Public Perceptions of Police Interactions With Juveniles

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Public Perceptions of Police Interactions With Juveniles

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Abstract:

While previous research shows how different people respond differently to situations regarding police use of force on juveniles (Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, etc) this paper delves into what aspect each person has that influences the way they feel the police officer should respond to a juvenile suspect. I surveyed a group of about 300 people and asked them to give their responses to a vignette in which they were the acting police officer. Then, I analyzed the public opinion results through the lens of authoritarianism and compared them to the variables of age, gender, employment, and education.

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Research Questions:

- How does the public view police use of force on juveniles?
- What factors contribute to the differing in opinions regarding police interactions with juveniles?
- How should police officers utilize their discretion in cases involving juveniles?
- Should there be a separate training for police officers in regards to juveniles mind and body?

**Introduction:**

Over the past few decades, police departments all across the United States have been critiqued and criticized by the public and the media has been dedicating a lot of time and resources to publicize events regarding police use of force/police brutality as much as possible. More recently, the public’s outcry has been primarily focused on the need for better treatment of America’s youth population. They are demanding different protocols to counteract the violence between youth and police officers (Fighting Police Abuse, 2018). Police officers’ main directive is to serve their community and one of the most important ways to do that is to plan for a better future and take care of the younger generations. Since the juvenile population is the future, everything the community does should be in attempt to set them up for success. Police officers are public servants who maintain order while keeping the community as safe as possible. To ensure the police officers are guaranteeing the safest future for their community, they have to do their part in keeping adolescents on the path to success and out of the criminal justice system.

For people to know how to better police their own communities, it is important for us to know what the public wants out of their police department. This research analyzes how the public views police use of force and how it differs from juveniles to adult offenders, the general public’s awareness of the famous police use of force cases such as Michael Brown and Tamir Rice, and how they would respond to various policing scenarios using a series of vignettes.
Although the members of the political elite have been polarized for some time, scholars have begun to discuss whether the general American population has become polarized as well. Marc Hetherington and Jonathon Weiler’s (2010) explanation of authoritarianism is widely accepted as the cause for the divide. He analyzes people’s views on good and evil, right and wrong, gay marriage, race, illegal immigration, and use of force as a security measure, and concludes that their views all depend on their level of authoritarianism. In general, people with stronger authoritarian beliefs have less patience for people who break the rules or challenge the authoritative figures they believe are important (Hetherington and Weiler, 2010). This research is broken into three main parts: the history of juvenile-police interactions, a background on juvenile brain development, and Supreme Court Cases that ruled on juveniles in the criminal justice system. Then, I will utilize a unique survey data set to test the effects of age, gender, employment, and education on their response to police use of force on juveniles. I will focus on public opinion through the lens of authoritarianism. I will analyze the relationships between age, gender, education, and employment and how respondents’ said they would respond to different vignettes explaining a possible police encounter.

Famous Cases/History of Juvenile-Police Interactions:

Although police-involved deaths of juveniles (particularly those of color) occurred before 2014, the deaths of Michael Brown and Tamir Rice gained the nation’s attention to how frequently they occur. These two deaths, on top of various protest groups such
as Black Lives Matter, sparked a movement that demanded better training of police officers and stricter investigations when they utilize force. Because of this tremendous public response, it is worthy of study.

