

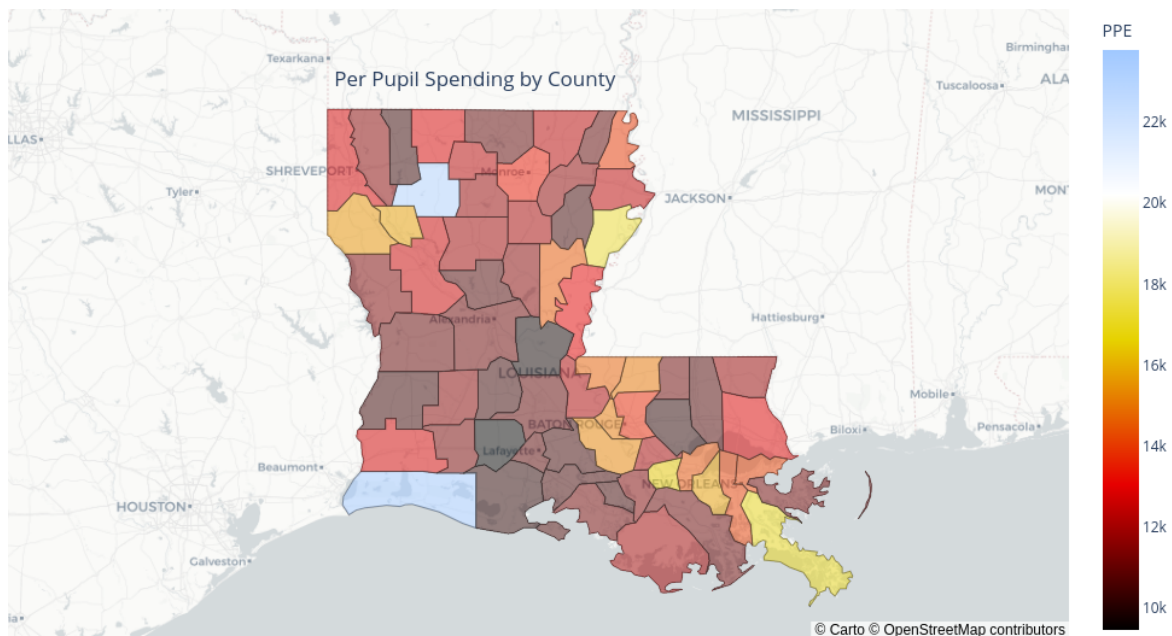
Education's Role in Crime and Perpetuating Hierarchy

Abstract

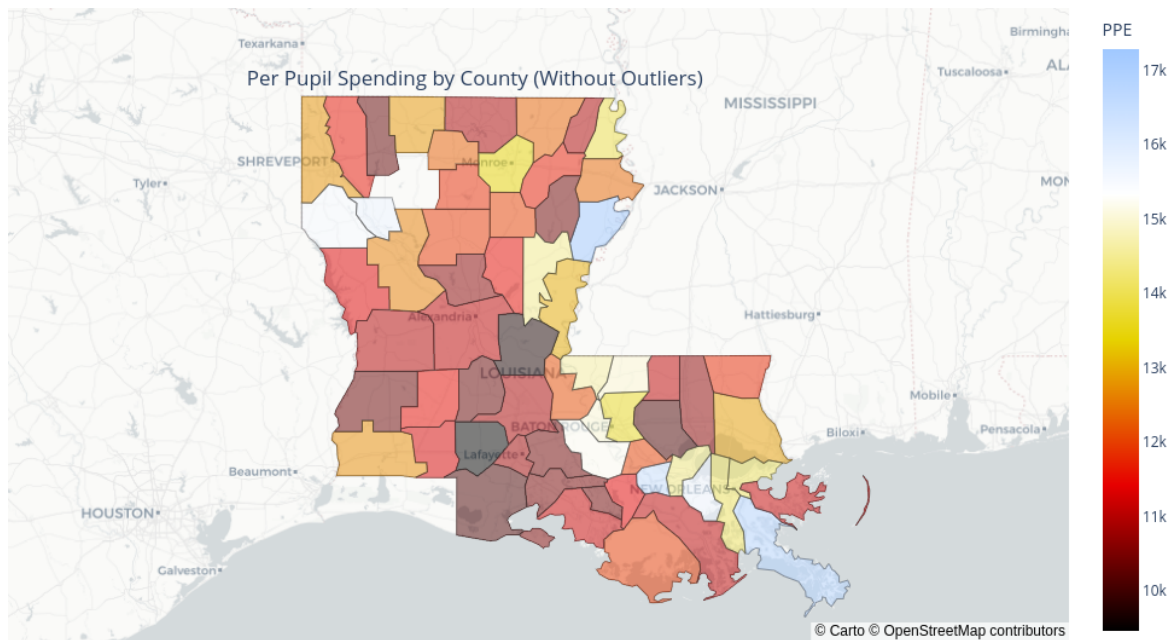
There is an epidemic in the U.S. Criminal Justice system. Year after year the U.S. houses the most vulnerable members of society within prisons, without a second thought as to *why* the demographics of prisons are what they are. As is evident from the first-hand accounts in *Right Here, Right Now* the poor, abused, neglected, and forgotten are most at risk of entering the penal system at a young age. While these stories are purely anecdotal, they are indicators of larger problems plaguing the systems our government has (or rather hasn't) put in place. I seek to tackle only one aspect of this system analytically in this paper - in hopes that I may glean a fuller view of the total unjust picture. About 15 million students filter through public high schools every year. Among them are children from nearly every background and while it can be difficult to control what is happening at home, I argue that those who are vulnerable, should be given the most personalized attention and allocated more resources in school. An environment where students spend much of their formative time. I focus on public schools to see if the differences within this system correlate to the demographics that we see over represented in violent crime arrests and as a corollary of those on death row. My analysis is mainly on Louisiana, as their Parishes have kept readily available records on both public school funding and violent crime. The main statistics I looked to associate with violent crime rates were per pupil Expenditure and high school graduation rate.

