

EVALUATING THE ATTITUDES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TOWARDS DWI COURT  
EFFICIENCY: AN ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

by

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### **Abstract**

Driving while intoxicated (DWI) courts have recently gained traction as a possible solution to the management and treatment of alcohol-involved offenders. As the number of DWI courts in operation in the U.S. increases, so has the research dedicated to studying these courts.

Unfortunately, few studies aside from outcome/recidivism research have been conducted. Thus, the current study hopes to add to the small body of literature by evaluating the perceptions law enforcement have of DWI court efficiency and the factors that impact their perspectives. Survey data from an evaluation of a DWI court in Las Cruces, New Mexico are used for the study, and chi-square tests and t-tests are utilized in the analysis. Results indicated respondent characteristics including *age*, *career length*, and *traffic duty* were significantly related to the respondents' perceptions of DWI court efficiency. Thirty-two Likert-scale items were also analyzed and five items were found to be significant: *unclear rules*, *reforms weaken cop power*, *DWI cause more work*, *decreased respect by civilians*, and *.08 appropriate*. Implications for future research are discussed with respect to the results.

**Keywords:** DWI courts, law enforcement, evaluation

## **Introduction**

Driving while intoxicated (DWI) represents an important and highly under-studied criminal behavior. DWI offenders pose a serious societal concern as nationwide, more than one-quarter (approximately 29%) of total motor vehicle crash fatalities for 2018 were alcohol-impaired-driving crashes (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA], 2019). Drunk driving crashes in 2018 resulted in 10,511 deaths, and the NHTSA (2019) reports that in addition to the direct impacts of alcohol-impaired driving, a host of collateral consequences pose a serious concern (e.g., increased insurance costs, damage to families, and added expenditures involved in managing DWI offenders).

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports, a little over a million drivers were estimated to have been arrested for driving under the influence in 2018. Of all drivers convicted of impaired driving, one-third are repeat offenders (National Center for DWI Courts, 2019). Previous studies have found that a significant portion of issues associated with drunken driving can be attributed to chronic DWI offenders (Hingson & Winter, 2003; Yu & Williford 1993). Such offenders pose a serious threat to public safety, and in previous years it has been left to traditional courts to deal with these cases. However, it has become evident that the traditional process has been ineffective in treating DWI offenders and may even be linked to an increase in recidivism among them (Wallace, 2008).

Over the years, the issue of driving while intoxicated has been the focus of much legislation, and responses have been varied, but a large portion of legislative response has been in support of a crime-control approach. Aiming to deter future criminal behavior, this approach focuses on tactics such as license suspension and mandated sentences, but such punitive sanctions have received little support from the literature (Taxman & Piquero, 1998; Yu, 2000).

The shortcoming of traditional courts and the crime control model have scholars considering the benefits of treatment and other approaches for these offenders (Dill & Wells-Parker, 2006; Pratt, Holsinger, & Latessa 2000; Taxman & Piquero, 1998).

As the treatment of DWI offenders emerged as a preferred strategy, many states have adopted problem solving courts to manage and treat their DWI offenders. DWI courts are comprehensive court programs that provide specialized treatment, supervision, and accountability for DWI offenders, usually repeat offenders, in hopes of changing the behavior of these alcohol/drug dependent individuals (National Center for DWI Courts, 2019). The crime control model is utilized for DWI courts with the use of sanctions for failure of completion, but the emphasis on treatment makes them unique to traditional courts. DWI court programs are based on the premise that by successfully identifying and addressing the underlying causes of DWI offenders' behavior, such as substance use and mental health disorders, impaired driving can be prevented.

Emerging out of a preexisting treatment court model—the drug court—DWI courts are one of the newer problem-solving courts. Research on both drug courts and DWI courts is sorely lacking, but with its later emergence, DWI courts have a significantly smaller body of literature (Narag, Maxwell, & Lee, 2013; Saum, Hiller, & Nolan, 2013; Kaiser & Holtfreter, 2016). The research examining DWI courts has not kept pace with its development and usage across the nation. There are only a handful of studies that have been done to assess the effectiveness of DWI courts and even fewer studies completed on the attitudes criminal justice professionals have towards them (Farole, 2009). Thus, by analyzing survey data, the current study attempts to add to the body of literature by examining the perceptions law enforcement have about DWI courts and the factors and characteristics that impact their attitudes.

