a place of anger and discord. Even though parents might attempt to keep marital discord away from the children, the climate of anger and conflict could still exist in the home (DeGenova & Rice).

### *Infidelity, Separation, and Divorce*

Free (1991) cited two studies dealing with divorce and delinquency. According to Free, West and Farrington conducted a study in 1973 of male delinquents in London, England. It was found that the children from divorced homes were more likely to be delinquent than were children from homes where death claimed the life of one of the parents. As reported by Free, a study conducted by Wadsworth in 1979 showed that male children living in homes with a parent who had divorced were more prone to commit serious offenses than were children living in homes where one parent was lost to death.

### *Abuse and Neglect*

In Putman's (2006) study it was reported that more than a million children were abused or neglected annually in the United States, resulting in enormous "...human, social, and fiscal cost" (p. 3). Putman further stated:

Two basic child developmental processes appear to be negatively affected by experiences of child abuse and neglect: Neurodevelopment (the physical and biological growth of the brain, nervous, and endocrine systems) and psychosocial development (personality formation including morals, values, social conduct, capacity for relationships with other

individuals, and respect for social institutions and mores). At some level, neurodevelopment and psychosocial development are inextricably linked in that the brain is the source of an individual's psychological and social behavior. (p. 3)

Garbarino and Guttman (1986) reported their findings concerning abuse:

Once a family becomes high risk and abusive, this tends to maintain or accelerate itself as the adolescent becomes more problematic and intrafamily relationships become more tense and conflictual. These families are characterized by psychopathology, problem behaviors, and malfunctioning relationships as well as instability and uncertainty related to simultaneous adolescence and midlife transitions... These high-risk families are characterized by a disagreement between parents and their adolescents concerning family relationships and the nature and degree of the adolescent's problems. (p. 147)

### *Chemical Abuse*

Finn and Frone (2003) reported that substance use was high in grades 9 through 12. National surveys have demonstrated that drugs and alcohol are readily accessible and present in schools. Finn and Frone in their review reported that over one third of students between ages 12 and 19 stated that it was easy to obtain marijuana in their schools' buildings, grounds, and buses. Students who reported high levels of alcohol use were more likely to be aggressive at school than were those students reporting lower levels of alcohol use (Finn & Frone).

## *Human Development*

### *Early Childhood*

There are many factors that can affect the lives of small children. As early as 3 years of age, a child is capable of displaying an entire range of emotions. These emotions might include anger, pride, shame, or guilt. According to Wasserman et al. (2003), "Parents, teachers, and even peers affect children's socialization of emotional expression and help them learn to manage negative emotions constructively" (p. 3).

### *Preteen Years*

Many studies have focused on behavior inhibitions and activations and their associations with delinquency. In a study cited by Wasserman et al. (2003), it was found that daring behaviors of children between 8 and 10 years of age could predict delinquent behavior prior to age 21. However, anxiety and guilt did not predict delinquent behavior by age 21 (Wasserman et al.). Highly active preteens were more likely to commit delinquent acts by age 12 or 13. On the other hand, physically active teenagers were less likely to drink, smoke, or take health risks than were children who participated in only passive activities (Nelson & Gordon-Larson, 2006).

As reported by the University of Minnesota (2004), Andrew Collins, who was chairperson of the 2004 Children's Summit on Child Psychology at the university, said that researchers maintained the preteen years were significant in the development of children but those years tended to receive less attention than the earlier years or adolescence. He added:

We're finding that a lot of things we attribute to adolescence actually get started in middle childhood ... When things take root in the middle childhood, it's harder to change their course later on. For example, drug use is growing much more rapidly in this age group, and children are beginning violent and criminal behavior earlier – a troubling trend. Proper early intervention, however, can lead to a successful future for these children. If you change the course during middle childhood, it can have big effects later on. (n. p.)

### *Adolescence*

During adolescence, students tend to move away from parental control and protection. These attempts to become more independent, reportedly, could lead to problem behavior and cause the parent to become more controlling of the adolescent. Such discipline allegedly could lead to depression and alienation of the child, causing the child to be more susceptible to substance abuse (Cooney, 1989).

## *Discipline and Delinquency*

### *Theories of Discipline*

Delinquent behavior could result from lack of socialization. Snyder and Patterson (1987) focused on socialization skills. Delinquent behavior could start early as a result of poor socialization skills when dealing with trivial, anti-social behaviors displayed by the child. Such behavior might result in poor interpersonal and work skills that could lead to the risk of rejection. Snyder and Patterson explained, "The rejected child is also likely to associate with other unskilled, coercive children, thereby increasing his opportunities to acquire, perform, and hone antisocial behavior" (p. 216). Continued association with these unskilled, coercive children could increase the frequency of anti-social behavior. According to Snyder and Patterson:

Parents, peers, and other socialization agents do not have a unidirectional effect on the developing child; the effect is reciprocal. The child is both a victim and an architect of his own environment. In terms of the development of antisocial behavior, these processes can be conceptualized as a series of positive feedback loops; inept parenting fosters antisocial child behavior and skills deficits, which child characteristics in turn make parenting more difficult, and so on. Similarly, child antisocial behavior and skills deficits lead to peer rejection, which in turn leads to further antisocial behavior and increasing skills deficits. In this positive feedback process, the problem is exacerbated over time. (p. 237)

### *Parenting Skills*

According to Ebata (1986), students who were active in sports and reportedly did well in school were perceived by their parents as not having problems in school and received less discipline from the parents. However, students who did poorly in school and were not very active were perceived as having additional behavior problems; therefore, they received stricter controlling efforts by the parents. Children who were perceived as having less social competency tended to receive less support from the parents and more discipline. Discipline appeared to be based on the perception of the problem rather than the problem itself. Those children were more prone to have adjustment problems later (Ebata).

Vondra (1989) pointed out:

More significant than the occupational status of father, the educational attainment of the mother, the income or health of the family, are the subjective reactions parents have to the more immediate (economic) conditions of home and family life that these broader socioeconomic indicators only help create. (p. 227)

A common belief has been that families have the most influence on delinquency. Agnew (1953) maintained, “Delinquency was least likely when the quality of family relationship was good and parents attempted to socialize children against delinquency” (p. 139). When parents provided clear rules, monitored behavior, and consistently disciplined deviant behavior, the child was less likely to become delinquent (Agnew).

