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Juvenile Curfews in Metro Atlanta: A Case Study and Content Analysis of Laws, Arrests, and
Victimizations

by

Olivia Berry

Under the Direction of Toby Bolsen, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to analyze how juvenile curfew laws in Metro Atlanta affect juveniles compared to case studies in the literature. The research focuses on 11 Metro Atlanta counties with and without these laws. This study is primarily qualitative and designed to draw attention to the makeup of juvenile curfew laws, potential consequences, and how the situation in Metro Atlanta may differ from other regions. By utilizing data on juvenile crime and victimization sourced from the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Crime Statistics Database, in tandem with the language of each curfew law, this study explores the potential impacts of these laws. This qualitative study provides the framework for a larger study on curfew laws in Georgia and explores the importance of evidence-based policymaking when legislating on juvenile issues.

INDEX WORDS: Juvenile curfew, Juvenile crime, Juvenile victimization, Public policy, criminal justice

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2023

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Victimizations

by

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December 2023

DEDICATION

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to those who supported me in finishing my program and thesis. I could not have done this without my committee chair Toby Bolsen, PhD, and his invaluable patience and feedback throughout this process. I also could not have undertaken this project without Charles Hankla, PhD, who has provided support and expertise throughout my academic journey at Georgia State University as my professor and a member of my thesis committee. Additionally, this would not have been possible without Peter Lindsay, PhD, who guided me in developing my research question and showed great interest in my research topic. I would also like to thank Ryan Carlin, PhD, and Jeannie Grussendorf, PhD, who have helped develop my writing skills and passion for academia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the first of February, 2023, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners significantly expanded their juvenile curfew law's curfew hours. The amendment to the original curfew was an effort to combat rising crime in Fulton County (FOX 5 Atlanta, 2023). However, not all commissioners agreed on the broader curfew hours, some raising concerns about juvenile curfews and their effectiveness at keeping kids out of trouble. While the effectiveness of juvenile curfew laws has been studied by political scientists, legal scholars, and criminologists across the country, few studies exist that explore these laws in the context of Metro Atlanta. Despite this, policymakers in four of the eleven Metro Atlanta counties have instituted county-wide juvenile curfews.

This thesis fills the gap in the research about juvenile curfew laws by adding a case study and content analysis particular to the Metro Atlanta counties. The primary focus of the study is a qualitative investigation of the language and effectiveness of these laws to add to the existing case studies. This study utilizes data visualizations on juvenile crime and victimization from the Georgia Bureau of Investigations to provide additional context to the justifications for, impacts of, and language in curfew laws.

Since the 1800s, juvenile curfew laws have grown in popularity as a tool for local and state policymakers to reduce juvenile crime and victimization in communities across the country (Hemmens & Bennett, 1999). Despite policymakers advocating for the benefits to their constituents, though, curfew laws have a long history intertwined with oppression. Historically, curfew laws have primarily been used to quell social unrest and rebellion among communities of color (Ugwu, 2022). This same tool has been written into municipal codes across Metro Atlanta to keep youth from being out in public in times of high crime. The hours that are restricted in

curfew laws are up to the discrepancy of lawmakers and vary county-by-county. Despite their differences, however, juvenile curfews in Metro Atlanta are all implemented for similar purposes: reducing juvenile crime and victimization.

1.1 Research Questions

The ever-expanding usage of juvenile curfew laws across the country and in Metro Atlanta raises concerns from policymakers and advocates alike over the effectiveness of these laws. At the core of this thesis lie two questions designed to unravel the juvenile curfew laws found in Metro Atlanta and challenge their components with the existing literature. By delving into these inquiries, this thesis contributes meaningful insights that promote evidence-based policymaking when passing laws that affect juveniles, such as juvenile curfews.

Each question corresponds to a specific component of this study, guiding toward a comprehensive understanding of juvenile curfews and how effective and evidence-based they are in Metro Atlanta. This research will analyze the existing landscape of these laws in Metro Atlanta, setting the stage for further study. Each of the following research questions serves as a focal point for the later qualitative policy analysis.

1. How effective are juvenile curfew laws as a solution to juvenile crime and victimization?
2. What are the unintended consequences of juvenile curfew laws?

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze curfew laws in Metro Atlanta, evaluating their effectiveness and adherence to the trends in the existing literature. To have a full understanding of juvenile curfew laws, this thesis will explore their key components directly in the municipal code, evaluate the juvenile crime and victimization rates in counties with and

without curfews, and put all the findings in the context of the existing literature and demographics of Metro Atlanta. With the identified variations in juvenile curfew laws across counties, the potential impacts on youth in each need to be explored on a case-by-case basis and collectively.

This qualitative study aims to approach a more holistic understanding of juvenile curfew laws and the issue of reducing juvenile crime and victimization, while also exploring alternative solutions that are in line with the current trends. This study gauges whether each curfew law is evidence-based according to existing case studies and will serve as a tool to inform and engage policymakers, stakeholders, and advocates interested in reforming how juvenile crime and victimization are addressed by municipalities.

1.3 Previous Research

I have previously studied the intersection between juvenile curfew laws and youth criminalization as a Team Leader for a similar topic at the Zoukis Research Collaborative. That research inspired a deep interest in how municipal policies target and impact youth and set the foundation for this thesis. My research team explored the impact of youth curfew laws on the juvenile crime rate, developing hypotheses about the relationship between them, and studied the rate of juvenile crime in areas with and without youth curfew laws to evaluate the impact. Our goal was to fill the gap in the existing case study research on juvenile curfews by exploring this topic in the Metro Atlanta area. However, with only a few days to do so, our research was limited and we had little time to explore the literature and data we collected. We utilized only one year of juvenile arrest data and some limited demographic information. The data showed little to no relationship between counties with curfew laws and the juvenile crime rate, likely due to the small sample size and limited data.

We explored two hypotheses. Firstly, if juvenile curfew laws are effective, then the juvenile crime rate will be decreased in counties with curfew laws. Secondly, if a county has a predominantly African-American population, then it will be more likely to have a juvenile curfew law. With the data we collected on juvenile crime and demographics in the 11 Metro Atlanta counties, we observed a relationship between predominantly white counties and a lack of curfew laws. However, the relationship between curfew laws and the juvenile arrest rate was inconclusive. Given this project did not move further than showcasing the data visualization and some limited observations, I became interested in researching this topic in more depth.

