Sociology Insights

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Juvenile Offending and Racial Threat: A Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Offenders, Age, and Crime

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Abstract

The fear and reprisal of minority crime is at issue in most criminal justice administrations throughout the United States. As racial threat theory posits, minority population increases lead to political motivation to increase the presence of police agencies and expenditures to control the rise in minority populations in communities. This ideal will be brought out by looking at the increasing Hispanic populations in the South and how they may influence police functions. This project will examine juvenile populations as they increase or decrease according to race and ethnicity in the 35 largest cities in Texas. UCR data was collected to observe juvenile populations and their racial/ethnic make-up as compared to the crime rates in the afore-mentioned cities.

Keywords: Juvenile Offending; Minority Crime; Racial Threat Theory; Minority Populations

Introduction

Racial and ethnic offending research has been at issue for many years at the adult and national level. And, juvenile offending by race and ethnicity is common when observing juveniles and their propensity to commit violent crimes. But what is lacking is when one observes juvenile population level increases and decreases in accordance to race and ethnicity and their offending in that population. It is viable to examine the offending rates of juveniles by race/ethnicity and how they compare to the actual juvenile population levels to get a better understanding of what groups are committing crimes at what rates within their own racial or ethnic groups as well as the juvenile population as a whole.

Studies have attempted to explain why minority youths are prone to commit more crime than their white counterparts. Included in Wolfgang and Feracuti's (1967) subculture of violence theory, minority youths, especially blacks, are susceptible to communal mores and customs that are contributing to their violent behaviour.

It is this subculture that develops and passes on the nature to offend creating an environment of perceived lawlessness [1]. Blalock [2] presented his argument in his racial threat thesis by including that increased minority encroachment on typically white geographic areas increases political pressure on criminal justice administrations to create laws that increase the social control of minorities in the community. With juvenile populations increasing across America and minority populations increasing at rates many times ten times that of the normal population [3], minority juveniles have become a factor that must be addressed by police and other criminal justice agencies.

And, the criminal threat is nothing new to American society when examining minority presence. From the early days where European immigrants entered the northeast, racial and ethnicity differences held many suspect of criminality. Was it the different cultures and how they interacted that created a fear of the unknown or were the immigrants that came to America prone to illegal conduct that legitimized the fear of crime? In the later years of the 1950's and 1960's as civil rights movements were coming to the forefront, the fear of black men as they were related to criminal activity became paramount. James Q. Wilson included that "it is not racism that makes whites uneasy about blacks, but it is fears…Fear of crime, drugs, gangs, and violence [4]. But do minorities really commit more crimes or is the perceived threat of crime guiding legislation and policy makers to channel efforts into racial and ethnic minority communities?

When one examines national reports on juvenile crime trends, it does not take long to realize that blacks [5, 6], and to some extent Hispanics [7], are arrested for far more crimes than their percentage in the population affords. In many cases, blacks are arrested at a rate that is five or six times that of their percentage in the total population in the United States [8, 9]. And minorities have a far greater chance of being victims of crime, especially violent crime, than whites [9, 10]. Explanations for this phenomenon are many. One can look at current drug laws

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with disparities in sentencing for supposed street drugs and higher level drugs [11-13], legislation that has been enacted to control gangs and gang violence [14], and increasing numbers of juveniles that are living in poverty and in disseminating neighbourhoods and inner-city communities [14, 15].

What is the relationship with minorities and crime? Are these afore-mentioned crimes minority prone as a population or are crimes place oriented as has been presented by Chiricos [16] and earlier by Shaw and McKay (1942) with minority populations being caught in the vacuum of criminal perceptions by race and ethnicity? Recognizing these factors, the current research will examine earlier explanations through a review of previous writings. Racial threat theory will be included in the attempt to explain how and why the criminal justice system answers these perceptions or threat of criminality by black and Hispanic juveniles. In addition, we will look at the relationship between juvenile population and the rate at which juveniles commit crime by using FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) data that was obtained for 35 of the largest cities in Texas. The study will encompass a fifteen-year span from 1990 to 2004 to compare the racial trends of juvenile offenders with the racial trends of the surrounding population utilizing U.S. Census data.

The project will include white, black, and Hispanic juvenile arrest counts and rates as operationalized into three categories of drug crime, violent crime, and property crime respectively for ages 10 to 17 years. As most studies only include racial analysis with white and black juveniles, the current research included a third ethnic variable of Hispanics, as they are the fastest growing minority population in the United States [16, 7].