On August 9, 2014, Darren Wilson, a 28 year old police officer of Ferguson, Missouri fatally shot an African-American male by the name of Michael Brown Jr. just months after his high school graduation. Earlier that day, Brown, accompanied by Dorian Johnson, was caught on camera stealing a box of cigars from a local convenience store and the police were called. Wilson arrived at the scene and called for backup as soon as he spotted Brown and Johnson. The supposed events of the rest of the day are different depending on who is asked. Allegedly, Wilson drove up to the suspects and ordered them to move away from the street. When he pulled his cruiser closer to them, Brown allegedly reached for Wilson’s gun and, during the altercation inside of the vehicle, two shots were fired and one of them hit Brown’s right hand. Brown and Johnson attempted to flee the scene and hid behind a car as Wilson exited the vehicle. Wilson pursued the two suspects and 10 more shots were fired after the physical altercation between him and Brown, the last one assumed to be fatal. Brown was an unarmed juvenile and died on the street that day. The investigation leading into Johnson’s use of force was found to be reasonable as an act of self-defense. This sparked riots In Missouri and it spread throughout the entire country. Although there is no evidence that Brown begged Wilson to put the gun down, the phrase, “Hands up, don’t shoot” became the slogan for nationwide protests (Itkowitz, 2014). This timeline of events is allegedly what happened between Wilson and Brown, although most of these instances cannot be proved.
On November 22, 2014, two officers in Cleveland, Ohio by the names of Timothy Loehmann (26) and Frank Garmback (46) received a call about a young, black male (soon to be known as Tamir Rice) who was harassing people by pointing a gun at them. The person who called it in informed the dispatcher that the pistol was probably fake and the suspect was assuming a juvenile. However, this information was not relayed to Loehmann and Garmback on their initial call to the scene. When they arrived to the scene, both officers yelled at the suspect to “show me your hands” but, as Rice was moving his hand, Loehmann assumed he was reaching to draw his gun and shot him twice. Rice passed away the next day from the gunshot wounds. During the investigation, the gun was learned to be an airsoft replica of a pistol. The investigation into Loehmann was completed after the County Sheriff’s Office released a statement explaining that Loehmann was acting on protocol since Rice had, what appeared to be, a firearm in his possession. Rice’s family filed a lawsuit against the city and it settled for $6 million. During the aftermath, it was learned that Loehmann had applied to be a police officer in the city of Independence, Ohio and was denied the opportunity based on the fact that he was unfit for duty and emotionally unstable. The Cleveland police department did not do any research or review his personnel file before hiring him as a police officer and Loehmann never disclosed this information during the hiring process. Loehmann’s employment with the Cleveland Police Department was terminated two years later after an investigation because he withheld crucial information on his application. This case received international media coverage and quickly became another platform for citizens protests and riots nationwide (Heisig, 2017).
These are just two examples of cases that sparked a national discussion about police brutality and police use of force on juveniles. This research project was a response to this discussion in attempt to find relationships between the participants and how they responded to the questions.

The issue of juvenile brain development came up in these discussions because Rice and Brown were not at the age where the part of their brain that handles consequences of actions was fully developed. Based on the national average, they still had about seven or eight years before their brains would be able to comprehend the severity of their actions and the potential consequences for it (Thurau, 2009). It is crucial to keep in mind the rate of juvenile brain development while discussing police interactions with juveniles because the subject is not anatomically capable of understanding the situation to its fullest.

Why Juvenile Age Matters:

Initial researchers used juveniles as a method of assessing authoritarianism. They researched how people felt disciplining their children, how strict their household is, etc. They found that less authoritarian people parented their children less strict than their authoritarian counterparts (Sarwar, 2016). The survey utilized in this research is based on this connection with the assumption less authoritarian people would choose less police use of force on juveniles. Because this survey looks at public opinion through the lens of authoritarianism, it is important to recognize why the age of a juvenile is important in regards to how authoritarian a person is.
Getting into situations with the police have the potential to affect the rest of one’s life. Having a criminal record can influence employment opportunities, housing, government programs, etc. A juvenile may not be able to efficiently weigh out the effects of getting involved with the police based on the fact their brains are not fully developed until the age of 25. Understanding consequences, impulse control and self-regulation are a few of the last characteristics to develop. During the teenage years, one cares more about what others think about them than anything else and peer pressure is one of the most destructive factors in their life (Thurau, 2009). Oftentimes, teenage behavior is categorized as experimentative, risky, and carelessness to potential consequences. Individuals under the age of 25 are not mentally ready to make decisions that drastically influence the rest of their lives (Thurau, 2009). Because police officers have the discretion to whether or not they will introduce juveniles to the criminal justice system, their decision must not be made lightly. They have the power to help choose the path these children will walk and they must have all of the proper training to make the right decision. Even though there is science suggesting that juveniles do not have proper brain development to make decisions and understand consequences, states have expanded the qualifications for a juvenile to be charged as an adult. In 1998, about 7,100 juveniles were charged as adults with felonies in criminal court (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).

In conjunction with authoritarianism, The issue of how to handle juveniles in the criminal justice system is not a new discussion. Various cases have made their way to the Supreme Court and distributed change throughout the country, taking into
consideration the scientific research available to them at the time and the data regarding juveniles in the criminal justice system.

**Supreme Court Cases:**

Roper v. Simmons (2005) concluded that it is unconstitutional to sentence someone under the age of 18 to capital punishment. While writing for the majority, Justice Kennedy noted three reasons as to why children should be categorized as separate from their adult counterparts. First, juveniles are immature beings and have not fully developed their sense of responsibility which results in poorly chosen actions. Second, juveniles are more susceptible to peer pressure and other negative influences. And Third, the juvenile’s character is not as formed as an adults. Hence, they have much more potential for rehabilitation than an adult would because their character isn’t as ingrained in their identity (NJDC).

Graham v. Florida (2010) expanded on the conclusion of Roper and decided that the punishment of life without the possibility of parole was unconstitutional when imposed on a juvenile. Drawing upon the same reasoning, the majority felt that life without the possibility of parole violated the 8th amendment as a cruel and unusual punishment for a juvenile (NJDC).