1.4 Significance

Policymakers must use the existing literature, research, and data as the backing for their policies, especially when writing laws that affect vulnerable populations, such as juveniles. By examining juvenile curfew laws, this study emphasizes a critical need for policymakers in Metro Atlanta to have reliable specific research on the effectiveness, consequences, and potential alternatives to juvenile curfew laws. The study's focus on these 11 Metro Atlanta counties highlights the significant local policy variations and the real-world implications of these policies. This thesis can empower policymakers, advocates, and stakeholders to push for evidence-based policies and serve as the basis for reformation. It adds to the body of knowledge about and understanding of these laws, evaluating each according to existing trends and providing the foundation from which further research and discussions can emerge. This thesis sets the stage for a larger future study on curfew laws throughout the entire state of Georgia and adds to the existing number of case studies on juvenile curfew laws.

1.5 Assumptions

There are several assumptions made in this study. First, this study relies on the assumption that the municipal code accurately represents the reasons policymakers enacted these laws. If the municipal code lists that reducing juvenile crime is the intention of the law, that will be assumed to be accurate. While there may be additional motivations this study only takes into account what is explicitly written within the law. Additionally, the study assumes that the Metro Atlanta region is comparable to other urban case studies featured in the literature. The literature review uses studies from New Orleans, San Francisco, and case study collections. The urban studies will be most comparable to Metro Atlanta but others will also be used to give more insight. This study also assumes accuracy in data sourced from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's (GBI) Crime Statistics Database and that reporting from local police to the GBI is accurate. There are instances in the victimization data where data has been excluded for concerns about reliability so this is also a limitation of the study.

Several other limitations also exist in this research. The study is not generalizable, as it is only a case study of a handful of counties, in which only the four counties with juvenile curfew laws are thoroughly explored. This study is designed to build the framework for a larger study or to be used in a collection of case studies, like the collection referenced in the literature review. This thesis will explore alternatives to juvenile curfew laws, but their impact might not be straightforward in measurement, nor are they the primary focus. Alternatives will be selected based on what is recommended in the existing research and based on the results of this study. Finally, time-period bias is a concern in the data. Focusing on a time when crime is particularly high or low can contribute to time-period bias, and the COVID-19 pandemic is a significant outlier, making some of the current data unreliable—hence, the heavily qualitative rather than

quantitative focus. To control for this concern, the study compares the counties with and without curfew laws to each other rather than a time-study. However, a time study on Fulton County was conducted to evaluate the new juvenile curfew restrictions, but it is not within the peak years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.6 Overview

Juvenile curfew laws are typically enacted for at least one of three main reasons: 1) to reduce juvenile crime, 2) to reduce juvenile victimization, and/or 3) to specifically reduce juvenile drug crimes. Juvenile curfews are a prevalent solution to these issues promoted by municipal leadership. Within the 11 Metro Atlanta counties, 4 of 11 have enacted juvenile curfew laws that are county-wide: Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Henry counties. In each, one or more of these three justifications are referenced. The objective of this research is to evaluate each county's juvenile curfews according to the current literature, assess potential unintended consequences of these laws, and suggest improved or alternative policies that address more specific needs and circumstances of juveniles.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Within the extensive body of literature on juvenile curfew laws, several recurring themes and debates have surfaced, from questions about their effectiveness and enforcement to how their usage affects youth, particularly youth of color. Understanding the existing body of literature is crucial for contextualizing the Metro Atlanta juvenile curfew laws and identifying the key components of their analysis. The following sections explore theories in juvenile crime and victimization, important terms, and the most notable case studies on this topic. In addition to the existing theories and case studies, this section presents a brief historical overview of juvenile curfew laws and their derivations. The trends observed in the literature review will serve as the foundation for the later interpretation of data and content analysis.

2.1 Background

First enacted in the 1890s, juvenile curfew laws were intended to decrease crime among child immigrants. However, their usage grew significantly during WWII as they were “perceived as an effective control for parents who were busy helping with the war effort” (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997). The greatest interest in juvenile curfew laws in the United States appeared in the 1970s and 1980s as juvenile crime was reportedly on the rise and the War on Drugs was in full swing (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001).

Juvenile curfew laws have changed over time, but they also vary from locality to locality. Age restrictions are the best example, with age restrictions found pertaining primarily to youth under 16, 17, or 18 years old. Occasionally, curfews will also have additional restrictions for younger age groups as well, likely stricter hours. Most juvenile curfews restrict juveniles to their homes or simply prevent them from being out in public without a guardian from late night into

early morning. This is often with limited exceptions, such as school functions, work hours, or emergencies.

Some municipalities are attempting to restrict after-school hours as well. While these restrictions of after-school hours are not in the majority, it is suggested that juvenile curfew laws are more effective at reducing crime during after-school hours, as it coincides with the times when most juvenile crime is committed. 26% of juvenile crime is committed between the hours of 2 pm and 6 pm (Council For A Strong America, 2019).

Juvenile curfew laws are not to be conflated with driving curfews or emergency curfews. In Georgia, restrictions attached to a Class D driver's license prevent teen drivers from driving between midnight and 5 a.m. (Georgia Department of Driver Services, n.d.). This is a statewide restriction in contrast to county juvenile curfew laws. This also only restricts driving, not whether or not juveniles can be out of their homes without a guardian. Meanwhile, emergency curfews do not strictly apply to juveniles and may also be issued by a state or country during a state of emergency. It is a temporary situation, unlike juvenile curfews.

2.1.1 Theories

There are a few primary theories that propose justifications for why juveniles commit crimes. One that is invaluable to this study is strain theory, which has shaped crime rate studies and linked crime with economic inequality on macro and micro levels. Strain theory is often applied to youth in the United States, suggesting that crime can be a result of limited opportunities in a society that socializes us to believe in and pursue limitless possibilities. Those without the opportunity to achieve cultural goals using institutionalized means, like attending college or other legitimate paths, are left with the choice of rejecting either the cultural goal or rejecting the legitimate means (Inderbitzin et al., 2014).

For youth in America, the “American Dream” is a source of these cultural goals. However, it is not the only cultural goal influencing juveniles. Youth are expressing their identities and demonstrating their sense of belonging while facing many expectations, whether it be from peers, guardians, or society. According to strain theory, their options are only to achieve the cultural goals or reject them. However, adolescents tend to have specific subcultures that make this challenging, such as the retreatist subculture. This subculture is most associated with juveniles who cannot find a place for themselves and retreat into drug use and isolation (Inderbitzin et al., 2014).