Data and Background

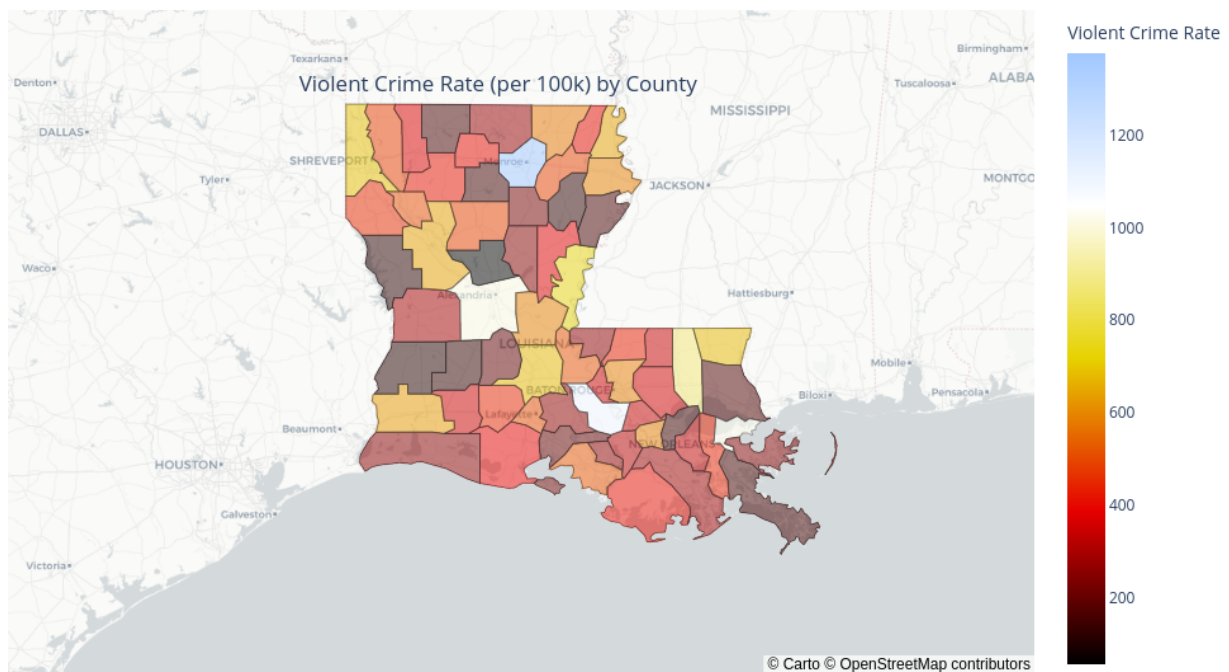
I hypothesized that the average quality of education in each county would correlate negatively with violent crime. A simple hypothesis, but there is a lot that goes into "quality." Maybe an index of quality taking many factors into account could be created, but for my purposes I chose to first analyze average Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE) using data from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. This first figure is a choropleth representation of the PPE metric. As we can see, there are two Parishes that sit as vast outliers to the rest of the state. Average PPE ~\$4000 more than the next highest spenders. This may be due to a higher density of Charter



