

Vicki Bui

Professor Zavita

CRM/LAW C120

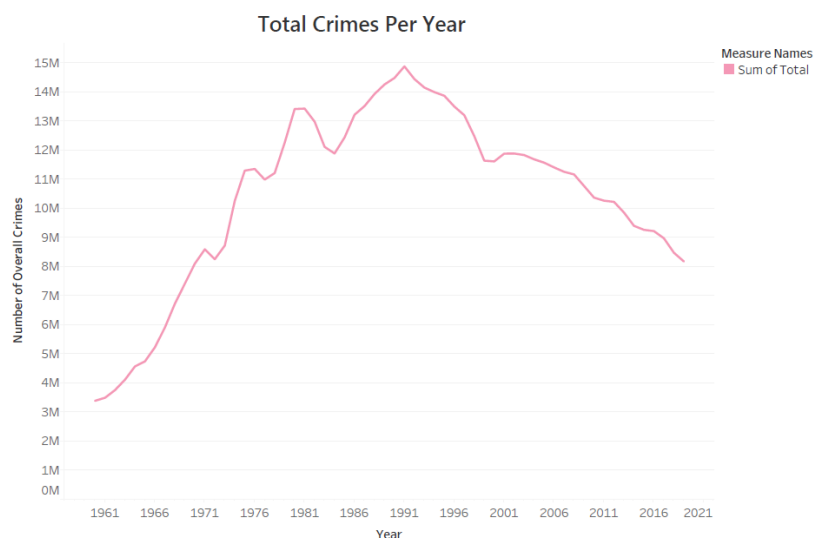
03 August 2023

Government Policies, Funding, and Racial Disparities: For Better or For Worse?

Race is oftentimes a hot topic when discussing crime. Some of these discussions in the media can be problematic. Which races commit the most crimes? What causes certain races to commit more crimes than others? Much of the population respects data to draw sound, mathematically backed conclusions. After all, numbers are highly objective and hard to argue with. However, data hardly ever leads to one definitive conclusion. Without the given context, incorrect assumptions can be made solely with the numbers appearing in a data set. Even visualizations can be flawed. People build data visualizations to tell the story they want to back their point, whether or not it comes from an educated background. Many false narratives created about people of color in the media are drawn from historic stereotypes. In my analysis of my project, I gave myself direction by theorizing the origins, effects, and preservation of these stereotypes. First off, I wanted to plot total crime overall. I created a line graph visualization in the software Tableau to

achieve this, and it maps out total crime within the past 60 years.

Although it is much easier to see on



the actual dashboard, there are apparent turning points in the data, many of which correspond with historical events that shaped racial tensions for better or for worse.

The Great Migration, which occurred between the early 1900s and the mid-20th century, saw millions of Black Americans leaving the rural South in search of better opportunities and newfound prosperity in urban centers, particularly in the North and Midwest. Encouraged by the promise of industrial jobs, improved living conditions, and the hope of escaping the oppressive Jim Crow laws, Black Americans moved to cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York. While the migration brought economic and cultural contributions to these cities, it also led to significant consequences. Redlining, a discriminatory housing practice, prevented Black families from accessing loans and mortgages, relegating them to segregated and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. White flight, fueled by racial tensions and prejudices, saw white residents fleeing to suburban areas, leaving behind decaying urban centers. As a result, racial tensions escalated, exacerbating disparities in education, employment, and overall quality of life for Black communities. Despite these challenges, the Great Migration laid the foundation for the civil rights movement, as Black Americans continued to fight for equality and justice in the face of systemic racism and discrimination ("Black Migration: The Journey to Urban America.").

The Great Migration explains how so many black Americans ended up in cities which have a high concentration of people of color today. Social tensions and economic policies led to the breakdown of urban cities. When black Americans migrated to urban cities, which were historically held a white-majority population, they were met with racial violence. Many affluent white people fled to the suburbs to develop communities that would be white-only. Thus, black Americans, hoping to come to cities for economic prosperity, were met with social and economic roadblocks.

