CASCADE COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT JUVENILE ARREST POINT OF CONTACT STUDY

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The current investigation seeks to build upon the prior literature concerning law enforcement contact with juveniles. It address a void in studies conducted by Hollist, Coolidge, Delano, Greenwood, King, McLean, McKay, Harris, Burfeind, and Doyle in 2012, and also Hollist, Downey, Acton, Harris, McKay, Bunch, Burfeind, and Doyle in 2014. Findings presented here are based on an online survey administered to Great Falls Police Department officers and Cascade County Sheriff's Office deputies. Questions were asked of participating law enforcement members that sought to identify factors affecting their formal and informal decisions to issue citations, arrest, and place juveniles in detention.

The objective of the research is to aid in development of core-capacity capabilities that will enable the State of Montana, Cascade County, and local law enforcement to better understand and more effectively address police contact with juveniles and the factors that influence the likelihood of a formal (arrest) versus informal outcome. Data presented here provide critical knowledge and insight that is essential for informing departmental policies regarding police contact with youth in Cascade County and elsewhere. This research is also expected to be of importance to practice and policy across Montana, notably to the State of Montana's mission to address disproportionate minority involvement in the juvenile justice system.

This report is the result of a contract between the Montana Board of Crime Control, the Alliance for Youth, and the University of Montana Criminology Research Group.

METHODOLOGY

Research findings presented here are based on information gathered from the results of an online survey with six sections that asked participants a series of questions, including about employment and background, factors contributing to the formal decision-making process, community resources, and perspectives on the local community. The survey also inquired about disproportionate minority contact (DMC), juvenile justice system knowledge, and demographic information. Data were gathered between March 2016 and June 2016. All active employees of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Great Falls Police Department were invited to take the online survey. Participants were informed about the survey through a pre-contact email message that was sent out internally within the departments. Roughly three days later, a message from the CRG research team with a link to the online survey was sent. A first and second follow-up reminder was sent to those persons who had not submitted the survey two weeks and then four weeks after the initial message from the CRG research team. Of 109 respondents, 60 completed and submitted the survey; this is a response rate of approximately 56 percent.

Factors Associated with Citation, Arrest, and Initial Detention

Free-Response Section:

The survey asked respondents to list the top three reasons they would issue a citation, make an arrest, and place a juvenile in detention, rather than performing an informal act such as issuing a warning, counseling and releasing the youth, or another alternative to detention. Notable findings are presented below and explored in more detail later in this report.

- o Seriousness of offense was listed most frequently as an important factor triggering the decision to cite, arrest, and place a juvenile in pre-adjudicatory detention.
    - § Partner Family Member Assault (PFMA) was specifically and frequently named as rationale for arrest.
- o Drug and alcohol use was considered an important trigger for issuing a citation, but was far less frequently listed as a reason to arrest or for initial placement in detention.
- o Public safety was commonly mentioned as a reason for arrest and for initial placement in detention.
- o Inability to contact a parent/legal guardian was also cited as an important factor in arrest and pre-adjudicatory detention.
- o Criminal history was frequently mentioned as a trigger for citation and arrest.
- o Departmental policy was not frequently mentioned as a reason to cite, arrest, and detain juveniles.
    - § The free-response section findings on departmental policy are notable because they differ from those produced in this inquiry's Index Factor Section, where departmental policy ranked as an important consideration for citation, arrest, and detention.
- o Citizen and bystander complaints were commonly listed as a reason to cite a juvenile.
- o Running away from home was frequently listed as a consideration for issuing a citation.
- o There was more agreement among respondents in the top three named factors (seriousness of offense, inability to contact a parent/legal guardian, and public safety) for the initial detention section than there was in the citation and arrest sections.

Index-Factor Section:

Survey respondents were asked to rate 12 factors commonly associated with citation, arrest, and initial detention. Notable findings are presented below and explored in more detail later in this document.

- o The trends in the level of importance for the index factors were somewhat similar to the trends in frequency for the free-response section.
- o Citation:
    - § Factors considered to be important included "severity of offense," "public safety concerns," "departmental policy," and "juvenile under the influence of alcohol/drugs."
    - § Respondents indicated that "parental substance abuse and bystander/citizen insistence to issue a citation" constituted neither important nor unimportant factors. Those two factors yielded the lowest scores among the options provided.

- o Arrest:
    - § The range in average scores (2.88-4.77) suggests differences in opinions concerning the level of importance for the factors. (See Table 2.1 for more information).
    - § Factors considered **important** in arrest include "public safety concerns," severity of the offense," "departmental policy," "juvenile under the influence of alcohol/drugs," "inability to contact parent/legal guardian," and "prior record of the juvenile."
    - § "Bystander/citizen insistence to make an arrest" had the lowest average score (2.88).
- o Initial Detention:
    - § The range in average scores (3.33-4.90) suggests that respondents found all given factors to be important. (See Table 2.1 for more information).
    - § Factors that are considered to be important include "severity of offense," "public safety concerns," "departmental policy," "juvenile under the influence of alcohol/drugs," "inability to contact a parent or legal guardian," and "absence of a suitable alternative to detention."
    - § "Instability or lack of structure at home" (M=3.33) and "demeanor of the juvenile" (3.65) garnered the lowest average scores.

Community Resources

Respondents were asked to rate their knowledge of the availability of eight community resources including "drug treatment and education;" "mentoring programs;" "a crisis care center;" "shelter care/non-secure detention;" "a multi-disciplinary care planning team;" "emergency housing services;" "a current and updated community resources guide," and "secondary trauma services for direct service providers." Highlights from the survey's Community Resources section are presented below and explored in more detail later in this report.

Availability of Community Resources:

- o Law enforcement officers were most sure about the availability of drug treatment and education programs and mentoring programs for juveniles.
- o Respondents had mixed knowledge about the availability of crisis care centers, shelter care/non-secure detention facilities, and emergency housing services.
- o Survey participants were least certain about the existence of multi-disciplinary teams, current and updated community resource guides, and secondary trauma service for direct service providers.

Collaboration with Other Community Service Providers:

Participants were asked to rate how frequently they collaborated with eight other agencies or systems including child welfare; chemical dependency/addiction; early child care; education system service providers; juvenile justice/legal; medical; mental health, and nonprofit/advocacy. Notable findings are presented below and explored in more detail later in this document.

- o Law enforcement officers are most likely to interact with members of the juvenile justice/legal system.
    - § The mean score for collaboration with the juvenile justice/legal system was 3.26, which indicates collaboration occurred "sometimes."

- o Medical Systems, mental health systems, education system service providers, and child welfare systems received average scores below 3, indicating collaborations occur rarely to sometimes.
- o Early child care systems, nonprofit/advocacy programs, and chemical dependency/addiction systems had the lowest average scores, all below 2. This indicates that respondents never or rarely collaborate with organizations in those domains.

Current Trauma-Informed Care Practices within Department:

Respondents were asked a series of questions about existing trauma-based systems and practices within law enforcement departments. Notable findings are presented below and explored in more detail later in this document.

- o The range in average scores (2.44-2.79) suggests that there is a need to increase the amount of attention currently given to trauma-informed care.
  - § Connecting with service providers outside of law enforcement was the most likely trauma-informed care activity of those measured.

Planning and Training

Participation in Training/Planning Programs:

- o Of the types of training programs listed, including state and local education on trauma and victimization, respondents were most likely to participate in training programs on services for juveniles outside of the law enforcement domain.
- o Respondents varied in their willingness to participate in state and local-level planning and training. Overall, respondents were "undecided" on their willingness to participate in such offerings.
  - § Although some respondents indicated that they would be "very likely" to participate in planning and training programs, other respondents said they would be "very unlikely" to attend.
- o Respondents were more inclined to participate in training within the department than they would be to participate in local and state training opportunities.
  - § This finding is based on a separate set of questions regarding departmental training.