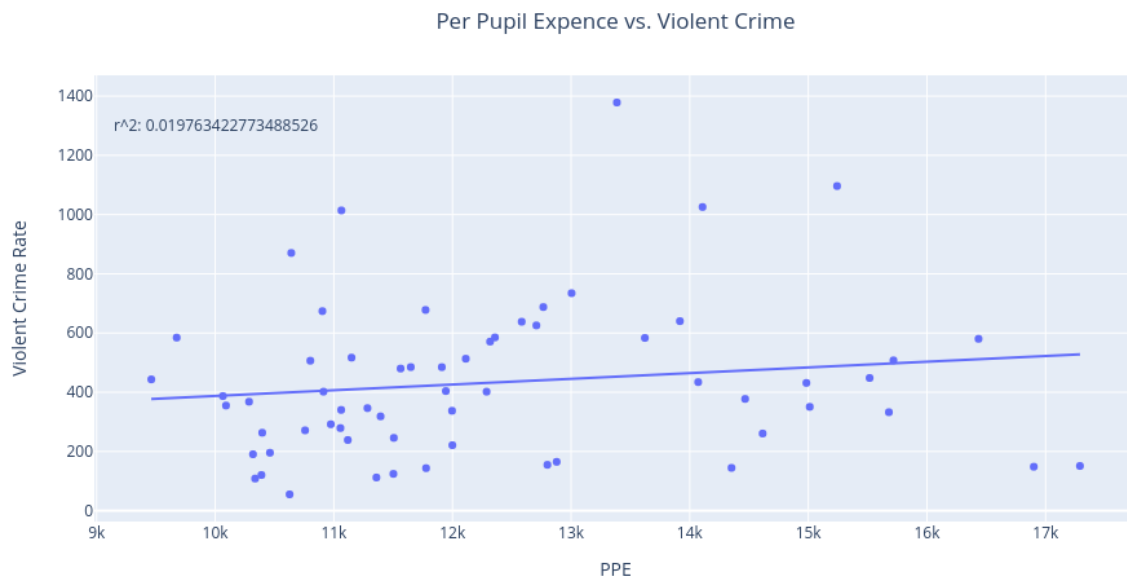
Schools here. I want to keep this in mind moving forward, but in order to get a better qualitative look at the entire state, I removed the two outliers and thus changed the scale. This is purely for



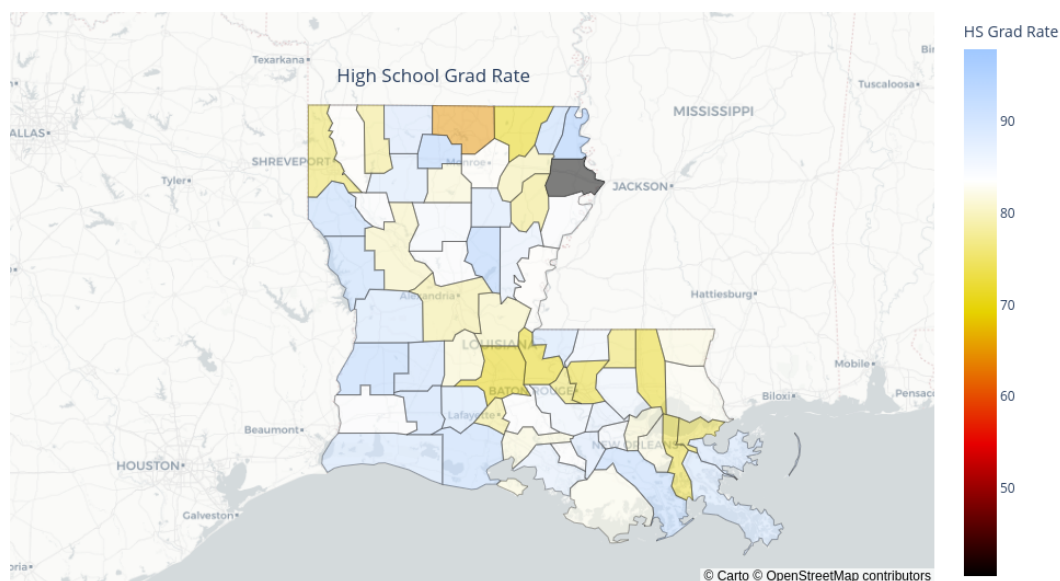
Qualitative analysis since the two maps aren't directly comparable. A notable observation: Plaquemines Parish in the south and Tensas Parish in the North are the next top spenders. Plaquemines is a poor Parish, hard hit by hurricanes and with an economy primarily based around crude oil drilling and fishing and Tensas is an extremely sparsely populated Parish just north of Angola Prison without much economic activity outside of cotton farming. This all goes to say that these aren't the archetypal bastions of wealth that one might associate with higher education funding. Interestingly both counties fall at the lower end of the violent crime scale at ~150 cases per 100k population.



