

2018

# Racial threat: The effect of racial and economic demographics on police spending

Julianne Bacon  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Public Policy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Bacon, Julianne, "Racial threat: The effect of racial and economic demographics on police spending" (2018). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 16311.

<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/16311>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

**Racial threat: The effect of racial and economic demographics on police spending**

by

**Julianne Bacon**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: Political Science

Program of Study Committee:  
David Andersen, Major Professor  
Andy Hochstetler  
Kelly Shaw

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2018

Copyright © Julianne Bacon, 2018. All rights reserved.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE.....	1
Racial Threat Hypothesis.....	6
CHAPTER 2. DATA AND METHODS .....	10
Findings .....	13
CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSION.....	17
REFERENCES .....	19
APPENDIX A. LIST OF INCLUDED COUNTIES .....	22
APPENDIX B. DEFINITION OF VARIABLES .....	23

**LIST OF FIGURES**

	Page
Figure 1	Comparison of US Population and Prison Population Racial Composition.....1
Figure 2	Hispanic Population Change and Police Spending.....13
Figure 3	Black Population Change and Police Spending.....13

**LIST OF TABLES**

	Page
Table 1	Coefficients for Year 2000 Regression.....14
Table 2	Coefficients for Year 2010 Regression.....15
Table 3	Coefficients for Change Regression.....15

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Professor Dave Andersen, and my committee members, Professors Andy Hochstetler and Kelly Shaw for their guidance and support throughout the course of my graduate studies and in conducting this thesis. As my committee, you have been there to answer countless questions, develop this thesis project, and even settle some anxieties. As a student in your classes, you've all inspired me to complete this program so that I can go on and work to help make the world a better place. Your dedication to students like me is truly appreciated.

I would also like to thank my supervisor and colleagues in LAS Career Services for making my time at Iowa State University a wonderful experience. I feel incredibly lucky that I was not only chosen to work as your Graduate Assistant, but that you were also some of the smartest and most supportive women that I could have been surrounded by every day as I went through my program.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family. You have all encouraged me in one way or another to reach for the highest bar, which inspired me to enter graduate school in the first place. Throughout my years of study, you have supported and motivated me, and I could not have done this without you. Thank you.

**ABSTRACT**

Racial threat hypothesis argues that members of the racial majority perceive growing proportions of a minority population as threatening, and in response, take actions to reduce the perceived threat. It has been hypothesized that perceived racial threat may explain the disparate racial demographics of the United States prison population. To test this claim, I utilize census data to establish racial and economic demography changes within U.S. counties between 2000 and 2010, county crime rates, and police expenditure data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

By combining these data over the course of ten years, I evaluate the relationship between minority population growth and police expenditures in urban U.S. counties. The findings in this paper provide evidence in favor of the racial threat hypothesis as an explanation of the disproportionate minority prison population by way of increased police spending in areas with minority population growth.

## CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE

Mass incarceration is a costly venture, both fiscally and socially. The American prison population has grown to six times what it was 30 years ago, costing taxpayers billions every year and increasing the number of convicts to be released into communities every day that may lack the skills or resources necessary to lead productive, crime-free lives. The incarcerated population is also quite disproportionate when compared to the general population of the United States. Those who are considered the racial minority are overly represented in our prisons, especially for non-violent crimes. In this thesis, I will use the term *racial threat* to characterize the potential motivation of excluding racial minorities from the economic and political spheres of society through means of formal social control in the form of arrests and incarceration. Before examining data that provides a test of racial threat, I will provide background on the disparities in arrests and sentencing of minorities and summarize the racial threat literature.