DMC in Cascade County

Factors Associated with DMC:

The survey asked law enforcement to rate 13 factors on whether they could present explanations for DMC. Highlights from those findings are presented below and explored further later in this report.

- o Average scores across all factors suggest that law enforcement perspectives on DMC vary, and there is not a single item collectively agreed upon to explain minority overrepresentation compared to white juveniles.
- o Absence of Family Support and Stability was the highest rated factor for all three points of contact.

Barriers and Challenges to DMC Interventions:

Respondents were asked to rate a list of barriers/challenges to successful DMC interventions. Options presented included "administration/management buy-in;" "lack of adequate funding;" "lack of alternatives to formal responses;" "lack of knowledge about racial and ethnic disparities;" "lack of cultural awareness/competency;" "limited public outreach;" "limited technical assistance;" "not enough time at your level of interaction;" "poor coordination and planning," and "staff/rank and file buy-in." Highlights of findings from that line of inquiry are detailed below and expanded upon later in this document.

- o Respondents differed in their views about the importance of the index factors used to measure barriers and challenges of successful DMC intervention.
  - § None of the index factors produced an average score indicating that respondents believed it would constitute a barrier or challenge to successful DMC intervention.
- o "Administration/management buy-in," "lack of knowledge about racial and ethnic disparities," "lack of cultural awareness/competency," "poor coordination and planning," and "staff/rank and file buy-in" received lower average scores than other items in the table, meaning respondents believed they posed less of a challenge than other items listed.
- o "Lack of alternatives to formal responses" received the highest average scores in all three points of contact.

Perceptions of Community

Community Changes:

Respondents were asked to rate community change and departmental dynamics during the five years prior. Five factors were presented to rank including "juvenile crime," "community prioritization of resources to respond to juvenile crime," "your department's prioritization of resources to respond to juvenile crime;" "officer preparedness to respond to juvenile crime," and "alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes to juvenile crime." Notable findings from the Community Changes section are detailed below and discussed in more detail later in this document.

- o Respondents almost uniformly rate community changes and departmental dynamics as neither greatly increasing nor greatly decreasing during the five years preceding the survey.
- o While each of the given community changes are perceived by some respondents as increased, "alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes to juvenile crime" is the only community aspect to be perceived by some respondents as "greatly decreased." The decrease of alternatives to formal decisions is of particular interest, because it limits law enforcement officers' ability to choose between formal and informal actions.

Law Enforcement Perceptions of Their Community:

- o Cascade County law enforcement officers as a group have mostly neutral perceptions of their community.
  - § A wide range in this survey category's minimum and maximum scores, however, suggests variation in respondent perceptions of community.
- o Items receiving the highest average scores reflect positive relationships between law enforcement and the community.
  - § "Community trust in police" (M=3.85) and "community support for law enforcement" (M=3.79) were the highest rated community factors.

o   "People do what is best for the community" and "People in this community trust each other"
       yielded the lowest average scores (M=3.09).

Officer Knowledge

<u>Knowledge of the Juvenile Justice Systems:</u>

   o   There is a wide degree of variation in law enforcement officer understanding of the given
       juvenile justice systems.
       §   Understanding of the juvenile detention domain received the highest average mean
           score (M=3.27)
       §   Knowledge of juvenile diversion options received the lowest average score (2.70)

CONSIDERATIONS

Before moving to a brief synopsis of recommendations based on findings from this investigation, there are four important considerations to note. First, the findings are drawn from respondents in Cascade County and may not be generalizable to other counties in Montana. Second, despite efforts to include all members of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Great Falls Police Department, the evidence is based on views from just over half (56 percent) of all eligible participants. It is possible that the views expressed in the online survey are consistent with the departments as a whole, but the possibility of differences in opinion among respondents exists. Third, the number of responses to questions decreases in the survey's latter portion. Even though the evidence shows that most participants completed the survey in less than 30 minutes, the drop-off could be associated with response fatigue.

A fourth consideration may also aid in explaining the response drop-off. Response voids were most observable in the survey section on DMC. This may be a reflection of the approach used to write the questions about DMC. The questions did not ask law enforcement respondents to indicate whether or not there were disparities between minority and white juveniles and formal law enforcement decisions. In contrast, drawing on the relative rate index data at the arrest point of contact, the questions asked about factors influencing disproportionate minority contact and posing barriers and challenges to interventions. This may have impacted officer willingness to rate and answer questions on something that they do not perceive as a problem. The research team received three email responses from members of the sample indicating they would not participate. In one of these messages, a specific concern about the DMC questions was mentioned.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

<u>Conclusions:</u>

   o   Cascade County law enforcement officers consider many factors important when deciding
       between formal and informal options at citation, arrest, and initial detention. Seriousness of
       the offense and public safety concerns were the most commonly named and highly rated
       factors in both the Free-Response and the Index-Factor sections.
   o   Data on participant knowledge about existing community resources is mixed.
   o   Voids exist in the amount of collaboration between law enforcement and other local
       juvenile justice system agencies.

- o Most respondents did not agree that their departments implement training and education concerning trauma and trauma-informed care.
- o As a group, members of Cascade County law enforcement are not likely to participate in state or local-level planning programs related to trauma and victimization, preferring instead opportunities at the departmental level.
- o Absence of family support was found to be most consequential factor for understanding disparities in citations, arrests, and initial detention differences between minority and white juveniles.
- o Many factors that have been shown in prior research to present barriers to successful DMC were not rated as hindrances by Cascade County law enforcement.
- o Findings overall indicate that Cascade County law enforcement perceives stability in juvenile crime levels, resource prioritization and officer preparedness to address juvenile crime, and alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes, though some respondents indicated that alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes have declined
- o There is a wide degree of variation in law enforcement officer understanding of the given juvenile justice systems.

Recommendations for Cascade County

- o Build relationships between law enforcement and community resources
    - § Make knowledge of community resources more available
    - § Increase communication between law enforcement departments and community resources.
    - § Explore the possibility of partnering with a local facility currently housing juveniles that could provide officers a short-term detention alternative for youth who do not pose a public safety threat, especially if no guardian is available.
    - § Increase communication among law enforcement agencies, community resource organizations, juvenile justice systems, and Cascade County citizens to develop needed community resources.
- o Build relationships between law enforcement and other juvenile justice system organizations
- o Conduct a survey that focuses on informal outcomes
    - § Data is needed to cultivate a better understanding of informal outcomes for law enforcement and juvenile interactions.

Recommendations for the CCSO and GFPD

- o Create a system to develop and sustain trauma-informed goals
    - § Include written safety plans and timely screening and assessment tools available to officers who work with juveniles.
    - § Articulate a detailed policy on trauma-informed care
    - § Increase education and training on trauma-informed care
- o Cultivate stronger working relationships between law enforcement agencies and other community resources
    - § Such outreach should include schools, medical facilities (mental and physical), non-profits/advocacy programs, juvenile justice/legal systems, parent groups, and others.
- o Discuss DMC and DMC intervention strategies
    - § This is especially relevant given the disconnect between evidence-based data on DMC rates and respondent perceptions illuminated by this investigation.

<u>Future research</u>

- o Include juveniles and parents in future investigations
    - § The CRG has not been involved in gathering data about issues and perspectives from juveniles and their parents.
    - § Develop future research designs that include interviews with and involvement from juveniles. Such designs should be a priority.
- o Investigate the importance/prevalence of factors that influence an officer's formal decision-making process
    - § Some data from this investigation concerning factors in citation, arrest, and initial detention demonstrated conflicting results. Further research is needed to better understand these disparities.
- o Focus on law enforcement's relationship with community
    - § Respondents expressed neutral opinions on community factors. More data is needed to understand officer-community relationships.

