The Great Juvenile Arrest Drop in Florida

Marshae D. Capers[1] and Mateus R. Santos[1#]

[1]The University of South Florida
[#]Advisor

ABSTRACT

Scholars suggest that there has been an international crime decline since the 1990s. Although prior literature has explored trends and factors that may be contributing to the overall crime decline, there is limited literature on crime trends among juveniles. This study analyzes arrest trends of juveniles from 2010-2020 in Florida in comparison to adult arrest trends, and to the trends of neighboring states (i.e., Georgia and Alabama). This study utilizes official data from different crime reporting agencies such as the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the FBI Uniform Crime Report to assess the arrest trends among juveniles in Florida from 2010-2020 and compared the trends to those in neighboring states, Georgia and Alabama. The results indicate that there was a strong, yet very gradual decline in arrests among juveniles in the designated years, for an overall decline of 68.33% between 2010 and 2020. We observe a comparable decline for adults, though it was weaker at 56.25% and less gradual. In addition, though Alabama had its own trend, the juvenile arrest decline in Florida was nearly the same as in Georgia, except for the years of 2019-2020 when Georgia's decline was steeper. Hence, we found evidence that the juvenile arrest decline in Florida has been a gradual process, likely linked to similarly gradual underlying causes, instead of a sudden policy shock. Similar trends were found among adults in Florida, and among juveniles in Georgia, suggesting that these trends could have the same driver. We discuss possible causes and implications considering existing literature.

Introduction

Research on crime trends explores how and why the incidence of crime in a population change over time. This topic is an essential part in all discourse about crime, supporting discussions between people in their everyday lives, in academia, among policymakers, in the media, etc. Since individuals may rely on unreliable sources for their data about crime, such as social media and fabricated news, their conceptions may be misconstrued. Research on crime trends and the proper communication of findings is, thus, crucial for addressing misconceptions.

Scholars agree that there has been a significant decline in crime since the 1990s, with several crime types (i.e., car theft, robbery, burglary, assault, homicide) declining in countries across the world (Tseloni et al., 2010). There have been many dissenting explanations pertaining to why crime rates have declined over the past three decades. The factors that prompted a drop in crime rates are said to have first affected burglary and car theft, then theft from cars and persons, followed by assaults (Tseloni et al., 2010). Some scholars argue that there has been a decline in crime reporting due to victims' trust of the police decreasing, causing all crimes to not be accounted for in official statistics, such as the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) (Xie et al., 2023). Security improvement is another explanation for crime declines, particularly as it refers to vehicle theft, as vehicles have become increasingly more difficult to steal due to improvements in alarm and locking technology (Farrell et al., 2011). Another potential explanation for the decrease in crime rates is that incarceration rates have been steadily increasing (Butts & Evans, 2014). Finally, a study has proposed that countries globally are observing lower rates of homicide because of population aging (Santos et al., 2019).

While there has been some attention to overall crime trends, there has been little attention to crime trends among juveniles. Juveniles have contributed to the overall crime drop in violent crime occurring since the 1990s (Butts & Evans, 2014), with juvenile homicide rates decreasing in several countries (Santos, 2023). In Spain, scholars have found that property and serious violent crimes have also decreased since the 1990's. However, the authors argue some of this decline may be due to the fact that some juveniles (such as socially disadvantaged and immigrant) could be omitted from the data even though they are more likely to offend given their lack of access to social benefits (Fernández-Molina & Bartolomé Gutiérrez, 2020). Some other explanations for the juvenile crime drop include population aging (Santos et al., 2019), a decline in arrests among juvenile offenders (Butts & Evans, 2014), decrease in risky behaviors such as tobacco, alcohol, cannabis use, and risky sexual behaviors, a decrease of in-person interactions and socialization (Ball et al., 2023), and reduction in substance use disorders among juveniles (Grucza et al., 2018).

The examination of juvenile crime trends is equally (if not more) important to study than crime trends among adult offenders because an individual's childhood and the activities they are involved in may determine the course their life will take (Laub, 2015). If one is constantly involved in the criminal justice system at a young age it may lead to a lifelong investment in criminality (Piquero, 2023). If juvenile crime trends are examined, and plausible explanations for juvenile delinquency are presented then programs can be implemented in society that aim to intervene before a juvenile gets tied up in the criminal justice system. This can then lead to an overall drop in juvenile delinquency, and to a long-term drop in crime as these juveniles age, therefore increasing public safety.

The aim of the current study is to fill the gap in previous literature by analyzing the arrest trends of juveniles in the context of Florida from 2010-2020, compared to the arrest trends of adults in the same context. In addition, we compare the rates of Florida with that of neighboring states, namely Georgia and Alabama. Florida's large and growing population helps to examine juvenile crime trends on a relatively large scale in the context of the United States.

Literature Review

Great Crime Decline

From the mid 1990's and into the twenty first century there has been a close examination of crime trends globally. Studies have generally found that there has been a decrease in crime rates since the mid 1990's, after a sharp increase in crime throughout the 1980's (Butts & Evans, 2014; Farrell et al., 2011; Tseloni et al., 2010). Scholars have discovered that crime rates have fallen in multiple categories including; violent crime, property crime, and crimes against persons (Tseloni et al., 2010).

Crime decreases are not unique to one region, for they have been found in Western countries, the United States, Canada, and countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia (Tonry, 2014; Tseloni et al., 2010). In addition, crime decreases have occurred across multiple crime types and regions. For example, although crime rates in the United States remain high in urban areas versus suburban and rural areas, they have continuously dropped across both of these area types (Vogel & Messner, 2019).

Scholars have presented some probable explanations pertaining to the decrease in crime rates. One explanation is that security quality and quantity have increased, improvements in security devices and the capacity to which security devices can be used linking decreases in crimes to enhancements in security (Farrell et al., 2011). Farrell et al. (2011) found that car theft and theft from cars reduced dramatically after advancements in security such as car alarms and central locking. The factors that promoted the decline in car theft has been said to also impact burglary, personal theft, and assaults (Tseloni et al., 2010). Another explanation for the decrease in crime is that changes in police strategies and economic, social and political environments which may contribute to victims' decreased trust in police and their inclination to report crimes that happen to them (Xie et al., 2023). Xie et al. (2023) found that victim's distrust in police has been increasing since the mid-2000's, including among victims of different racial identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, metropolitan areas, and victims of varying types of crime. This mistrust of police among

civilians has led to decreased police notifications of crimes and may help explain some of the decrease in crime trends. Additionally, population aging may have a profound impact on the global decrease in crime trends. The size of a countries youth population and homicide rate may be associated, with a smaller youth population correlating with a smaller homicide rate. Specifically, Santos et al. (2019) found that population aging affects country's homicide trends, as when the proportion of adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 29 declines, so does the homicide rate.