There is relevance of including Hispanics in this study as their group is largely predominant in the southern and western parts of the United States [17] and as will be demonstrated in the study, Hispanics are again the fastest growing juvenile population in Texas. UCR Reports include Hispanics in the white arrest count when considering race but this was thought to challenge the legitimacy of the study as this inflates actual arrests of whites when Hispanics are not controlled for. We included Hispanics as an ethnicity to examine the differing arrest counts and rates in comparison to those of whites and black juveniles. In conclusion, we will discuss the results of the analyses as they relate to juvenile offending and racial trends in the population at hand.

Racial Threat Thesis

Hubert Blalock developed racial threat theory in his writings in 1967. With this, he associated minority group populations and geographic areas with levels of social control from the government [2]. This conflict perspective has been used to test many aspects of policing and social control including arrest rates [18-21], police use of force [18, 22, 23], police size [24, 25], as well as issues in corrects such as incarceration rates and the death penalty [20].

But what is racial threat hypothesis and how does it apply to criminal justice agencies and their daily routines. Minority threat and racial issues are aspects that still divide social and political entities in many areas with criminal justice taking no exception. As mentioned afore, race-based studies have examined many areas of policing. Blalock's theory posits that as black populations increase in size in a given geographic area, the status quo or the dominant groups feel threatened by their increasing presence generating laws and rules to control the lesser groups [2]. The dominant group's beliefs and assumptions of normality are assumed to be violated as the threat increases [24, 27, 28].

The increase of a minority class sends signals to the majority groups of a sense of loss of control and the "potential for lawlessness" [28]. With this, laws are passed to squelch minority encroachment [24], pressure is increased on political offices [19] and power thresholds of the majority are increased to maintain the existing perception of control [2]. The trickle-down effect of these pressures many times falls squarely on the shoulders of the police to enforce new laws and social controls put in place by political ideologies [29, 30]. [2] Blalock's thesis foresees these increased controls as the predicts of racial threat theory largely support the research that suggests this premise.

Review of Literature

The racial and ethnic trends of juvenile offenders, when compared to that of the population, are a phenomenon that is not entirely new to the works of researchers in criminal justice [9, 14, 31-34]. But what is dissimilar about the current research is its utilization of regional UCR data in Texas to analyse juvenile populations as they rise and fall in accordance with the racial and ethnic percentages in that population. What national data loses are the individual differences that may be observed by examining neighbourhoods outside the normal context of where most think minorities live. By characteristic, many minorities live in large cities and inner-city neighbourhoods [9, 35], which may cloud the reality of what is happening in smaller areas of the country. Additionally, the risk of under-representing minority groups such as Hispanics is imminent, as many live outside of large urban areas in rural and suburban neighbourhoods and communities [7, 9, 36]. Also, by examining national data, one may lose the regional differences in the population's race and ethnicity. [16] It used this method in studying racial and ethnic composition of areas in Florida and perceived crime risks. Although different in scope as they examined how racial/ethnic differences influenced fear of crime, the ideal behind how crime may affect certain areas due to racial/ethnic compositions still stands.

The drug war of the 1980's and 1990's has highlighted the minority offending in staggering numbers [13, 33, 34, 36] as prisons have been filled with blacks and more recently Hispanics. Criminal justice policy has been altered time and again due to new legislative actions that increase sentencing guidelines and mandatory sentences [11, 13]. The impact of drug laws on minorities has been the result of blacks and Hispanics being arrested in disproportionate numbers. Although violent crime fuels the fire for fear or perceived

fear of crime [31, 32, 38, 39], the arrests for drug crimes far outnumber that of violent crimes [13]. Media attention, citizens' complaints, and police attitudes toward juvenile drug offenders increases the negative discernment that pushes harsher, and may times biased punishments on juveniles [6, 11, 13, 14, 31, 40, 41]. The inability of lawmakers, scholars, and criminal justice personnel to come to agreement on the issues of race, ethnicity, and crime still energizes the debate and the literature that follows.

What do we know about race, ethnicity, drugs, and crime and how it affects crime rates, and in the case of this research, juvenile crime? There seems to be no clear-cut answer to why juveniles do what they do. Additionally, there is no clear solution as to racial and ethnic differences when examining differences in crime and the actors in the population [34].