Miller v. Alabama (2012) expanded upon both Roper and Graham and decided that it is unconstitutional to sentence a juvenile to life without the possibility of parole for a homicide conviction, where that sentence is the only option. The majority concluded that all mitigating factors must be taken into consideration before a juvenile could ever be sentenced to a punishment of life without the possibility of parole (NJDC).
J.D.B. v North Carolina focused on the Miranda Rights and how J.D.B., age 13, was never read his Miranda Rights while being interrogated by the assistant principal, a police investigator, and a school administrator when he was the prime suspect for a burglary. J.D.B. ultimately incriminated himself and was then informed about his right to leave. Justice Sotomayor wrote the court’s opinion and decided that the age of an adolescent could impact how they would perceive his/her freedom to leave. It is reasonable to assume an adult would have probably heard of the Miranda Rights and would know, to some extent, that they had a right to an attorney or a right to remain silent but a child probably does not. Justice Sotomayor explained that children, “often lack the experience, perspective, and judgment to recognize and avoid choices that could be detrimental to them” and went on to refer to police interrogation techniques as events that “would leave a man cold and unimpressed can overawe and overwhelm a [teen].” J.D.B. v North Carolina was a pivotal moment in the Court’s discussion where age is “more than a chronological fact.” It is a crucial detail in a case and should be taken into consideration.

Although the judicial system has incorporated the scientific research of juvenile brain development into their cases, it has not yet been incorporated into the field of police work. This research will study how the general population thinks juveniles should be treated within the system while utilizing a real life scenario a police officer could be given in his/her line of work.

**Purpose of Research:**
A large majority of police interactions with juveniles are in response to minor legal matters. Most juveniles are arrested for low-level, nonviolent offenses and they report that the police officers treat them with disrespect (Myers, 2004). By arresting juveniles and initiating their cycle through the criminal justice system, it causes harm to the individual and their family (sometimes irreparable) and it unnecessarily taxes our public resources. Police academies are not training their recruits what they have to know about the juvenile development to successfully and sufficiently work with the younger population (Strategies For Youth, 2013). Because the adolescent brain develops at a slower pace and does not fully develop until the early-mid twenties, police officers should be aware of this, especially as it pertains to the decision-making and consequential sides of the brain. When dealing with children and teenagers, police officers should be equipped to act as a diplomat and communicate with the individuals to provide the best solution to keep the community safe while working with the juveniles at hand to get them off of the path to criminal behavior.

Because police officers are there to serve their community, it is important to get the public’s opinion on what would be an appropriate amount of force. Ronald Weitzer (2002) argues that incidents involving police misconduct drastically alter the public’s opinion towards police but it is rarely ever investigated. By listening to public opinion and responding to it, it holds police accountable for their actions. Although police are not elected public officials, they should be held to an honorable standard and respond to the concerns of the population they are serving.

This study researches the public perceptions of police interactions with juveniles. It utilizes a survey that asked participants their knowledge about the current topic,
demographic questions including their age, gender, employment, and education, and then gives them vignettes on how they would handle an interaction with a juvenile if they were a police officer.

**Methodology:**

In testing the public’s opinion on police interactions with juveniles, I surveyed about 300 people from Plymouth County, Massachusetts. I utilized the online survey platform Qualtrics to distribute my questionnaire because it was time effective, cost effective, and decreased the probability of social desirability bias. I posted on the social media Facebook page *All Things Plymouth*, which is a social media platform for all residents of Plymouth, Massachusetts to partake in, and urged residents of Plymouth to participate in my anonymous survey. Within this survey, I asked an array of demographic questions, questions regarding their knowledge level of police brutality cases, case law, etc, and ended with a series of vignettes. The vignettes were randomly distributed asking the participant to respond as a police officer to the same scenario but with the offender being a child, a teenager, or a middle-aged adult. The aim of this was to see how people responded to the same situation when the only changed variable was the age of the offender.

**Variables and Demographics of Population Sample:**
The independent variables I will be focusing on are gender, race, age, education, and employment. According to the United States Census Bureau, out of the 60,000 people living in Plymouth, 51% are female and 49% are male, 95% are white, 3% are Black or African American, 2% are Hispanic or Latino, 1% are Asian, and 1% are American Indian and Alaska Native. 12% of the population are between the ages of 18 and 25, 10% are between the ages of 26 to 35, 13% are between the ages of 36-45, 16% are between the ages of 46 to 55, and 33% are 56 or older. 93% of people in Plymouth obtained their high school diploma or some college and 35% have their bachelors degree or some type of higher education. In 2016, the most common industries for male residents of Plymouth to work in are construction (20%), retail (19%), food services/accommodation (13%), manufacturing (10%), professional/scientific/technical services (7%), arts/entertainment/recreation (4%), and other services besides public administration (4%). The most common industries for women to work in were health care/social assistance (23%), retail (15%), food services/accomodation (15%), other services besides public administration (9%), manufacturing (7%), educational services (7%), and finance/insurance (5%).