A study comparing violent crime trends from 2014 to 2015 and again from 2015 to 2016, James (2018) found that some cities in the United States saw a spike in violent crime rates. These increases in crime may be explained by a "Ferguson effect" where events in Ferguson, MO had broader consequences for public safety. In particular, researchers have hypothesized a decrease in police presence after scrutiny by the public of the over-policing of some groups, and police shootings leading to the death of unarmed civilians (James, 2018). The study also indicated that even though there was an increase in violent crime in the designated years, these increases did not impact the overall downward crime trend (James, 2018).

Juvenile Crime Trends

One explanation for the decrease in overall crime rates is the decrease in juvenile offending. Before the crime decline after the mid-1990's there was an increase in crime from the 1980's to the 1990's. Juveniles contributed roughly 20% of the violent crime arrest growth from 1981 to 1994 (Butts & Evans, 2014). Although juveniles had a large influence on the increase in crime rates during those years, they arguably had an even larger impact on the decrease in crime rates in the years thereafter (Butts & Evans, 2014). Though scholars have elaborated several explanations for the decline in overall crime rates, researchers have proposed that the decline occurred primarily in the form of the plummeting in arrests among juvenile offenders (Butts & Evans, 2014). This decline in juvenile offending can be observed in different parts of the world and among different crime types. In Spain, for example, property and violent juvenile offending has been decreasing (Fernández-Molina & Bartolomé Gutiérrez, 2020), and homicide rates among youth have descended as well (Santos, 2023).

Some scholars have attempted to explain the decreases in juvenile offending rates. In the context of Spain, Fernández-Molina & Bartolomé Gutiérrez (2020) found that there has been a decrease in property and serious violent crimes, however, this decline was unmatched in domestic violence and theft. Only non-economically disadvantaged Spanish boys are adequately encapsuled in the crime drop data, and the lack of inclusivity in reporting for all demographic backgrounds may indicate that the reduction in crime rates among juveniles is actually less than they appear to be (Fernández-Molina & Bartolomé Gutiérrez, 2020). Specifically, the authors argue that crime statistics may not account for the socially disadvantaged, girls, and immigrant juveniles, who have been greatly impacted by policy changes that lead to a reduction in their family's income and financial assistance.

Another explanation for the decrease in juvenile offending is that their participation in crime may decrease as populations age. A smaller generation of juveniles spends more time with adults (instead of other juveniles), and have easier access to education, jobs and other social services (Easterlin, 1987; Steffensmeir et al., 1992). Declines in youth offending can also be explained by declines in risk behaviors among adolescents. Australia, England, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United States, and Europe have all experienced reductions in adolescent risk behaviors such as smoking, alcohol use, cannabis use, and early sexual initiation (Ball et al., 2023). Declines in risk behaviors have been explained using three primary explanations: the unitary trend, behavior-specific, and cascade hypotheses. The unitary trend hypothesis states that there are common underlying causes for the decline in adolescent risk behaviors, including increased internet use, less in person time with friends, less childhood trauma, more pressure to do well in school, greater risk analysis, etc. The behavior-specific hypothesis suggests that decreases in adolescent risk behaviors are unique to certain risk behaviors such as drinking and smoking. For example, stricter laws for purchasing cigarettes and alcohol may lead to decreased alcohol and cigarette use among adolescents. Finally, the cascade hypothesis says that declines in particular risk behaviors have led to declines in other risk behaviors, such as declined binge drinking

leading to a decline in sexual risk behaviors (Ball et al., 2023). Ball et al. (2023) examined empirical studies conducted in North America and Europe and found empirical support for all three hypotheses.

Substance use disorders have also decreased among adolescents. In a study investigating trends between 2003-2014, Grucza and colleagues (2017) found a 49% decrease in the number of substance use disorders among adolescents, and a 34% decline in delinquent behaviors such as being in a serious fight, attempting to injure a person, carrying a handgun, selling drugs, and stealing (Grucza et al., 2018). In their study they found that delinquent behavior and substance use disorder were found to be linked and to follow the same trend over several years, which would support a unitary trend hypothesis (Grucza et al., 2018). Internal or external factors may have contributed a decline in both substances use disorders and delinquent behaviors among adolescents. Internal traits include a disinterest in engaging in delinquent behaviors and utilizing drugs. Conversely, external behaviors encompass environmental factors such as a decline in childhood exposure to the risky behaviors of others, to opportunities to engage in risk themselves, an increase in psychotropic medication for children, and a decrease in child maltreatment (Grucza et al., 2018).

Crime Trends in Florida

Crime trends have been analyzed globally and within the United States, however, literature about Florida is more limited. A few studies have considered the impact of spatial distribution of crime in Florida. Han et al. (2019) did a study on a tourist area in Orlando, FL, near their theme park Universal Studios, and found that crime was at a higher concentration within close range to the theme park. Another study conducted in Coral Gables, FL, focused on the spatial patterns of crime in the context of property crime. Busy commercial areas with a significant amount of home renters were found to be associated with hotspots for vehicle and residential burglary (Carter et al., 2020). In Coral Gables, FL there was also a divide between the city, separating the North and South. In the Northern area, hotspots and crime were more prevalent, whereas in the Southern area there were decreases in the amount of crime (Carter et al., 2020). This reveals that different cities experience different amounts of crime, so this may impact overall crime reports. Another factor that may impact crime rates in cities is the number of immigrants that reside there. Scholars examined arrest records from Pinellas County Sheriff's Office to determine if immigration had an impact on recidivism. Immigrants were found to be less likely to recidivate than native born citizens (Piatkowska & Camacho, 2022), driving overall crime rates to decrease as more individuals migrate there.