In the context of juvenile curfew laws, one of the primary reasons for these laws is the idea that they are capable of reducing juvenile drug crimes. Assuming this theory is at least partially valid regarding drug crimes among adolescents, the source issue is unresolved by juvenile curfew laws. Instead, this study invites three alternative solutions: driving a cultural goal shift, providing greater opportunities for youth in need, and expanding mental health programs for juveniles identified as retreats in this model.

Another theory significant to this study is the victim-delinquency link. The victim-delinquency link, which suggests an overlap between juvenile victimization and juvenile crime, was explored by Cuevas et al. in “Juvenile Delinquency and Victimization: A Theoretical Typology.” Using a sample of individuals who participated in the Development Victimization Survey, a longitudinal study designed to assess youth victimization across age, gender, and development, the surveyed juveniles who reported delinquent behavior also tended to report trauma symptoms and lifetime adversity. This study identifies youth between 13 and 15 where a large jump in delinquent activities “appears associated with worsening mental health” (Cuevas et

al., 2007, p. 1598). This study makes the argument again for mental health programs, this time as a resolution to juvenile victimization.

Another theory that gained popularity emerged during the 1970s, when curfew laws were on the rise, called the Superpredator Theory. The since-disproved Superpredatory Theory, or, more accurately, Superpredator Myth, argues that young people are senselessly violent and without conscience. As a result of the theorists' abusive language, assumptions that juveniles are violent and "flooding the nation's streets" created an explosive focus on the "epidemic" of juvenile violence. The popularity of this theory overlapped with the War on Drugs, and the intertwining of the two resulted in a huge focus on juvenile crime and drug abuse. Many of the juvenile curfew laws in Metro Atlanta identify drug crime as one of their concerns that juvenile curfews should solve. While the Superpredator Myth is no longer used, it, and the War on Drugs, left a long-lasting impact on the perception of juveniles (Bazelon, 2000).

2.1.2 Terms

In addition to the existing theories, it is critical to recognize several terms and tools and how they could be at play in the context of curfew laws. Police departments across the United States use a tool called predictive policing. This is the use of quantitative data to identify youth statistically likely to be at risk of committing crimes. Predictive policing uses data to identify times of high crime and individuals who seem more likely to commit them, similar to how curfew laws have identified certain hours and the juvenile demographic as likely to be committing crimes. The focus on specific times, locations, and groups of individuals makes discriminatory judgments about juvenile behavior and enshrines it in law (Rossbach, 2023).

The use of juvenile data in predictive policing systems causes premature assumptions to be made about juveniles and their likelihood to commit crimes. Similarly, juvenile curfew laws

also make premature assumptions about what juveniles are doing outside of their home during curfew hours. The assumption of their likelihood to be committing crimes when seen outside the home during these hours is based entirely on the fact they are juveniles. Their youth is sufficient to result in a police stop, inviting juveniles to more interactions with the police which can be damaging for some youth, particularly youth of color (Rossbach, 2023).

Though predictive policing systems do not use race as one of their measures, they do use zip code, socioeconomic background, education, and other variables (Lau, 2020). These disproportionately coincide with youth of color and, in practice, is creating a system that uses data to feign objectivity. Zip code in particular is a particularly problematic variable, as areas of higher crime and incarceration rates are likely a result of over-policing. The influx of police officers means more arrests are being made, and the historical data put into predictive policing algorithms reflect the prevalent history of racism in policing, drawing a further influx of police officers to already over-policed areas heavily populated with people of color (Hare, n.d.).

In addition to terms, it is essential to acknowledge a piece of legislation that has shaped juvenile justice. During the same era in which curfew laws became increasingly prevalent in the United States, the Nixon administration passed the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDP Act). The JJDP Act provided grants to states that focused on specific juvenile issues such as youth homelessness, family relationships, and providing counseling. This act also included provisions to avoid sending youth to juvenile detention for status offenses, such as curfew violations. A status offense is an offense that would not otherwise be criminal if committed by an adult. The alternative to enforcing these status offenses was to provide security and community services to juveniles in need of “mental health, substance abuse, or co-occurring

disorder services” (Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act, 1974). Again, the existing theory is in disagreement with curfew laws, instead drawing attention to juvenile mental health.

2.1.3 Case Studies

As this literature review has explored various theories in the preceding sections, it is evident that a comprehensive understanding of juvenile curfew laws requires a closer examination of real-world applications. Case studies bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing tangible examples of how juvenile curfew laws manifest in real-world scenarios. They offer an in-depth exploration of juvenile crime and victimization rates, shedding light on intricacies that may be overlooked in more generalized discussions. With case studies, we can critically examine the existing knowledge of how these laws affect juvenile crime and victimization.

Referring back to “Juvenile Delinquency and Victimization: A Theoretical Typology,” the findings suggest that youth victimization precedes youth delinquency. The observed relationship between juvenile delinquency and juvenile victimization suggests a causal relationship. Because of this causal relationship, developing public policy solutions to juvenile delinquency also requires solutions to juvenile victimization. Several case studies on this topic overwhelmingly show that juvenile victimization is unaffected by curfew ordinances or that there is no observable relationship.

The criteria for considering case studies for this thesis start with focusing on metro areas so that the literature is most comparable to Metro Atlanta. It excluded studies focusing on driving curfews and emergency curfews, except when mentioned as historical context for the evolution of curfew laws. Overall, these case studies all recognize similar limitations and acknowledge the need for repetition. Some authors suggest changes to juvenile curfews that will make them more

effective, and, by replicating aspects of these studies in the context of Metro Atlanta, this thesis can determine whether juvenile curfew laws are effective there as well.

2.1.4 New Orleans Case Study

This study on New Orleans' curfew law is an in-depth case study of this singular curfew. Using police records and arrest data, the researchers examined incidents of victimization and arrests during and outside of curfew hours in a time series to analyze the data. The researchers expected that, if juvenile curfew laws were effective, victimizations and arrests during curfew hours and overall in the time after the curfew law took effect would decrease. However, they did not observe this. Instead, juvenile crime and victimization were not significantly affected by the implementation or enforcement of the curfew laws (Reynolds et al., 2000).