Race and ethnic difference as set up in the United States are divided by two factors. Race refers to a person's skin color and ethnicity refers to the country where a person is from [33, 42]. According to UCR data, race refers to black, white, American Indian, and Asian Pacific. This research did not include the latter two as the numbers of juvenile offenders were nominal and were not significant. Ethnicity is separated as white Hispanic and non-white Hispanic. This encompasses a wide array of individuals with the only separating factor being Spanish-speaking ability. The classification of Hispanics has been criticized as being a political or administrative [34] severance. With the large rise in Hispanic populations [7, 16, 17, 36] and just under 35% under the age of 18 years [18], they have become the largest minority group in the United States. And with nearly 90% of Hispanics living in the south and west [3], the percentage of the juvenile population that is Hispanic is sure to continually increase.

Tracking juvenile offending is troubling to many researchers. The question of whether to rely on official data such as the FBI's UCR reports that is limited to whether apprehended offenders "differ in some way" from non-apprehended offenders [34]. Additionally, UCR only reports crimes reported to the police and if a minority offender is arrested many times in one year as some juveniles are, they become over-represented in the statistical data [37, 43].

In return, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) estimates juvenile crime in another fashion. Surveys are sent to households around the country questioning if the person has been a victim of a crime. Some say this is a better way to measure juvenile crime, as it not limited only to crimes that come to the attention of the police [37, 43]. This measurement is also not without faults as underreporting of offenses such as those where family are involved [34] and overstating criminal activity are concerns to validity. For the purpose of this study, we utilized UCR data for the research cities examining official police records of the numbers of juvenile arrests from 1990 to 2004.

Methodology

To examine the relationship between the juvenile population and the rate of juvenile crime, data were obtained as part of a larger state-wide examination of crime in Texas. Census Place level data was obtained for thirty-five of the largest cities in the state of Texas. These data encompassed Uniform Crime Report (UCR) annual data for thirty-five agencies over a fifteen-year period (1990-2004). Both 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data, as well at the 2005 American Community Survey data were obtained at the Census Place level of aggregation to better examine this variation over time.

Crime was operationalized in three key ways; violent crime (homicide, robbery, rape and aggravated assault), property crime (burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft) and drug crime (possession and manufacturing). Due to the few crimes associated with individuals under the age of ten, these analyses are limited to individuals ranging in age from ten to seventeen years of age.

Population Estimates

To construct rates of crime over time a population value was necessary. However, since the crime data was longitudinal in nature estimates based on a single decennial census were considered a poor estimate at best. To this end, the 1990 U.S. decennial Census and the 2000 U.S. decennial Census figures were used to estimate varying populations between the dates.

A fixed change over time was calculated by obtaining both population counts by age as well as population counts by race and ethnicity. Finding the difference between the two and dividing this by the nine unmeasured years calculated a simple year-to-year estimated change. Then a year-to-year estimate was constructed by adding the difference for each unmeasured year between. This was done separately for each of the thirty-five U.S. Census Places.

A second estimate was calculated by using the 2000 U.S. decennial Census and the 2005 American Community Survey population estimates. Similarly, to what was outlined above, finding the difference between the 2000 and 2005 population estimates calculated a year-to-year change. Dividing this value by the four unmeasured years, and subsequently adding this value to each consecutive year calculated the yearly difference.

The above procedures were employed to estimate several key variables for our analyses. Yearly population estimates of juveniles aged 10-17, white juveniles, Black/African-American juveniles and Hispanic juveniles. Finally, a percent value was also calculated for each of the race and ethnicity categories to examine the racial and ethnic composition of our juvenile population. A year to year estimate of the percent juvenile (10-17) in the total population, the percent white in the juvenile population, the percent Black/African-American in the juvenile population and the percent Hispanic in the juvenile population were also calculated.

1. While it should be apparent that this is by no means a perfect estimate, we are confident that relying on this population calculation is far superior to relying on a static population count, or by using the 1990 population values for several years and the 2000 for

the remaining. Ideally, we could have relied on the U.S. Census to provide this information, however, while total population estimates are available from the U.S. Census year to year, this information is not available for subgroups within the total population such as age groups or race/ethnicity, at this lower level of aggregation.

To examine the impact of the changing age and racial/ethnic composition on crime in the U.S. designated places, an additional set of analyses examined the impact of the composition variables on the count UCR data. Once again this was broken down into four sets of three outcomes, examining the drug, violent and property crimes across the total juvenile population, as well as the white, Black/African-American and Hispanic populations.

Analytic Methods

As previously outlined, our hypotheses suggested that minority juveniles are arrested at a rate higher than that of the racial makeup of the general population. Two additional hypotheses are included which assume minority juveniles are arrested for violent crimes at a rate higher than that of white juveniles and minority juveniles age 10-17 years old are arrested at a rate higher than white juveniles of the same age.