Legislation and policy mandates may also be associated with crime rates in Florida. The Stand Your Ground legislation, expands legal use of deadly force in self-defense, was passed in many states across the United States including Florida. Researchers suggest that after the passage of the Stand Your Ground Law the number of homicides increased (Levy et al., 2020). One of the first incidents that garnered a large amount of media coverage after the Stand Your Ground law went into effect in Florida is in 2012 was when 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed by an alleged neighborhood watch personnel. Thus, it is possible that Stand Your Ground laws has increased the number of fatalities across the United States, and especially in Florida, however this requires further research.

Scholars have examined the impact of police presence in Florida schools on juvenile arrest rates. Specifically, they hypothesized that an increased police presence may positively influence juvenile arrest rates, with juvenile arrest rates increasing as police presence increases. After the 2018 Parkland shooting the state of Florida mandated that all public schools have a law enforcement personnel present on campus. The presence of law enforcement personnel on Florida public schools campus has led to an increase in student arrests and behavioral reports made to law enforcement (Curran, 2020). This is important to note because that increase in the number of student arrests does not necessarily imply an increase in juvenile offending rates, as it reflects just an increase in reports to the police.

Overall, there is very limited research on crime rates in Florida, particularly in a longitudinal perspective which emphasizes change over time, instead of just cross-sectional differences between groups or places. Not only is research on general crime rates in Florida limited but so is research on juvenile crime rates. A single study has analyzed how juvenile crime rates may be impacted through student arrests on a specific school campus. It is essential to

examine how juvenile crime rates are changing over time to identify issues that may be afflicting this population, and which may severely impact their long-term life trajectories.

Current Study

Although previous literature has examined crime trends globally and some studies have discussed factors that may impact crime trends in Florida, none of the studies have looked at crime trends in Florida over several years in the context of juveniles. This study aims to contribute to literature by analyzing juvenile crime trends in Florida from 2010-2020, in comparison to adult offending trends, and to the rates of neighboring states.

Data & Methods

This study uses population and arrest data for Florida, Alabama and Georgia from 2010 to up until 2020. All data used in this study is listed in Appendix A, which can be used for study replication. This data corresponds to a compilation of public records from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR), the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) US Census, Macro Trends, the Georgia Uniform Crime Report, and the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, FBI UCR, FDLE, Georgia UCR and the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center were used to gather arrest data regarding both juvenile and adults. Within these reports there are sections that reveal the number of arrests that have been reported by law enforcement in the designated years. In these arrest reports a juvenile was identified and categorized as an individual who is 18 years and younger.

Data on the total population, which was used to calculate the number of juveniles and adults in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama for designated years and then compared to the number of juvenile and adult arrests to obtain the arrest rates for both adults and juveniles, are from the United States Census Bureau, which is responsible for producing data about the demographics of individuals in America and the economy. The US Census Bureau defines a juvenile as someone who is aged 19 years and younger, so the percentage of juveniles of the total population in designated years was able to be calculated.

We calculated arrest rates in percentages. Specifically, we used the following formula:

$$Arrest\ Rate_y = \left(\frac{Arrest\ Count_y}{Population_y} \right) * 100$$

Where the arrest rate of year "y" equals to the number of arrestees divided by the population of a group. Resulting rates reflect the percentage of the population (total, adults or juveniles) who were arrested. In addition, we calculated the yearly Change in that arrest rate using the formula:

$$Rate\ Change_y = \left(\frac{Arrest\ Rate_y - Arrest\ Rate_{y=2010}}{Arrest\ Rate_{y=2010}} \right)$$

Where the change in the arrest rate is relative to the rate in 2010. Specifically, we subtracted the rate of 2010 from the rate of each year, which was then divided by the rate in 2010, for a rate change in percentage points. For example, a decline 50% in the arrest rate of a given year would indicate that year had half of the arrest rate of 2010.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of the Department of Justice, which regularly publishes informational statistics on crime, crime victims and offenders, and the operation of justice systems. The Bureau of Justice Statistics collects data through the compilation of official justice records and through surveys, such as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and the Police-Public Contact Survey. The NCVS is a nationally representative survey which encapsules information on criminal victimization through interviews with victims of crimes. The Police-Public Contact Survey asks participants about their contact with police officers to analyze their views on encounters with the police and how respondents perceived these encounters.

The FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR) consists of data from over 18,000 law enforcement agencies regarding crime occurring in their jurisdiction. There are eight types of crimes covered in the UCR: murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Findings from the UCR are published annually from four data collections which include the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the Hate Crime Statistics Program, the Summary Reporting System (SRS), and the Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted Program (LEOKA).

The NIBRS is made up of specific details from each crime incident that is reported to law enforcement including the offender(s), victim(s), the relationship between the parties, who was arrested, and the property that may have been involved in the crimes. The Hate Crime Statistics Program is made up of data collected from the NIBRS that discusses crimes consisting of motivating factors of offenders such as their bias against a certain race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and disability. The SRS is used to collect data from law enforcement agencies that detail monthly counts of the number of crimes reported to law enforcement with ten categories of offenses: murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, arson, and human trafficking acts (commercial sex acts and involuntary servitude). The LEOKA program is aimed at improving officer safety by examining incidents of police officers being killed or assaulted while on duty.

Another data source used for this study was Google Datasets which utilizes metadata sets derived from millions of datasets across the web in efforts to make datasets from different publishers more accessible to the public. Additionally, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement website was used, which consists of arrest records occurring in the state of Florida. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement collects their data from the Department of Corrections, state attorneys, public defenders, clerks of court, and the county detention facility administrators. In reference to Georgia and Alabama Macro Trends, the Georgia UCR and the Alabama Justice Information Center was used for data collection. Macro Trends gathers their data from the US Census Bureau and provides a detailed account of population data as well as the population growth rate for each state in the US over several years. The Georgia UCR consists of annual reports of offenses and arrests provided by the different law enforcement agencies in Georgia and the Alabama Justice Information Center releases information regarding the criminal justice system including offenses and arrests.

All these data sources were used to obtain data about the juvenile and adult population of Florida, Georgia, and Alabama in the designated years from 2010-2020, and number of arrests for each age group.

Analytical Strategy

We conduct a descriptive analysis of the calculated rates between 2010 and 2020 using line plots. For data analysis, we first compared the adult against the juvenile arrest trend in Florida. Then Florida's adult and juvenile arrest rates were compared with those of neighboring states, namely Georgia and Alabama. We observe the juvenile arrest trends in Florida, and the extent these trends are comparable to the arrest rate of adults, and to the rates observed in Georgia and Alabama. A unique trend for the rate of juvenile arrests in Florida would indicate the influence of specific drivers, while a shared trends will suggest more general causes that are shared across age groups, and/or across multiple states.