### *Gangs*

In recent years, gangs have become responsible for much of the crime committed. Until the mid-1980s, a traditional reason for joining gangs was to protect turf. Since then, gangs have been involved frequently in the sale of drugs and other crimes including homicide and violent activity. Studies of gangs and their activities have led to the development of programs for families of troubled youth. These programs have proven to be successful in reducing crime by providing the parents of troubled youth with parenting skills (Christeson & Newman, 2004).

### *Aggressive Behavior*

Finn and Frone (2003) reported a fairly strong relationship between interpersonal aggression and vandalism. They also stated:

Male students were more likely to engage in interpersonal aggression and damage school property than were female students. About 88% of male participants reported verbal and physical fights at school compared to 61% of female participants. Similarly, 58% of male students engaged in acts of vandalism at school compared to 22% of female students. (p. 46)

In addition, rebellious students were more likely to “engage in interpersonal aggression and vandalism at school than students who have lower levels of rebelliousness” (Finn & Frone, p. 46).

## *Bullying*

Wiseman (2002), in *The Hidden World of Bullying*, stated the following regarding bullying:

Until recently, the definition of bullying has been thought of as a bigger boy, often with low social status, physically picking on a smaller boy. But when we define bullying in this manner, we ignore the root causes of bullying, its various forms, and adults' contribution. Bullying's root causes are found on how people--children and adults alike--define who has power, privilege, and respect in our culture. One of the primary ways people define who has power is how our culture defines masculinity and femininity. (p. 19)

Wiseman defined masculinity by "...control over oneself and others" (p. 19). She defined femininity as "the need for male attention for validation and presenting oneself in a non-threatening manner to get that attention" (p. 19).

According to Wiseman (2002), characteristics used to define girls that were part of the "in crowd" included: being pretty, confident, hanging out with the right guys, nice (on the outside), rich, happy, thin, popular, athletic, in control, and having long hair. Terms used to define guys who were part of the in crowd included: strong, in control, rich, has a car, has girls, funny, aggressive, tough, athletic, and confident. Terms used to define students who were in the "out crowd" for girls included: shy, fat, has acne, loner, no style, too opinionated and cause-oriented, and gay. Guys were described as weak unathletic, sensitive, Mama's boy, and tries too hard, gay, acts like a girl, geek-nerdy, and cries. Bullying resulted when students tried to move from the out crowd to the in crowd or when students tried to stay in the in crowd. The desire to be in the in crowd was stronger than the teaching of any adult, parent, teacher, or even the law (Wiseman,).

Will and Neufeld (2002) listed some statements that could suggest to students that bullying is something they must learn to endure. Those statements included:

1. being bullied is just part of growing up;
2. you need to stand up for yourself;
3. boys will be boys;

4. you need to toughen up. Don't be so sensitive;
5. they tease you because they like you; and
6. they're just jealous.

According to Will and Neufeld, when these statements came from someone the students loved or respect, they could lead violent behavior.

### *School and Community*

The majority of a juvenile's time is spent in the school. O'Toole (1999) reported the following in relation to schools and communities:

School shootings and other forms of school violence are not just a school's problem or a law enforcement problem. They involve schools, families, and the communities. An adolescent comes to school with a collective life experience, both positive and negative, shaped by the environments of family, school, peers, community, and culture. Out of that collective experience comes values, prejudices, biases, emotions, and the student's responses to training, stress, and authority. His or her behavior at school is affected by the entire range of experiences and influences. No one factor is decisive. By the same token, however, no one factor is completely without effect, which means that when a student has shown signs of potential violent behavior, schools and other community institutions do have the capacity – and the responsibility — to keep that potential from turning real. (p. 13)

According to O'Toole, when investigating an approach for assessing threats, there are four major areas to consider:

1. personality of the student,
2. family dynamics,
3. school dynamics and the student's role in those dynamics, and
4. social dynamics. (p. 13)

### *School Dynamics*

According to O'Toole (1999):

School dynamics are patterns of behavior, thinking, beliefs, customs, traditions, roles, and values that exist in a school's culture. Some of these patterns can be obvious, and others subtle. Identifying those behaviors that are formally or informally valued and

rewarded in a school could help explain why some students get more approval and attention from school authorities and have more prestige among their fellow students. It can also explain how the “role” of a particular student is given by the school’s culture and how the student may see himself or herself fitting in or failing to fit in with the school’s system... Students and staff may have a very different perception of the culture, customs, and values in their school. (pp. 13-14)

In assessing school dynamics, one must look at several factors when determining the student’s perspective. O’Toole listed the following:

1. student’s attachment to school,
2. tolerance for disrespectful behavior,
3. inequitable discipline,
4. inflexible culture,
5. pecking order among students,
6. code of silence, and
7. unsupervised computer access. (p. 14)

### *Social Dynamics*

According to O’Toole (1999):

Social dynamics are patterns of behavior, thinking, beliefs, customs, traditions, and roles that exist in the larger community where students live. These patterns also have an impact on students’ behavior, their feelings about themselves, their outlook on life, attitudes, perceived options, and lifestyle practices. An adolescent’s beliefs and opinions, his choices of friends, activities, entertainment, and reading material, and his attitudes toward such things as drugs, alcohol, and weapons will all reflect in some fashion the social dynamics of the community where he lives and goes to school. (pp. 13-14)

O’Toole listed the following as factors that have been assessed in the social setting:

1. media, entertainment, technology;
2. peer groups;
3. drugs and alcohol;
4. outside interests; and
5. the copycat effect. (p. 14)

### *Summary*

Although the literature did not provide a distinct profile for adolescents who commit criminal acts, it did, however, provide many factors that could contribute to children's committing criminal acts. Those factors included family background, divorce, family structure, family conflict, behavior of parents, influences on the human development of juveniles, the discipline of the child, and the community in which the child lives.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between family type and criminal behavior of juveniles in Tennessee who have been referred to Juvenile Court in 2006. The data consisted of referrals from the 98 juvenile courts participating in the study that reported their referrals to the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges between January 1, 2006, and December 31, 2006 (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2007).

#### *Juvenile Courts*

Tennessee has 98 juvenile courts with 110 juvenile judges. Seventeen of the courts are designated as “special-act” juvenile courts and 81 are general sessions courts with juvenile jurisdiction. Each of the 95 counties in Tennessee has at least one juvenile court (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2005).

Children under the age of 18 are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court unless they have been previously transferred to the adult court system. Transfer to the adult court system is based the severity of the crime committed by the juvenile (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2005).