As mentioned above population estimates were calculated for the year-to-year data. Crimes rates per 10,000 in the population were calculated for each of the three crime types (violent, property and drug) across each of the separate groups of interest (juveniles 10-17, white juveniles, Black/African-American juveniles and Hispanic juveniles). In addition, percentages were also calculated for the representation of each of these groups within their populations; juveniles 10-17 within the total population, and each of the racial and ethnic groups within the 10-17 juvenile population.

To test the hypotheses, a series of simple bivariate linear regression analyses were defined. However, transformations of the data were necessitated by severe negative skewness across all the dependent variables. To resolve this, the log of each of the dependent variables was calculated for our analyses.

Each dependent variable had only a single independent variable of the particular crime's rate demographic representation. More clearly stated, the only independent variable included in the analyses of the three juvenile (10-17) crime rates was the measure of the percent of the population that was 10-17 years of age for that year. For each of the race and ethnicity dependent variables, the only independent variable included was that group's representation in the juvenile population that corresponding year.

While the data obtained were longitudinal in nature, these analyses focus on a cross sectional perspective of treating each agency's year as a separate variable. Previous research has not suggested a longitudinal relationship and we felt compelled to focus on the most parsimonious model.

2. While the data transformation procedure resolved many of our problems, there were several dependent variables that we were unable to transform with a resulting skewness calculation of less than 1.0 or greater than -1.0. Of our twelve dependent variables four still exceeded these cut-off values; juvenile drug crime rate, the juvenile property crime rate, the white juvenile drug crime rate and the juvenile white property crime rate. While this is problematic, three of the four values still fell above -2, with only the juvenile property rate exceeding this with a value of -2.4. However, following a visual inspection of the data we felt confident in continuing the analyses, however being aware of this problem.

Analyses

Table 1 includes a univariate analysis of what we feel are relevant variables utilized in the study. As revealed previously, we operationalized crime in three ways using violent, property, and drug crimes respectively. When discussing the total crime rates in the three areas, we included arrest rates of juveniles 10-17 years per category. Total violent arrests had a slightly negative skew, but Total Property arrests and Total Drug arrests were heavily negative skewed distributions. The variables examined were logged in the attempt to transform the distributional shape for skewness before the descriptive

Arrest Rate per 10,000	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Total Violent Crime	0	6.52	3.45	0.66	-0.86
Total Property Crime	0	8.74	5.61	0.66	-2.42
Total Drug Crime	0	6.72	3.83	0.77	-1.68
White Violent	0.66	6.35	3.44	0.63	-0.34
White Property	0.65	8.62	5.76	0.63	-1.83
White Drug	0.66	6.08	3.97	0.78	-1.1
Black Violent	2.24	8.67	4.41	0.8	0.55
Black Property	2.05	10.14	6.14	0.78	-0.36
Black Drug	1.66	8.82	4.38	0.75	0.19
Hispanic Violent	0.78	6.7	3.46	0.75	-0.01
Hispanic Property	1.64	9.41	5.47	0.82	-0.82
Hispanic Drug	0.29	6.83	3.81	0.81	-0.6
N=524[1]					

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics.

statistics were run. After examining the data, it was found that several cities had included zeros for arrests in some years and some had less than one (.58) arrests in Total Property Crime and Total Drug Crime, causing wide variation in total arrests influencing the values. It is thought to be unlikely there were no arrests in their jurisdictions for the above-mentioned crimes that lead to the extreme data variables. (Table 1)

Using Stata (9.3) for Windows, the twelve bivariate linear regressions as previously outlined were conducted. Tables 2 through 5 display the results of these models. It is clear through a cursory examination that Table 3 of the models provides a remarkably high percent of variation explained. And, the patterns of the coefficients and their significance indicate that significant patterns are present. But in Tables 2, 4, and 5, little or none of the percent of variation is explained.

Table 2 shows the results of the regression models predicting the number (logged) of juveniles arrested across the fifteen-year period within the thirty-five agencies. The only independent variable included in the model is the percent of the total population that falls between the ages of 10 and 17. We failed to find any significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables in the model. What is interesting is the direction, although nonsignificant, of the relationship showing an increase in the drug related crime while a decrease in both the property and violent crime. (Table 2)

Juvenile Drug		Juvenile Violent	Juvenile Property
Crime Count		Crime Count	Crime Count
Percent Juvenile	0.043	-0.014	-0.033
in the population	-0.027	-0.024	-0.02
Constant	3.942	4.247	6.646
	-0.33	-0.292	-0.253
R^2	0.005	0	0.005
* p < .05			
** p < .01			
*** p < .001			

Table 2: Juvenile Arrest Counts by Percent Juvenile in the Population.