There was a temporary effect when the curfew law was first introduced, but the initial decrease in crime and victimization soon resumed at the same rate as before the curfew law was implemented. Any decrease in crime or victimization specifically during curfew hours was evened out by an increase during non-curfew hours. These findings were in line with several previous case studies that the authors cited from the 1970s to the late 1990s, affirming a lengthy trend in the inefficiency of juvenile curfews. However, the authors do discuss circumstances that may make the laws more effective, most notably: 1) if juveniles were a larger percentage of criminals and 2) if the curfews were in effect during hours when there are high rates of juvenile crime. In conclusion, the authors call for more research into the theoretical basis for these laws to provide a better understanding of the context, as it may aid the development of more effective laws and "longer-term, more encompassing prevention and intervention strategies" rather than a quick fix (Reynolds et al., 2000, p. 227).

2.1.5 Chicago Case Study

The second case study explored was located in Chicago, with a particular focus on how juvenile curfew laws affect youth of color. The author explores how curfew laws are a descendant of “sundown town” laws that have historically been utilized to suppress black and African American communities, protests, and movements. Juvenile curfew laws grew in popularity in the 1970s “Get Tough on Crime” era, a followup to the Civil Rights Era in the 50s and 60s. Curfew laws have famously been used to suppress rebellions across the United States, and, in recent years, were most notably used following the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (Ugwu, 2022).

This case study acknowledges not just the ineffectiveness of juvenile curfews, but also the disproportionate enforcement of them. The authors found that “curfew-related police activity clearly impacted areas where Black and Brown children lived the most” (Ugwu, 2022, p. 103). In contrast, white populations had limited curfew-related interactions with police. This study is incredibly important to this thesis because it emphasizes alternative approaches. It suggests that rather than expanding curfew laws and inviting more investigatory stops, public policy should focus on positive community engagement with police to avoid over-criminalizing youth of color (Ugwu, 2022).

2.1.6 California Studies

This case study analyzed how rates of juvenile crime changed in tandem with rates of police enforcement. Like other case studies, there was no statistical support that stricter curfew enforcement reduces juvenile crime. In contrast to the previous studies, the authors argue that not only do curfew laws not affect juvenile crime, but also that other status offenses do not either. It

was found that youth and adult crime rates rise and fall together, indicating no impact of curfew laws (Macallair, 1998).

Another case study located in California focused on trends in juvenile arrests in the San Francisco Bay Area. This case study focused on the stigmatization of Black and Latino youth. The study found that Black and Latino juveniles felt they experienced “governance through crime” (Rios, 2006, p. 43). Of the 50 youth members participating in the study, 29 were arrested for nonviolent crimes. Despite being released for nonviolent crimes, these juveniles were subject to ankle monitoring and house arrest, along with probation restrictions (Rios, 2006). Curfew laws, also a nonviolent crime, can manifest as a tool for the hyper-criminalization of youth of color.

2.1.7 The Campbell Collaboration

The Campbell Collaboration is a nonprofit organization that synthesizes research studies for use by policymakers. After examining over 7,000 studies on juvenile curfews, the report was in line with the previous case studies, suggesting that juvenile curfews are ineffective at reducing crime and victimization. However, due to limitations in studying this topic, the authors conclude that the findings need additional replication due to their observational nature (Wilson et al, 2016).

2.2 Conclusion

Across the board, and the country, there is little evidence that juvenile curfews impact the juvenile crime rate in the long term. Instead, status offenses, as a whole, are discredited by some studies and there is a strong emphasis overall on pursuing alternatives to these laws, such as more accessible mental healthcare programs for juveniles, building more positive community engagement with police, and a greater focus on prevention rather than a bandaid. While juvenile

curfew laws are touted as valuable tools for policymakers to reduce juvenile crime and victimization, the literature suggests not only that these laws are ineffective but also that they may disproportionately affect youth of color.

3. METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a continuation of past research, focusing on assessing how juvenile curfews operating in Metro Atlanta affect juvenile crime and victimization. This study is also only the beginning, a foundation for what could be replicated throughout the entire state of Georgia. For this thesis, juvenile arrest and victimization data will be utilized, focusing on Fulton County's recent expansion of the juvenile curfew and the overall effect of curfews on counties in Metro Atlanta. The Metro Atlanta counties included are Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale. Of these counties, Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Henry have county curfew laws, while the rest do not. Using data on juvenile crime in conjunction with demographic data from January 2019 through April 2023 and juvenile victimization data from January 2020 to December 2022, this study will conduct a content analysis of these curfew laws, make connections to the existing literature, and provide supplemental data visualizations.

To answer the primary question in this thesis of whether juvenile curfew laws are an effective solution to crime in Metro Atlanta, this study explores two points of interest. The first main point is regarding the relationship between the rate of juvenile crime and whether or not a county has curfew laws and the relationship between the rate of juvenile victimization and whether or not a county has curfew laws. This study goes deeper, however, exploring how the presence of curfew laws affects juvenile crime and victimization, focusing on arrests of youth of color in particular. Additionally, the language and strictness of the laws, including the general themes and correlations will be observed and analyzed.

3.1 Research Focuses

This study is mostly descriptive and exploratory to provide context to the rest of the analysis. Visualizations and qualitative analysis will reveal distinct themes and variations in the language and strictness of curfew laws across different counties in Metro Atlanta. Through visual representations and qualitative examination, it is anticipated that there will be notable patterns and differences in the language and strictness of the juvenile curfew laws. This exploration aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diversity in curfew laws without making specific quantitative predictions about their impact on juvenile crime or victimization rates. The focus will be on capturing the nuances and contributing valuable insights to the overall understanding of their landscape. The three other focuses of this study are based on the existing literature:

1. If there is no significant difference in the rate of juvenile crime between counties with and without curfew laws, then juvenile curfew laws are ineffective.
2. If a county has a curfew law, it will coincide with disproportionate juvenile arrests for curfew violations among youth of color.
3. If there is no significant difference in the rate of juvenile victimization between counties with and without curfew laws, then juvenile curfew laws are ineffective.

Finally, given Fulton County's change in the strictness of their curfew law earlier this year, I will use 8 months of juvenile victimization data in Fulton County before and after the new curfew passed to see if there were any immediate impacts. The New Orleans case study showed a temporary effect on juvenile crime and victimization as a result of the curfew law, so this study will conduct a similar time-series analysis in Fulton County to see if a similar temporary effect is present (Reynolds et al., 2000).

3.2 Data

All data on juvenile crime, victimization, and race and sex breakdowns are sourced from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Crime Statistics Database. Population data and overall demographic information is sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Census projections and estimates compiled by World Population Review. The U.S. Census Bureau is government-owned and operated. World Population Review uses U.S. Census Bureau data to present yearly estimates. Data from the US census is publicly available, while data from the GBI Crime Statistics Database is provided upon request.