The juvenile court has jurisdiction over the following areas:

1. adjudication of children as dependent, neglected, abused, status-unruly or delinquent;
2. determination of custody;
3. termination of parental rights;
4. ordering of treatment, evaluation, or commitment of mentally retarded or mentally ill children;
5. commitment of children to the custody of the Department of Children Services;
6. establishment of parentage;

7. ordering and enforcement of child support for children of unwed parents;
8. establishing visitation for noncustodial parents;
9. enforcement of the compulsory school attendance laws;
10. removal of the age restrictions on a minor's application for a marriage license;
11. giving of judicial consent to a minor's employment or enlistment in the armed services if law requires such consent;
12. giving of judicial consent to the medical treatment of a child when his or her parents or guardians are unable to do so;
13. judicial authorization of an abortion without parental consent;
14. adjudication of alleged traffic violations by persons under the age of 18; and
15. transfer of serious delinquency cases to criminal court for trial as adults. (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2005, p. 8)

### *Geographic Regions*

For this study, the geographic regions were grouped as follows:

#### East Tennessee:

Anderson, Bledsoe, Blount, Bradley, Bristol City, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Franklin, Granger, Greene, Grundy, Hamblen, Hamilton, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson City, Knox, Loudon, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Polk, Rhea, Roane, Scott, Sequatchie, Sevier, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, and Washington Counties.

#### Central Tennessee:

Bedford, Cannon, Cheatham, Clay, Coffee, Cumberland, Davidson, Dekalb, Dickson, Fentress, Giles, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Jackson, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marshall, Maury, Montgomery, Moore, Overton, Perry, Pickett, Putnam, Robertson, Rutherford, Smith, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, Wayne, White, Williamson, and Wilson Counties

#### West Tennessee:

Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Johnson, Lake, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, and Weakley Counties

### *Research Design*

Over the years, there have been numerous changes to the family structure in Tennessee and delinquent behavior is on the rise. This study focused on the association between the family and delinquent behavior of the children referred to the juvenile court system in Tennessee in 2006. The following research questions were used as a guide for completing the study:

1. To what extent, if any, does frequency of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ among family-of-origin types; (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age groups of children (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions (East, Central, West) in Tennessee?
2. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ between family-of-origin types?
3. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ between ages of children?
4. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ among geographic regions in Tennessee?

The following null hypotheses were developed from these four research questions:

Ho1: There is no difference in the frequency of reported criminal activities displayed by children among different family-of-origin types (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age groups of children (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions (East, Central, West) in Tennessee.

Ho2: There is no difference in the criminal behavior types displayed by children of different family-of-origin types.

Ho3: There is no difference in the criminal behavior types displayed by children in different age groups.

Ho4: There is no difference in the criminal behavior types displayed by children in different geographic regions in Tennessee.

### *Population and Data Collection*

The population used in the study was the juveniles who were referred to the Tennessee juvenile courts as reported by the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in 2006. There were 161,631 reported referrals made in 2006. Of the total reported referrals, 78,612 were alleged delinquent offenses that included offenses against persons (10,492), offenses against property (12,512), illegal conduct (53,301), and other (2,307). The total reported referrals also included 25,415 that were status-unruly offenses that would not be offenses if adult had committed them. Status-unruly offenses included truancy (7,312), runaways (3,585), possession of tobacco products (4,250), violation of valid court order (1,524), violations of curfews (2,759), and unruly behavior (5,985). Of the total reported referrals, 57,604 were because of the actions of the parents or custodian and not the children (Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2007). Of these referrals reported to the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 24,972 were diverted from going to juvenile court. For this study, the cases that were diverted were not included in the analysis leaving 79,055 referrals that were tried in juvenile court in Tennessee.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 11.5. The comparisons of results were analyzed using chi-square test statistics and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Data regarding research question #1 were analyzed using a three-factor Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The number of referrals for delinquent behavior for family-of-origin type (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age group (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions in Tennessee (East, Central, and West) was input into SPSS. Descriptive statistics and a three-factor ANOVA were used to determine whether to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis: There is no difference in the frequency of reported criminal activities displayed by children according to family-of-origin type, age group, and geographic regions in Tennessee. The family-of-origin type was examined for interaction with age group and geographic regions in Tennessee. The age group was examined for interaction with family-of-origin type and geographic regions in Tennessee. The geographic regions in Tennessee were examined for interaction with family-of-origin and age group.

Data regarding research question #2 were analyzed using chi-square test statistics. Chi-square test of statistics was used to reject or retain the null hypothesis: There is no difference in the criminal behavior type displayed by children of family-of-origin types.

Data regarding research question #3 were analyzed using chi-square test statistics. Chi-square test of statistics was used to reject or retain the null hypothesis: There is no difference in the criminal behavior type displayed by children of age group.

Data regarding research question #4 were analyzed using chi-square test statistics. Chi-square test of statistics was used to reject or retain the null hypothesis: There is no difference in the criminal behavior type displayed by children by age groups.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this chapter, the research questions presented in Chapter 1 and the hypotheses presented in Chapter 3 are addressed. The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between family type and criminal behavior of juveniles in Tennessee who have been referred to Juvenile Court in 2006. The study involves the data from the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges that were collected from the Tennessee juvenile courts in 2006.

The four research questions formed the basis of the study and development of the null hypotheses used in the study. All calculations were performed using SPSS.

#### *Analysis of Research Questions*

##### *Research Question #1*

To what extent, if any, does frequency of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ among family-of-origin types; (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age groups of children (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions (East, Central, West) in Tennessee?

The null hypothesis developed for research question #1: There is no difference in the frequency of reported criminal activities displayed by children among different family-of-origin types (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age groups of children (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions (East, Central, West) in Tennessee. After reviewing the

data, it was concluded there were insufficient data (> 0.5% of the population) to determine the number of times a referral was made for each individual.

### *Research Question #2*

To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ between family-of-origin types? The null hypothesis Ho2 was developed: There is no difference in the criminal behavior types (offenses against persons, offenses against property, illegal conduct, and status offenses) displayed by children of different family-of-origin types.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether referral types of Tennessee juveniles reported in 2006 varied among family-of-origin types. The two variables used were family-of-origin types (both biological parents, father and stepmother, mother and stepfather, mother only, father only, and other) and the referral reasons (offenses against persons, offenses against property, illegal conduct, and status offenses). Family type and referral type were found to be significantly related, Pearson chi-square test of statistics  $\chi^2 = (15, N = 79,055) = 786.056, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .058$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. Table 1 shows number of referrals within referral reason for the family-of-origin types.