Juvenile Drug		Juvenile Violent	Juvenile Property
Crime Count		Crime Count	Crime Count
	(White)	(White)	(White)
Percent Juvenile	-.014**	-0.005	-0.006
in the population	-0.004	-0.004	-0.003
Constant	5.038	3.945	6.321
	-0.296	-0.259	-0.226
R^2	0.019	0.003	0.006
	(Black/AA)	(Black/AA)	(Black/AA)
Percent Juvenile	.074***	.065***	.078***
in the population	-0.005	-0.004	-0.005
Constant	1.597	1.752	3.186
	-0.087	-0.083	-0.091
R^2	0.335	0.301	0.343
	(Hispanic)	(Hispanic)	(Hispanic)
Percent Juvenile	.048***	.041***	.042***
in the population	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002
Constant	1.357	1.326	3.281
	-0.106	-0.093	-0.966
R^2	0.424	0.413	0.4

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 3: Juvenile Arrest Counts by Race/Ethnicity Percent Juvenile in the Population.

Juvenile Drug		Juvenile Violent	Juvenile Property
Crime Rate		Crime Rate	Crime Rate
Percent Juvenile	0.034*	-0.044**	-0.023
in the population	-0.016	-0.014	(.0.014)
Constant	3.424	6.147	3.372
	-0.008	-0.019	-0.172
R^2	0.008	0.019	0.005

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 4: Juvenile Arrest Rates by Percent Juvenile in the Population.

Juvenile Drug		Juvenile Violent	Juvenile Property
Crime Rate		Crime Rate	Crime Rate
	(White)	(White)	(White)
Percent Juvenile	-0.004	0.003	0.002
in the population	-0.003	-0.002	-0.002
Constant	4.264	3.232	5.627
	-0.178	-0.145	-0.142
R^2	0.006	0.004	0.002
	(Black/AA)	(Black/AA)	(Black/AA)
Percent Juvenile	-0.001	-.011***	-.006*
in the population	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003
Constant	4.397	4.571	6.235
	-0.055	-0.058	-0.055
R^2	0	0.028	0.01
	(Hispanic)	(Hispanic)	(Hispanic)
Percent Juvenile	.004**	-0.001	-0.001
in the population	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002
Constant	3.642	3.47	5.504
	-0.069	-0.063	-0.065
R^2	0.018	0	0

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

Table 5: Juvenile Arrest Rates by Race/Ethnicity Percent Juvenile in the Population

Table 3 shows an additional analysis where the dependent variable is the count of arrests across the racial/ethnic groups and again the independent variable is the corresponding percent of the juvenile population (10-17) falling within that same racial/ethnic group. For white juveniles we find only the single significant relationship showing a decrease in drug arrests of white juveniles as the percent of white juveniles increases.

3. The current study examined 35 Texas cities from 1990 to 2004 equaling 525 variables. Austin, Texas did not report one year resulting in N=524.

However, when we examine changes in the Black/African-American population we do find significant impacts across all three crime types. Indicating that as the Black/African-American percent juvenile increase we have corresponding increases within drug crime arrests ($b = .074$, $p < .001$), violent crime arrests ($b = .065$, $p < .001$) and property crime arrests ($b = .078$, $p < .001$). In fact, approximately a third of the variation in all three dependent variables can be explained simply by measuring the proportion Black/African-American in the juvenile population.

The third set of analyses in Table 3 looks at the Hispanic juvenile population and Hispanic juvenile arrests. We find a pattern similar to that seen in the Black/African-American population. Once again, drug arrests ($b = .048$, $p < .001$) violent crime arrests ($b = .041$, $p < .001$) and property crime arrests ($b = .042$, $p < .001$) are significantly related to the percent of that group within the juvenile population. (Table 3)