To combat the violence communities of color faced, many banded together to protect themselves from white violence. Some gangs that emerged as a result are still active to this day, including the Bloods and Crips (*History of Gangs in the United States*). Many gangs, originating as ways to fend for themselves in a society constantly enacting policies to put their communities at a disadvantage, grew distrustful of the law and relied on less than legal methods to obtain income. In the late 20th century, certain infamous bills and policies passed to combat a growth in crime rates, such as the War on Drugs and the 1994 Crime Bill. Masked as being tough-on-crime, these policies furthered racial stereotypes by associating more serious offenses with crimes more so committed by

people of color, such as possession of crack cocaine, strengthening a false narrative that people of color are criminals (Cullen). As police presence grew specifically in communities of color, so did tensions between the two groups, which had systemically existed centuries beforehand.

Prison System Growth (1950-2016)

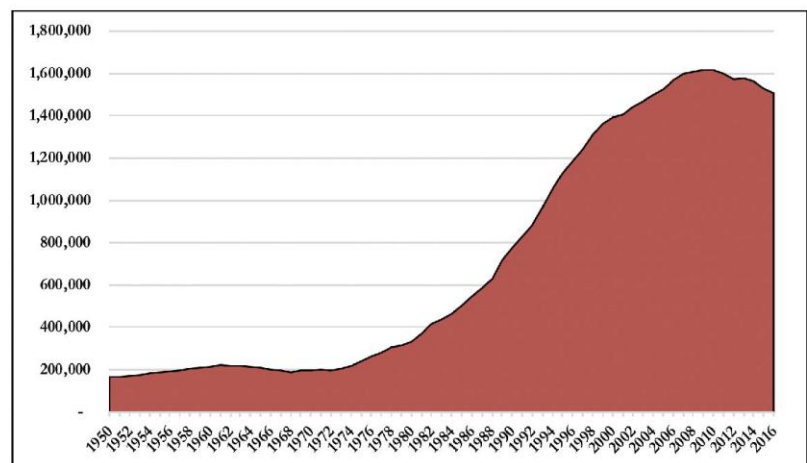


Figure 1. Cullen, James. "The History of Mass Incarceration." Brennan Center for Justice, 25 July 2023, www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/history-mass-incarceration.

Slave Patrols initiated in the 1700s, where their main duties involved shutting down slave revolts and capturing runaway slaves to bring back to their owners. After the 13th Amendment passed, slave patrols transitioned into a period of militia groups determined to deny newly made citizens their freedom and basic rights, called Black Codes. After the 14th

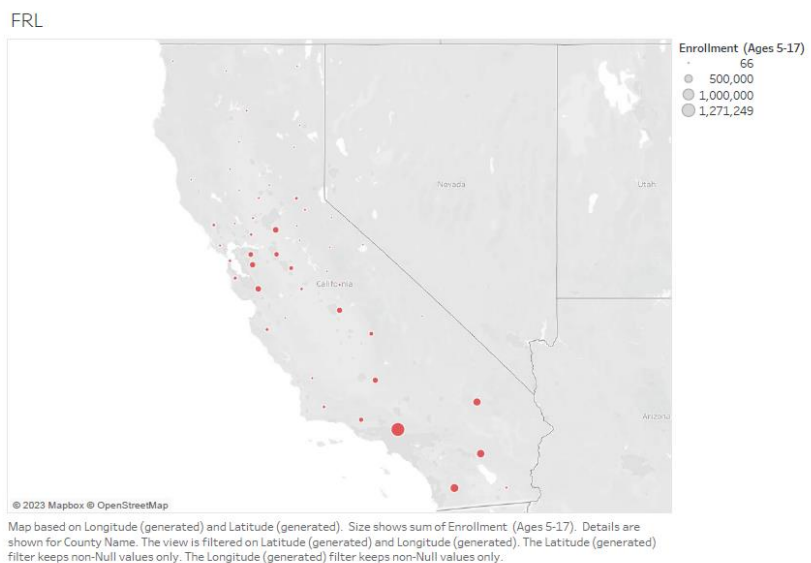
Amendment made Black Codes unconstitutional, law enforcement sprung up to enforce laws, including the infamous Jim Crow policies (“The Origins of Modern Day Policing”). Police presence today is encouraged by much of modern mainstream media to regulate crime. People in favor of an increase in police presence campaign for an increase in police funding, yet increased police has only shown to bring more instability to communities.

Police brutality continues a vicious cycle of racial violence and tension. From 2014 to 2016, police killed almost 2,000 people, with the number not decreasing any time soon (*Profiled*). Dr. Graves, an evolutionary biologist, stresses that biological races do not exist. Instead, races are a social construct, sustained by a separation of stereotypes based on the perception of someone’s physical appearance. Yet, systemic inequality persists as a result of historical racial division.