Table 1

*Number of Referrals Within Referral Type by Family-of-Origin Type*

Family-of-Origin Type	Offenses Against Persons	Offenses Against Property	Illegal Conduct	Status Offenses	Total
Both Biological Parents	1,346	1,771	8,358	3,723	15,198
Father and Stepmother	125	143	558	378	1,204
Mother and Stepfather	673	532	1,910	1,217	4,332
Mother Only	4,723	4,677	15,029	9,373	33,802
Father Only	571	730	2,836	1,762	5,899
All Other	<u>2,228</u>	<u>2,216</u>	<u>9,665</u>	<u>4,511</u>	<u>18,620</u>
Totals	9,666	10,069	38,356	20,964	79,055

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference between each pair of variables. Table 2 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all comparisons. All pairwise differences were significant except for the father and stepmother vs. father only comparison. Figure 1 shows percentage of offenses among family-of-origin types.

Table 2

*Results for the Family-of-Origin Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm's Sequential Bonferroni Method*

	Pearson $\chi^2$	<i>P</i> value <i>P</i>	Cramer's <i>V</i>
Both Biological Parents vs. Father and Stepmother	39.53	<.001	.049
Both Biological Parents vs. Mother and Stepfather	240.07	<.001	.111
Both Biological Parents vs. Mother Only	544.20	<.001	.105
Both Biological Parents vs. Father Only	99.55	<.001	.066
Both Biological Parents vs. All Other	92.20	<.001	.052
Father and Stepmother vs. Mother and Stepfather	22.13	<.001	.063
Father and Stepmother vs. Mother Only	20.60	<.001	.024
Father and Stepmother vs. Father Only*	2.11	.551	.017
Father and Stepmother vs. All Other	32.74	<.001	.041
Mother and Stepfather vs. Mother Only	13.74	<.003	.019
Mother and Stepfather vs. Father Only	81.72	<.001	.089
Mother and Stepfather vs. All Other	99.48	<.001	.066
Mother Only vs. Father Only	100.07	<.001	.050
Mother Only vs. All Other	267.54	<.001	.071
Father Only vs. All Other	89.99	<.001	.061

\*Not significant

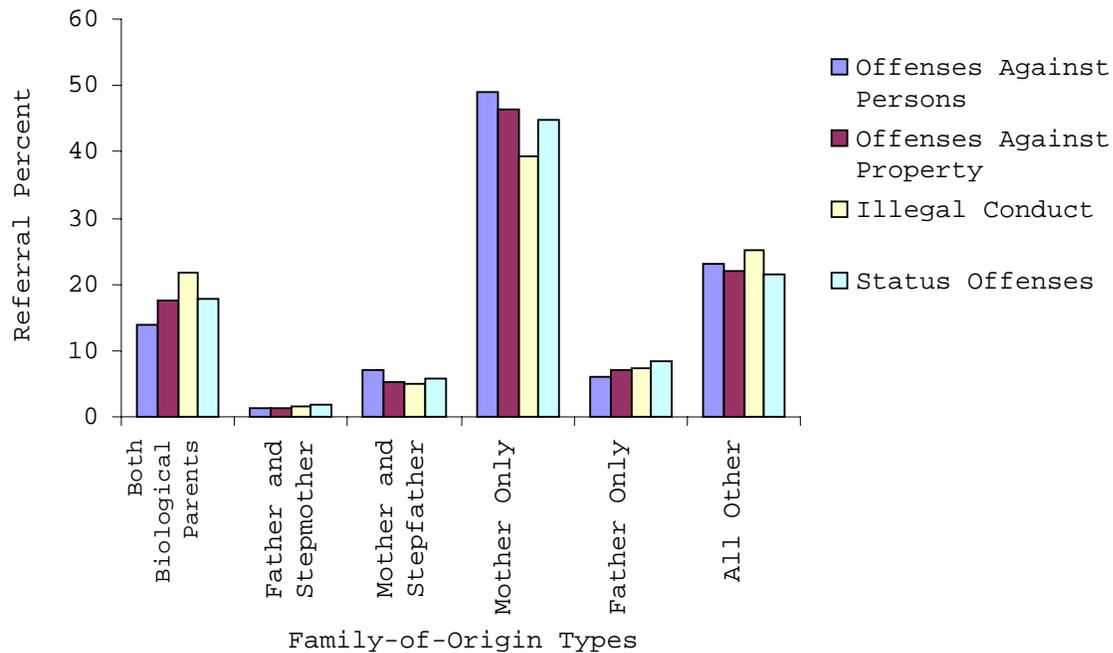


Figure 1. Percentage of Offenses Among Family-of-Origin Types

*Research Question #3*

To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ between age groups of children? The null hypothesis Ho3 was developed: There is no difference in the criminal behavior type displayed by children in different age groups.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether referral types of Tennessee juveniles reported in 2006 varied among age groups. The two variables used were age group (birth to 10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years) and the referral reasons (offenses against persons, offenses against property, illegal conduct, and status offenses). Age group and referral type were found to be significantly related, Pearson chi-square test of statistics  $\chi^2=(6, N =$

79,055) = 2,118.43,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .116$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. See Table 3 for numbers of age groups and referral reasons.

Table 3

*Number of Referral Reasons Within Referral Types by Age Group*

Age Group	Offenses Against Persons	Offenses Against Property	Illegal Conduct	Status Offenses	Total
Birth to 10	140	161	1,064	989	2,263
Age 11-14	2,223	2,169	3,662	3,714	11,768
Age 15-19	<u>7,303</u>	<u>7,739</u>	<u>33,630</u>	<u>16,352</u>	<u>65,024</u>
Total	9,666	10,069	38,356	20,964	79,055

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference between each pair of variables. Table 4 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all comparisons. All pairwise differences were significant.

Table 4

*Results for the Age Group Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm’s Sequential Bonferroni Method*

Comparison	Pearson $\chi^2$	<i>P</i> value	Cramer’s <i>V</i>
Birth to 10 vs. Age 11-14	508.79	<.001	.190
Birth to 10 vs. Age 15-19	282.60	<.001	.065
Age 11-14 vs. Age 15-19	1,828.13	<.001	.154

Figure 2 shows the proportion of referrals reasons by age group.