### **The Drug Court Model**

Since its emergence in the late 1980s, the problem-solving court model has been recognized as a relatively successful approach to the management and treatment of offenders suffering from substance use disorders (Bouffard, Richardson, & Franklin, 2010). When the drug court model gained significant recognition in the 1990's, federal support helped expand its programs and accelerate their growth. Between 1995 and 1997, the U.S. Department of Justice introduced 279 grants totaling \$56 million in funding, including planning grants to help jurisdictions develop designs for courts, implementation grants to create new drug courts, and enhancement grants to expand existing drug courts (General Accounting Office, 1997). With federal backing, the need for research on drug courts was growing.

Blenko (2001) conducted a critical review of 37 published and unpublished drug court evaluations, reporting that the drug courts were more successful at supervising, drug testing, and providing treatment for their participants than traditional courts and other forms of community supervision. The study also found that there was a substantial decrease in drug use and recidivism while offenders were in the program. Echoing the findings of Blenko (2001), a similar study was conducted by Wilson, Mitchell, and Mackenzie (2006). The researchers conducted a meta-analysis which included more than fifty drug court evaluations and provided evidence in support of the effectiveness of drug courts in reducing recidivism. This study also found pre- and post-plea drug court models appeared more effective than courts with mixed approaches, indicating that the nature of the model used for the drug courts affected their effectiveness. Gottfreedson and Exum (2002) offered one of the more rigorous studies by using an experimental research design to test the efficacy of drug courts. Participants in Gottfreedson and Exum's study were randomly selected and assigned to either a drug court or traditional court.

Findings from their randomized trial found that drug court participants were less likely to recidivate than participants from the comparison group (48% vs 64%, respectively). The findings from their study were significant, as the threat to internal and external validity were controlled.

As researchers continue to add to the literature on drug courts, some studies have found no differences in recidivism patterns between drug courts and traditional courts (Bavon, 2001, Listwan et al., 2003, Wolfe et al., 2002). However, these studies are significantly outnumbered by research in support of drug courts and their effectiveness (Brewster, 2001, Mitchell, Wilson, Eggers, & Mackenzie, 2012, Peters & Murrin, 2000, Shaffer, 2006). Though the research involving drug courts is not without its shortcomings, the general implications of the growing literature have most scholars supporting the use of problem-solving courts. Shortly after the emergence of the drug court model into our criminal justice system, criminal justice professionals started to consider the drug court model as a promising tool, one that may be useful in rehabilitating alcohol dependent offenders (Bouffard et al., 2010). The possibility that DWI offenders may benefit from problem-solving courts as typical drug offenders have has led to the development of DWI courts.

### **The Rise of DWI Courts**

Modeled after drug courts, DWI courts are facilitated by a team of stakeholders including judges and other court officials, including law enforcement officers, who closely monitor offender compliance with court-ordered sanctions (Freeman-Wilson & Huddleston, 1999). Through intensive supervision, participants are held accountable for their completion of rigorous treatment requirements provided through the court's programs. As research suggests, there is no single rehabilitative approach that is best for all individuals, so, ideally, DWI courts would be

able to provide treatment plans (e.g. social skills training, family and marital therapy, cognitive behavior therapies) that are tailored to meet the specific needs for each offender (Hanson, 2009).

In 1995, one of the first ever DWI courts was created by Municipal Court Judge Stephen Ryan to treat the population of DWI offenders in Las Cruces, New Mexico (Winfrey and Giever, 2000). In the years following, little evaluation had been done to address the delivery of treatment in DWI court programs until 1998, when practitioners from seven jurisdictions, who had expanded the drug court program to include DWI cases, created a DUI/Drug Court Advisory Panel. The panel was created to identify the challenges there were to the development and implementation of DWI courts. The panel convened at the invitation of the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI), in partnership with several other organizations including the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Tasked with constructing a national DWI court strategy, the advisory panel weighed the costs and benefits of adapting drug court programs to manage DWI offenders and ultimately concluded that wide-scale implementation of DWI courts was in the best interest of our criminal justice system (Freeman-Wilson & Huddleston, 1999). Along with their recommendation for more DWI courts utilizing the drug court model, the panel recommended that existing drug courts include DWI offenders in their program populations. As of 2018, there are 726 DWI courts operating in the U.S., many of them hybrid DWI and drug courts (National Center for DWI Courts, 2019).

Understanding the need for partnerships among all agents of our justice system as well as a coordinated delivery of treatment, the advisory panel also recommended that the NDCI be put in charge of establishing the standards for which DWI courts should operate (Freeman-Wilson and Huddleston, 1999). As a result, the NDCI developed of a set of ten “guiding principles” to structure DWI courts and address the unique challenges faced by DWI offenders.