Ouachita, Iberville and Rapides Parishes have the highest prevalence of violent crime respectively at 1378, 1013, and 1096 per 100k Population. These three Parishes, looking back on the PPE data, are all middling or well above the median spending. This disconnect between pure spending on student's experience and crime is borne out when plotting the two variables against each other.



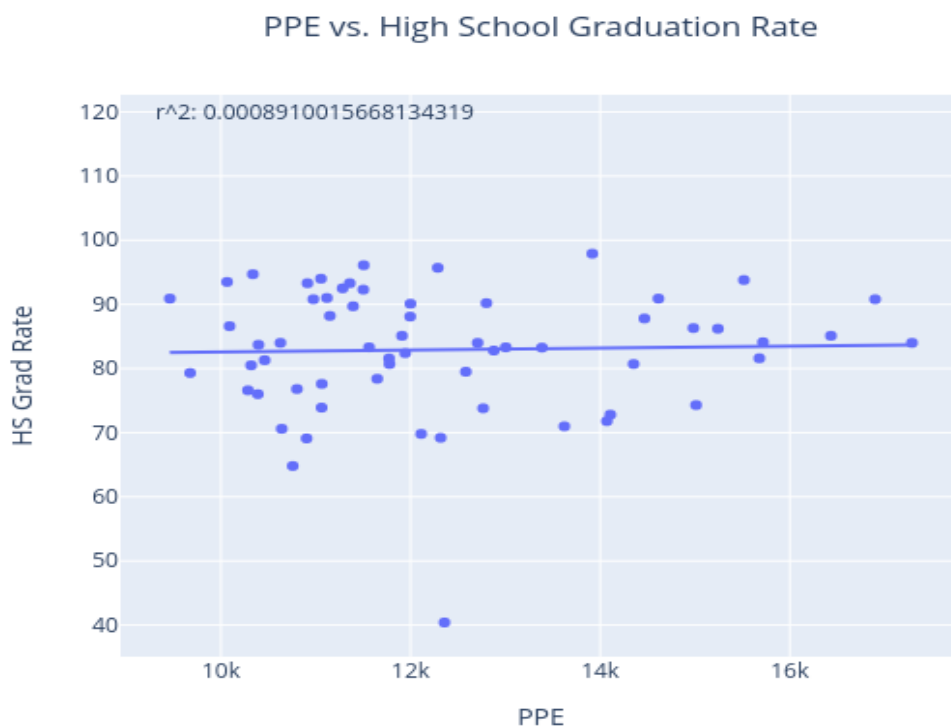
The exceedingly scattered data results in a coefficient of determination of 0.019, thus a correlation can't really be drawn. If anything it appears to be a positive correlation! This doesn't completely blow apart my hypothesis though, it only means that in this small sample size of Louisiana's 64 Parishes PPE may not be a sufficient determinant of education quality. This is when I noticed within my dataset for violent crime rate, there was also High School graduation rate data. So in a similar way I visualized this data.



There is a wildly low graduation rate in Madison Parish which has a violent crime rate well above the median rate at 585 cases per 100k. Every other Parish sits in the 70%-97% range. Upon first review, this map seems to align more with the violent crime map. Those Parishes closer to 70% graduation rate are the same ones with an elevated violent crime rate.