Results

Shown in Figure 1 is the juvenile and adult arrest rates in Florida from 2010-2020. For juveniles the arrest rate went from 2.37 to 0.75 per 100 juveniles, and the decline in juvenile arrest rates was almost constant, meaning that it dropped by a similar amount in every year of analysis. In fact, the juvenile arrest rate has dropped between all years we observed, without exception, at an average of -0.16 percentage points (pp) per year. This gradual decline suggests the influence of similarly gradual causes, instead of a sudden policy shock. The adult arrest rate is a little more volatile, but there is also an overall decline, going from 6.27 to 2.74 per 100 adults in the years of analysis. Overall, both juvenile and adult arrest rates declined, however, for juveniles the decline was more linear and gradual.
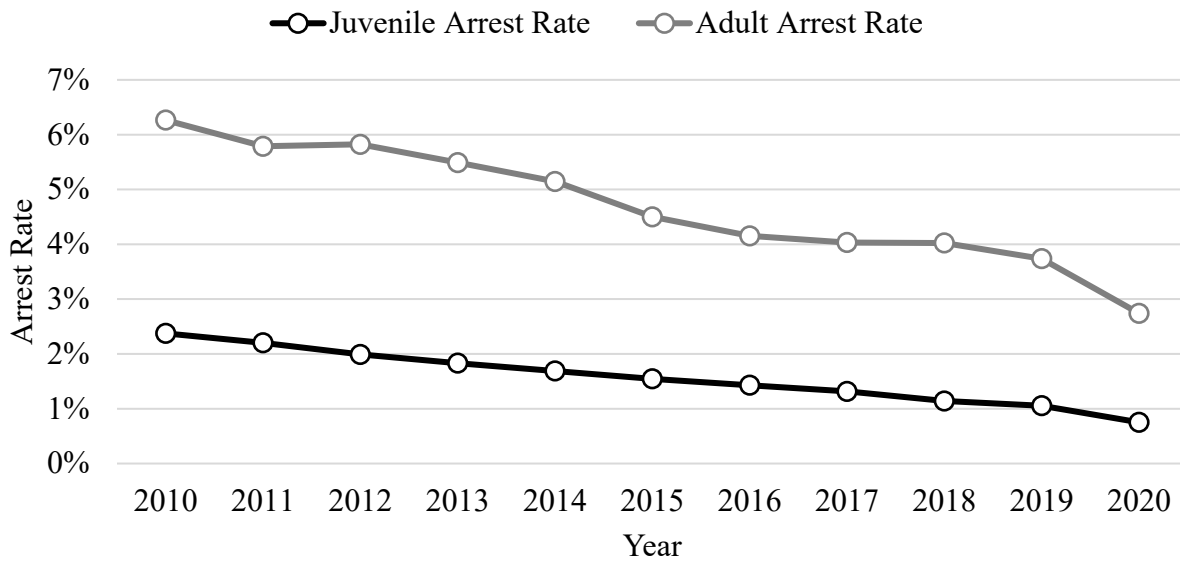

Figure 1. Juvenile and Adult Arrest Rates – Florida 2010-2020

Shown in figure 2 is the proportional change in arrests among juveniles and adults in Florida for each year relative to 2010. The adult arrest rate decreased by 56.25% from 2010-2020, and the juvenile rate declined by 68.33%. Both are very substantial declines, which are unusual for their intensity. Although juvenile arrests experienced a larger decline, both groups had an enormous decline. In addition, from 2019-2020 there was a steeper decline for both groups in comparison to previous years, which could be related to outbreak of the COVID-19 virus which led to a worldwide shut down. Generally, Figures 1 and 2 show an intense yet gradual decline in the juvenile arrest rate in Florida, which largely mirrors the decline of the adult arrest rate.
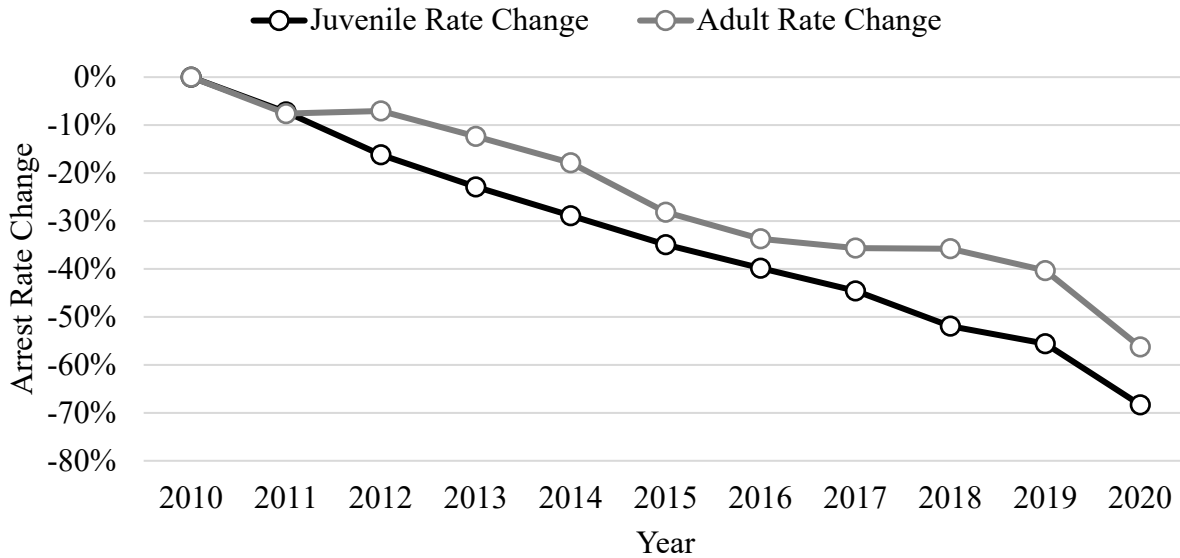
Figure 2. Proportional change in the Juvenile and Adult Arrest Rates from 2010 – Florida 2010-2020

