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## **The relationship between race and delinquency and the factors that influence disproportionate minority contact in Missouri**

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Disproportionate Minority Contact has been an issue in Missouri since the 1980s, when reports were released claiming that there was a greater amount of minority youth coming in contact with the juvenile justice system than Caucasian youth (OJJDP, 2004). DMC studies prior to this project include initiatives supported by Jackson and St. Louis County to address disproportionate minority contact. This study focuses on the risk factors that drive children to delinquent behavior, and eventually their interactions with law enforcement. This study looked at a data set of 1633 delinquents in 13 counties in Missouri. Hirschi theorized along with Gottfredson that a child's criminal propensity is fairly fixed by age 10. Once established, these propensities do not change (Winfrey, Taylor, He, & Esbensen, 2006). Approximately one-third of the children in the data sets analyzed for this research first came in contact with the justice system at the age of 12, with the rest of the ages dispersed between 13 and 16 years old. A chi-square analysis revealed that family issues, including parental incarceration and a poor social support structure, may put an African American child at greater risk for delinquency than a Caucasian youth (OSCA, 2001). This study is part of the assessment and diagnosis process, which is also being carried out by other researchers. Following this process, an intervention phase will begin to address disproportionality within the state, which will include a presentation of this information at a conference. After evaluating the results yielded by this study, a monitoring process will be established so as to help reduce future occurrences of DMC in the Missouri juvenile justice system. However, more research is needed to further address DMC within the state of Missouri, and as members of law enforcement and the justice system come together with a better understanding of the data that has been presented, these efforts will have a greater impact on their future actions in the juvenile justice and court system.