Racial inequality can be observed even in childhood. Children are aware of their socioeconomic status growing up, which results in differing behaviors and relationships with authority. Growing up in an unstable household, a child only knows instability and is likely to be thrown into a life repeating that same instability, potentially even through crime. School is one of the first experiences a person has with authority outside of the home and forms the non-familial basis of how they will interact with the public. When students from different social backgrounds interact with each other, those from lower-income or unstable households oftentimes perform poorly in comparison to their more well-off classmates (Kurlychek, Johnson). With exposure to academic discipline and authority, the child and people in authority subconsciously view the child as a delinquent, and the child develops a cynical relationship with authority that oftentimes persists lifelong. In fact, studies have observed that black men have a higher likelihood of going to prison than graduating high school (Kurlychek, Johnson). Although primary education is not

oftentimes in the discussion of the intersection of race and crime, the school-to-prison pipeline is a phenomenon that powerfully touches on education and human development.

When deciding on what I wanted my subtopic to be, I thought about my own upbringing. I grew up low-income and heavily relied on government assistance for my entire childhood and adolescence. I attribute my success today to a few vital policies: free/reduced lunch and financial aid. In 2019-2020, the Centers for Disease Control found that black and Latinx children were at a disproportionately high rate of food insecurity, at 18.8% and 15.7% respectively, compared to white children at 6.5% (Jayaswal). As food insecurity affects the physical and mental development of a child, the free/reduced lunch program offers a solution to combat this racial disparity. As I read this, I thought it was great in theory, and I would also attribute free/reduced lunch to my success. But was there any evidence to back up the theory that it supported children on a more widespread scale? According to Census Bureau data from 2017, school lunch lifted 1.2 million people out of poverty, with over half being children (Jayaswal). I made a visualization to represent the number of free lunches distributed in each county using data from the California Department of Education within the years 2022-2023. I initially wanted to map data from all counties within the United States, but Tableau did not recognize any of the counties for the data set I used to map the entire country and it was unfathomable to manually change all 3000 counties.



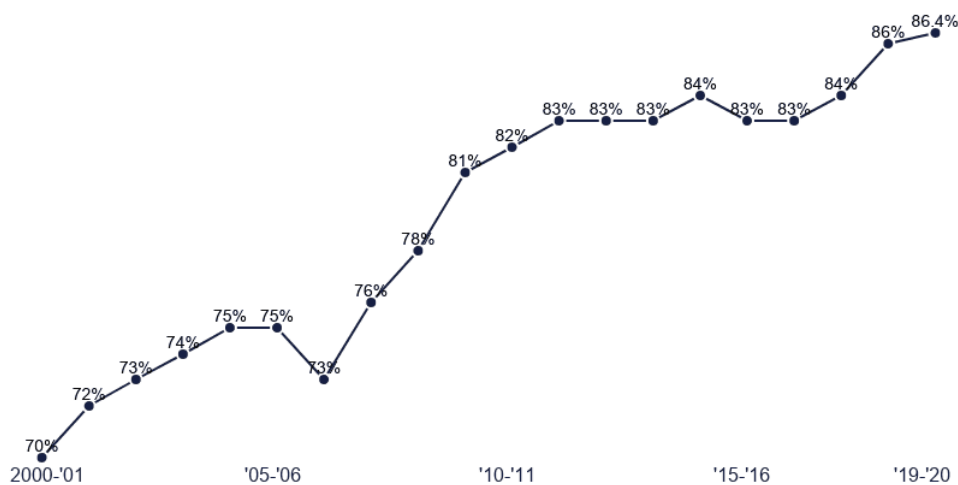
By far, the county with the most meals is Los Angeles County, which has a known concentration of people of color (Newman).

Millions of college students, including myself, rely on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be able to pursue higher education, in determination to lift ourselves and our families out of poverty. There exists a disparity in household income between different races, directly attributing to a difference in ease to afford higher education. While 40% of white families have a household income of under \$75,000, this percentage dramatically increases to 71% for black families (Levine, Ritter). Interestingly, when the income level increases to \$125,000-\$200,000, the disparity in assets shows more evidently, with the median amount of assets in black families at this income level being under \$100,000, while for white families it is over \$300,000. Ideally, financial aid gives more money to families with lower incomes.