Shown in figure 3 is the percent of juveniles relative to the total population in Florida from 2010-2020. There is a declining percent in the youth population, which decreased from 27.1% in 2010 to 24.1% in 2020. More specifically, from 2017-2020 there was a steep acceleration in that decline, which may have continued to accelerate in more recent years. The decrease in the percent youth population may have an impact on the juvenile arrest rates, as a smaller proportion of juveniles tends to have more educational and economic opportunities and is easier to supervise and control. Hence, demographic change in the form of a declining proportion of juveniles in the overall population by be a factor contributing to the decline in arrests in Florida, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.
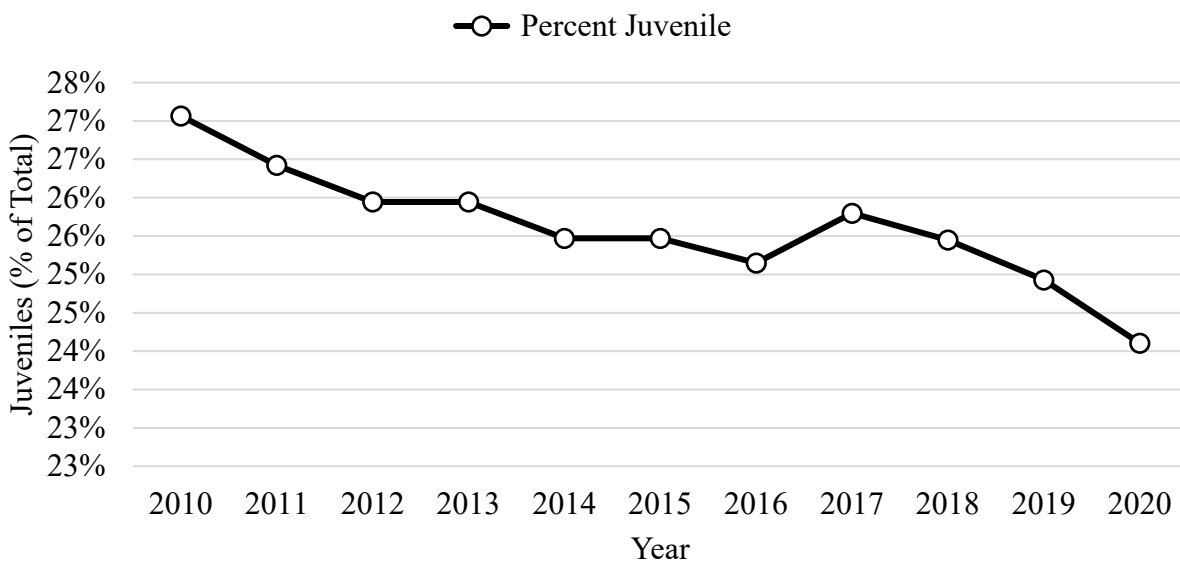

Figure 3. Juveniles as a Percent of the Total Population – Florida 2010-2020

Figure 4 compares the juvenile arrest rate per 100 juveniles in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama from 2010-2020 (Panel 4a) as well as the percent change in the arrest rates in the same context (Panel 4b). The figures reveal a nearly identical downward trend between Florida and Georgia, which saw almost the same exact decline in the juvenile arrest rates from 2010 and 2020. Over that period, the arrest rate in Georgia remained about 0.6 percentage points lower than that of Florida. However, despite of this difference in level, the change observed in both states was nearly parallel. The single difference, which is minor, is in 2019-2020, when the juvenile arrest rate in Georgia declined a little more strongly than that of Florida. Hence, which cause is driving the juvenile arrest decline, it likely impacts both Gorgia and Florida, and to similar extents. In contrast, there is a remarkably distinction between these two states and Alabama, which saw an increase in its juvenile arrest rate from 2010 and 2012. Thereafter, however, Alabama joined Georgia and Florida in also observing a decline in its juvenile arrest rate, though at a less gradual pace. None-theless, it appears that even Alabama is also experiencing a juvenile arrest decline, even though it started years later.