The 10 guiding principles for DWI courts are as follows (National Center for DWI Courts, 2019):

- (1) The DWI court target population must be clearly defined, with eligibility criteria clearly documented.
- (2) A clinically competent objective assessment of the impaired-driving offender must address a number of bio-psychosocial domains including alcohol use severity and drug involvement, the level of needed care, medical and mental health status, extent of social support systems, and individual motivation to change.
- (3) DWI courts must carefully select and implement treatment practices demonstrated through research to be effective with the hard-core impaired driver to ensure long-term success.
- (4) Increased supervision and monitoring by the court, probation department, and treatment provider must occur as part of a coordinated strategy to intervene with repeat and high-risk DWI offenders and to protect against future impaired driving
- (5) Because the DWI court model is built on and dependent upon a strong team approach, both within the court and beyond, the court should solicit the cooperation of other agencies, as well as community organizations to form a partnership in support of the goals of the DWI court program.
- (6) Judges selected for DWI courts must possess recognizable leadership skills as well as the capability to motivate team members and elicit buy-in from various stakeholders.
- (7) Case management, the series of inter-related functions that provides for a coordinated team strategy and seamless collaboration across the treatment and justice systems, is essential for an integrated and effective DWI court program



(8) As nearly every state revokes or suspends a person's driving license upon conviction for a DUI offense, the court must address transportation issues and caution participants against driving without a license.

(9) Program designers must design a DWI court evaluation model capable of documenting behavioral change and linking that change to the program's existence. To prove whether a program is efficient and effective requires the assistance of a competent evaluator, an understanding of and control over all relevant variables that can systematically contribute to behavioral change, and a commitment from the DWI court team to rigorously abide by the rules of the evaluation design.

(10) Prioritize creating a sustainable program that includes considerations of structure, scale, organization, participation, funding, and community impact.

### **Prior Research**

By establishing the 10 guiding principles of DWI courts, a door was opened for process evaluation research. However, as DWI courts became more and more prevalent, the efficacy of DWI courts appeared to be what researchers were most interested in. This prompted multiple studies on DWI court outcomes. In an early evaluation by Breckenridge et al. (2000), a DWI court located in Las Cruces, New Mexico was examined. The researchers hoped to identify differences in outcomes for participants who completed the DWI court program versus those assigned to traditional court as well as differences in outcomes between alcohol-dependent offenders and non-alcohol-dependent offenders. Though no differences of significance were found between the groups of alcohol-dependent offenders and non-alcohol-dependent offenders, the researchers interpreted the lower reconviction rates for offenders assigned to the DWI court as a positive finding.

With larger study samples and longer follow-up periods than Breckenridge et al. (2000), two later studies, Lapham et al. (2006) and Ronan et al. (2009), had similar positive findings in that participation in DWI court programs both reduces and delays recidivism. More recently, Harron and Kavanaugh (2015) claim that 12% reductions in recidivism rates is a reasonable expectation for DWI courts. They then go on to state that the best DWI courts were as much as 60% better at reducing recidivism than other sentencing options. Harron and Kavanaugh also addressed the cost benefits of DWI courts, stating that DWI courts, through reducing the time of supervision and incarceration, save communities nearly \$1,500 per participant and more than \$5,000 per graduate. Sloan et al. (2016) used North Carolina administrative data on specialty court programs and found that completion of such programs was associated with reduced rates of re-arrest after a four-year follow-up period. When comparing DWI court programs and drug treatment court programs, the study also found that greater reductions in recidivism rates were associated with completion of a DWI court program.

Though many studies rely on recidivism measurement, some scholars have suggested it may be beneficial to investigate other dimensions of DWI court effectiveness. Carey (2020) examined 154 participants in a south Texas DWI court using interview data that was taken at the intake, discharge, and 6-month follow-up stages of the program. The researchers found that the participants' alcohol and drug use were substantially reduced by the end of the program and that participants also reported committing less crime. By the time of the program's conclusion, mental health issues (i.e. depression and anxiety) were also alleviated. A study by Carey, Allen, & Einspruch (2012) tracked participants in the San Joaquin DUI Monitoring Court (SJDMC) through DMV data and found that, in the 18 months following their entry into the program, there were significant reductions in the amount of traffic accidents. Compared to those on traditional

probation, offenders who participated in SJDMC were involved in half as many drug- or alcohol-involved accidents. A primary goal of DWI courts is to reduce car crashes and fatalities, as these crashes come at a far greater cost, in terms of both human and economic costs, than arrests (Harron & Kavanaugh, 2017).