Police contact with juveniles has long been a topic of interest. Prior research has extensively focused on age as a factor in arrest, community influences, and juvenile opinions of police officers. Findings show that juveniles are more likely to receive formal treatment than adults when involved in interactions with law enforcement (Brown, Novak, and Frank, 2009; Feld, 2013). This is particularly true when the juvenile belongs to an ethnic minority group (Rosenfeld, Rojek, and Decker, 2012). Programs such as Connecticut's Effective Police Interactions with Youth training program have been found to be successful in helping officers better interact with juveniles to produce successful outcomes.

The literature also shows that community factors influence youth arrest rates (Brick, Taylor, and Esbensen, 2009; Brown, Novak, and Frank, 2009; Liberman, Kirk, and Kim, 2014; Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, and Simons, 2009; Weitzer, Ronald, and Brunson, 2009). Of particular interest to this study, communities that have a larger white population compared to minority populations experience high rates of disproportionate minority contact by police officers (Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, and Simons, 2009). Youth opinions of the police are negatively affected when they are arrested or witness peers being arrested (Brick, Taylor, and Esbensen, 2009; Flexon, Lurigio, and Greenleaf, 2009; Liberman, Kirk, and Kim, 2014; Schuck, 2013; Watkins and Maume, 2012; Wiley, Slocum, and Esbensen, 2013; Slocum, Wiley, and Esbensen, 2016). Research shows that formal interactions with police increase delinquency and future arrest rates among juveniles (Liberman, Kirk, and Kim, 2014; Wiley, Slocum, and Esbensen, 2013; Slocum, Wiley, and Esbensen, 2016). Community conditions and experiences with the police influence the relationship between police and juveniles and arrest rates (Weitzer, Ronald, and Brunson, 2009).

If long-term outcomes are to be improved, there is a need to better understand police contact with juveniles. The current study contributes to the existing knowledge. In particular, it provides information about the factors that influence law enforcement interactions with juveniles, specifically decisions to issue a citation, arrest, and place juveniles in pre-adjudicatory detention. This research effort also examines resources available in the local community, factors associated with Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), and law enforcement knowledge and perspectives on community issues.

For several years, the Criminology Research Group (CRG) of the Social Science Research Laboratory at the University of Montana in Missoula has examined police officer interactions with juveniles across Montana. CRG members participated in two prior studies, in 2012 and 2014. Those studies serve as this study's foundation.

In the 2012 work, CRG members Dustin Hollist, Jake Coolidge, Wesley Delano, Ian Greenwood, Michael King, Tyson McLean, Patrick McKay, Chuck Harris, James Burfeind, and Dan Doyle examined juvenile justice decision-making in Cascade County. While data access issues precluded examination of the arrest point of contact at that time, the 2012 study examined race and ethnic disparities at decision points including initial detention, referral to county attorney, petition, diversion, delinquency finding, and secure placement.

In March 2014, CRG members traveled to Great Falls to conduct interviews with members of the Great Falls Police Department and the Cascade County Sheriff's Office. A total of eight interviews were conducted at that time, with one female officer and seven male officers participating. The

interview guide asked respondents to discuss their experiences working with juveniles in Cascade County. Participants were asked to talk about police contact with juveniles, factors influencing contacts resulting in citation or arrest, suggestions for improving police contact with juveniles, and issues regarding policing minority juveniles.

The current investigation seeks to build upon the prior literature concerning law enforcement contact with juveniles, and address a void in the findings from the Hollist et al. (2012, 2014) studies. It is based on an online survey administered to Great Falls Police Department Officers and Cascade County Sheriff's Deputies. Questions were asked to identify factors affecting officers' formal and informal decisions to issue citations, arrest, and initial placement of juveniles in detention. Data presented here provide knowledge and insight that is essential for informing departmental policies regarding police contact with juveniles in Cascade County and elsewhere. This research is also expected to be of importance to practice and policy across Montana.

SECTION ONE: THE CURRENT INVESTIGATION

Cascade County has more than 80,000 residents. The county seat, Great Falls, provides services to much of the central and northern sections of the state, including the Blackfeet, Rocky Boys, Fort Belknap, and Fort Peck Indian reservations. Cascade County's role as a hub for regional commerce and culture, along with the relative population density of Great Falls, has earned the region the designation as one of only three Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) in Montana. A primary contributor to the local economy and culture is Malmstrom Air Force Base, which employs more than 4,000 personnel and supports an annual payroll of more than $200 million. Several large annual events, including the Montana State Fair; Pro-Rodeo Circuit Finals; divisional basketball championships, and the nationally renowned Charles M. Russell Exhibition and Sale art auction further shape regional economy and culture.

Great Falls is located on Interstate 15, the major north/south interstate arterial to Canada and the most direct route between Yellowstone National Park and Glacier/Waterton National Parks. The highway makes Great Falls an attractive hub and regional catchment area. The city provides essential health care resources and is also a popular tourist location, in particular for Canadian travelers who frequently shop in Great Falls when the exchange rate is favorable.

Immediate proximity of at least three reservations to the Great Falls urban hub yields a highly mobile American Indian population. Families transition with frequency between reservations and Great Falls. Reasons for such transitions are numerous. They include employment gains and losses, a desire to escape family dysfunction, the need to access confidential medical care, and attempts to leave dismal living conditions. Regardless of reasons for the relatively high transience levels among the local population, research definitively identifies transition and mobility as a factor placing youth at risk for engaging in criminal behaviors.

When seeking explanations for disproportionate American Indian representation in Cascade County's juvenile justice system, transience constitutes one risk factor. Other factors include generational substance abuse, generational poverty, and unresolved generational trauma and grief. In light of continued evidence supporting the presence of DMC in Cascade County and elsewhere, it is clear that a better understanding of its causative factors needs to be developed. Cultivating such understanding constitutes one essential step toward identifying and implementing effective

interventions capable of assisting juveniles so they may surpass hurdles and become productive and crime-free citizens.

Toward this end, a collaboration was developed between Alliance for Youth in Great Falls, the Criminology Research Group at the University of Montana (CRG), and the Montana Board of Crime Control. In June 2013, a collaborative grant proposal, led by Janet Meissner at Alliance for Youth, was submitted to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) for funding consideration for the *FY 2013 Disproportionate Minority Contact Community and Strategic Planning Project (CASP)*. The Montana application was one of four to receive funding under the award mechanism.

To achieve goals set forward with the current investigation, CRG members constructed an online survey with questions based in part on interview themes identified during the Hollist et al. (2014) study. The three most prominent themes that emerged from the 2014 officer interviews were (1) home life and parenting issues, (2) substance abuse, and (3) mobility issues associated with American Indian juveniles. A review of the literature, including prior DMC arrest point-of-contact studies, was conducted with a specific focus on law enforcement interaction with juveniles. Literature explored regarding law enforcement contact with juveniles included also an examination of factors influencing the decision to issue a citation, make an arrest, or to detain a juvenile. The examination of evidence-based best practice models addressing key problems and possible solutions are matched with findings from the survey data from Cascade County. Findings from these activities are presented in their respective sections of this report.