(4a) *Rate*
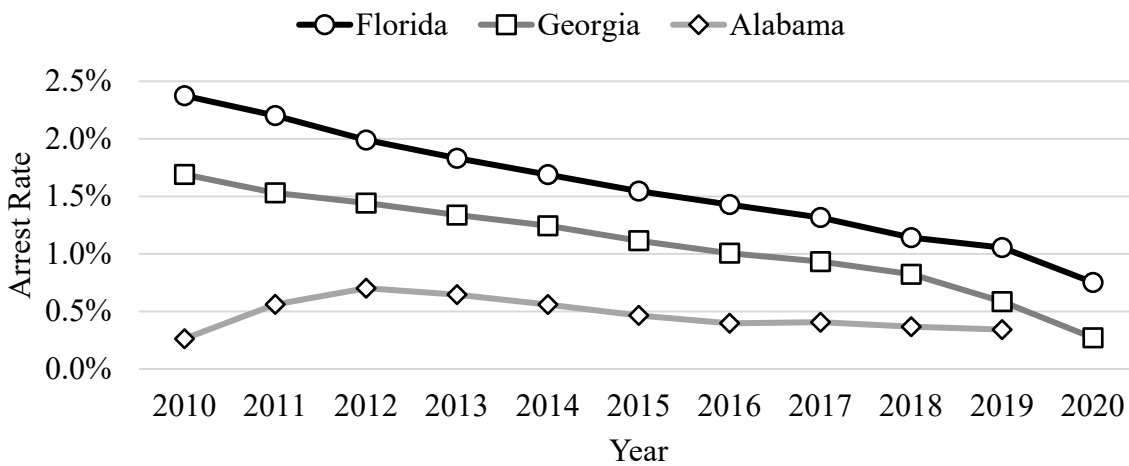
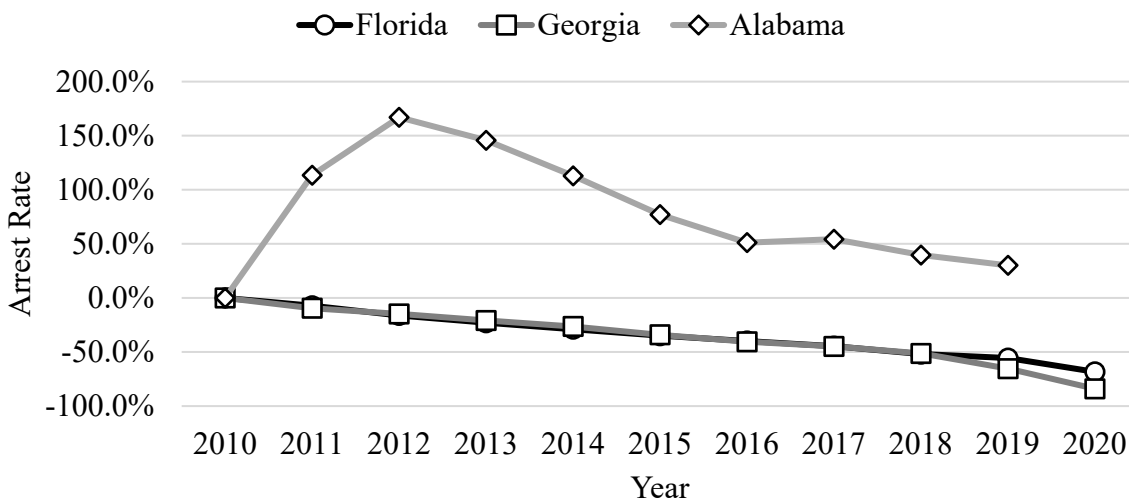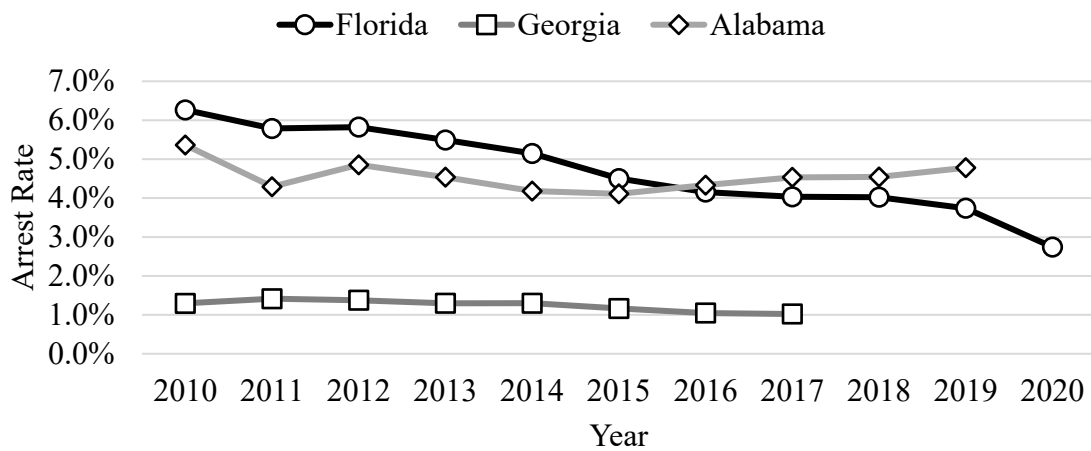**(4b)** *Percent Change Since 2010*

Figure 4. Juvenile Arrest Rates – Florida, Alabama, and Georgia 2010-2020.

Shown in figure 5 is the adult arrest rates in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama from 2010-2020 (Panel 5a), and the percent change in the same context (Panel 5b). There is missing data on adult arrests from 2018-2020 for Georgia, and for 2019-2020 for Alabama, which should be considered when analyzing the results. Here, again Florida and Georgia share many similarities. Though arrest rates are much lower in Georgia (averaging at 1.24%) than in Florida (at an average of 4.70%), the changes in the two states are remarkably similar, showcasing a very gradual decline, which seems to be accelerating in more recent years in Florida. In fact, as juveniles with a low arrest rate age into adulthood, it is likely that they will add further downward pressure in the arrest rate of adults. Again, Alabama is an exception relative to the other two states, though in the case of adult rates the differences are even more pronounced. Alabama is not experiencing a decline of its adult arrest rate over the study period, and in fact has been observing a steady increase since 2015. Specifically, Alabama experienced a decrease in arrest rates from 2010-2011, an increase from 2011-2012, a decrease from 2012-2015, and again an increase in adult arrests from 2015-2019.

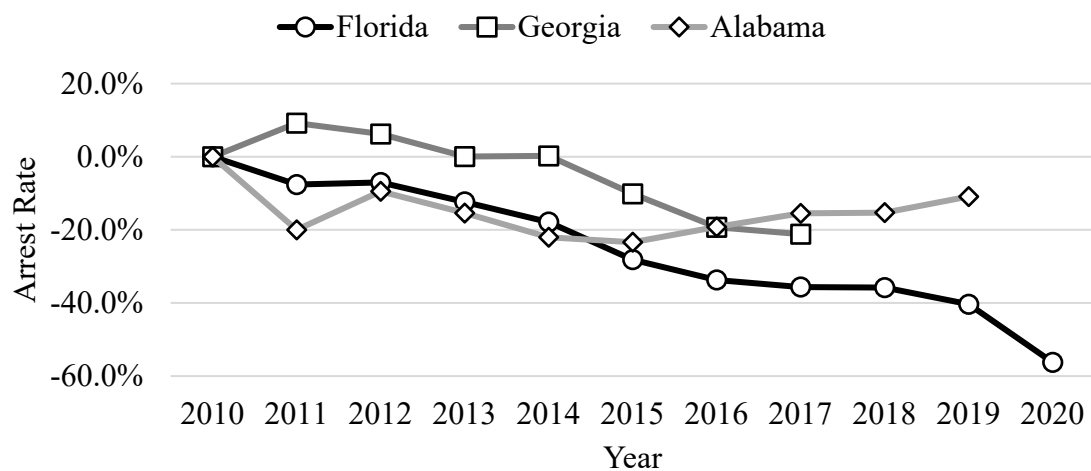**(5a)** *Rate*

(5b) *Percent Change Since 2010*

Figure 5. Adult Arrest Rates – Florida, Alabama, and Georgia 2010-2020.