While a small amount of favorable evidence exists, there is no consensus regarding the overall effectiveness of DWI courts. An equal number of studies question the efficacy of DWI courts (Bouffard & Richardson, 2007; MacDonald, Morral, Raymond, & Eibner, 2007). One study by Cavanaugh and Franklin (2012) compared graduates from a Texas DWI court to a group of similar offenders who completed probation. Upon examining re-arrest outcomes at 6- and 12-months post-release, DWI courts were found to be no more effective than probation. Cavanaugh and Franklin (2012) contend that DWI courts do not reduce recidivism and there is no persuasive reason to expect them to. However, other studies have produced similar results but argue that more experimental evaluations are needed before declaring DWI courts ineffective. Mitchell et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analytical review of traditional and non-traditional drug courts. In all, 154 quasi-experimental and experimental evaluations were reviewed, 28 of them evaluations of DWI courts. Though significant reductions in recidivism were found in adult drug courts, the evaluations of the DWI courts did not produce statistical significant results. The study concluded that though the effectiveness of DWI courts was not supported, more rigorous evaluations were needed.

A large portion of the research examining DWI courts lack scientific rigor, as many of the evaluations consist of non-peer-reviewed technical reports (Cavanaugh and Franklin, 2012). Studies examining their effectiveness have yielded inconsistent findings making it impossible for scholars to draw firm, scientifically grounded conclusions about DWI courts (Marlowe, 2009).

Along with a lack of scientifically strong studies, there is a near-universal focus on outcome research that has led to serious gaps in the literature. Though studying impacts on recidivism is extremely crucial, it is essential that other important aspects of DWI courts are not neglected in the research.

As stated previously, DWI courts are facilitated by a team of stakeholders. The team component is one of the most significant differences between DWI courts and traditional courts. DWI courts bring together judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, treatment providers, and everyone that has a stake in the participants future. Law enforcement are included in the team of stakeholders, as officers are the ones tasked with enacting policies at the street level. When attempting to manage and treat these offenders, each person on the team, including law enforcement, provides the judge with insight, experience, and opinions (Wallace, 2011). Law enforcement are particularly important as DWI court stakeholders, as they deal with DWI offenders first hand and are actively involved in the enforcement of drunk-driving policy. It is the enforcement priority of law enforcement that determines the impact DWI policies have on the level of drunk driving, not the policies themselves (Goodfellow & Kilgore, 2013). The impact law enforcement can have on DWI courts cannot be stressed enough, which is why the lack of research on law enforcement and their perspective is truly concerning.

There have been many studies that underscore the importance of knowledge about police attitudes (Marinos & Innocente, 2008, Oberweis & Musheno, 2001; Petrocelli, Oberweis, Smith, & Petrocelli, 2014, Worden 1989), but despite an increased focus on the perspectives of the police, there is almost nothing known about police officers' attitudes towards DWI courts. Focusing on the officers' perceptions of DWI court efficiency, the current study is intended to explore this widely understudied area in hopes of filling the gap in the literature on DWI court

## Methodology

*Data.* The data in this study are derived from survey data from an evaluation of a DWI night drug court in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Self-enumerated questionnaires were used to collect data on what police officers knew about the DWI court, their attitudes toward the program, and other factors that may account for their attitudes. The questionnaire was distributed to all police from the state police, the sheriff's department, a neighboring metropolitan police department, and a nearby campus police department. The sample included all police officers who, during March, April, and May of 1997, had the opportunity to arrest DWI offenders. While 108 police officers were approached for participation in the study, the final sample was comprised of 63 of the officers who completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 58.3%.

*Outcome variable.* The outcome variable for the current study is whether or not the police officer considers the DWI court to be efficient. The analysis uses a single outcome measure: *DWI court is efficient* (0 = no, 1 = yes). When asked if they thought the DWI court was efficient, approximately 54.8% ( $n = 34$ ) of the officers included in the sample answered no while 45.2% ( $n = 28$ ) answered yes.

*Independent variables.* The analysis examines two different blocks of independent variables: officer demographics and DWI court related questions. Ten characteristics for each officer are included in the analysis: *ethnicity, education, marital status, age, career length, arrest experience, alcohol consumption, traffic duty, knows an alcoholic, and knows someone involved in a DWI crash.* Due to low cell counts, some variables needed to be recoded. Race was recoded as *ethnicity* and *alcohol consumption*, originally coded as amount of drinks (in a week), was changed from a continuous variable to a binary variable. *Marital status* and *education* were also recoded by combining cells with low counts. Four of the officer characteristics—whether or not

the officer has done *traffic duty*, whether or not the officer *knows an alcoholic*, the officer's *alcohol consumption*, and whether or not the officer *knows someone involved in a DWI crash*—are binary variables, while another three—*arrest experience* (number of DWI arrests made by an officer), *age*, and *career length*—are continuous variables. The last three of the officer characteristics included in the analysis, *ethnicity*, *education*, and *marital status*, are categorical variables.