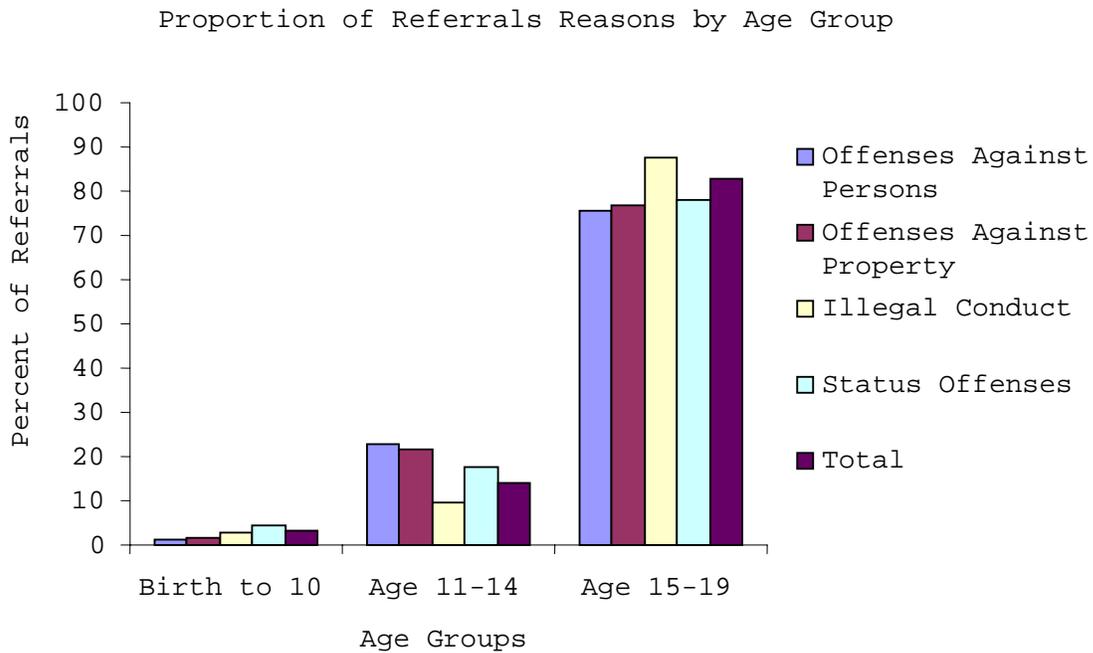


Figure 2. Proportion of Referral Reasons Within Referral Types by Age Group

Because more than 75% of the referrals were for the age group of 15-19, additional study was done for the teenage children. The null hypothesis Ho3<sub>1</sub> was developed: There is no difference in the criminal behavior type displayed by children of ages 13 through 19. A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether referral types of Tennessee juveniles reported in 2006 varied among ages. The two variables used were ages (13 through 19) and the referral reasons (offenses against persons, offenses against property, illegal conduct, and status offenses). Age 13 through 19 and referral type were found to be significantly related, Pearson chi-square test of statistics  $\chi^2 = (18, N = 74,698) = 3,868.73, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .131$ . The null hypothesis Ho3<sub>1</sub> was rejected. See Table 5 for number of referrals by age and referral reasons.

Table 5

*Number of Referral Reasons Within Referral Types by Ages*

Age	Offenses Against Persons	Offenses Against Property	Illegal Conduct	Status Offenses	Total
Age 13	260	299	414	480	1,453
Age 14	625	615	1,009	1,034	3,283
Age 15	1,223	1,107	2,058	1,934	6,322
Age 16	1,679	1,598	3,616	3,267	10,160
Age 17	2,002	2,073	7,046	4,505	15,626
Age 18	2,181	2,319	12,246	5,355	22,101
Age 19	<u>1,325</u>	<u>1,579</u>	<u>9,810</u>	<u>3,039</u>	<u>15,753</u>
Total	9,295	9,590	36,199	19,314	74,698

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference between each pair of variables. Table 6 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all comparisons. All pairwise differences were significant.

Table 6

*Results for Ages 13-19 Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm's Sequential Bonferroni Method*

Comparison	Pearson $\chi^2$	<i>P</i> value <i>P</i>	Cramer's <i>V</i>
Age 13 vs. Age 14*	4.91	<.187	.032
Age 13 vs. Age 15	15.85	.001	.045
Age 13 vs. Age 16	38.49	<.001	.058
Age 13 vs. Age 17	169.00	<.001	.099
Age 13 vs. Age 18	435.95	<.001	.136
Age 13 vs. Age 19	643.99	<.001	.193
Age 14 vs. Age 15*	4.72	.194	.194
Age 14 vs. Age 16	40.09	<.001	.055
Age 14 vs. Age 17	270.58	<.001	.120
Age 14 vs. Age 18	788.56	<.001	.175
Age 14 vs. Age 19	1,142.91	<.001	.245
Age 15 vs. Age 16	38.60	<.001	.048
Age 15 vs. Age 17	362.05	<.001	.128
Age 15 vs. Age 18	1,157.36	<.001	.202

Table 6 (continued)

Comparison	Pearson $\chi^2$	<i>P</i> value <i>P</i>	Cramer's <i>V</i>
Age 15 vs. Age 19	1,672.07	<.001	.275
Age 16 vs. Age 17	242.69	<.001	.097
Age 16 vs. Age 18	1,134.59	<.001	.188
Age 16 vs. Age 19	1,783.54	<.001	.262
Age 17 vs. Age 18	396.73	<.001	.1
Age 17 vs. Age 19	942.20	<.001	.173
Age 18 vs. Age 19	198.58	<.001	.072

\*Not significant

The number of referrals for ages 13 through 19 was analyzed and plotted on a line graph to show the trend of referrals for this age group. Figure 3 illustrates the trends of the referrals for this age group.

