Contents

List of Tables and Figures *ix*
Foreword *xiii*
Acknowledgments *xvii*

1 **Introduction** 1

The Role of Environmental Forces, 5
The Application of the Ecological Method, 6

2 **Child Protection in the U.S.: A System in Crisis** 10

3 **Rival Theories and Previous Research** 14

Psychodynamic vs. Sociological Theory, 14
Adolescent Pregnancy and Illegitimate Birth, 22
Divorce and Marital Discord, 24
The Single-Parent Family, 24
Economic Status, 25
Education, 30

4 **Findings** 31

The Population at Risk, 31
Sparsely Populated Counties, 32
Characteristics of Abusive and Neglectful Families, 33
County Group Comparisons, 34
Environmental Variable Correlation with
Child Maltreatment Rules, 42
Multiple Regression of Rates of Reported Child
Maltreatment on Environmental Variables, 43
Discrimination of Risk, 66

5 **Discussion of Study Results** 77

Family Structure and the Ability to Provide, 77
The Influence of Adolescent Pregnancy, 78
Forms of Child Maltreatment, 80
Child Protection Laws, Interstate Variance, 80

6 **Recommendations** 85

Refocusing Service: A Comprehensive Stress Model, 85
Large-Scale Ecological Study, 87
Exploring Relations Among Rival Etiological Theories, 89
Increasing the Suitability of Public Data Sets for Comparative Analyses, 91

7 **Conclusion** 94

Appendix A 98
References 114
Index 135

Tables and Figures

Tables

4.1	Comparisons Between Counties Grouped by Population on 33 Environmental Variables	36
4.2	Simple Correlations Between Child Maltreatment Rates and 33 Environmental Variables for All Counties	44
4.3	Simple Correlations Between Child Maltreatment Rates and 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population Under 50,000	46
4.4	Simple Correlations Between Child Maltreatment Rates and 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000-99,000	48
4.5	Simple Correlations Between Child Maltreatment Rates and 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 100,000+	50
4.6	Simple Correlations Between Child Maltreatment Rates and 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000+	52
4.7	Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables	54
4.8	Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for All Counties	55
4.9	Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population Under 50,000	55
4.10	Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000-99,999	56
4.11	Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 100,000+	56

4.12 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000+ 57

4.13 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Neglect on 33 Environmental Variables for All Counties 57

4.14 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Neglect on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population Under 50,000 58

4.15 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Neglect on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000-99,999 58

4.16 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Neglect on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 100,000+ 59

4.17 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Neglect on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000+ 59

4.18 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Physical Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for All Counties 59

4.19 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Physical Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population Under 50,000 60

4.20 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Physical Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000-99,999 60

4.21 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Physical Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 100,000+ 61

4.22 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Physical Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000+ 61

4.23 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Sexual Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for All Counties 61

4.24 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Sexual Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population Under 50,000 62

4.25 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Sexual Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000-99,999 62

4.26 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Sexual Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 100,000+ 62
4.27 Forward Stepwise Regression of Rates of Reported Child Sexual Abuse on 33 Environmental Variables for Counties with Population 50,000+ 63
4.28 Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on Economic, Educational, and Family Structural Variables 64
4.29 Intra-State Correlations Between Child Maltreatment Rates and 33 Environmental Variables for All Counties 70
4.30 Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for the 25 New York State Counties with More than 100,000 Residents in 1980 76
4.31 Regression of Rates of Reported Child Maltreatment on 33 Environmental Variables for the 177 Counties of the States of Missouri and New York in 1980 76

Figures

4.1 Stacked histogram for canonical discriminant function of classification of counties with high vs. low rates of child maltreatment on the basis of 33 environmental variables 68
4.2 Actual reports of maltreatment per 1000 children vs. estimated rates based on characteristics of the 62 New York State counties in 1980 73
4.3 Actual reports of maltreatment per 1000 children vs. estimated rates based on characteristics of the 25 New York State counties with more than 100,000 residents in 1980 74
4.4 Actual reports of maltreatment per 1000 children vs. estimated rates based on characteristics of the 115 Missouri state counties in 1980 75