My sample consisted of 327 respondents, 71% female and 29% male, which is not a clear representative of the town of Plymouth as a whole. 95% of my respondents were white, 1% were black or African American, 0% were American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% were Asian, 0% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 3% were other. Out of the 327 respondents, 20% were between the ages of 18-25, 19% were between the ages of 26-35, 14% were between the ages of 36-45, 18% were between the ages of 46-55, 17% were between the ages of 46-55, and 19% were 56 or older.
2% of my sample completed some high school, 21% completed high school or obtained their GED, 30% completed some college, 11% have their associates degree, 23% have their bachelors degree, and 13% have a masters degree, PhD, or other professional degree. Only 6% of my respondents work in the criminal justice field, social work, military, or work for the government. With this sample, I tested three independent variables: age, gender, employment, and education. When discussing employment, I categorized responses as being in the criminal justice field or not being in the criminal justice field. I expanded the criminal justice field to include social work and military as well based on a social workers responsibility for working with at risk youth and people in need of help and a member of the military is understood to be more authoritarian than the average person who is not in the military (Adorno et al, 1950). Because of the small sample, I utilized a p-value of less than 0.2 to consider my data approaching statistical significance and less than 0.1 somewhat statistically significant.

Data & Analysis:

In the survey, I asked a variety of demographic questions including the respondent's age, occupation, preferred gender identification, etc. Each person was asked whether they were aware of the famous cases of Tamir Rice and Michael Brown and whether or not they were aware that most police departments do not have a separate protocol in place to handle situations with juvenile subjects. Towards the end of the survey, I also gave a vignette describing a police interaction with a subject. There were varying degrees of multiple choice options including a fill in the blank choice. Each vignette had a four part escalation that transitioned the interaction into a more
serious exchange. While responding to the four questions, the respondent could choose one answer that was either utilizing verbal commands, tasering the subject, and shooting with either the intent to injure or intent to kill. I analyzed the responses to the various demographic questions and ran a cross-tabulation and chi-squared for their responses to the vignettes and their responses to the knowledge and awareness based questions.

**Age:**

There seems to be a generational difference on the attitudes towards authoritarianism. The contemporary criminal justice system is much more authoritarian than democratic because the focus is on tough punishments and punitive policing tactics (Amar and Schneider, 2007). Studies show that urban adult groups are significantly more authoritarian than urban youth groups based on how they respond to questions regarding punishments, parenting techniques, military strategies, and police protocols (Reddy, 1983). This indicates that the older generations are more likely going to be in support of authoritarian behavior and the younger generations are likely going to support more democratic behavior.

H1: Older generations are going to favor police use of force.

H1o: There is no correlation between age and favoring of police use of force.

When responding to the initial vignette questions, the relationship appeared to be statistically significant. After running a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test [Table 1 here], the p-value was 0.098 for the first part of the vignette dealing with a juvenile. So, 20% of respondents over the age of 55 decided to taser the juvenile offender, compared to 0% of people ages 26-35, 8% of people ages 36-45, and 0% of people ages 46-55.
However, when the respondents were prompted with follow-up questions, the relationship no longer met the guidelines for statistical significance.

My hypothesis was supported as my p-value for one of my vignette questions was somewhat statistically significant. Looking at that, there seems to be a relationship between age and utilizing use of force. Unfortunately, my hypothesis was not supported by the follow-up questions in the vignette as they were not statistically significant and, therefore, could not reject the null hypothesis.

**Gender:**

Previous researchers observed that women are less likely to support the use of violence and more willing to support the use of verbal de-escalation techniques (Smith, 1984). Smith (1984) researched how men and women responded to violence and found a moderately strong relationship between gender and support of violence. When it came to questions dealing with law enforcement and criminal behavior/punishments, the men and women responded much differently than questions regarding indirect support of violence, such as potential changes in military and defense budgets. Women are taught to exhibit more empathy with moral issues and are likely to be more aware of sensitive or ethical issues (Chung & Monroe, 2003). Because they are taught to be more empathetic, they are more likely to be concerned for the welfare of others (Bass et al., 1998).

H2: Men are more likely to favor police use of force.