Given the small sample sizes and limited degrees of freedom, it is essential to use alternative approaches to p-values. This study will use Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to assess the linear relationship between variables alongside data visualizations to better show the relationships between the variables.

3.3 Research Shortcomings

This research is a case study on Metro Atlanta and with the small sample size it is not possible to evaluate statistical significance. This is only a case study, however, and a larger study would be able to assess statistical significance. While the policy analysis is largely qualitative and based on observations, a larger study in Georgia, where there is a lack of research on curfew laws, could benefit from this foundation. Additionally, the data from the GBI Crime Statistics Database relies on reporting from police stations across Metro Atlanta and some data had to be removed for questions of reliability or was missing in the first place. All data that is used is complete and shows no signs of error.

4. ANALYSIS

This section is dedicated to presenting and interpreting the language and elements of juvenile curfew laws, exploring the relationships between the presence of juvenile curfews and several different variables such as race and sex, and investigating the impact of juvenile curfews on juvenile crime and victimization. By utilizing tables to compare elements, data visualizations to showcase relationships, and calculating correlation statistics, this thesis provides a view of Metro Atlanta juvenile curfew laws, their relationship with key demographics, and their potential impacts on communities.

4.1 The Language of the Laws: Elements and Strictness

Table 1 details the basic components of each of the four curfews in this study. While they are similar, each of them differs slightly in terms of name, age range, and hours. Child, juvenile, and minor are used interchangeably, and the age range found alongside each depends on how the municipality chooses to define it.

Table 1 Curfew Law Restrictions in Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Henry Counties

County	Code	Age Range	Hours
Clayton County	Sec. 62-11. - Child curfew.	17 and under	11:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 12:00 a.m. - 6:00 a.m. Friday, Saturday
DeKalb County	Sec. 16-44. - Juvenile curfew.	16 and under	12:00 a.m. - 5:00 a.m.
Fulton County	Sec. 46-140. - Juvenile curfew.	16 and under	11:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m.
Henry County	Sec. 3-4-218. - Curfew for minors.	17 and under*	12:01 a.m. - 5:30 a.m.

The age range is broadest in Henry County, as all juveniles under 18 are included, plus, as designated by the asterisks, there are additional rules applied to those under 14. Some counties, such as Henry County, have different juvenile curfew hours depending on age while others, such as Clayton County, vary depending on the day of the week. The widest time range restriction is shared by Clayton and Fulton counties, which both have curfew restrictions from 11:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. For Clayton, though, this is only applicable Sundays through Thursdays with slightly less restrictive curfew of midnight to 6:00 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. In February 2023, however, Fulton County chose to broaden its curfew hours, expanding them from the initial start time of 11:00 p.m. to a new start time of 8:00 p.m. in

response to increased youth violence. This study primarily focuses on the original terms of the curfew, given that the data included only extends a few months into the new curfew restrictions.

Overall, each curfew differs in how strict it is in terms of hours and age group. When excluding the new Fulton County curfew, Henry County's law is the strictest. The ages and hours are the broadest, with additional restrictions applying to those under 14. For Fulton County, prior to the recent change in curfew, the age range was the smallest and it was one of the less strict laws. DeKalb County, because of the short curfew hours, is one of the more lenient laws of the four. It lists the same hours to be off-limits as restricted by the driving curfew attached to Class D driver's licenses and may have been selected purposely by municipal lawmakers to make enforcement of both the juvenile curfew and the driving curfew simpler.

In addition to variations in name, age range, and hours, each curfew describes the purposes behind these curfew laws differently. Clayton County's child curfew code is an excellent example of the typical justifications found throughout the Metro Atlanta area. The law states:

In an effort to keep the county drug free and the county's streets safe by reducing the numbers of crimes that are committed by and against children after the hour set out in this section for curfew, the board of commissioners finds that a child curfew ordinance is one initiative to protect children in Clayton County from being victims, as well as perpetrators, of crime.

Accordingly, the Clayton County Board of Commissioners finds and declares that the purpose of this section is to reduce the number of crimes committed by and against children, and to safeguard the welfare of our children in areas in unincorporated Clayton County after the hour set out in this section for curfew; it, therefor, [sic] enacts a child

curfew ordinance as hereinafter set forth in the best interest of the citizens of Clayton County. (Clayton County Child Curfew Ordinance, 2005)

The Clayton County Board of Commissioners is acknowledging all three of the typical justifications for juvenile curfew laws: 1) reducing crime against children, 2) reducing crime committed by children, and 3) an effort to keep the county drug-free. All or a mix of these justifications are seen in the other three juvenile curfew laws in Metro Atlanta. In Fulton County's Juvenile Curfew Code, the justification is best summed up by a comment from a community member that is noted in the law. In a public hearing regarding the juvenile curfew, a parent stated, "a juvenile curfew ordinance is an attempt by Fulton County to save at least one child's life" (Fulton County Juvenile Curfew Ordinance, 1994). This code also recognizes the goal of preventing juveniles from being victims or perpetrators of crime.

The language in the Henry County code is the only one that does not specify any justifications behind the curfew law. The closest to the reasoning behind this law that the code provides is this statement:

It shall be unlawful for said persons, during said designated periods of time, to loiter, idle, wander, stroll, or play in or upon the public street, highway, roads, alleys, parks, playgrounds, or other public places, and public buildings, places of amusement and entertainment, vacant lots, or other unsupervised places; provided, however, that the provisions of this section shall not apply to a minor accompanied by his parent, guardian or other adult person having legal care and custody of the minor or where the minor is upon an emergency errand or legitimate business, directed by his parent, guardian, or other adult person having the legal care and custody of the minor. (Curfew Law for Minors, 1982)

This section of the code explains that this curfew is to ensure that juveniles are supervised by their parents or guardians during the curfew times. Similar to the other codes, though not explicitly stating it, this could be because of a desire to reduce juvenile victimization or crime by means of parental supervision and protection. Subsection (c) provides greater insight, as it states that juveniles in violation of this curfew are at the mercy of the Juvenile Court Code of Georgia and that violations of this law can result in them being charged and punished as provided by law (Curfew Law for Minors, 1982). This suggests that the purpose of the law is more focused on the idea that juveniles being out and about during curfew hours are doing so for nefarious purposes and thus should be punished by the law.