METHODS

The current investigation is based on information gathered from an online survey. There were six sections included on the survey that asked participants about employment and background information, factors contributing to the formal decision-making process, community resources, and perspectives about the local community. The survey also inquired about DMC, juvenile justice system knowledge, and demographic information. Data were gathered between March 2016 and June 2016. All active employees of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Great Falls Police Department were invited to take the online survey. Participants were informed about the survey through a pre-contact email message that was sent out internally within the departments. Roughly three days later, a message from the CRG research team with a link to the online survey was sent. A first and second follow-up reminder was sent to those persons who had not submitted the survey two weeks and then four weeks after the initial message from the CRG research team. A total of 60 out the total of 109 respondents completed and submitted the survey; this is a response rate of approximately 56 percent.

SAMPLE

The sample is comprised of members of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Great Falls Police Department. As shown in Table 1.1, half of the survey participants worked in patrol. Detectives comprise 20 percent of the sample, and mid-level supervisors reflects roughly 18 percent. Nearly 3 percent of the responses come from participants working as school resource officers. The remaining 9 percent of the sample is comprised of officers and deputies working in administrative and other court services positions. The majority of responses came from officers

working at the Great Falls Police Department (81.7 percent; n=49). Just over 18 percent (18.3 percent; n=11) of responses come from deputies at the Cascade County Sheriff's Office.

Table 1.1 Sample Characteristics

	Min	Max	M	SD	F	Valid%
Occupation *(N=60)*						
Patrol Officer					30	50
Detective					12	20
Mid-Level Supervision					11	18.3
Administration					1	1.7
School Resource Officer					2	3.2
Court Bailiff					1	1.6
Support Services					1	1.6
CSO					1	1.6
Civic Deputy					1	1.6
Department Affiliation *(N=60)*						
Cascade County Sheriff's Department					11	18.3
Great Falls Police Department					49	81.7
Time in Current Position *(N=42)*						
Years	0	19	5.26	5.02		
Months	1	11	6.00	2.86		
Time Working W/ Juveniles *(N=60)*						
Percent of Work Time	1	90	22.58	24.20		
Contact by Juvenile Ethnicity By Percent *(N=60)*						
Arab/Middle Eastern	0	5	.18	.70		
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	5	.50	1.24		
American Indian	0	85	34.55	22.55		
Black/African American	0	20	3.02	3.87		
Hispanic/Latino	0	10	2.02	2.94		
White/Caucasian	0	95	50.55	24.97		
Other	0	20	.92	2.96		

Information detailed in the bottom half of Table 1.1 shows the amount of time respondents have worked in their current position, the percentage of work time spent interacting with juveniles, and the race/ethnicity of the juveniles they work with. On average, respondents have spent just over five years (5.26) years in their current position. The number of years in the current position varies from a high of 19 years to a low of less than one year. This time does not account for other positions that the respondent may have had prior to employment with the Cascade County Sheriff's Office or the Great Falls Police Department.

As a group, survey respondents report spending 22.58 percent of their work hours interacting with juveniles. As illustrated in the table above, there is a broad range of variety in this category, however, ranging from a high of 90 percent of work time spent with youth to a low of 1 percent.

There is a near equal split on the percentage of white (50.55 percent) and minority (49.45 percent) juveniles that participants work with on a typical day. American Indian juveniles are the most common minority group, representing (34.55 percent) of the total population interacted with and almost 70 percent of all minority juveniles. The law enforcement sample is on average 38.6 years old, college educated, and male. Even though the sample is representative of the population that it is drawn from, variations in sample characteristics should be kept in mind as readers progress through the data findings and associated recommendations presented below.

SECTION TWO: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CITATION, ARREST, AND INITIAL DETENTION

The second survey section asked respondents to provide information about factors influencing their decision to cite, arrest, and place a juvenile in initial detention. Montana law enforcement officers are provided statutory discretion pertaining to the decision to cite, arrest, and initially detain a youth (MCA §41-5-322.2). Regarding initial detention, the statute states, "Whenever the peace officer believes, on reasonable grounds that the youth must be detained, the peace officer shall notify the juvenile probation officer immediately and shall, as soon as practicable, provide the juvenile probation officer with a written report of the peace officer's reasons for holding the youth in detention."

The survey's second section asked respondents to list the top three reasons they would issue a citation, make an arrest, and place a juvenile in pre-adjudicatory detention, rather than performing an informal act such as issuing a warning, counseling and releasing the youth, or another alternative to detention. Participants were next presented with an index containing 12 frequently referenced factors associated with the law enforcement decision-making process. Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of each of the 12 factors based on a Likert style response scale where possible choices ranged from 1 to 5; with 1=Very Unimportant, 2=Unimportant, 3= Neither Important/Unimportant, 4=Important, and 5=Very Important.

LISTING OF TOP THREE REASONS FOR CITATION, ARREST, AND INITIAL DETENTION

CITATION

The most frequent factor listed as rationale to issue a citation in the free-response section was offense seriousness. Articulations of this trigger varied, but largely included statements such as "seriousness of crime" or "seriousness of offense," and also "felony," "damage to property," "assault or injury to a person," and "theft." Drug and alcohol related issues were also cited frequently. Several respondents specifically listed "drugs/alcohol," while others used phrases such as "minor in possession of drugs or alcohol," "possession of drug paraphernalia," "drinking," and "DUI." Running away from home was also listed as contributing to the decision to issue a citation.

Whether or not there was a complaint against the juvenile was also a frequently listed trigger for citing a youth. Respondents used language such as "victim complaint," "adamant complaint," "parent request," and "the child's behavior was offensive to others and they wish to pursue charges" to describe these complaints. The juvenile's criminal history was also commonly listed as reason for

issuing a citation. Respondents used language such as "multiple warnings," "likely to commit again," and "criminal history."

Other factors observed but reported less frequently included the need to educate the juvenile, lack of cooperation, accountability, and deterrence, in addition to process and policy triggers, such as statutory considerations and mandates. Officers said further that their decision to issue a citation is affected by the fact that their departments are held responsible when no citation is issued.

ARREST

Offense seriousness was overwhelmingly listed as the most common reason to arrest a juvenile. Respondents articulated this priority by using language such as "seriousness of crime," "violent crime," "felony vs. misdemeanor offense," and "damage to property." Partner Family Member Assault (PFMA) was specifically mentioned as a juvenile offense worthy of triggering an arrest versus making an informal decision. Inability to Contact a Parent or Guardian was also commonly cited as a cause for arrest. Phrases listed to convey this rationale included "unable to find a parent to release the child to," "inability to contact a guardian after hours," and, "parent/legal guardian cannot be located."

Public safety was commonly mentioned as a trigger for arrest. Respondents expressed this priority with statements such as "keeping school and community safe," "responsibility to the public," and "threat to community." The juvenile's prior record was also commonly listed as contributing to the decision to arrest. Specifically, respondents used language such as "prior criminal history," "the child has a history of offenses and is well known by the officers," and "repeat offender."

Other factors detailed but appearing less frequently include officer safety, inability to reliably confirm the identity of the juvenile, and to ensure the youth would follow through with court and probation commitments. Offender safety was also mentioned.

Departmental policy and drug and alcohol factors were mentioned enough to include among the common factors cited as a reason for arrest, but less frequently than the factors itemized in the preceding three paragraphs.

INITIAL DETENTION

Seriousness of the Offense was the most commonly mentioned factor associated with initial detention. Respondents specifically listed "felony vs. misdemeanor offense," "significant offense," and described several types of assault. Also frequently listed as an initial detention consideration was the Inability to Contact a Parent/Guardian, as articulated with statements such as "no guardian to release to," "lack of parental contact," "unable to contact a guardian if the offense allows a physical arrest," and "guardian lives out of the area." Public safety factors were also cited frequently as triggers for detention, a priority reflected by responses including "danger to himself or herself or to others," "danger to the community," and "juvenile is a threat to public safety."