However, even with similar income levels, black families hold significantly less assets than white families, concluding that at similar income levels, white families can more easily afford higher education. Despite these unseen nuances in financial aid, there are clear positive effects on providing students from disadvantaged backgrounds a chance to pursue higher education and

obtain more advanced career prospects. Overall, the past few years have seen an increase in the amount of financial aid given out (Hansen). The University of California, Irvine, oftentimes boasts

Historical Student Financial Aid Acceptance Rate



about its statistics involving diversity, such as the consistent increase in both acceptances and enrollment amongst First Generation students, the majority of which coming from underrepresented backgrounds (“UCI Fall 2021 Enrollment Data Shows Student Diversity Trending Upward”).

At my high school, approximately 70% of students were on the Free/Reduced lunch program. Since we were the only low-income majority school in the Huntington Beach Unified High School District, we received the most financial assistance. Some of my peers went on to attend Top 20 Universities, such as Stanford and MIT. I also observed, from my youth to my high school graduation, that the kids who were deemed as delinquents at a young age, yet I saw as kind individuals, grew up to become involved in harmful activities. For years, I wondered why there was such a disparity, considering we all grew up in the same city and went to the same schools, effectively showing how similar we were in our upbringing. The insights learned from this project helped me to realize why these disparities exist. Furthermore, this project affirmed theories I had about the intersection of race and funding, delving into nuances I was vaguely familiar with. Funding by itself does not necessarily indicate positive progress for community growth and development. With law enforcement being a primary example, the theory behind an increase in police presence is so that criminal activity can be monitored and deterred, but only manifests into more harm for the community. On the other hand, funding to invest in the wellbeing and growth within the community, especially targeted towards growing children and adolescents, creates progress for these underprivileged communities. When reading or hearing about policies at hand, there can oftentimes be a key difference in the idea in theory and in practice, which is evident in several examples of community funding.

Works Cited

- "Black Migration: The Journey to Urban America." National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/migrations/great-migration#:~:text=Black%20people%20who%20migrated%20during,in%20wealth%20in%20the%20United>.
- California Department of Education. "School Accountability Report Card (SARC) Data Files." <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filessp.asp>.
- Cullen, James. "The History of Mass Incarceration." *Brennan Center for Justice*, 25 July 2023, www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/history-mass-incarceration.
- Disaster Center. "Crime in the United States by Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 1997-2016." Disaster Center, <https://www.disastercenter.com/crime/uscrime.htm>. Accessed 3 August 2023.
- Hanson, Melanie. "Financial Aid Statistics" EducationData.org, February 15, 2021, <https://educationdata.org/financial-aid-statistics>
- History of Gangs in the United States*, www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43455_1.pdf. Accessed 4 Aug. 2023.
- Jayaswal, Rhea. "Healthy School Meals for All Advances Racial Equity." Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), <https://frac.org/blog/healthy-school-meals-for-all-advances-racial-equity>.
- Kurlychek, Megan C., and Brian D. Johnson. "Cumulative Disadvantage in the American Criminal Justice System." *Annual Review of Criminology*, vol. 2, Jan. 2019, pp. 291–319, doi:10.1146/annurev-criminol-011518-024815.
- Newman, Kaylyn. "The 10 Most Racially Diverse Big Cities in the U.S." US News,

<https://www.usnews.com/news/cities/slideshows/the-10-most-racially-diverse-big-cities-in-the-the-us?slide=4>.

Profiled. Dir. Kathleen Foster. Distributor: Women Make Movies, 2016. *Docuseek2*. Web. 4 Aug 2023.

"The Great Migration: The African American Exodus North | The African Americans | PBS." YouTube, uploaded by PBS, 3 Feb. 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGTwnZ5yJg>.

"The Origins of Modern Day Policing." *NAACP*, 3 Dec. 2021, naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/origins-modern-day-policing#:~:text=The%20origins%20of%20modern%2Dday,runaway%20slaves%20to%20their%20owners.

"UCI Fall 2021 Enrollment Data Shows Student Diversity Trending Upward." *UCI News*, 3 June 2023, news.uci.edu/2021/12/07/uci-fall-2021-enrollment-data-shows-student-diversity-trending-upward/.