Table 2 explores the differences in penalties set out by the curfew laws in these Georgia counties. The individuals held responsible and punishments for adult parties vary across the counties, but all juveniles are held responsible according to the O.C.G.A. § 15-11-1. Each juvenile curfew law names similar parties in the language of the law, typically referencing the juvenile restricted, parents/guardians, and business owner, operators, or employees as having responsibility. The juveniles under their respective age restrictions are the ones violating the laws, but parents/guardians and business owners, operators, and employees who allow it are also in violation of the juvenile curfews as well. However, the penalties differ significantly from law to law. Both DeKalb and Fulton County note that upon first violation there will only be a warning citation. Clayton and Fulton County both include a penalty fine and/or jail sentence for the parents/guardians or business owner, operator, or employees in violation. Meanwhile, Henry County only provides penalties for the juveniles and, despite holding the adult parties culpable, does not have penalties listed.

Table 2 Curfew Law Violation Penalties in Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, and Henry

County	Parties Referenced	Penalties
Clayton County	child, parent or guardian, and business owner, operator, or employee	Upon conviction of an adult party, there shall be a fine up to \$1,000.00, or a jail sentence for up to 6 months, or both. O.C.G.A. § 15-11-1
DeKalb County	minor, parent or guardian, and business operator	A minor, parent, guardian or operator of an establishment or public place who violates this section for the first time shall be given a warning citation. Violation penalties are subject to appropriate penalties as imposed by the court. O.C.G.A. § 15-11-1
Fulton County	minor, parent or guardian, and business owner, operator, or employee	Upon conviction of violations of this section for the first time, an adult, parent, guardian or owner, operator or employee of an establishment shall be given a warning citation. Upon further convictions, an adult, parent, guardian or owner, operator or employee of an establishment shall be subject to a fine not to exceed \$500.00, or imprisonment in the Fulton County jail for not more than 60 days, or by both this fine and imprisonment. Any adult, parent, guardian or owner, operator or employee of an establishment who violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Except as otherwise provided each violation of this section shall constitute a separate offense. O.C.G.A. § 15-11-1
Henry County	minor, parent or guardian, and business owner, operator, or employee	Only provides penalties for minors as subject to the Juvenile Court Code of Georgia.

4.1.1 Assumption of Youth

In DeKalb County, some language of the curfew draws attention to a potential adverse effect of the law. Subsection (d)(3) states:

Before taking any enforcement action, the authorized county officer or employee shall ask the apparent offender's age and the reason for being in the public place or

establishment. The authorized county officer or employee shall not issue a citation or make an arrest unless the officer reasonably believes that an offense has occurred and that, based on any response and other circumstance, that no exception listed in subsection 16-44(c) is present. (Juvenile Curfew, 2013)

This subsection of the juvenile curfew recognizes that county officers have the authority to use the assumption of age as the reasonable suspicion that could justify probable cause to stop or investigate. Similar subsections are found in Clayton County and Fulton County's laws. Because of a juvenile curfew law, being young or appearing to be young is all the justification needed for a police officer to pull over or engage with an individual. This is highly subjective and akin to profiling. Similarly to other profiling, this may affect juveniles in a similar manner by putting them in potentially tense situations with the police and/or leading to them being perceived as deviant or a threat, especially youth of color. Since several of these laws exist because of the assumption that juveniles out during the restricted curfew hours to commit crimes, this can lead to police or others engaging with them under that assumption and acting accordingly. As noted in previous case studies, juvenile curfew laws tend to negatively affect youth of color in this way the most, and, in addition to microaggressions and racial profiling, these laws also create the assumption that juveniles out late are committing crimes, drug crimes in particular (Rios, 2006).

Young adults may also experience adverse effects due to these laws. It can bring young adults into contact with the police who would not otherwise have been in contact with them. Young adults may be pulled over late at night and questioned, as referenced in the above code, about where they are going and how old they are. In instances of being pulled over, this can give

the police the authority to demand proof of age from all young-appearing individuals in the vehicle, rather than driving curfews, which just apply to a driver who appears to be under 18.

In counties with curfew laws, individuals who may appear young can be prone to more contact with the police as a result of these laws; I expect that young adults between the ages of 18-24 would have a larger percentage of arrests in counties with curfew laws than in counties without. Using data from the GBI Crime Statistics Database of the number of total arrests across adult age groups, I compared the average percentage of arrests of individuals aged 18-24 from 2019 to 2022 in each of the Metro Atlanta counties.

Average 18-24 Arrests from 2019-2022

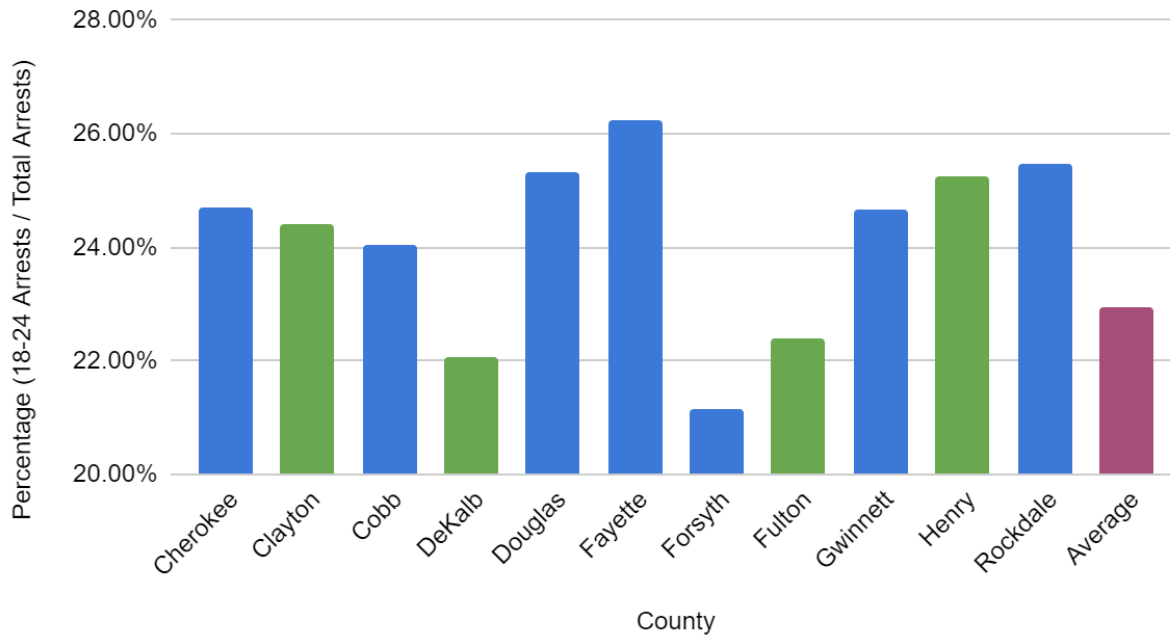


Figure 1 Average Arrest Rate of Individuals Aged 18-24 as Compared to Total Number of Adult Arrests from 2019-2022

Note. Data in green indicates counties with Juvenile Curfew Laws, whereas data in blue indicates counties without Juvenile Curfew Laws.