There was less variation in factors listed by respondents as triggers for initial detention than in the citation and arrest segments. The relative absence of variation indicates there is more agreement among respondents on reasons to detain a youth than there is to cite or arrest. Less commonly

referenced factors contributing to detention include Departmental Policy, Juveniles Under the Influence of Drugs and Alcohol, and Absence of a Suitable Alternative to Detention.

RATING OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CITATION, ARREST, AND INITIAL DETENTION

Survey respondents were asked to rate 12 factors associated with arrest, citation, and initial detention. The 12 factors were drawn from previous CRG studies and a review of the literature, where such factors are frequently cited as triggers for formal police action. Information presented in Table 2.1 highlights findings from respondent ratings. Column M contains the average rating scores based on respondent answers. Minimum and maximum scores are also reported along with the standard deviations (SD) for the ratings. The standard deviations provide an indicator of the amount of variation (change across all responses) among all the ratings when examined as a group. As the range of scores is narrow (1-5), standard deviations reported are also narrow.

Table 2.1 Factors for Citation, Arrest, and Initial Detention*

	Citation (N=55)				Arrest (N=55)				Initial Detention (N=47)			
	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD
Bystander/citizen insistence to make a citation/arrest	1	5	3.14	1.02	1	5	2.88	1.01	-	-	-	-
Absence of a suitable alternative to detention	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	4.00	.77
Demeanor of the juvenile	1	5	3.64	.88	1	5	3.36	.96	2	5	3.65	.76
Departmental policy	1	5	4.45	.85	1	5	4.24	.94	1	5	4.45	.95
Inability to contact a parent or adult legal guardian	1	5	3.52	1.11	1	5	3.96	.99	2	5	4.02	.88
Instability or lack of structure at home	1	5	3.27	1.02	1	5	3.27	.88	2	5	3.33	.72
Juvenile is under the influence of alcohol/drugs	1	5	4.36	.75	1	5	4.14	.86	2	5	4.06	.81
Parental substance abuse	1	5	3.14	.88	1	5	3.11	.89	-	-	-	-
Prior record of the juvenile	2	5	3.87	.80	1	5	3.89	.89	2	5	3.96	.80
Public safety concerns	3	5	4.73	.52	1	5	4.77	.66	4	5	4.87	.34
Severity of the offense	4	5	4.86	.35	1	5	4.75	.67	4	5	4.90	.31
Unwillingness of parent/guardian to take custody/responsibility of the juvenile	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	3.94	1.04

(Dashes indicate that the factor was not applicable to the decision point measured)

CITATION

As illustrated in Table 2.1, average citation scores show that "severity of offense," "public safety concerns," "departmental policy," and "juvenile under the influence of alcohol/drugs" constitute the most important factors influencing the citation decision. Further, "severity of the offense" and "public safety concerns" each have minimum scores above 2, meaning no respondent rated them as unimportant. "Prior record of the juvenile" (M=3.87) nears classification as an important decision-making factor. "Parental substance abuse and bystander/citizen insistence to make a citation" garnered the lowest average scores (M=3.14) and were ranked overall by respondents as neither important nor unimportant. Average citation scores (M=3.14-4.86) suggest that respondents found the given factors to be somewhat important when deciding to issue a citation.

The pattern in the survey ratings section is similar to that produced from the open-ended questions. Severity of the Offense was the most commonly listed and highest rated factor associated with issuing a citation to a juvenile. Drug and alcohol issues were also frequently listed and highly rated. Citizen complaint was also among the most often listed factors, but it received among the lowest scores of all of the factors in the ranking section. Of importance to the reader is the issue of runaway juveniles. In the free-response section, it was commonly listed as an explanatory factor for issuing a citation, but it was not among the 12 factors respondents were asked to rate.

ARREST

Average arrest scores show that "public safety concerns," "severity of the offense," "departmental policy," and "juvenile under the influence of alcohol/drugs" constitute important factors in law enforcement decisions to arrest. Law enforcement indicated that when contemplating arrest, "public safety concerns" (M=4.77) were slightly more important than "severity of the offense" (M=4.75). "Inability to contact a parent or adult legal guardian" (M=3.96) and "prior record of the juvenile" (M=3.89) were also observed to be important factors in arrest decisions. "Bystander/citizen insistence to make an arrest" garnered the lowest average score (M=2.88). Variations in the average scores (M=2.88-4.77) and the range of minimum and maximum scores suggest differences in opinion concerning factor importance.

Rankings in the reasons cited for arrest are largely consistent with those produced by the open-ended questions. "Severity of the offense," "inability to contact a parent or adult guardian," "public safety," and "prior record" were all highly rated and commonly reported factors when weighing the decision to arrest. In contrast with answers provided in the survey's free-response section indicating that citizen and bystander complaints affect the decision to arrest, "bystander/citizen insistence to make an arrest" garnered the lowest scores among all 12 factors in this category.

INITIAL DETENTION

Before discussing the findings for the decision to detain a juvenile, it is important to recognize that "bystander/citizen insistence to issue a citation/make an arrest" and "parental substance abuse" did not apply to the initial detention decision and are not included in Table 2.1. "Severity of the offense," with an average score of 4.90, and "public safety concerns," with an average score of 4.87, were the most highly rated considerations for initial detention. Among all survey participants, there was not a single rating on either of these factors below 4. This suggests that all respondents view these as important or very important considerations. "Departmental policy," "juvenile under the

influence of alcohol/drugs," "inability to contact a parent or legal guardian," and "absence of a suitable alternative to detention" also rated as important factors in the decision to detain. Each of these garnered an average score equal to or greater to 4.

In the initial detention category, "instability or lack of structure at home" received the lowest average score at 3.33. "Demeanor of the juvenile" also garnered relatively low rankings, yielding an average score of 3.65. Average scores in the initial detention section, which range from 3.33 to 4.90, suggest that respondents viewed each of the factors as important to consider when deciding to detain a juvenile. Initial detention scores are higher than ratings for citations and arrest. Further, all minimum detention section scores surpass 1, except for "departmental policy" and "unwillingness of parent/legal guardian to take custody/responsibility of the juvenile."

The pattern observed in the initial detention ratings is largely consistent with those produced in the initial detention category of the Free-Response Section. "Severity of the offense," inability to contact a parent or adult guardian," and "public safety" were all highly rated and commonly reported factors associated with the initial detention decision. The importance attributed in the rating scores to the given factors suggest that there was uniform agreement about the importance of "severity of offense," "inability to contact a parent or adult guardian," and "public safety." As indicated by answers provided in the Free-Response Section, other factors influence such decisions as well.

SECTION THREE: EXISTING RESOURCES

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Law enforcement agencies often draw from community resources, and the decisions that they make are frequently influenced by available services. This section of the report explores answers provided by respondents to survey questions about the availability of community resources and collaboration with other agencies. Information based on questions about existing trauma-based systems and practices within the department and willingness to participate in trauma-informed planning and training programs is also presented. These subjects constitute important considerations for understanding law enforcement involvement in coordinated and comprehensive care for juveniles.

Findings presented in Table 3.1 are based on responses to prompts inquiring about knowledge of whether eight community-based resources were available. The findings show that law enforcement were most sure about the availability of drug treatment and education programs and mentoring programs for juveniles. Responses to questions inquiring about law enforcement's awareness of crisis care centers, shelter care/non-secure detention facilities and emergency housing services were mixed. Survey responses suggest that law enforcement was comparably less certain about the existence of multi-disciplinary teams, current and updated community resource guides, and secondary trauma service for direct service providers.