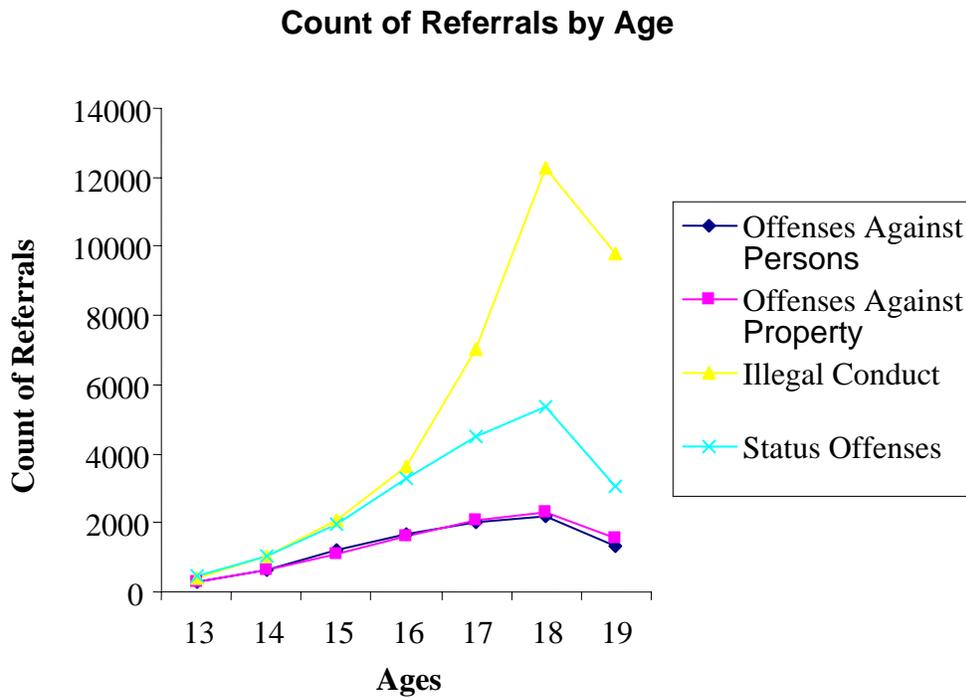


Figure 3. Number of Referral Reasons by Age

#### Research Question #4

To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ among geographic regions in Tennessee? The null hypothesis Ho4 was developed. There is no difference in the criminal behavior types displayed by children in different geographic regions in Tennessee.

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether referral types of Tennessee juveniles reported in 2006 varied among geographic regions of Tennessee. The two variables used were geographic regions (East, Central, and West Tennessee) and the referral reasons (offenses against persons, offenses against property, illegal conduct, and status offenses). Geographical regions and referral type were found to be significantly related, Pearson chi-square

test of statistics  $\chi^2 = (6, N = 79055) = 2722.007, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .131$ . The null hypothesis was rejected. See Table 7 for the number of referrals.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2006) indicated that Tennessee's estimated population was 5,692,661. East Tennessee has a population of 2,236,315 (39%), Central Tennessee has a population of 1,890,845 (33%), and West Tennessee has a population of 1,565,501 (28%). Table 7 shows that a larger number of referrals was in the East Tennessee region that also has the largest population, whereas the least number of referrals was from the West Tennessee region, which also has the smallest population.

Table 7

*Number of Referral Reasons Within Referral Types by Geographical Regions in Tennessee.*

Regions	Offenses Against Persons	Offenses Against Property	Illegal Conduct	Status Offenses	Total
East Tennessee	2,825	3,513	15,467	9,601	31,406
Central Tennessee	2,780	2,875	13,541	7,674	26,870
West Tennessee	<u>4,061</u>	<u>3,681</u>	<u>9,348</u>	<u>3,689</u>	<u>20,779</u>
Total	9,666	10,069	38,356	20,964	79,055

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference between each pair of variables. Table 8 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all comparisons. All pairwise differences were significant. Figure 4 shows the referral types by regions of Tennessee

Table 8

*Results for Geographic Regions in Tennessee Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm’s Sequential Bonferroni Method*

Comparison	Pearson $\chi^2$	P value <i>P</i>	Cramer’s <i>V</i>
East Tennessee vs. Central Tennessee	115.69	<.001	.026
East Tennessee vs. West Tennessee	4,637.07	<.001	.176
Central Tennessee vs. West Tennessee	3,564.71	<.001	.163

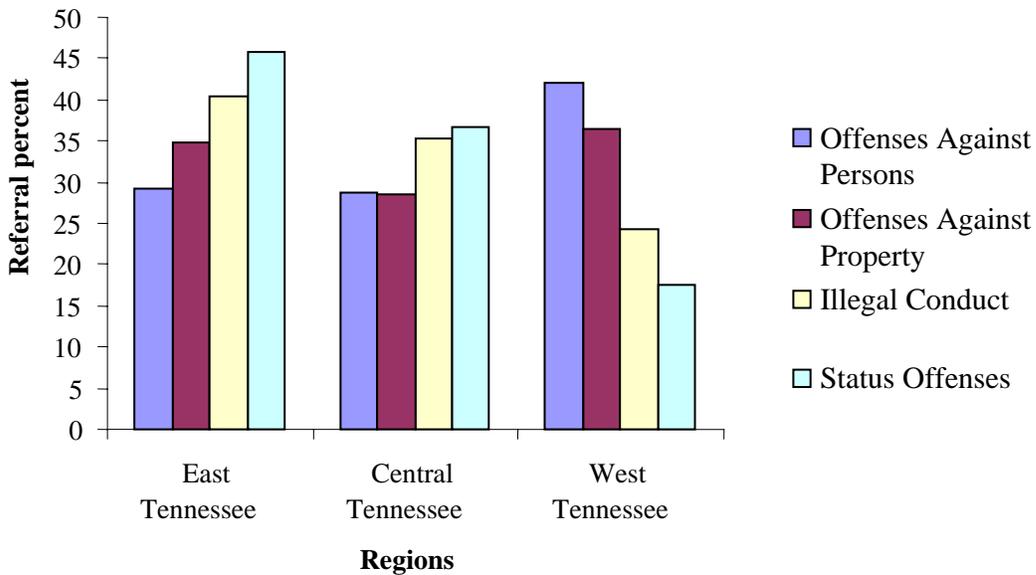


Figure 4. Referral Types by Regions of Tennessee

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of the study. Along with a summary of the findings, the conclusions and recommendations for further study are provided.

#### *Summary of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between family type and criminal behavior of juveniles in Tennessee who have been referred to Juvenile Court in 2006. The data used in the study were collected by the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges as reported by the juvenile judges in Tennessee during the 2006 calendar year.

Four research questions formed the basis of the study:

1. To what extent, if any, does frequency of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ among family-of-origin types; (both biological parents, biological father and stepmother, biological mother and stepfather, mothers only, fathers only, other); age groups of children (birth-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-19 years); and geographic regions (East, Central, West) in Tennessee?
2. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behaviors displayed by children differ between family-of-origin types?
3. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ between ages of children?
4. To what extent, if any, do the types of reported criminal behavior displayed by children differ among geographic regions in Tennessee?