Of the counties with curfew laws, as highlighted in green in the figure above, half of them have above-average rates of juvenile arrests while the other half are below-average. There does not appear to be an obvious relationship between incidents of arrests in the 18-24 age group and whether a county has a juvenile curfew law. Two of the three lowest percentages of 18-year-old through 24-year-old arrests are from counties with curfew laws. On average, across all Metro Atlanta counties, adults in the 18-24 age group make up 22.95% of arrests. Clayton County and Henry County are both above average in terms of arrests in the 18-24 age group, while DeKalb and Fulton are both below average.

4.2 Juvenile Crime

I expected that if there are no significant differences in the rates of juvenile crime between counties with and without curfew laws, then juvenile curfew laws are ineffective. The data visualization in Figure 2 shows no glaringly obvious relationship between the percentage of juvenile arrests and whether or not a county has curfew laws.

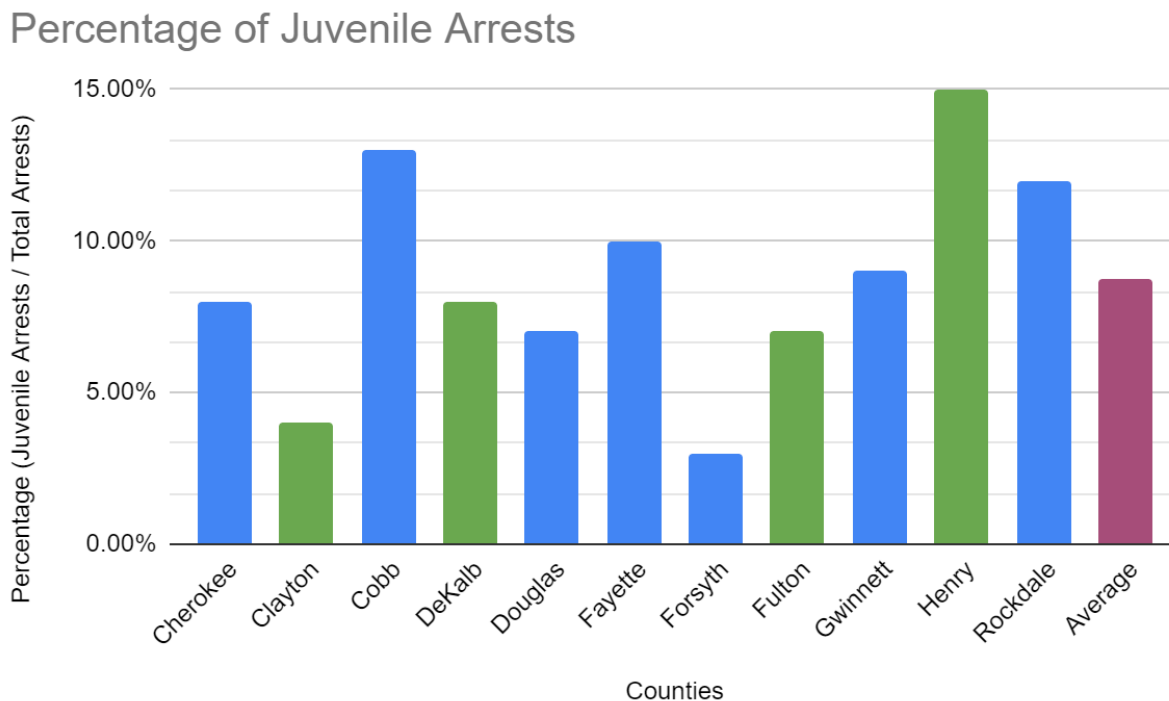


Figure 2 Average Arrest Rate of Individuals Aged 17 or Younger as Compared to Total Number of Arrests from 2019-2022

Note. Data in green indicates counties with Juvenile Curfew Laws, whereas data in blue indicates counties without Juvenile Curfew Laws.

As highlighted in green, three of the four counties with curfew laws were below the average percentage of juvenile arrests, with two being close to average, while the fourth county was drastically above average. When calculating the correlation between whether a county has a curfew law and the percentage of juvenile arrests out of the total number of arrests in each

county, the result was -0.0495. This negative linear correlation suggests counties with curfew laws have a lower percentage of juvenile crime, as seen above with Clayton, DeKalb, and Fulton Counties all falling below average. However, the P value came out to 0.8851, which is not statistically significant.

While the correlation between the existence of curfew laws and the percentage of juvenile crime was not statistically significant, the data on juvenile arrests did include an interesting piece of information about how the number of arrests is broken down by demographics. Across all the Metro Atlanta counties, there were 536 male juveniles arrested for curfew violations in comparison to 78 female juveniles arrested for curfew violations. This breakdown of arrests is significantly skewed and may be a result of proactive and predictive policing. Police agencies that practice proactive policing in response to calls for them to do more about increases in juvenile crime often have officers engage with areas and individuals that they believe to be more likely to be committing crimes (Hare, n.d.). This could explain the breakdown of male and female arrests and may also similarly impact youth of color.

4.2.1 The Effects on Youth of Color

One of the other focuses of this thesis explores the effects of curfew laws on youth of color. I expect that if a county has a curfew law it will coincide with increased juvenile crime rates among youth of color in comparison to counties without curfew laws. Several points in the literature and previous work led to the exploration of this relationship. Firstly, as explored in the literature, juvenile curfew laws can disproportionately bring youth of color into contact with the police. Youth of color are often already dealing with microaggressions, biases, and assumptions of delinquency from police, so adding youth or perception of youth into the mix can not only

make what would previously have been an unfounded stop legal, but it also introduces the idea that juveniles out and about at certain times are out for illegal purposes.

Curfew laws are already more prevalent in counties with larger populations of people of color. All four counties with youth curfew laws, according to the 2020 demographic data sourced from the US Census, have a majority black population (See Table 3). In contrast, most counties without curfew laws have a majority white population, with the exceptions of Douglas and Rockdale counties.