Table 3.1 Availability of Community Resources *(N=51)*

	Available		Not Available		Not Sure	
	Frequency	Valid%	Frequency	Valid%	Frequency	Valid%
Drug treatment and education	40	78.4	2	3.9	9	17.6
Mentoring programs	36	70.6	4	7.8	11	21.6
Crisis care center	17	33.3	12	23.5	22	43.1
Shelter care/non-secure detention facility	17	33.3	23	45.1	11	21.6
Multi-disciplinary care planning team	18	35.3	7	13.7	26	51
Emergency housing services	20	39.2	13	25.5	18	35.3
A current and updated community resources guide	2	3.9	12	23.5	37	72.5
Secondary trauma services for direct service providers	8	15.7	8	15.7	35	68.6

Information presented in Table 3.2 is based on a series of questions asking participants to indicate how often they professionally collaborate with other agencies in the local community that also work with juveniles. This information is valuable, as many youth receive services in more than one system. Because law enforcement is typically the first point of contact, this information provides an idea of which systems they most commonly work with.

Table 3.2 Collaboration with Other Agencies *(N=46)*

	Min	Max	M	SD
Child welfare system	1	5	2.96	1.46
Chemical dependency/addiction system	1	5	1.98	1.16
Early child care system	1	5	1.59	.75
Education system service providers	1	5	2.41	1.44
Juvenile justice/legal system	1	5	3.26	1.10
Medical system	1	5	2.54	1.07
Mental health system	1	5	2.37	1.22
Nonprofit/advocacy	1	5	1.87	1.05

(1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Often)

The findings show variation in the average scores (M=1.59-3.26). Based on the responses, law enforcement is most likely to interact with members of the juvenile justice/legal system (M=3.26). Law enforcement interactions with medical, mental health, education service provider, and child welfare systems garnered average scores of less than 3. This indicates that there are some times when these collaborations occur. Early child care systems, nonprofit/advocacy programs, and chemical dependency/addiction systems, meanwhile, received the lowest average scores. The data

indicates that collaborations among law enforcement and professionals within these systems are best categorized as rarely occurring.

Table 3.3 Existing Trauma-Based Systems and Practices *(N=47)*

	Min	Max	M	SD
There is a system in place to develop/sustain trauma informed goals	1	5	2.46	1.01
Timely trauma-informed assessment is available and accessible to use with juveniles	1	5	2.50	1.11
Trauma informed safety plans are written/available for juveniles	1	4	2.44	1.01
Understanding the impact of trauma is incorporated into daily decision making practice	1	5	2.65	1.16
Written policy is established committing to trauma-informed practices	1	5	2.56	1.11
Work is in progress to connect with service providers outside of law enforcement to collaborate on trauma-informed care approaches	1	5	2.79	1.08

1=Not at All True, 2=Mostly Untrue, 3=Neither True or Untrue, 4=Mostly True, 5=Completely True

Table 3.3 is constructed from answers provided to a series of questions that inquired about existing trauma-based systems and practices within law enforcement departments. Participants were asked to indicate how true each statement was as it related to the department where they work. Although some respondents reported that the statements are "completely true", the average scores suggest, as a group, there are differences in the degree to which respondents view trauma-informed activities occurring in the departments where they work.

Average scores of between 2.44 and 2.79 suggest that there is a need to increase the amount of attention currently given to trauma-informed care. Though it's not a high number, the data show that the "work is in progress to connect with service providers outside of law enforcement" factor constituted the most likely trauma-informed care activity of the six measured. As trauma-informed care practices constitute a key tenet of work underway to increase collaboration and coordination among the various agencies and systems where juveniles receive care, this information presents a vital perspective.

PLANNING AND TRAINING

Planning and training programs are essential to any organization's effective and efficient operation. The survey contained questions that sought to illuminate respondent views about the importance of participating in planning and training programs. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale, how likely they would be to participate in opportunities at the state and local levels.

Table 3.4 Willingness to Participate in Planning and Training Programs *(N=47)*

	Min	Max	M	SD
<u>**STATE**</u> **Planning to ensure that all juveniles are screened for prior victimization and trauma**	1	5	2.64	1.39
<u>**STATE**</u> **Planning to investigate ways to improve sharing of victimization and trauma information for juveniles**	1	5	2.64	1.37
<u>**STATE**</u> **Efforts to develop training on trauma-informed care for juveniles**	1	4	2.74	1.39
<u>**LOCAL**</u> **Planning to ensure that all juveniles are screened for prior victimization and trauma**	1	5	2.87	1.31
<u>**LOCAL**</u> **Planning to investigate ways to improve sharing of victimization and trauma information for juveniles**	1	5	2.94	1.31
<u>**LOCAL**</u> **Efforts to develop training on trauma-informed care for juveniles**	1	5	2.98	1.31
A training program to learn about services provided to juveniles outside law enforcement	1	5	3.32	1.39

(1=Very Unlikely, 2=Somewhat Unlikely, 3=Undecided, 4=Somewhat Likely, 5=Very Likely)

As illustrated in Table 3.4, average scores suggest that respondents are most likely to participate in a training program about service provided to juveniles outside of law enforcement (M=3.32). The range of average scores shows that at least some respondent would be "very likely" to participate in trauma planning and training at local and state levels. There are also respondents, however, who reported that they would be "very unlikely" to participate. As a group, the average score suggests respondents were mostly "undecided" on whether they would be willing to make such a contribution. Additional questions asked about participation in departmental training and planning. The resulting average scores (M=3.35-3.73) suggest that respondents are more inclined to participate in these activities within the department than at the local and state levels.

SECTION FOUR: DMC IN CASCADE COUNTY

One section of the online survey was devoted to questions about Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC). Items listed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below are based on prior research into DMC conducted nationally and also informed by findings from a series of studies conducted by the CRG. CRG investigations have involved focus groups, face-to-face interviews, and surveys of juvenile justice system practitioners from across the state. The present study sought to understand law enforcement perspectives on possible explanations for DMC, rather than to gather information about the existence of minority overrepresentation.

Table 4.1 Factors Associated with DMC at Citation, Arrest, and Initial Detention

	Citation (N=42)				Arrest (N=37)				Initial Detention (N=34)			
	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD
Absence of family support and stability	1	5	3.73	1.07	1	5	3.57	.96	1	5	3.50	1.03
Differences in the number of offenses committed	1	5	3.59	.97	1	5	3.46	.90	1	5	3.31	.92
Differences in previous law enforcement responses to offenses committed	1	5	3.26	.96	1	5	3.24	.86	1	5	3.17	.94
Differences in the severity of prior offenses committed	1	5	3.40	.93	1	5	3.30	.94	1	5	3.39	.96
Differences in previous juvenile justice system involvement to effectively respond to the offenses committed	1	5	3.30	.86	1	5	3.32	.71	1	5	3.29	.83
Generational familial criminal involvement	1	5	3.48	1.09	1	5	3.43	1.12	1	5	3.14	1.15
Generational poverty	1	5	3.14	1.04	1	5	3.11	.94	1	5	2.97	.95
Lack of cultural awareness/competency	1	5	2.79	.91	1	4	2.76	.90	1	5	2.67	.86
Lack of effective community intervention strategies	1	5	2.93	.94	1	5	2.86	.98	1	5	2.84	.90
Lack of staff knowledge/training	1	5	2.63	.90	1	4	2.57	.90	1	4	2.61	.80
Legislation, policies, or legal factors	1	5	2.81	1.03	1	5	2.81	.94	1	5	2.75	.84
School and school-related Problems	1	5	2.93	.94	1	5	2.95	.85	1	4	2.89	.85
Trauma/prior victimization	1	5	3.09	.97	1	5	3.19	1.00	1	5	3.11	.98

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

As detailed in Table 4.1, minimum and maximum scores suggest variation in respondent views about the importance of factors presented as possible explanations for differences in citation, arrest, and initial detention rates between white and minority juveniles. Across all three decision points, "absence of family support and stability" was the highest rated factor. The average score for this factor shows it was most highly rated for the citation decision (M=3.73), but was also the most important consideration measured for understanding DMC at both the arrest (M=3.57), and initial detention (M=3.50) decision points. Average scores across all factors suggest that perspectives vary among the law enforcement officer ratings.