The second block of independent variables include survey items adapted to assess officers' attitudes towards alcohol-involved offenders, DWI courts, and criminal justice legislation and policies. A total of 32 items were taken from the survey to use in the analysis, each item coded on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Variables include officers' attitudes towards issues such as stress officers are under, the amount of time spent on DWI cases, the clarity of DWI laws, the rights of law enforcement (should they be increased?), and the current BAC limit (is .08 too lenient?). Other variables include whether respondents believed that reforms weaken police power, that DWI caused more work for them, that citizens have bad attitudes, that the public has too many rights, and that stiffer penalties for DWI offenders were more successful.

*Analytic Procedure.* Data preparation and analyses are performed using the statistical software platform IBM SPSS Statistics 26. First, descriptive statistics of the respondents are presented. To assess for possible confounders, these demographic variables were compared between the outcome measure; categorical variables were compared using the chi-square test and continuous variables using the independent samples *t*-Test as the outcome variable is binary. Finally, the Likert-scale items are analyzed using *t*-tests.

*T*-tests were utilized with the assumption that the variances of the two groups are equal. The assumption of homogeneity of variance is tested using Levene's test of equality of variances,. Group variances are treated as equal when the significance value (*p*-value) is greater than .05 (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ) Though meaningful, the significance value alone is not sufficient to measure the magnitude of association, so effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *D* only for significant findings. For Cohen's *D* effect sizes, a mean difference around .2 is considered to be a small effect; .5 considered medium, and .8 large (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017). Unfortunately, multiple regression was not used in the data analysis due to the small sample size. There is minimal missing data due to some officers not answering each item. As a result, pairwise deletion was used rather than listwise deletion as this would result in a much smaller sample, reducing statistical power.

## **Results**

Respondent characteristics can be found in Table 1. In terms of ethnicity, there were slightly more Hispanic officers (54%). Respondents' mean age was 32.5 ( $SD = 6.1$ ) and ranged from 23 to 51 years. More than half of the sample was married (65.1%). Only a small number were divorced or separated (14.3%) with the remainder of the sample single (19.4%). The majority of respondents had at least some college experience (74.2%), while 25.8% had their GED or high school diploma. Also included in the respondent characteristics were the officers' alcohol consumption and whether or not they have been assigned to traffic duty. Respondents who reported they do not drink (54.5%) slightly outnumber those who reported that they do drink (45.5%), and only a select few of the officers have been assigned to traffic duty (34.9%) compared to the majority who have not (65.1%). When asked whether or not they knew an

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	34	54.0
Not Hispanic	29	46.0
Education		
High school/GED	16	25.8
Some college	46	74.2
University degree		
Marital Status		
Single/never married	12	19.4
Separated/divorced	9	14.5
Married/common law	41	66.1
Traffic Duty		
No	41	65.1
Yes	22	34.9
Know Alcoholic		
No	47	77.0
Yes	14	23.0
Knew about DWI Crash		
No	29	46.8
Yes	33	53.2
Alcohol Consumption		
Does not drink	18	54.5
Drinks	15	45.5

alcoholic, 77% of the sample said yes while 23% said no. The respondents were also asked if they knew someone involved in a DWI crash, and the responses were close in number with 53.2% responding yes and 46.8% responding no.

Table 2 presents the bivariate comparisons of court efficiency by respondent characteristics. Among the variables analyzed using the chi-square test, *traffic duty* was the only variable to have a statistically significant relationship with the outcome variable,  $\chi^2(1, N = 62) = 6.93, p < .05$ . Of the law enforcement officers who have not done traffic duty, 58% believe DWI courts are efficient relative to nearly one quarter (23%) of officers who have, indicating that participation in traffic duty impacts officers' attitudes towards DWI court efficiency. For continuous variables including *age*, *career length*, and *number of DWI arrests*, *t*-tests were