H2o: There is no correlation between gender and likelihood to favor police use of force.
I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test between the participants gender and their responses to the different vignette stages regarding the police officers response. During the third scenario in the vignette that dealt with a juvenile, the p-value was 0.06 which appears to be somewhat statistically significant. In the three responses that did not include violence, women responded at a higher rate than men. However, the two choices that utilized force were favored more by men. [Insert Table 2] 12% of men decided to shoot the subject with intent to kill compared to only 2% of women and 41% of women decided to assure the subject he would not be injured if he put the gun down, compared to 32% of men. According to this analysis, there appears to be a relationship between gender and one’s likeness to utilize force.

The p-value was less than 0.1 so my data appears to be somewhat statistically significant. Therefore, I will reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is some relationship between gender and use of force.

However, men are also more likely to participate in social desirability bias (Chung, Janne, and Monroe, 2003). From an early age, women are socialized to reason differently than men. When it comes to tests such as the SAT, women usually score higher because they are conditioned to leave the question blank if they don’t know it whereas men are more likely to guess. Schoderbek and Deshpande (1996) classify this male likelihood of social desirability bias as impression management, which means they make a conscious effort to lie or fake it in order to create a favorable impression.

H3: Men are more likely to be aware of the lack of protocol in place regarding use of force on juveniles.
H3o: There is no correlation between gender and awareness of the lack of protocol regarding use of force on juveniles.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test between gender and whether or not the participant was aware of the lack of police protocol regarding use of force with juveniles. [Insert Table 4] 39% of males responded that they were aware of this compared to the 17% of females who were aware of this. My p-value was 0.00 and appears to be statistically significant. Normally, this would be a perfect analysis and I could reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is a relationship between the two variables. However, given the wording of the question and taking into consideration social desirability bias and impression management, it is likely that this number does not accurately represent the true male populations knowledge on this topic.

**Employment:**

Research suggests that people who are in the criminal justice profession tend to be more authoritarian in their views, especially those who have no college education (Smith et al, 1967). Researchers studied the New York City’s police department’s newest police officers and categorized them as college graduates and those with no college education. They tested for authoritarianism by using the Piven (1961) and Rokeach (1960) scales for their behavior and responses to various situations. They concluded that An explanation for this could be the social psychology theory that certain personalities are attracted to certain occupations. Similar to how the field of psychology attracts highly neurotic people, the field of police and correctional institutional work attracts authoritarian personalities (Adorno et al, 1950).
H4: The respondents who work/have worked in the criminal justice field are quicker to utilize force than those who have not worked in the criminal justice field.

H4o: There is no relationship between employment and use of force.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test between the participant’s occupation and their responses to the vignettes. When responding to the third step to the juvenile vignette, [Insert Table 5] my p-value was 0.04 which is somewhat statistically significant. 9% of people with criminal justice backgrounds chose to shoot the juvenile suspect with intent to kill, compared to the 0% with no criminal justice background. Both the first response and the fourth response to the juvenile vignette had a p-value of 0.1 and are approaching the line of being statistically significant. Because my p-value is less than 0.01, it is somewhat statistically significant. With that data alone, I could reject the null hypothesis. Although we cannot declare a relationship because the follow-up vignettes did not conclude a p-value of less than 0.1.

**Education:**

Previous scholarship suggests that higher education groups tend to be more libertarian and lower educated groups tend to be more authoritative (Smith et al, 1967). Previous research shows that education is one of the more prominent factors to determine many social stances. Although it is yet to be determined what aspects of education cause this relationship, results from various scholars such as Rune Stubager strongly favor the fact that the values of higher educators are transferred onto the students and it results in a fundamental conflict between highly educated and less educated groups.
H5: The more educated a person is, the less likely they are to utilize force in their vignettes.

H50: There is no correlation between education and likelihood of force.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test of the variables education and responses to vignettes. In the first step of the juvenile vignette, the p-value was 0.14 [Insert Table 6]. 44% of respondents with a master’s degree, PhD, or other professional degree decided to command the driver to exit the vehicle, compared to 0% of respondents with some high school. Similarly, 0% of respondents with a master’s degree, PhD, or other professional degree decided to taser the subject, compared to 67% of respondents with some high school. As it is approaching 0.1, it appears to be somewhat statistically significant. Therefore, there could be a relationship between education and their quickness to utilize force in a situation with a juvenile offender. Since it is not less than 0.1, I cannot reject my null hypothesis and I cannot declare a relationship between education and use of force.

Similarly, a person is more likely to be more aware of societal issues if they are more educated, whereas a less educated person is less likely to watch the news and stay up-to-date with current events and political issues. According to Matthew Baum (2003), highly educated individuals are more likely to research on their own, where a less educated individual responds better to soft news and does not search for more information regarding the subjects brought up on the news or on newspaper headlines.