Table 3 County Demographic Data (As Per 2020 U.S. Census)

	White	Black	Asian	Two or More Races	Latino or Hispanic
Cherokee	75.4%	5.81%	1.93	4.96%	11.3%
Clayton	8.32%	68.86%	4.86	3.6%	13.51%
Cobb	48.33%	25.79%	5.32	5.89%	13.65%
DeKalb	28.82%	51.51%	6.15	4.37%	8.56%
Douglas	33.68%	47.99%	1.71	3.58%	11.12%
Fayette	58.39%	23.47%	5.09	4.97%	7.89%
Forsyth	64.49%	4.17%	16.63	4.42%	9.79%
Fulton	38.02%	41.22%	7.51	4.95%	7.3%
Gwinnett	32.78%	28.21%	12.91	3.41%	22.1%
Henry	35.36%	47.66%	3.18%	5.09%	7.86%
Rockdale	25.80%	61.00%	1.90%	2.40%	10.70%

Note. Highlighted values indicate counties with Juvenile Curfew Laws.

Table 4 presents the four counties in Metro Atlanta with juvenile curfew laws and the number of juvenile curfew arrests by race and ethnicity from January 2019 to September 2023.

Table 4 Curfew and Loitering Offense Arrests by Demographic in Counties with Curfew Laws 2019-2023

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Pacific Islander	Total Curfew Arrests
Clayton	2	19	0	1	0	22
DeKalb	54	25	0	0	0	79
Fulton	39	171	1	0	1	212
Henry	1	1	0	0	0	2

Of the four counties with curfew laws, two of them had significantly more incidents of arrests of Black youth in the category of juvenile curfew and loitering offenses than is proportionate to the population. In Fulton County, 171 Black juveniles were arrested for a juvenile curfew violation in comparison to 39 white juveniles. Black juveniles make up 80.66% of juvenile curfew arrests despite Black and African American individuals making up only 45% of the population according to the U.S. Census data. Meanwhile, white juveniles only make up 18.40% of the juvenile curfew violation arrests despite white individuals making up 44.2% of the population in Fulton County. A similar disproportionate arrest situation is seen in Clayton County as well.

Interestingly, Henry County has only made two arrests on the grounds of curfew violation in this same time frame. This indicates a lack of enforcement of the juvenile curfew law and may be due to a lack of emphasis placed on the need for the law. Henry County is the only county that does not suggest consequences nor provide any justifications in the language of the law itself.

4.3 Juvenile Victimization

The final piece of this study explores the relationship between juvenile victimization and the presence of juvenile curfew laws. If there is no significant difference in the rate of juvenile victimization between counties with and without curfew laws, then juvenile curfew laws are

ineffective. In the data visualization included in Table 5, the percentages portray the estimated percentage of the youth population who have been victimized in each county from 2020 to 2022.

Table 5 Percentage of Juvenile Population Victimized Based on Population Estimates from 2020-2022

	2020	2021	2022	Avg.
Cherokee	0.65%	0.72%	0.91%	0.76%
Clayton	2.13%	1.59%	0.37%	1.36%
Cobb	1.01%	1.36%	1.46%	1.28%
DeKalb	1.38%	1.94%	2.30%	1.87%
Douglas	1.29%	1.01%	0.96%	1.08%
Fayette	0.44%	0.72%	0.65%	0.60%
Fulton	0.61%	0.65%	0.88%	0.71%
Gwinnett	0.17%	0.35%	1.23%	0.58%
Henry	0.24%	0.96%	1.34%	0.85%
Rockdale	0.04%	0.19%	0.64%	0.29%

Note. Highlighted values indicate counties with Juvenile Curfew Laws. Forsyth County was excluded from this dataset due to incomplete data sent by the GBI's Crime Statistics Database.

Each county has an average percentage which encompasses the data from 2020, 2021, and 2022. Across all counties with juvenile curfews, on average, 1.20% of juveniles are victimized. Meanwhile, in counties without juvenile curfews, an average of 0.77% of juveniles are victimized. The average across all counties is 0.94%. Counties with juvenile curfew laws are seeing greater rates of juvenile victimization than those without.

Using the averages for each county, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was calculated to be 0.48. This coefficient shows a positive relationship between the average rate of juvenile victimization from 2020-2022 and whether or not a county has curfew laws. This result was

unexpected, given the primary goal listed for many of these juvenile curfews was to reduce juvenile victimization.

In the case of Fulton County's change in the strictness of their curfew law earlier this year, 8 months of juvenile victimization data in Fulton County before and after the curfew passed shows that there were limited impacts. From June 2022 through January 2023, there were 1246 incidents of juvenile victimization. From February 2023 through September 2023, there were 1368 incidents of juvenile victimization. Despite the new stricter curfew law, Fulton County's incidents of juvenile victimization increased by 8.92%. This is in contrast to the New Orleans study, which recognized a temporary effect on juvenile victimization as a result of the new curfew law (Reynolds et al., 2000).

5. CONCLUSION

In Metro Atlanta, the impacts on juvenile crime and victimization are mixed. There was a negative correlation between counties with curfew laws and the percentage of juvenile arrests, suggesting that counties with curfew laws have a lower percentage of juvenile crime. However, in terms of victimization, there was a positive correlation, and counties with curfew laws had a greater rate of juvenile victimization. In Fulton County when, comparing the incidents of juvenile victimization from before and after the juvenile curfew law hours expanded, the number of incidents of juvenile victimization increased.

It is important to recognize the limitations of this study, particularly the small sample size and how that impacts the overall results. Due to the limited sample, the results did not reach statistical significance, but the observed patterns still provide valuable insights. Future research with a larger and more diverse sample is necessary to confirm these preliminary observations. Regional and demographic differences, as well as strictness and components of the curfew laws themselves, can all affect their impact. Given the gap of research studying juvenile curfew laws in Georgia, this thesis took the first step in evaluating these curfew laws' language and effects.

Though this study did see a lower percentage of juvenile crime in counties with curfew laws, there is still the need to explore broader solutions to juvenile crime and victimization. In Fulton County, the reliance on increasing the strictness of the juvenile curfew law appears to not have had the intended effect and alternatives need to be explored and utilized by policymakers. Following the literature's recommendation, either in conjunction with curfew laws or not, Metro Atlanta counties should explore strengthening juvenile mental health programs, developing a more positive community engagement with police, and focusing on reducing the reasons why

juveniles choose to commit crimes, rather than reducing the times they have the opportunity to do so.

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