Table 2. Bivariate Comparison of Perceptions of Court Effectiveness by Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Not effective	Effective	Test Statistic
	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	
Ethnicity			$\chi^2(1) = 1.35, p = ns$
Hispanic	18 (54.5%)	15 (45.5%)	
Not Hispanic	16 (55.2%)	13 (44.8%)	
Education			$\chi^2(1) = 1.89, p = ns$
High school/GED	11 (68.7%)	5 (31.3%)	
Some college	22 (48.9%)	23 (51.1%)	
University degree			
Marital Status			$\chi^2(2) = 3.98, p = ns$
Single/never married	3 (27.3%)	8 (72.7%)	
Separated/divorced	5 (55.6%)	4 (44.4%)	
Married/common law	25 (61.0%)	16 (39.0%)	
Traffic Duty			$\chi^2(1) = 6.93, p = .008$
No	17 (42.5%)	23 (57.5%)	
Yes	17 (77.3%)	5 (22.7%)	
Know Alcoholic			$\chi^2(1) = 1.088, p = ns$
No	6 (42.9%)	8 (57.1%)	
Yes	27 (58.7%)	19 (41.3%)	
Knew about DWI Crash			$\chi^2(1) = 1.23, p = ns$
No	13 (46.4%)	15 (53.6%)	
Yes	20 (60.6%)	13 (39.4%)	
Alcohol Consumption			$\chi^2(1) = 3.35, p = ns$
Does not drink	7 (41.2%)	10 (58.8%)	
Drinks	11 (73.3%)	4 (26.7%)	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	
Age	34.5 (6.4)	30.29 (5.0)	$t = 2.82, p = .006$
Career length	112.9 (91.6)	60.54 (54.3)	$t = 2.65, p = .010$
Number of DWI Arrests	27.39 (62.9)	15.46 (11.6)	$t = 0.95, p = ns$

*Note.* Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

utilized to test for significant differences between officers who believed DWI courts efficient and those who did not. The results of these tests can also be found in table 2. The number of DWI arrests made by officers who think DWI courts are efficient ( $M = 27.4, SD = 62.9$ ) did not prove statistically significant from those who do not ( $M = 15.5, SD = 11.6$ ),  $t(55) = 0.95, p > .05$ . However, officers in support of DWI court efficiency had significantly shorter career lengths ( $M = 60.5, SD = 54.3$ ) than the officers who do not feel DWI courts are efficient ( $M = 112.9, SD = 91.5$ ),  $t(59) = 2.65, p = .010$ . Age was also found to be statistically significant. Younger

officers ( $M = 30.3$ ,  $SD = 5.0$ ) tend to believe in DWI courts' efficiency over older officers ( $M = 34.5$ ,  $SD = 6.4$ ),  $t(60) = 2.82$ ,  $p = .006$ .

After analyzing the officer characteristics,  $t$ -test were then used to evaluate the second block of independent variables, Likert-scale items, and their relationship to the officers' perceptions of DWI efficiency. The descriptive and bivariate statistics of the items can be found in table 3. Thirty-two Likert-scale items were included in the analysis. The majority of the items' descriptive statistics, with average means closer to 3, indicate that the officers were unsure of how they felt about the question statements and did not want to commit to an answer of agree or disagree. However, some items law enforcement officers overwhelmingly agreed with or disagreed with. It appears that, of the Likert-scale questions asked of them, respondents agree that reforms weaken cop power ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ), not concerned with sanction ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), and judges follow guidelines ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ). Respondents were also found to agree that .08 is appropriate ( $M = 2.10$ ,  $SD = .96$ ), hence respondents disagreeing that .08 is too lenient ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = .93$ ). In regard to other statements the respondents disagreed with, the officers were more likely to strongly disagree regarding severe penalties ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) and the present movement is an over-reaction ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = .67$ ).

Out of the 32 items analyzed, only five items were found to be statistically significant. All five tests exhibited medium effect sizes, ranging from 0.54 to 0.73. The largest was in regard to unclear rules for DWI courts. When asked if DWI courts had unclear rules, officers who perceive DWI courts to be inefficient slightly agreed ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) whereas those who think courts are efficient, were more likely to strongly disagree with it ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ),  $t(61) = 2.82$ ,  $p = .007$ . The respondents were also asked whether they felt .08 was appropriate as the legal BAC limit, and those who thought the courts are efficient ( $M = 1.82$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) were