H6: The more educated a person is, the more likely they are to be aware of famous cases revolving around police brutality.
H6o: There is no correlation between education and awareness of police brutality cases.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test for the variables education and awareness of cases and discovered a p-value of 0.38. Since it is not anywhere near approaching the line for statistical significance, it has failed the chi-square test and we cannot reject the null hypothesis.

H7: The more educated a person is, the more likely they will be appear of the lack of police protocol regarding juvenile subjects.

H7o: There is no correlation between education and awareness of police protocols.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test for the variables education and awareness of police protocol regarding juveniles and discovered a p-value of 0.18. Because this would not normally count as statistically significant, we cannot reject the null hypothesis. I cannot reject the null hypothesis and cannot conclude a relationship between the variables education and awareness of police protocols.

Discussion:

Keeping in mind that this was a rather small sample, I had some results that seem to coincide with the qualifications of being statistically significant. There seems to be some type of relationship between use of force and all variables tested (age, gender, employment, and education). It is important to remember that although some of the vignette questions appeared to be statistically significant, the follow-up questions were not. Overall, it is clear that there is a difference in the way males and females answered these questions. Based on my results, it is fair to say that difference is, in part, due to
the existence of impression management. Social desirability bias, and our society’s way of conditioning females into being more nurturing and empathetic.

By studying the public opinion of police officers, it will aid in maintaining their accountability. The police departments should respond to public opinion by addressing discontent, holding officers accountable, revamping current protocol, and updating the academies to provide better training for the cadets. The psychological study of juveniles and the anatomical study of their brains show they are not capable of making decisions with respect to the potential consequences. Because the discontent of public opinion is supported by scientific facts, police protocol should more accurately reflect these findings.

Conclusion:

Given the small sample, it could be possible that there is a relationship between variables that our p-value did not support but our data did not have the confidence to produce a strong relationship. In future research, I would urge researchers to gather a bigger sample with more diverse participants. As I would have liked to study the variable of race but could not given my overwhelming response of white participants, I would try to gather data from a more diverse area. I would also add in the first part to my vignettes that the officer called for back-up, because a lot of my participants filled in that response and clicked “other.” When questioning about what a police officer should do in response to the event, I would also emphasize that the response does not have to comply with current police protocol and should focus on what a police officer should respond with, based on the respondents values. Future research should strongly keep
in mind the idea of social desirability bias and male impression management when drafting questions for the survey. It is nearly impossible to eliminate some bias, specific question wording could be helpful in limiting the amount of bias in the results. Although distributing an online survey was time efficient and got me a good amount of responses, I could only base my analysis on the multiple choice or short answer responses. I would suggest possibly doing a focus group to get more in depth reasoning behind an individual’s responses. Even though one would not be able to get a lot of participants, they could delve further into the discussion of public opinion on police in general and what has shaped their participants opinion on police interactions with juveniles.
Appendix A-Distributed Survey

Public perceptions of police interactions with juveniles

Start of Block: Block 1: Demographics

Q1 Dear Participant, You are invited to participate in a research study designed to gather information on how the public feels about our current criminal justice system as it pertains to law enforcement interactions with juveniles. You will be asked to complete a short survey which includes demographic questions (for example, your age, gender you identify as, and education), questions about police encounters with juveniles, and finally a short scenario where you will determine how a police officer should respond in a certain situation. Data from this study will be used in completion of an undergraduate honors thesis project. Completion of the survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes and you can skip any questions that make you uncomfortable or you do not wish to answer. Your name will not be attached to any of the response you provide and the online survey will not collect information about your IP address. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed with online surveys, but will be upheld to the extent permitted by law. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or discontinue your participation at any time without incurring any penalty. You will receive no direct compensation or benefit for completing this survey, but your participation in this study will added to a limited body of research on public perceptions of policing.
behaviors, specifically related to interactions with juveniles. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the Principle Investigator, Dr. Ashley Kilmer at Ashley.Kilmer@bridgew.edu or 508-531-2469. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the University Institutional Review Board office (508-531-1242) and will be given an opportunity to discuss any questions in confidence, with a member of the committee. This is an independent committee composed of faculty and staff of Bridgewater State University and its affiliates, as well as lay members of the community not connected with the institution. The committee has reviewed and approved this study (IRB Protocol #2018209). If you agree to participate, please click on the arrow button below to continue to the survey. You will have the option to refuse to answer individual questions and may change your mind and leave the study at any time without penalty.

Q2 Instructions: Please answer the following the questions as honestly and accurately as you can. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer.

Q3 First, we’d like to get some information about you and your current occupation or education.
Q4 What is your age in years?

____________________________________________________________

Q5 What gender do you identify as?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- I identify as: (3) ________________________________________________

Q6 What race do you identify with?