Discussion, Policy Implications & Limitations

Prior literature suggests that there has been a global decrease in crime rates since the mid 1990's among both juveniles and adults. This may be due to a multitude of underlying factors. Prior to speculating on causes, however, researchers should carefully consider the nature of these crime trends and their contexts. Although prior literature has agreed that there has been a crime decline, research has not thoroughly examined juveniles, especially in the context of Florida. To test the theory that crime trends have ultimately experienced a decline among both juveniles and adults, the current study aimed to assess crime trends among juveniles by analyzing juvenile arrest trends in Florida between the years 2010-2020 in comparison to adult arrest trends in the same context. Specifically, a descriptive study was conducted that utilized official statistics from different crime reporting agencies to evaluate the arrest trends among juvenile and adults in Florida. Data from Florida was then compared with data from the neighboring states Georgia and Alabama, which served as control groups in this study.

Results of this study agree with previous literature, indicating that arrest rates among juveniles and adults have decreased strongly in Florida between 2010-2020. There was a gradual decline in juvenile and adult arrest trends in the study, which reveal that the decline is the result of a process and not a shock. The exact nature of this process, however, is unclear. It could have several sources, including legislative changes, innovations in justice policy, economic factors, improvements in health, demographic shifts, etc. Both juvenile and adult arrest trends in Florida follow a similar rate, and the only shock that may be observed is from 2019-2020 where there was a large drop in arrests among both groups. We observed a gradual decline in both juvenile and adult crime trends, however, it seems juveniles a little bit more than adults.

We also found that the arrest declines observed in Florida are remarkably like the same declines which were observed in Georgia, which were both very dissimilar to Alabama. This is an interesting finding because it suggests that whatever is influencing the arrest declines in Florida could also be taking place in Georgia and this should ignite some further investigation among researchers pertaining to the factors influencing this decline. This could also warrant some attention by policy makers to assess what policies and programs are effective in reducing criminal justice involvement among civilians.

The overall decline in arrest rates among both juveniles and adults reveal that there may be some underlying factors contributing to this decline. These factors may include population aging (Santos et al., 2019, Roeder et al., 2015, Blumstein, 2006), increases in immigration (Wadsworth, 2010), improvements in security (Farrell et al., 2011), declines in crime reporting due to victims mistrust of police (Xie et al., 2023), and declines in juvenile risk behaviors (Ball et al., 2023, Grucza et al., 2018, Vaughn et al, 2018) which may be due to an aversion among juveniles to engage in risk behaviors which include delinquency (Borodovsky et al., 2019). In reference to this study to support the population aging hypothesis, in figure 3 we can observe that in Florida the juvenile as a percentage of the population declined along with the arrest rates, going from over 27% in 2010 to just about 24% in 2020. Technology may also be a driving factor in the arrest decline among juveniles and adults. Studies have suggested that cell phone ownership may have negatively influenced offending (Klick, MacDonald, and Stratmann, 2012, Orrick & Piquero, 2012). The technology hypothesis should be investigated further, because not only have cell phones impacted crime rates, but video games may also be an influencing factor in the crime decline. Markey et al., (2015) found in their study that violent video games may be correlated to a decrease in real world violence. One hypothesis presented by the current study is that portraits of corrections in the media can serve as a deterrence for delinquency. There has also been a surge in media depictions of the criminal justice system may also play a role in people's trust that the criminal justice will solve issues effectively (Kort-Butler & Hartshorn, 2016). One argument presented by this study is that not only have the juvenile arrest rates declined, but there has also been a decline in adult arrests which may suggest that as juveniles with low arrest rates enter adulthood, there should continue to be an overall decline in arrests.

Future research should investigate a multitude of things including why there is such a large decline in juvenile arrests in comparison to adults. This may be a result of underlying factors that are affecting juveniles at a different rate than adults such as those presented in the study. Another direction for future research is examining if the overall

decline in arrest rates reflects a drop in actual offending, or if enforcement has been refined to address and prevent offending. There may also be underrepresentation of offending taking place due to a lack of reporting, so crimes may be occurring but are not being reported, which could influence the number of arrests therefore impacting arrest trends. After all, this study examines arrest trends among juvenile and adults in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama but not the crimes reported to law enforcement as outlined by the Uniform Crime Report. So, it is possible that there are more crimes taking place in comparison to arrests that have been made as reflected in official reports.

An implication of this study is the diagnosis of a great arrest decline in Florida. Though we cannot speak directly about its causes, the very fact that Florida (and Georgia) is experiencing such as steep and gradual decline in their arrest rates is a remarkably positive development. On one hand, it suggests that future generations may be much less prone to criminal offending than aging cohorts, which should lead to a continuing decline on adult arrest rates. Second, as arrest rates decline, criminal justice expenditures on policing, with the justice system and with the correction system can be better allocated to focus on the (much smaller) criminality that remains, further declining crime. Third, the resources spared can also be dedicated to a range of other programs in support of youth in vulnerable social conditions. Finally, a generation of youth with a much smaller likelihood of arrests will represent, soon, a much larger generation of adults without a prior criminal record, who will avoid all the stigma and challenges associated with that record. In turn, those individuals will likely have stronger opportunities to prosper, and to live more fulfilling lives without infringing on the rights of others.

Another policy implication includes the need to evaluate policies that are currently in place and see if they can be associated with the decline in arrests, and if certain policies are associated, they can be expanded or replicated in initiatives. There can also be policy innovation as a result in analyzing crime trends, which include influencing policy makers to develop certain laws or regulations to address certain types of crimes. Policy makers assessing programs and facilities that may be aiding in the decline in juvenile arrest rates and ensuring that they are adequately maintained to ensure that arrest rates continue to decline. This could include resource allocation to those programs from other services to maintain the decline in arrests. Overall, understanding and examining arrest trends is essential for developing evidence-based policies that effectively address the underlying causes of the crime and promote public safety.

There are some limitations to the current study. This study is solely descriptive, so it cannot speak directly about the causes of the results presented. The data used was based on a measure of detection which was reported arrests, so it does not necessarily reflect actual offending. Therefore, there is no clear reason to believe that crime detection got worse, so this should be investigated more. The current study also utilized Florida as a state of analysis, so results cannot be generalized to other areas.

Despite these limitations, this study clearly shows and contextualizes a novel and understudied phenomenon, namely the great juvenile crime decline. States in the South of the United States are notorious for their higher levels of violence compared to the rest of the country (Nisbett, 1993), yet this study shows promising patters regarding a strong, steady and gradual decline in offending which is promising for the future. Specifically, this decline in juvenile offending should support a longer-term drop in violence, freeing public resources from incarceration facilities and other criminal justice apparatus to more positive investments in other social necessities such as education, health and infrastructure.