The significance of the study was to provide social workers, counselors, parents, school administrators, and teachers with insights regarding the associations among the types of family origins and the referral numbers and types of juvenile behavior. The study was also done to

assist juvenile treatment program staff in providing appropriate counseling for children demonstrating criminal behavior.

### *Summary of the Literature*

The review of literature showed that the breakdown of the family was associated by many researchers with an increase in criminal behavior of the children. A study of literature also addressed the various family types and their association with negative influence on the behavior of the children.

The literature highlighted several findings that influenced children's behavior. As children develop, they need their parents' affirmations of adoration, love, value, approval, and acceptance of the children in their family (DeGenova & Rice, 2002). The Americans for Divorce Reform (2006) reported that children of single-parent or nonintact families were more prone to commit delinquent activities. The study supported the literature indicating the importance of the father being present in the child's life as a factor in reducing delinquent behavior (Obsatz, 2001). Cohabitation was also associated with higher incidents of delinquency than found in an intact family (Woods & Emery 2002). The study supports the literature that indicated that failure of coparenting makes children of single-parent families more prone to delinquent behavior (NDSU Extension Service, 2006).

This study also supports the literature that indicated the importance of parental interaction with children as they go through the various developmental stages. Adolescents tend to move away from parental control and toward independence; this could lead to delinquent behavior (Cooney, 1989). Poor parenting skills might also increase the conflict for control that exists between children and parents (Ebata, 1986). Adolescents tend to desire being in the in-crowd. This desire can be stronger than the teaching from adults (Wiseman, 2002).

### *Summary of the Findings*

The findings of this study support the literature in showing that family-of-origin, age group, and regions tend to influence the criminal behavior of children.

#### *Research Question #1*

The answer to research question #1 remains unclear. The data used in the study were for calendar year 2006 only and did not include the number of previous referrals for each case. While a small number of cases (> 0.5% of the total population) were referred as many as five times in 2006, it did not mean that there were more referrals for those cases than for the cases where only one referral was made in 2006. The referrals in previous years used different criteria; therefore, they were not available in a format that could be linked with the data used in the study.

#### *Research Question #2*

The second question was supported by all pairwise interactions except for father and stepmother and father only. This lack of difference coupled with the generally positive results associated with the presence of both biological parents tends to support the idea that the father's relationship with the child is helpful in preventing criminal behavior of the child. Table 1 showed that the number of referrals made for family-of-origin types where the biological father was present tended to be lower than situations where the biological father was not present. The presence of a stepfather also tended to substantially reduce criminal behavior of children.

Table 1 also showed that the presence of the biological mother only was associated with a higher number of referrals than was any of the other family-of-origin types. Conversely, the presence of a biological father and stepmother tended to reflect a lower numbers of referrals than did any of the other family-of-origin types.

The results of this study tend to oppose the idea that was presented in the literature that indicated children from the single-parent families in which the custodial parent did not remarry were less prone to engage in violent activity than were the children from stepfamilies (Free,

1991). As shown in Table 1, single mothers had a larger number of referrals than any other family-of-origin category, whereas the biological father and stepmother tend to have the smaller number of referrals than any other family-of-origin category. It would appear that perhaps the presence of the biological father was more important than the remarriage of the biological mother.

The number of referrals for the mothers only family-of-origin type in this study appear to be higher than expected. To support the findings of this study, the decision was made to compare the number of referrals to the family-of-origin types with referrals and to all of the family-of-origin types in Tennessee. The data were regrouped using the U.S. Census Bureau's family-of-origin types (married couples, father only, mother only, and other). Table 9 shows the percentages of referrals as they relate to both family-of-origin types.

To make a comparison of each family-of-origin type that had referrals to the juvenile courts (F-of-O With Referrals), and each family-of-origin type for all of Tennessee (F-of-O for All TN), the number of referrals was divided by the number of family-of-origin types for all of Tennessee. Table 9 shows a comparison of family-of-origin type that had referrals to the juvenile courts (F-of-O With Referrals) to the family-of-origin type for all of Tennessee (F-of-O for All TN). For the family-of-origin types with referrals to the juvenile courts (F-of-O With Referrals), 20,734 (26.2%) of the referrals came from married couples, 5,899 (7.5%) of the referrals came from fathers only, 33,802 (42.8%) of the referrals came from mothers only, and 18,620 (23.6%) of the referrals came from other family-of-origin type. For all family-of-origin types in Tennessee (F-of-O for All TN) with referrals to the juvenile court system, 20,734 (4.4%) of the married couples had referrals, 5,899 (11.3%) of the fathers only had referrals, 33,802 (17.8%) of the mothers only had referrals, and 18,620 (3.2%) of the other family-of-origin type had referrals.

Table 9

*Comparison Between Family-of-Origin With Referrals and All Family-of-Origin Types in Tennessee*

	# of F-of-O Types with Referrals	% of F-of-O Types with Referrals	# of TN F-of-O Types	% of All TN F-of-O Types That Had Referrals
Married-Couple Family	20,734	26.2	476,625	4.4
Father Only	5,899	7.5	52,250	11.3
Mother Only	33,802	42.8	190,169	17.8
Other	<u>18,620</u>	<u>23.6</u>	<u>573,143</u>	<u>3.2</u>
Totals	79,055	100.0	1,292,187	6.1

Table 9 compares the percentages of referrals contributed by the four family-of-origin types. When looking at the percentages of referrals for family-of-origin types with referrals mothers only family-of-origin type has the highest percent of referrals, married-couple family-of-origin type has second highest percent followed by other family-of-origin, with fathers only family-of-origin type having the lowest percent of referrals for the family-of-origin type with referrals. When looking at the percentages for all family-of-origin types living in Tennessee, mothers only family-of-origin type also has the highest percent of referrals, fathers only family-of-origin type has the second highest, followed by married couples with other family-of-origin type having the lowest percent.

Figure 5 illustrates the changes in percentages of referrals contributed by family-of-origin types, when comparing the number of referrals contributed by the family-of-origin types with referrals to all family-of-origins living in Tennessee.