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (6) ______________________________________________________

Q7 Do you identify as Hispanic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q8 Are you currently enrolled in college?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently enrolled in college? = No

Q9 What is your highest level of education completed?

- Some high school (1)
- High school diploma or GED (2)
- Some college (3)
- Associate's Degree (4)
- Bachelor's Degree (5)
- Master's Degree, PhD, or professional degree (6)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently enrolled in college? = Yes

Q10 What is your major? (select all that apply)

- Accounting/Finance (1)
- Anthropology (2)
- Art (3)
- Athletic Training (4)
- Biology (5)
- Chemistry (6)
- Communications (7)
- Computer Science (8)
- Criminal Justice (9)
- Dance (10)
- Education (11)
- English (12)
- Geography (13)
- Health Science (14)
- History (15)
- Management (16)
- Mathematics (17)
- Music (18)
Q11 Are you currently employed?

- Full-Time (1)
- Part-Time (2)
- No (3)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently employed? = Full-Time

Or Are you currently employed? = Part-Time

Q12 Please describe your current occupation (type of agency or place of employment).

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Display This Question:

If Are you currently employed? = Full-Time

Or Are you currently employed? = Part-Time

Q13 How many years of experience do you have within your current field?
Q14 Next, we’d like to ask you some questions about recent news stories and law enforcement policies regarding encounters with juveniles. It’s alright if you aren’t familiar with any current events, legal decisions, or policies. We are interested in learning what you do know and what your perspective is on these topics.

Q15 Are you aware of any police use-of-force encounters with juvenile suspects (i.e. nationally known cases such as Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, or cases from your local communities)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you aware of any police use-of-force encounters with juvenile suspects (i.e. nationally known... = Yes

Q16 If yes, please provide your thoughts and opinions about the cases you’ve heard of:
Q17 Are you aware of any legal arguments or court decisions for or against police use-of-force with juveniles?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you aware of any legal arguments or court decisions for or against police use-of-force with juveniles? = Yes

Q18 If yes, what legal arguments or court decisions are you aware of?

Q19 Were you aware that most police departments do not have a separate protocol on record regarding the use-of-force on juveniles as opposed to adults?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Q20 Do you think there should be a separate protocol that details how police should use their authority or force with a juvenile that is different from protocols with adults?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Q21 Please explain the reasoning behind your answer:

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Page Break

Q22 Do you think that there should be an age cut-off to be considered a juvenile by law enforcement (currently a person is legally considered a juvenile if they are under the age of 18)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- It depends (3)

Display This Question:
If you think that there should be an age cut-off to be considered a juvenile by law enforcement (... = It depends)

Q23 What factors should determine whether a person should be considered a juvenile by law enforcement?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Display This Question:

If you think that there should be an age cut-off to be considered a juvenile by law enforcement (... = Yes)

Q24 At what age would it be appropriate for a minor to be treated like an adult by law enforcement?

______________________________________________________________________

Page Break

Q25 Do you think a younger child (such as 5 or 6 years old) would be able to shoot a gun and kill someone just as easily as an adult?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q26 Should their physical capability to fire a gun and potentially kill someone influence an officer’s response to a call about a 5 or 6 year old child?
Q27 Please explain the reasoning behind your answer:

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Block 2: Knowledge and Opinions about police encounters with juveniles

Start of Block: Block 3: Juvenile Scenario

Q28 Finally, I would like you to review the following vignette describing a police interaction with a subject. I will provide a series of responses on how an officer could respond in that situation. Pick what you believe is the best response or provide your own description on what you think the appropriate response should be.

Q29 A police officer witnesses a vehicle driving recklessly (swerving into the other lane) and 15mph over the speed limit. The officer signals for the car to pull over but it doesn’t, resulting in a high speed chase on a residential street with other vehicles and pedestrians nearby. After 10-15 minutes, the driver turns onto a dead end street and is forced to stop. The police officer is now able to view the driver and, based on the physical characteristics of the driver, assumes the
subject is a juvenile about 14-16 years old. The police officer asks subject to exit the vehicle but the subject refuses.

Q30 The police officer should: (select what you believe is the best response)

- Command the driver to exit the vehicle and repeat commands until subject complies (1)
- Try to force him out of the car using only the officer’s hands (2)
- Taser the subject (3)
- Other (4) ________________________________________________

Display This Question:

If The police officer should: (select what you believe is the best response) = Command the driver to exit the vehicle and repeat commands until subject complies

Q31 The driver still refuses to comply with the officer’s commands. What would you do next?