Respondents were also asked to rate a list of barriers/challenges to successful DMC interventions. The items in Table 5.2 have been used in prior surveys in Montana and across the country that have sought explanation for DMC. They were included in the survey because previous investigations did not include perspectives from law enforcement. The findings below provide information that can be used with the prior information to inform state and local strategies to address DMC.

Table 4.2 Barriers/Challenges to Successful DMC Intervention

	Citation (N=39)				Arrest (N=36)				Initial Detention (N=34)			
	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD
Administration/management buy-in	1	4	2.77	.71	1	4	2.69	.82	1	5	2.71	.87
Lack of adequate funding	1	5	3.26	.91	2	5	3.31	.82	1	5	2.85	.86
Lack of alternatives to formal responses	2	5	3.36	.74	1	5	3.36	.90	2	5	3.15	.74
Lack of knowledge about racial and ethnic disparities	1	5	2.74	.82	1	5	2.67	.83	1	5	2.71	.80
Lack of cultural awareness/competency	1	5	2.85	.81	1	5	2.78	.83	1	5	2.71	.76
Limited public outreach	1	5	3.15	.84	1	5	3.08	.77	1	5	2.91	.79
Limited technical assistance	1	5	3.03	.78	1	5	2.94	.83	1	5	2.82	.76
Not enough time at your level of interaction	1	5	3.15	1.01	1	5	3.08	1.03	1	5	3.00	1.04
Poor coordination and planning	2	5	2.90	.72	1	5	2.83	.78	1	5	2.85	.78
Staff/rank and file buy-in	1	4	2.56	.79	1	4	2.56	.81	1	4	2.68	.73

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

The patterns in the importance attributed to each of the factors across each of the three decision points illustrated in Table 5.2 are similar. The absence of ratings for possible minimum and maximum ratings scores suggest that for some factors, no respondents strongly disagreed or strongly agreed that the factors posed barriers/challenges to successful DMC interventions. The average scores suggest that there are differences in views of the importance of the factor measured. In no instance did the average exceed a value of 4.

"Lack of alternatives to formal responses" received the highest average score. "Staff/rank and file buy-in received the lowest average score." There was not a single respondent who strongly agreed that "staff/rank and file buy-in" posed a barrier/challenge for successful DMC interventions. Similar findings were reported for "administration/management buy-in." Average ratings suggest that respondents did not view "administration/management buy-in," "lack of knowledge about racial and ethnic disparities," "lack of cultural awareness/competency," "poor coordination and planning," and "staff/rank and file buy-in" as presenting the same level of barriers/challenges for successful DMC intervention as the other items listed the table.

SECTION FIVE: OFFICER PERSPECTIVE AND KNOWLEDGE

PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY

Community dynamics influence law enforcement activities and street-level decision-making. To examine connections between law enforcement and community issues, participants were asked

two sets of questions. The data in Table 5.1 is based on answers to a series of prompts asking about perceived community change and departmental dynamics during the five years prior. Table 5.2 represents a separate set of questions on how participants conceptualize their community and community members.

Table 5.1 Community Changes in the Past Five Years *(N=34)*

	Min	Max	M	SD
Juvenile crime	2	4	3.32	.59
Community prioritization of resources to respond to juvenile crime	2	5	3.15	.56
Your department's prioritization of resources to respond to juvenile crime	3	4	3.12	.33
Officer preparedness to respond to juvenile crime	3	4	3.15	.36
Alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes to juvenile crime	1	4	3.15	.56

(1=Greatly Decreased, 2=Decreased, 3=Neither Increased or Decreased, 4=Increased, 5=Greatly Increased)

As reported in Table 5.1, average scores indicate that respondents almost uniformly rated community changes and departmental dynamics as neither greatly decreasing nor greatly increasing during the five years prior. Average scores are clustered between 3.12 and 3.32, indicating similarity in assigned ratings. "Juvenile crime" garnered the highest average score of 3.32 and "department prioritization of resources to respond to juvenile crime" yielded the lowest average score of 3.12. Both scores fall within the neutral rating section of the five-point scale.

"Alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes to juvenile crime" is the only community change item where the minimum score (1=Greatly Decreased) was observed. This is of particular interest to the current study. While each of the given community changes are perceived by some respondents as increasing during the previous five years, "alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes to juvenile crime" was the only community factor to be rated by some respondents as greatly decreased. The decrease of alternatives to formal decisions is of particular interest. The lack of alternatives in the community constrains law enforcement officers' ability to choose informal actions.

As illustrated by the average scores detailed in Table 5.2, respondents overall neither agree nor disagree as a group with the statements about community dynamics. The average scores and minimum and maximum scores illustrate some difference in views. Items receiving the highest average rating scores reflect positive relationships between law enforcement and the community. Community trust in police (M=3.85) and community support for law enforcement (M=3.79) were the highest rated of the seven items measured. Agreement ratings were lowest for "people in this community trust each other" and "people do what is best for the community." Participants varied in the level of agreement for which they assigned rating scores. All items received scores across the spectrum of possible ratings from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with the exception of "people in this community are accepting of cultures outside their own." There was not a single respondent who strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 5.2 Officer Perceptions of Community *(N=33)*

	Min	Max	M	SD
People in this community are aware of their neighbors activities	1	5	3.39	1.03
There is community support for the job that law enforcement does	1	5	3.79	.99
People in this community are accepting of cultures outside of their own	2	5	3.45	.87
People in this community trust each other	1	5	3.09	.88
People in this community trust the police	1	5	3.85	.83
People in this community work together to achieve common goals	1	5	3.21	.74
People do what is best for the community	1	5	3.09	.81

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

KNOWLEDGE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Law enforcement serves as a gateway into the juvenile justice system. Because initial law enforcement contact opens the door to juvenile interaction with a variety of other agencies, it is important for law enforcement to understand the work peer justice agencies do. To gauge respondent knowledge, participants were asked to rank their understanding of about those agencies and also juvenile diversion options. The findings are reported in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Officer Understanding of Juvenile Justice Systems *(N=33)*

	Min	Max	M	SD
Juvenile court	1	5	3.09	1.19
Juvenile prosecution	1	5	3.06	1.03
Juvenile defense	1	5	2.97	1.02
Juvenile detention	2	5	3.27	.94
Juvenile probation	1	5	3.00	1.20
Juvenile diversion options	1	5	2.70	1.26

(1=Very Weak, 2=Weak, 3=Neither Strong or Weak, 4=Strong, 5=Very Strong)

An examination of the scores shows a wide degree of variation in respondent ratings. In all instances except juvenile detention, at least some respondents reported "very weak" understanding. The lowest average score was obtained for juvenile diversion options, which unlike the other five categories listed for ranking constitutes a program, rather than an agency. Average scores overall occupy a narrow range, between 2.70-3.27. That finding suggests that even though some respondents reported having "very strong" knowledge, the group as a whole claims "neither strong nor weak" knowledge of work done by the other agencies.