### Proportion of Referrals Comparison

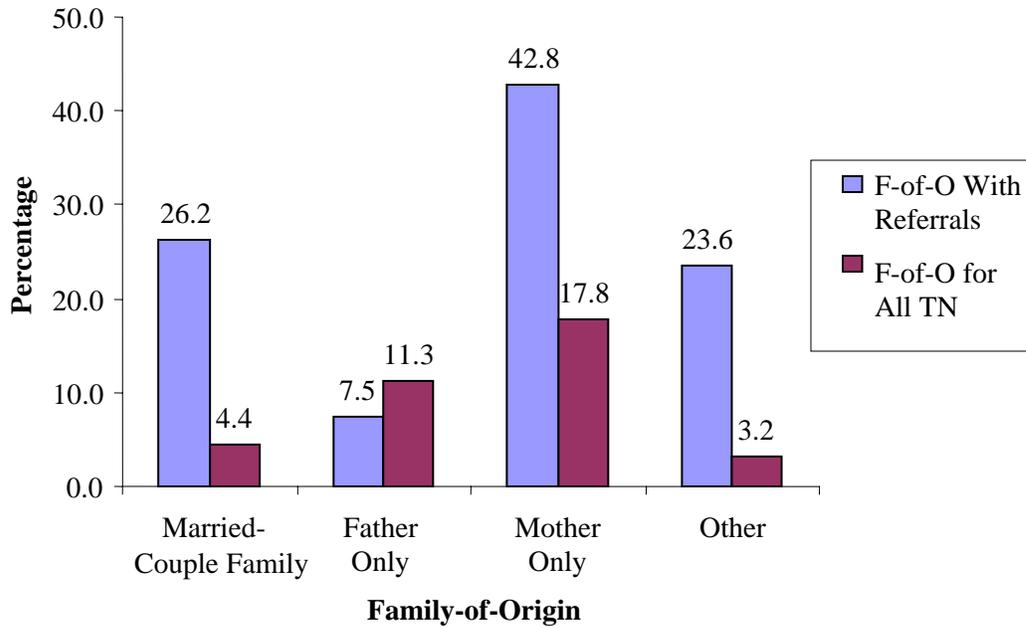


Figure 5. Referrals as They Relate to Family-of-Origin Types With Referrals and All Family-of-Origin Types Living in Tennessee

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2006)

#### Research Question #3

The findings from the study regarding research question #3 indicate that the criminal behavior tends to increase with the age of the children. However, as shown in Table 3, the majority of the referrals (82.7%) were for Tennessee's children in the age group of 15-19 years. A further study of the 13-19 age groups also indicates that the criminal behavior of the teenagers tends to increase substantially as the children grew older. Figure 3 shows that criminal behavior begins to decrease between ages 18 and 19. However, this decrease could have been the result of those children being charged for more serious crimes in adult court rather than in juvenile court.

Figure 3 also presented a change in the type of referrals made as the children became older. Referrals for offenses against persons, which included criminal homicide, assault, rape, etc., were the lowest number for all ages. The number of referrals for offenses against property, which included burglary, arson, vandalism, etc., was second lowest in all age groups. In addition, the referrals for status offenses, including runaways, truancy, unruly behavior, etc., were the highest type of referrals for the younger teenage children, and referrals for illegal conduct, including possession or sale of controlled substances, disorderly conduct, criminal trespass, etc., were the highest for the older teenage children. Referrals for offenses against persons and offenses against property showed an increase with age of the children. This study supports Cooney's (1989) notion regarding adolescents' tendency to move away from parental control to that of independence thus leading to delinquent behavior.

Between the ages of 16 and 18, there is a marked increase in the illegal conduct of children. This change could be the result of students becoming bored in school, increasing their dependency on drugs, becoming more involved in gang activity, or other changes in school dynamics (O'Toole, 1999).

The drop in referrals after age 18 could be the result of the way those crimes are recorded by the court system rather than a change in children's behavior. However, the maturity of the children might tend to reduce the display of criminal activity.

Results of this study show the reported display of criminal behavior of the children increased dramatically after age 14. This could result from the way that criminal behavior of children under 14 was dealt with by parents and society or the children's lack of ability to carry out criminal activity.

#### *Research Question #4*

Research question #4 was supported by the research as shown in Figure 4. East Tennessee has the highest number of reported referrals for status offenses, whereas West Tennessee has the lowest number of reported referrals for status offenses. East Tennessee has

the highest percentage of status offenses for the three regions, and West Tennessee has the highest percent of offenses against persons.

Figure 4 also showed that East Tennessee had the highest percentage of status offenses and the lowest percentage of offenses against persons, while West Tennessee had the highest percentage of offenses against persons and the lowest percentage of status offenses.

#### *Value of the Study*

This study should provide social workers, counselors, parents, school administrators, and teachers with a better understanding of children regarding the associations among the family-of-origin types and the referrals numbers and types of juvenile referrals made to Tennessee Juvenile Courts. The results of the study are also useful in family and child counseling to prevent criminal behavior by providing a better understanding of the association of the family-of-origin types with criminal behavior. This study provides information that could assist juvenile treatment facility staff in developing treatment programs appropriate for the children of various family-of-origin types in Tennessee. The result of this study could also assist juvenile treatment program staff in providing appropriate counseling for students as it relates to the family-of-origin type that the child lived in prior to placement.

#### *Recommendations for Further Study*

A number of additional studies should be conducted. The number of referrals that a child receives over time should be tallied to determine if the punishment for criminal activity is effective in preventing the reoccurrence of criminal behavior and how that behavior is associated with the family-of-origin types. The study could also show if the criminal behavior of the child was changed as a result of maturing. A follow-up study of those children at some future point would be helpful in determining if the amount of criminal activity changes as the children mature.

Another study should be conducted to address issues relating to quality of life and what can be done to improve the quality of life in the family-of-origin. The study could also show interaction between quality of life of family-of-origin types and criminal behavior of the children.

Another study that is recommended would be the coparenting involvement in the discipline of the child. Because the number of criminal behaviors displayed by children living with the mother only was substantially higher than for other family-of-origin types, it would be helpful to know the effect and extent of the father's involvement in the child's life.

Further study should also be done regarding the more nontraditional types of living arrangements of the children. It should examine the length of time in each type of living arrangement and the age of the children when the living arrangement changed.

Another study that is recommended is an examination of the reasons and the lengths of time the children lived with their mother. Is the child reacting to another event in the life of his or her family or was it the result of living only with the mother? Is the conscious decision of the mother to remain single and raise children affecting the behavior of the child?

Expanding the study to other states could be beneficial. This would be useful in determining if the behavior is representative of juvenile behavior in other states or if it is unique to Tennessee.

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