References

Ball, J., Grucza, R., Livingston, M., ter Bogt, T., Currie, C., & de Looze, M. (2023). The great decline in adolescent risk behaviours: Unitary trend, separate trends, or cascade? *Social Science & Medicine*, *317*, Article number 115616. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115616

Blumstein, A. (2006). The Crime Drop in America: An Exploration of Some Recent Crime Trends. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, *7*(sup1), 17–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/14043850601037938

Borodovsky, J. T., Krueger, R. F., Agrawal, A., & Grucza, R. A. (2019). A decline in propensity toward risk behaviors among US adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *65*(6), 745-751. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.07.001.

Butts, J., & Evans, D. (2014). The Second American Crime Drop. In T.W. Church, D. Springer, A.R. Roberts (Eds.) *Juvenile Justice Sourcebook* (pp. 61–77). Oxford University Press.

Carter, J., Louderback, E. R., Vildosola, D., & Sen Roy, S. (2020). Crime in an Affluent City: Spatial Patterns of Property Crime in Coral Gables, Florida. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, *26*(4), 547–570. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10610-019-09415-5

Curran, F. C. (2020). The Expanding Presence of Law Enforcement in Florida Schools. *University of Florida Education Policy Research Center.*

Easterlin R. A. (1987). *Birth and fortune: The impact of numbers on personal welfare* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Farrell, G., Tseloni, A., Mailley, J., & Tilley, N. (2011). The crime drop and the security hypothesis. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *48*(2), 147–175. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427810391539

Fernández-Molina, E., & Bartolomé Gutiérrez, R. (2020). Juvenile crime drop: What is happening with youth in Spain and why? *European Journal of Criminology*, *17*(3), 306–331. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818792383

Galea, S., Ettman, C. K., & Vlahov, D. (2019). *Urban Health*. Oxford University Press.

Grucza, R. A., Krueger, R. F., Agrawal, A., Plunk, A. D., Krauss, M. J., Bongu, J., Cavazos-Rehg, P. A., & Bierut, L. J. (2018). Declines in prevalence of adolescent substance use disorders and delinquent behaviors in the USA: A unitary trend? *Psychological Medicine*, *48*(9), 1494–1503. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291717002999

Han, S., Nobles, M. R., Piquero, A. R., & Piquero, N. L. (2021). Crime Risks Increase in Areas Proximate to Theme Parks: A Case Study of Crime Concentration in Orlando. *Justice Quarterly*, *38*(6), 1210–1229. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2019.1677935

James, N. (2018). Recent Violent Crime Trends in the United States. *Congressional Research Service, 45236.*

Klick, J., MacDonald,J., and Stratmann, T. (2012). Mobile Phones and Crime Deterrance: An Underappreciated Link. In A. Harel & K. Hylton (eds.) *Research Handbook on the Economics of Criminal Law* (pp. 243-256). Northhampton, MA: Edward Elger Publishing Inc.

Kort-Butler, L. A., & Hartshorn, K. J. S. (2011). Watching the Detectives: Crime Programming, Fear of Crime, and Attitudes about the Criminal Justice System. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *52*(1), 36–55. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2010.01191.x

Levy, M., Alvarez, W., Vagelakos, L., Yore, M., & Khallouq, B. B. (2020). Stand Your Ground: Policy and Trends in Firearm-Related Justifiable Homicide and Homicide in the US. *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, *230*(1), 161-167.e4. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jamcollsurg.2019.11.003

Markey, P., Markey, C., French, J. (2015). Violent video games and real-world violence: Rhetoric versus data. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 4(4),* 277-295. https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000030

Moise, I. K. (2020). Youth and weapons: Patterns, individual and neighborhood correlates of violent crime arrests in Miami-Dade County, Florida. *Health & Place*, *65*, 102407. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2020.102407

Nisbett, R.E. (1996). *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South.* New York, Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429501142

Orrick, E. A., & Piquero, A. R. (2015). Were cell phones associated with lower crime in the 1990s and 2000s? *Journal of Crime and Justice*, *38*(2), 222–234. https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2013.864570

Piatkowska, S. J., & Camacho, J. (2022). Foreign-born arrestees and recidivism: A multilevel analysis of arrest data from a Florida county Sheriff's office. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, *77*(5), 479–501. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-021-10005-y

Roeder, O., Eisen, L.B., Bowling, J., Stiglitz, J., Chettiar, I. (2015). What caused the crime decline? *Columbia Business School Research Paper,* 15(28). http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2566965

Santos, M. (2023). Cross-National Trends and Predictors of Youth Homicide Victimization. In K. Heide (Ed.) *The Routledge International Handbook of Juvenile Homicide (*pp.157-173). Routledge.

Santos, M., Testa, A., Porter, L., & Lynch, J. (2019). The contribution of age structure to the international homicide decline. *PLoS ONE, 14(10). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal. pone.0222996*

Steffensmeier, D., Streifel, C., & Shihadeh, E. S. (1992). Cohort size and arrest rates over the life course: The Easterlin hypothesis reconsidered. *American Sociological Review*, *57*(3), 306-314. https://doi.org/10.2307/2096237

Tonry, M. (2014). Why Crime Rates Are Falling throughout the Western World. *Crime and Justice*, *43*, 1–63. https://doi.org/10.1086/678181

Tseloni, A., Mailley, J., Farrell, G., & Tilley, N. (2010). Exploring the international decline in crime rates. *European Journal of Criminology*, *7*(5), 375–394. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370810367014

Vogel, M., & Messner, S. (2019). Crime and Criminal Justice in Cities. In S. Galea, C. K. Ettman, & D. Vlahov (Eds.), *Urban Health* (pp. 139–147). Oxford University Press.

Wadsworth, T. (2010). Is Immigration Responsible for the Crime Drop? An Assessment of the Influence of Immigration on Changes in Violent Crime Between 1990 and 2000*. *Social Science Quarterly*, *91*(2), 531–553. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00706.x

Xie, M., Ortiz Solis, V., & Chauhan, P. (2023). Declining Trends in Crime Reporting and Victims' Trust of Police in the United States and Major Metropolitan Areas in the 21st Century. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 40(1), 138-171. https://doi.org/10.1177/10439862231190212