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**Document Title:** Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Police Handling of Juvenile Arrests

**Author(s):** Ronald E. Claus, Ph.D., Sarah Vidal, Ph.D., Michele Harmon, Ph.D.

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## Introduction

Nearly 30 years after federally supported efforts to address disproportionate minority contact (DMC), the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority youth in various stages of juvenile justice processing remains a longstanding issue (Davis & Sorensen, 2013b; Leiber, Bishop, & Chamlin, 2011; Piquero, 2008). For example, although Black youth represent 14% of the youth population in the U.S. in 2013 (Puzzanchera, Sladky, & Kang, 2015), they constitute 36% of delinquency cases processed in juvenile courts (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2015). The relationship between race and ethnicity and contact with the juvenile justice system, however, is complex. Studies show that the effects of race and ethnicity on juvenile justice system contact may vary by extralegal, incident-related, and contextual factors, including age and gender of youth, and social and neighborhood contexts (Bishop, Leiber, & Johnson, 2010; D'Allesio, Stolzenberg, & Eitle, 2002). However, despite the exponential growth in systematically investigating DMC, theoretical and methodological limitations remain, including lack of a credible measure of ethnicity and geographically limited samples of youth (Kempf-Leonard, 2007). Few studies have also examined DMC during the early stages of involvement with the law (e.g., post-arrest handling decisions) wherein substantial discretion is exercised by law enforcement actors. In this study, we addressed these critical gaps in the literature by utilizing data from the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), a reporting system based on the submission of crime information by law enforcement agencies, to examine the effects of race and ethnicity, as well as extralegal and contextual factors on post-arrest handling of juvenile cases by the police.

## Theoretical Frameworks for Explaining DMC

Although the presence of DMC in the juvenile justice system is well-established, the mechanisms by which it exists remain unclear. Two theoretical frameworks generally guide the





























