Item	N	Overall		Not Effective		Effective		t-test	p	Cohen's D
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Increased efforts to arrest	63	2.71	1.17	2.88	1.15	2.57	1.17	1.05	.297	---
Unclear rules	62	3.27	1.13	2.94	1.22	3.71	0.85	2.82	.007	0.73
Officers under stress	62	3.77	0.86	3.67	0.99	3.89	0.69	1.02	.312	---
Superiors don't understand	62	3.44	1.25	3.18	1.45	3.75	0.93	1.79	.079	---
Reforms weaken cop power	63	2.27	1.18	1.94	1.15	2.68	1.12	2.53	.014	0.65
More aggressive because of court	63	2.92	1.13	2.91	1.19	2.96	1.07	0.18	.857	---
Vague Instructions	63	3.54	1.22	3.26	1.44	3.86	0.80	1.94	.057	---
DWI cause more work	61	2.80	0.95	2.56	1.08	3.11	0.69	2.30	.025	0.61
More secure	60	3.40	0.91	3.47	0.98	3.26	0.76	0.90	.372	---
Decreased Respect by civilians	63	2.35	1.07	2.09	0.87	2.68	1.22	2.23	.030	0.56
Laws unclear	63	3.70	0.93	3.59	1.05	3.79	0.74	0.84	.404	---
Treatment	62	3.23	0.76	3.21	0.78	3.25	0.75	0.19	.848	---
Held in jail till trial	63	2.90	1.20	2.97	1.22	2.79	1.20	0.60	.551	---
Public has too many rights	63	2.71	1.34	2.47	1.31	3.04	1.35	1.67	.100	---
Severe penalties	63	4.29	0.77	4.29	0.76	4.29	0.81	0.04	.967	---
MADD fanatics	63	3.84	0.85	3.74	0.96	4.00	0.67	1.23	.223	---
.08 appropriate	63	2.10	0.96	2.32	1.12	1.82	0.67	2.08	.042	0.54
Rules unclear	62	3.69	0.97	3.55	1.09	3.86	0.80	1.25	.216	---
Citizens have bad attitudes	62	2.47	1.24	2.24	1.15	2.75	1.32	1.61	.114	---
Promotions not merit based	62	2.92	1.25	2.76	1.39	3.11	1.07	1.09	.282	---
Not concerned with sanction	62	2.16	1.07	2.39	1.17	1.93	0.90	1.71	.091	---
Present movement over-reaction	63	4.33	0.67	4.29	0.76	4.39	0.57	0.57	.571	---
Reduce DWI to avoid court	61	3.07	0.87	2.94	0.98	3.21	0.74	1.22	.227	---
.08 too lenient	62	3.95	0.93	3.85	1.12	4.07	0.66	0.92	.360	---
Spend too much time on DWIs	62	3.73	1.07	3.58	1.17	3.89	0.96	1.14	.257	---
Officers don't look out for men	61	3.23	1.40	3.06	1.64	3.52	0.94	1.29	.202	---
Judge follow guidelines	62	2.16	1.04	2.03	1.13	2.29	0.94	0.95	.346	---

DWI contest cases	59	2.47	0.73	2.43	0.77	2.50	0.69	0.35	.732	---
Treated like criminal in court	62	2.76	1.18	2.58	1.23	3.00	1.12	1.40	.167	---
Citizens more defiant	63	2.35	1.17	2.12	1.25	2.64	1.03	1.78	.080	---
Not respected by superiors	62	3.35	1.31	3.09	1.47	3.71	1.01	1.90	.063	---
Increased cop rights	62	2.87	1.30	2.82	1.38	2.96	1.23	0.43	.667	---

*Note.* Items range from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Cohen's *D* is only calculated for statistically significant *t*-tests.

more likely to agree that .08 is appropriate compared to the officers who do not think DWI courts are efficient ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $t(60) = 2.08$ ,  $p = .042$ .

Aside from this item, .08 is appropriate, the group of respondents who perceive DWI courts to be efficient were more likely to disagree with the remaining three statements. Officers who believe DWI courts inefficient were revealed to be more likely than their counterpart to agree with statements concerning matters related to whether reforms weaken cop power, ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ),  $t(60) = 2.53$ ,  $p = .014$ ; whether DWI courts cause more work, ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ )  $t(58) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .025$ ; and whether there is decreased respect by civilians, ( $M = 2.09$ ,  $SD = .87$ )  $t(60) = 2.23$ ,  $p = .030$ . Though only five t-tests performed proved significant, five other t-test were approaching significance ( $p > .05$  and  $p < .10$ ) including tests evaluating the items: superiors don't understand ( $p = .079$ ), vague instructions ( $p = .057$ ), offenders are not concerned with sanction ( $p = .091$ ), citizens more defiant ( $p = .080$ ), and DWI courts are not respected by superiors ( $p = .063$ ).