With these results in mind, a final set of analyses was conducted to examine this relationship again, however this time focusing on arrest rates (per 10,000) in lieu of arrest counts. Table 4 provides the results of the three models examining crime across the juvenile population aged 10 to 17. In these models the only predictor included was the percent of the total population that fell within this age group. What's particularly interesting here is that for both property and drug crime, the percent of the population was a significant predictor, but failed to be for the violent crime model. In fact, the two significant predictors have coefficient estimates in different directions. A positive coefficient was found for juvenile drug crime ($b = .034$, $p < .05$) suggesting that increases in the percent population resulted in more arrests of juveniles for drug related crimes. While this may seem intuitive, the fact that we find a negative relationship for property crime ($b = -.044$, $p < .01$) suggesting that increases in the percent juvenile population results in less arrests for juvenile property crimes. One may entertain the ideal that police are concentrating their efforts on drug crimes due to the easy visibility and apprehension of offenders. Property crimes tend to be anonymous as the perpetrator is not readily apprehensible at the scene and the police have more difficulty building cases around these crimes. The police may look past property offenses as drug crimes are more resilient in the courts. (Table 4)

Finally, Table 5 shows a similar set of analyses examining the crime rate of the white juvenile population as compared to both the black/African-American juvenile population and the Hispanic juvenile population across the independent variable of the percent juveniles in that specific juvenile population. Across the white crime rate variables, we fail to find any impact of the proportion of white juveniles in the population. However, we see a significant relationship between several of the Black/African-American and Hispanic variables.

4. It should be clear that the question of ethnicity must be kept separate of that of race. UCR estimates calculated race and ethnicity separately making it impossible to consider race and ethnicity combinations (for example White-Hispanic or Black-non-Hispanic individuals). Considering the present and increasing population in Texas of Hispanic residents we felt it was necessary to include this fourth set of analyses. The only U.S. Census data obtained, used to calculate the rate as well as the population percentages, conformed to the UCR limitation.

For both Black/African-American violent crime rate and property crime rate we see a significant negative relationship. This suggest that as the proportion of the population that is Black/AA increases then we see a resulting decrease in the arrest rates for this same racial group ($b = -.011$, $p < .001$ and $b = -.006$, $p < .05$, respectively). In sharp contrast to this we find a significant relationship between Hispanic juvenile population percentage and arrests of Hispanic juveniles for drug related crimes ($b = .004$, $p < .01$). (Table 5)

Results

The goal of this paper was to examine the association between the juvenile population and the rate of juvenile crime in the Texas' 35 largest cities. The effects of these findings are important as it allows us to examine juvenile crime in reference to population, race, and ethnicity. By examining these results, it is significant to better understand crime and race/ethnicity and take responsibility for developing programs to address these issues in the juvenile population. Based on the results presented in this project, one can conclude that there are differences in juvenile offending rates by race/ethnicity and population changes both positive and negative. Interesting was the population changes that occurred in these cities as examined by race and ethnicity. As seen in Figure 1, the percentage of white juveniles (0-17) in the population decreased nearly 10 percent from 1990 to 2004 whereas the Hispanic population increased by about the same margin and black juveniles percents increased only slightly.

The effect of juvenile population increase has long been thought to be directly correlated with crime increases in the community. Fox (1996) predicted the cohort of "baby boomer" children to come of age in 1995 increasing the percent of

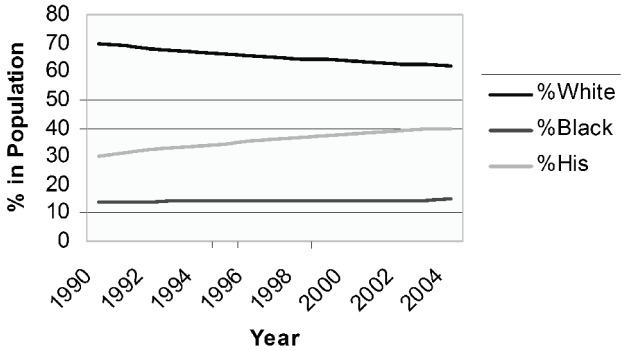

Figure 1: Juvenile Percent in Population

juvenile population dramatically. Additionally, his trend study for the Bureau of Justice Statistics predicted that juvenile populations age 14-17 would increase by 20% by 2005 with blacks leading the way increasing nearly 30% [14]. With the insurmountable amount of crime that was gripping American in the early 1990's, his predictions of a future crime wave were understandable. In this study, we see the results that contradict the predictions of these juvenile population increases as they are correlated with crime increases. (Figure 1)

Again, in Figure 1, it is demonstrated that the increases in juvenile populations are only nominal when considering the future population trends that were predicted. When we examined the percent of juveniles (10-17) in the total population and juvenile arrests by count, drug crime was the only variable to show an increase (.043) when the percent of juveniles increased. The results were notable in that juvenile violent crime, which gains much attention in the media [16, 44] and is thought to induce citizen fear of juvenile crime, showed a decrease (-.14) when considering the percent of juveniles (10-17) in the total population of the cities. But these results are in line with Schneider (1998) who included that drug arrests have far outnumbered violent crime arrests due to harsher drug laws and law enforcement attention. Also, differences in penalties for drug crimes such as crack and powder cocaine [11-13], evokes the attention of drug enforcement officers [40], which is in conjunction with the numbers of offenders in the prison systems for drug charges [45].