The qualitative result does seem to be backed up by this figure. Though, the coefficient of determination is still a dismal 0.087. This is because the data is not very tight, but even without the regression line, it is clear that there is a negative correlation between HS graduation rates and violent crime rate.



*In passing PPE is not at all correlated with High School Graduation Rates

Raw Data:

	Max	Min	Median	Mean	Std Dev
PPE (USD)	\$23789.20	\$9461.24	\$11927.115	\$12691.38	\$1916.04
HS Grad Rate	97.9%	40.4%	83.85%	82.93%	9.67%
Violent Crime Rate (per 100k population)	1378.43	55.14	394.48	432.69	262.58

*For a more detailed look, my compiled data is in a CSV file that I'll attach

**I'll also make my code available for further analysis

Analysis

Evidently the route of inquiry that I took, wasn't as fruitful as I might have hoped. Finding a smoking gun correlation was my hope, but there is still enough here for worthwhile analysis. First and foremost, there is no quantifiable smoking gun to find when it comes to the disparities in our Criminal Justice system. This data shows that the emergence of crime is a function of a very complex system. This analysis also doesn't take into consideration the prejudices that our Criminal Justice system and public educational institutions pin onto specifically black children.

The contemporary criminal justice system is built upon the shoulders of the super predator hysteria of the 90s and the War on Drugs when "tough on crime" policy garnered widespread voter and legislature support (Lawrence D. Bobo, Victor Thompson 2006). When pushed for results, police depts. had to adapt to an (even more) "proactive" and invasive form of policing that targeted communities of color. "In 1954, there were only about 98,000 African-Americans in prison or jail. By 2002 the numbers had risen to 884,500, an increase of 900 percent (Lawrence D. Bobo, Victor Thompson 2006)." This stringent disciplinary dogma found its way into schools, especially with the advent of the super predator narrative that gripped tv media. Zero-Tolerance policies swept through public school administrations. These zero-tolerance policies take the form of swift and harsh punishment for infractions within school and without school. Punishments range from suspensions to arrest, especially with the increased police presence that came along with zero-tolerance. "According to the Centers for Disease Control (2006), in most cases 100% of school districts had prohibitions against weapons, and fighting, nearly 80% had bans on gang-activity at school, and over 90% had implemented zero tolerance policies for alcohol, tobacco and other drugs." (Nancy A. Heitzeg, 2009) While I'm sure minimizing fighting and weapons use in schools is something pretty much every voter wants. The route by which this promise is kept is just as important as making the promise at all; under zero-tolerance children and teens are subjected to the law and penal system much earlier than they may have been otherwise. Many students that would have been

dealt with by the school itself, are outsourced to police or not dealt with at all through suspension and expulsion. (Nancy A. Heitzeg, 2009)

Increased usage of zero-tolerance policies such as suspensions are associated with higher dropout rates which based my findings should lead to higher violent crime rates. In a study of Florida's public schools, students who are given even one suspension dropped out at a rate of 32% and then 42%, 49, and 53% for 2,3, and 4 or more suspensions respectively. (Robert Balfanz, Vaughan Byrnes, Joanna Fox 2014) The stipulation of this fact in regards to crime and more importantly being arrested for crime, is discussed in a Berkley paper. "A one-year increase in schooling reduces murder and assault by almost 30 percent, motor vehicle theft by 20 percent, arson by 13 percent." Similarly they estimate that a 10 percent increase in graduation rates would reduce murder and assault arrests by 20 percent. (Lance Lochner, Enrico Moretti, 2004) This, in-part, explains that negative correlation that I found in my data.

Conclusion

Pouring funding into PPE obviously isn't the only thing that signifies a good experience in the public school system, nor does it correlate with successfully increasing graduation rates. PPE turns out to be a poor predictor of a county's violent crime rate whereas completion of high school is much more important. Education completion as a whole is negatively correlated with arrests, but there are systems in place that prevent people from vulnerable communities, specifically POC, from reaching that point. Further research should go into student retention, whether that is a function of teacher pay or additional programs outside of class that help students stay on track. Additionally the punitive systems of public school administrations should be reassessed. Perhaps pilot programs that focus on getting to the bottom of a student's behavior rather than purely punishing and pushing them away from school.

Citations

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