Juvenile detention, a peer agency that police work with routinely, received the highest average score at 3.27. The score suggest that respondents as a group perceive less-than-strong knowledge about the work done by juvenile detention. Juvenile detention stands out as the only category to receive a minimum score above 1, however, meaning that no respondent felt they had a very weak understanding of that domain. Two systems listed, juvenile diversion options and juvenile defense, yielded average scores below three, indicating a weak level of understanding. Juvenile diversion options received the lowest average score at 2.7. This finding is consistent with the findings presented in Table 5.1, where "alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes to juvenile crime" received the lowest average score.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this investigation has been to grow existing knowledge about law enforcement decision-making and perspectives on local community issues. Information in this report addresses a void left by previous inquiries conducted in Montana into police contact with juveniles. Research findings presented here provide critical knowledge and insight that is essential to inform policy and practice. In particular, this study provides information about formal versus formal decisions at the citation and arrest stage lacking in prior studies. The investigation also provides information about law enforcement perspectives on community issues, DMC, and juvenile justice system knowledge.

Findings from this inquiry show that offense seriousness and public safety concerns constitute important factors for law enforcement officers when deciding between formal and informal options at the citation, arrest, and initial detention stages. These factors were commonly listed by law enforcement and were the most highly rated factors influencing formal versus informal decision-making in the investigation. Departmental policy was considered to be important in all three points of contact by respondents in the Index-Factor Section. This finding, however, was not reflected in the Free-Response Section. Similarly, drug and alcohol use was rated highly in all three points of contact by respondents in the Index-factor Section, but was less frequently mentioned in the Free-Response Section for arrest and initial detention. Inability to contact a parent/adult guardian was one of the most frequently named factors in the Free-Response Section, and it rated as important in the Index-Factor Section for the decision to arrest and place in initial detention. These findings were not reflected in Free-Response or Index-Factor Sections for the decision to issue a citation.

The data on participant knowledge about existing community resources is mixed. For some resources, responses indicate that law enforcement clearly knew whether the given resources existed or not. The findings show, however, that participating law enforcement personnel were unsure about the presence of a number of community resources. Respondents as a whole were least sure about the availability of multi-disciplinary teams, current and updated community resource guides, and secondary trauma service for direct service providers. As a group, survey respondents were most sure about the availability of drug treatment and education programs and mentoring programs for juveniles.

Evidence presented here shows further that voids exist in the amount of collaboration between law enforcement and other local juvenile justice system agencies. Results regarding current trauma-informed care practices suggest that there is a need for departments to increase the amount of attention now given to trauma-informed care. Participants varied in their willingness to participate in planning and training opportunities. Overall, responses show that Cascade County law

enforcement officers are not likely to participate in state or local-level planning programs related to trauma and victimization, instead preferring departmental-level opportunities.

Absence of family support was found to be most the consequential factor for understanding disparities in citations, arrests, and initial detention differences between minority and white juveniles. That said, the average scores across all given factors for this survey section on DMC suggests that perspectives on contributing factors vary significantly. Many DMC factors included in the survey for respondent ranking, though drawn from prior research, were not rated as posing barriers and challenges to successful DMC interventions. Ratings show that despite differences in the importance of these issues among the respondents, none were collectively agreed upon.

Findings show further that officers felt that juvenile crime levels, resource prioritization and officer preparedness to address juvenile crime had largely gone unchanged during the five years prior to completing the survey. That was also the case, in general, with alternatives to formal law enforcement outcomes, despite responses from some survey participants indicating that alternatives had greatly decreased. Trust in the police and support for law enforcement were the most highly rated community dynamics in the investigation.

Participant responses show variation in law enforcement understanding of other agencies within the juvenile justice system. Cascade County law enforcement reported the most knowledge about juvenile detention. Juvenile diversion options received the lowest average score, which is consistent with other findings within this study (See tables 3.1 and 5.1). None of the average scores for the five agencies or juvenile diversion options suggests strong or very strong understanding for the respondents as a group.

Before moving to the recommendations section of this report, researchers would like to note four important considerations. First, findings presented here are drawn from Cascade County respondents and may not be generalizable to other Montana counties. Second, despite efforts to include all members of the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Great Falls Police Department, evidence presented here is based on views from just over half (56 percent) of all eligible participants. It is possible that the views expressed on the online survey are consistent with the departments as a whole, but the possibility of differences in opinion exists. Third, the number of responses to questions asked decreased in latter survey sections. Even though the evidence shows that most participants completed the survey in less than 30 minutes, the drop-off could be associated with response fatigue.

A fourth consideration may also aid in explaining the response drop-off. Response voids were most observable in the survey section on DMC. This may be a reflection of the approach used to write the questions about DMC. The questions did not ask law enforcement respondents to indicate whether or not there were disparities between minority and white juveniles and formal law enforcement decisions. In contrast, drawing on the relative rate index data at the arrest point of contact, the questions asked about factors influencing disproportionate minority contact and posing barriers and challenges to interventions. This may have impacted officer willingness to rate and answer questions on something that they do not perceive as a problem. The research team received three email responses from members of the sample indicating they would not participate. In one of these messages, a specific concern about the DMC questions was mentioned.

Evidence included here provides a foundation for making several recommendations for planning and policy in Cascade County, in addition to suggestions for future research. For ease and readability, the recommendations are presented as bullet points below.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CASCADE COUNTY

- Continue to build relationships capable of forming coordinated and collaborative community partnerships
    - § Work with local stakeholders to increase access to and information about community resources
    - § Emphasize the importance of communication with juvenile community resources and law enforcement departments
    - § Explore the possibility of partnering with a local facility currently housing juveniles that could provide a short-term detention alternative for youth who do not pose a public safety threat, especially if no guardian is available
    - § Communication between law enforcement agencies, community resource organizations, juvenile justice systems, and citizens of Cascade County to develop needed community resources
- Continue to facilitate interactions between law enforcement and other juvenile justice system agencies within the community
- Investigate the process associated with informal outcomes by law enforcement in their work with juveniles
    - § To date, all of the research conducted has focused on the formal decision-making process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GFPD AND CCSO

- Create a system to develop and sustain trauma-informed goals for juveniles
    - § Include written safety plans and timely screening and assessment tools available to officers who work with juveniles.
    - § Articulate a detailed policy on trauma-informed care
    - § Increase education and training on trauma-informed care
- Be proactive in developing relationships with other community agencies
    - § Coordination and collaboration with other agencies that work with juveniles in the justice system is key
    - § Involve and invite feedback from other community agencies outside of the justice system that also work locally with juveniles
- Continue to be a part of community discussion and plans to address DMC and implement DMC intervention strategies
    - § Law enforcement constitutes a critical community resource for addressing DMC and implementing DMC intervention strategies
    - § This work will never fully succeed without law enforcement buy-in and involvement

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Perspectives from youth and their parents are needed

- § To date, no studies are available that examine law enforcement interactions with juveniles from the perspective of the juveniles and their parents.
- § Future studies should involve a mixed-methods approach. Evidence from face-to-face interviews and focus groups should be used for survey development and administration.
  - o Studies are needed to better understand law enforcement and community relations
    - § Evidence from the current study shows mixed perspectives on law enforcement and community issues.
    - § Data are also needed that examine community perceptions of local law enforcement.

In closing, the goal of this investigation has been to advance existing knowledge about law enforcement interactions with juveniles, and to address a void in prior research. It is anticipated that the findings from this inquiry will provide critical information to lay the groundwork for implementing programs and informing departmental policy regarding law enforcement interactions with juveniles. Findings presented here are also expected to be of importance to the State of Montana's mission to address disproportionate minority involvement in the juvenile justice system. CRG members are proud of the collaboration undertaken with stakeholders in Cascade County and at the Montana Board of Crime Control to promote evidence-based and data-driven responses to community social issues.

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