- Repeat command that the driver to exit the vehicle until subject complies (1)
- Try to physically force him out of the car by grabbing onto the subject’s hands and arms (2)
- Taser the subject (3)
- Other (please explain) (4)

Q32 Provide your justification or reasoning for your responses:
Q33 Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer calls for backup and, when backup arrives, they see the subject has gotten a hold of the police officer’s gun and is pointing it at him. The officers responding as backup should:

- Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down (1)
- Instill fear in the subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer (2)
- Taser the subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon (3)
- Shoot the subject (aiming for a non-fatal wound) (4)
- Shoot the subject with intent to kill (5)
- Other (please explain) (6)

Display This Question:

If Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer calls... = Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down
Or Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer cal... = Instill fear in the subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer

Or Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer cal... = Taser the subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon

Q34 The suspect still refuses to put down the gun and is still pointing the weapon at the officer. What would you do next?

- Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down (1)
- Instill fear in the subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer (2)
- Taser the subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon (3)
- Shoot the subject (aiming for a non-fatal wound) (4)
- Shoot the subject with intent to kill (5)
- Other (please explain) (6)

Q35 Provide your justification or reasoning for your responses:

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Block 3: Juvenile Scenario

Start of Block: Block 4: Adult scenario
Q36 Finally, I would like you to review the following vignette describing a police interaction with a subject. I will provide a series of responses on how an officer could respond in that situation. Pick what you believe is the best response or provide your own description on what you think the appropriate response should be.

Q37 A police officer witnesses a vehicle driving recklessly (swerving into the other lane) and 15mph over the speed limit. The officer signals for the car to pull over but it doesn’t, resulting in a high speed chase on a residential street with other vehicles and pedestrians nearby. After 10-15 minutes, the driver turns onto a dead end street and is forced to stop. The police officer is now able to view the driver and, based on the physical characteristics of the driver, assumes the subject is an adult about 28-30 years old. The police officer asks subject to exit the vehicle but the subject refuses.

Q38 The police officer should: (select what you believe is the best response)

- Command the driver to exit the vehicle and repeat commands until subject complies (1)
- Try to force him out of the car using only the officer's hands (2)
- Taser the subject (3)
- Other (4) ________________________________
Display This Question:

If The police officer should: (select what you believe is the best response) =

Command the driver to exit the vehicle and repeat commands until subject complies

Q39 The driver still refuses to comply with the officer’s commands. What would you do next?

- Repeat command that the driver to exit the vehicle until subject complies (1)
- Try to physically force him out of the car by grabbing onto the subject’s hands and arms (2)
- Taser the subject (3)
- Other (please explain) (4)

Q40 Provide your justification or reasoning for your responses:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Q41 Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer calls for backup and, when backup arrives, they see the subject has gotten a hold of the police officer’s gun and is pointing it at him.

The officers responding as backup should:

- Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down (1)
- Instill fear in the subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer (2)
- Taser the subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon (3)
- Shoot the subject (aiming for a non-fatal wound) (4)
- Shoot the subject with intent to kill (5)
- Other (please explain) (6)

Display This Question:

If Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest.

The officer cal... = Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down
Or Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer cal...

Or Eventually, the subject is forced out of the car and he actively resists arrest. The officer cal...

Q42 The suspect still refuses to put down the gun and is still pointing the weapon at the officer. What would you do next?

- Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down (1)
- Instill fear in the subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer (2)
- Taser the subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon (3)
- Shoot the subject (aiming for a non-fatal wound) (4)
- Shoot the subject with intent to kill (5)
- Other (please explain) (6)

Q43 Provide your justification or reasoning for your responses:

End of Block: Block 4: Adult scenario
## Appendix B-Tables

### Age and Juvenile Vignette 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36-45</th>
<th>46-55</th>
<th>55+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Command subject to exit vehicle</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remove subject from car only using hands</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taser subject</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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P-value: 0.098

### Gender and Juvenile Vignette 3

<table>
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<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instill fear in subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taser subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot subject (aiming for non-fatal wound)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot subject with intent to kill</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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P-value: 0.06

## Gender and Awareness of Famous Police Use-of-Force Encounters With Juvenile Subjects
Table 3

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<th>Male</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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P-value: 0.68

Gender and Awareness of Current Police Protocols

Table 4

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>39%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>83%</td>
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P-value: 0.00

Employment and Juvenile Vignette 3

Table 5

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>All Other Occupations</th>
<th>Criminal Justice/Social Work/Military Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instill fear in subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taser subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot subject (aiming for non-fatal wound)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot subject with intent to kill</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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P-value: 0.04
### Level of Education and Juvenile Vignette 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Some High School</th>
<th>High School Diploma/GE D</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>Associate’s Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Masters Degree, PhD, other Professional Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Command the Driver to Exit Vehicle and Repeat Commands Until Subject Complies</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to force him out of car using only officer’s hands</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taser Subject</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>44%</td>
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