The research findings also suggested that when considering juvenile arrest counts and percent of juveniles (0-17) by race and ethnicity in the total juvenile population (0-17), both black and Hispanic juvenile arrest counts increase in drug, violent, and property crimes with whites increasing only in drug crimes significant at the .01 level and black and Hispanic increases significant at the .001 level. According to racial threat hypothesis, it should not come as a surprise that when numbers of minority juveniles increase in a population, the levels of criminal activity increase as that is a logical conclusion. One would assume that as more persons are in a given area, there are more opportunities for crime and more persons to commit crime. But the results in this study showed conflicting reports as much of the time as the percent of juveniles in the population increased, crime decreased. This was especially evident when arrest counts were converted to arrest rates.

With respect to variables associated with arrest rates of juveniles (10-17) per 10,000 juveniles (10-17), the findings were similar to those of the arrest counts with exception of drug crimes. The increase for juvenile arrests for drugs was significant ($p<.05$). Again, drug crimes by arrest maintained their significance throughout the project and, by examining percent of juveniles in the juvenile population only; we get an arrest rate that focuses only on the juvenile population so trends in population as they correlate with crime arrests can be understood. Additionally, childhood socialization problems as they show a relationship to juvenile crime become more evident and may shed light on policy and practice adaptations for criminal justice agencies [33]. But one must not dictate policy to drug crimes as has been evident in the past few decades [13, 41, 46].

Finally, the results in the rates of juvenile arrests (0-17) per 10,000 juveniles (0-17) by ethnic/race percent are attractive. One would assume by the media, literature, and reports concerning juvenile crime that increases in juvenile populations, especially that of blacks, is a direct correlate to the crime rates of juvenile offenders as racial threat may present. We found the opposite to be true. Little is heard in the media and news about Hispanic crime and its increase or decrease [16, 32, 45]. White juveniles were arrested in greater numbers as their percent in the juvenile population increased for violent and property crimes but had a decrease in arrests for drug crimes.

But blacks were arrested in statistically significant (Violent, $p<.001$; Property, $p<.05$) fewer numbers as their percent in the population increased. These results are particularly interesting as the black population in Figure 1 demonstrates the slow increase of the black population of juveniles from 1990 to 2004. And with arrest rates falling over the same time period but arrest counts increasing, the results are even more relevant. This difference is a direct contradictory to the national data that shows blacks leading in all crimes, many times by a large margin [11, 13-5, 31, 33, 37].

When testing for Hispanics arrest rates of juveniles (0-17) per 10,000 juveniles (0-17), we found decreases in violent and property arrest rates in the juvenile (0-17) population but showed a statistically significant ($p<.01$) increase in drug arrest rates, which is consistent in all analyses. As Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States [3], it should be concerning to police and policy makers of the apparent shift in offending from blacks to Hispanics in areas of the country where there are high populations of Hispanics [16]. This is not to say the police should focus on the Hispanic community and allude to a false ideal that they are drug crime prone. There would be not difference in this behaviour than that of alleged racial profiling of blacks that has been at the forefront of enforcement of drug crimes for many years. This study only shows there are significant relationships between juvenile population increases by ethnicity/race and increases in arrest rates for drug crimes.

The aspect of increasing Hispanic drug related crimes are of interest to law enforcement, especially to those jurisdictions in the South and West where larger numbers of Hispanics tend to reside [3, 17]. According to a Census Bureau report on Hispanic population in the United States (2002), there were 37.4 million Latinos in the population, or 13.3 percent. Of these, 66.9 percent were of Mexican origin with 88.9 of those residing in southern states [3]. The presence of drug crimes is linked to fear of violent crime [11] with the media expanding those fears exponentially [11, 13, 16, 40, 47]. And the duality of the presence of large numbers and the increase in the population of Hispanic juveniles rising parallel with drug arrests (see Table 5), states with the largest proportions of Hispanic populations tend to legislate harsher laws controlling drug sales and use [11, 13].