## Discussion

This study sought to examine the attitudes law enforcement had towards DWI courts and DWI court-related matters. By using two different sets of independent variables, officer characteristics and Likert-scale questionnaire responses, to examine respondents' perception of DWI court efficiency, the current study draws conclusions about the factors that impact the

perspectives of law enforcement. The findings, generated through statistical tests including chi-square tests and t-tests, indicated significant relationships between a number of the independent variables being studied and the officers' perspectives on DWI court efficiency. The first noteworthy observation was the relationship between the ages of the officers in the sample and perceived efficiency. The results of the study showed that younger officers were more likely than older officers to perceive DWI courts to be efficient. This observation is most likely explained by culturally related factors. Younger generations have been found to overwhelmingly support criminal justice reform (GenForward Survey, 2019), an attribute that is most likely shared by younger law enforcement officers. To further study the impact cultural factors can have on the attitudes of law enforcement towards DWI courts, future studies may look at additional variables including political beliefs.

Another possible explanation of the differences between younger and older police officers and their perception of DWI court efficiency is the value placed on research. Law enforcement officers tend to value experience more than research when it comes to performing their duties (Telep & Lum, 2014). This explains why some of the officers in the sample don't believe DWI courts are effective, and the tendency of older officers to value experience more than younger officers explains why older officers are more likely to perceive DWI courts to be ineffective.

A relationship between career length and perceived efficiency was also observed. Shorter careers lengths were connected to an increased likelihood of perceiving DWI courts to be efficient. As the ages of officers is correlated with career lengths, the relationship between career length and the outcome variable is best explained through the cultural factors used to explain the impact age has. The final noteworthy observation from the tests analyzing the officer

characteristics is the relationship between the officers' perception of DWI court efficiency and the assignment of traffic duty. Officers who have been assigned to traffic duty were found to be significantly more likely to believe DWI courts ineffective compared to officers who have not been assigned traffic duty. This is an interesting finding because of possible underlying implications. Thinking in terms of DWI courts, it is concerning that the officers who deal with traffic offenses and offenders first-hand are more likely to believe them inefficient. It calls into question the impact DWI courts are having and whether these impacts are being seen by the officers on the frontline.

No other differences were found regarding officer demographics. This was a positive as differences between the officers were not controlled when running t-tests on the Likert-scale items. The observed results of the tests performed on the Likert-scale items were all theoretically expected. As DWI courts are a part of criminal justice reform, it is appropriate that the results indicated that officers who think DWI courts are inefficient are more likely to agree that reforms weaken the power of law enforcement. Parallels can be drawn between these findings and other studies that evaluate the attitudinal differences between police officers in relation to the implementation of new practices or policy. Goetschel and Peha (2017) examined difference in attitudes between officers who supported and opposed the adoption of body-worn cameras (BWCs), finding that officers who did not support the new practice of BWCs were more likely to be concerned that BWCs would hurt the image and practices of the police. These findings are similar to the current study's observations on differences in attitudes towards DWI courts, a newer practice, and their impact on law enforcement power. It was also observed that officers who perceive DWI courts to be inefficient are more likely to agree that there is a decreased respect by civilians, DWI courts cause more work, and the rules of DWI courts are unclear.

Those observations were to be expected. Finally, results indicate that officers who think DWI courts efficient are more likely to agree that .08 is appropriate as the BAC legal limit. Only five of the thirty-two Likert-scale items analyzed were shown to be significant, a somewhat small showing of significance. However, the results of the study do indicate that there are some factors that have a significant effect on the attitudes of law enforcement.

This study contributes to our understanding of law enforcements' attitudes towards DWI court, but it does have some noteworthy limitations. First, the survey data used is quite dated and the sample included in the data is rather small. More recent data with larger samples should be utilized for future research. Second, the statistical analysis methods used in the study are bivariate. Future studies with more rigorous analyses will strengthen the literature with significant conclusions and observations. Finally, a lack of previous studies to compare results with hindered the evaluation and discussion of the findings. An increase in studies with similar methodologies in the literature will give greater validity to these findings.

## **Conclusion**

Problem-solving courts ushered in a new wave of criminal justice reform. A treatment-oriented approach to alcohol-involved offenders has become the focus of many criminal justice professionals, ultimately leading to the development of DWI courts. Although scholarly interest in assessing the effectiveness of these courts continues to grow, a shortcoming of the literature is that researchers have failed to adequately address the attitudes and perceptions stakeholders, such as law enforcement, have towards DWI courts. The current study begins to add to this gap in the literature by reporting significant findings on the factors that impact the perspectives of law enforcement. Future research, especially research that draws stronger conclusions, is needed to determine the extent to which the current findings may be generalized.

The advancement of this body of literature is essential to the advancement of our knowledge of  
DWI courts.



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