[16] It also included that race and ethnicity differences in neighbourhoods and cities tend to lead to increased amounts of fear of crime, whether it is perceived or real. With this, they found in their 2002 study examining racial and ethnic composition as it related to the perceived risk of crime that citizen fear of crime is has a causal analysis with races or ethnicities being present in neighbourhoods other than that of their own race or ethnicity [16, 48]. And, as blacks seemed to threaten the status quo in many areas of the country with perceived risks of greater crime [14, 38], the increasing Hispanic populations in southern states can be correlated with perceived fear of Hispanics becoming more threatening as a minority [16,32]. And with Hispanic juveniles under 18 years numbering 34.8 percent as compared to white non-Hispanics at 22.8 percent [3], one can see how the increase is in logical sequence to increasing drug crimes in Texas (see Table 5).

As one can see, drug visibility drives policy, legislation, media [49], race using drugs [47], culture, income (12% of blacks and Latinos live in poverty-higher in inner-city-50%). Older drug dealers use juveniles for carriers and street dealers. Lesser penalties and harassment by police may be reasons [40, 45]. And, police tend to develop harsher attitudes and become less tolerant toward drug users as well [11, 13, 40]. Citizen fear is greater in regions that have a higher Hispanic population than white or black [11, 16, 32].

Overall, the current research indicates some conclusions that can be drawn. When examining counts of arrests and percent change of juveniles in the general population, arrest counts have a propensity to increase as the juvenile percent in the population increases. Secondly, as the percent of juveniles by ethnicity/race in the juvenile population (0-17) increases, arrests by count increase statistically significant for blacks and Hispanics in all three variables but decreases in all three areas for whites with significance in drug arrests only. By this notion, support for Blalock's racial threat thesis should be substantiated. Next, when arrest counts are converted to arrests rates of juveniles (10-17) per 10,000 juvenile population (10-17), drug arrest rates showed a statistically significant increase whereas violent and property arrest rates declined as juvenile population percents in the 10-17 range increased. [50]

Finally, when we examined percent of ethnicity/race in juvenile population (0-17) and arrest rates for juveniles (0-17), whites showed an increase in violent and property crime consistent with prior research, but blacks decreased in all three variables with statistically significant decreases found in violent and property crime arrests and Hispanics declined in the same variables but did not show significant decreases. Consistent within the analyses were the results of drug arrest rates. Whites and blacks decreased in drug crime arrests within the total juvenile population (0-17), but Hispanics showed a significant increase in drug arrests consistent throughout the study.

The results in this study using the 35 largest Texas cities are inconsistent with the literature that is found for most national studies. One explanation for this would be the increasing Hispanic population in the South. Chiricos et al, found that when perceived community safety and reduce fear of crime is correlated with racial population changes. It is possible that the changes in racial composition in Texas insofar as Hispanics population increases are concerned, has led to a shift in offending by ethnicity/race. If racial threat hypothesis has any merit, its application can be utilized in the explanation of rising Hispanic populations in the South and their encroachment on the white population and increases in Hispanic crime. With many cities changing in population make-up, the research findings underscore the importance of conducting regional research, as national and state-wide research may not encompass the individual problems that local law enforcement and communities face when changes occur in particular areas.

Although the current study did use a smaller unit sample than much of the research examined that used national data in utilizing the 35 cities in Texas, the level of aggregation even at this stage may mask racial or ethnic changes that are relevant at the individual neighbourhood level [9]. As [16, 32] included, racial and ethnic differences and customs differ from neighbourhood and community is respect to the makeup of each area. And, by using only a single independent variable, the project was unable to discuss other potentially relevant socio-political demographic variations as these may predict law enforcement policies and practices that occur at the individual community level.

Future research is needed to delve deeper in the ethnic and racial differences in offending among juvenile populations at the state and local level. And, the sheds light on racial threat hypothesis in that Hispanic populations are increasing rapidly in the South and arrest rates and Hispanic juvenile crime is following suit. Hispanic populations have reached equilibrium in many cities in the South with some exceeding that of the white population. Racial threat theory would propose that arrest rates and police focus on racial minorities would tend to decrease but quite the opposite is being found with Hispanic juvenile crime increasing in all areas demonstrated in this project. A paradigm shift in police focus may be evident in southern states as the arrest rates for blacks tended to level out or decrease over the 15 year span the project entailed correlating with the black population in the 35 cities examined in Texas.

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