The prison-incarcerated population in the United States has grown from approximately 250,000 inmates in 1980 to 1,526,319 inmates in 2015 (BOP, 2015). The disproportionate impact of this imprisonment spike on African Americans is well

documented in the literature (Pager 2003, Pettit and Western 2004, Tonry 1995). In 2014, across U.S. state and federal prisons, black males represented 37% of the male prison population (BJS 2015),

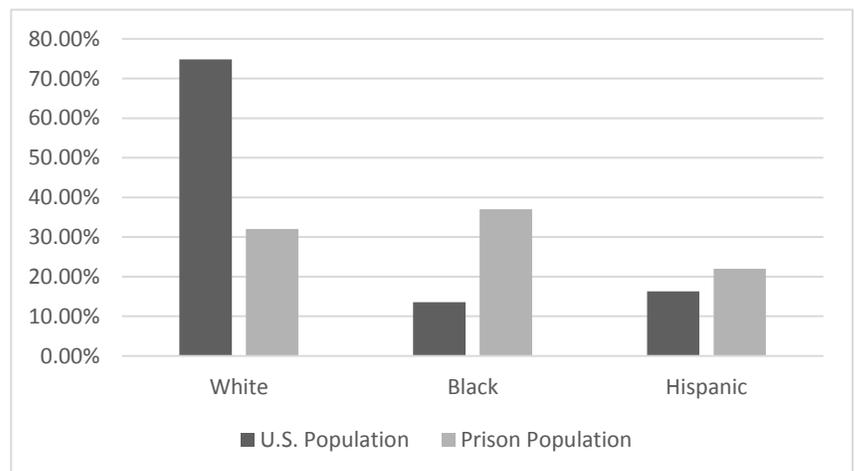


Figure 1: Comparison of U.S. Population and Prison Population Racial Composition

although blacks only represent 13.6%<sup>1</sup> of the total population of the United States (Census 2010). As a comparison, in the same year white males made up 32% of the male prison population (BJS 2015), although whites represent 74.8% of the population (Census 2010). Hispanic or Latino men represent 22% of prison inmates (BJS 2015), while they comprise only 16.3% of the U.S. population (Census 2010). In terms of race, the prison population does not reflect the American population, and minorities are in fact the majority in our state and federal prisons. (Figure 1)

The growth in the prison population is not correlated with an equally significant increase in crime, but rather the policies and politics behind the war on drugs (Tonry 1995). 57.7% of Hispanic and 51% of black inmates are federally incarcerated on drug offenses, compared to 42.4% of white inmates (BJS, 2015). Drug offenders make up the largest proportion of inmates in federal facilities at 49.5% (BJS, 2015), yet the prevalence of drug abuse in the United States has yet to decline. In fact, states with higher rates of drug incarceration experience higher, not lower, rates of drug use (Schiraldi, et al., 2000). In their evaluation of the deterrent effect of imprisonment for felony drug offenders, Spohn and Holleran (2002) found that those who served prison time for their offenses had higher rates of recidivism over their peers that received community corrections for the same offenses. Incarcerated offenders in that study also recidivated more quickly than those that did not receive prison sentences.

Mass incarceration affects entire communities, not just offenders themselves. The risks to an offender's neighborhood upon release from prison are not limited to recommencing substance abuse or criminal activity; prison poses physical health risks for all

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census race identification categories are "alone or in combination with one or more other races" and individuals may claim more than one category.

inmates and may subsequently pose risks to inmates' communities post-incarceration. Inmates report higher rates of chronic illnesses and have higher instances of infectious diseases such as hepatitis C, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS (Schnittker et al. 2011). This is not to say offenders are more likely to contract an infectious disease in prison, but rather that background factors that are commonly correlated with criminal activity, such as poverty and low educational attainment, are also factors that correlate with drug abuse and poorer health. Many offenders arrive to prison with preexisting conditions (Schnittker et al., 2011), and although they may see a doctor while in custody, they return to neighborhoods with chronic conditions which can create a public health issue that remains prevalent in poor and/or minority communities.

The social and opportunity costs of mass incarceration continue to be disproportionately paid by minorities. Inmates are more likely to have no high-school diploma (Brownsberger 2000), and upon release, will be faced with significantly fewer opportunities to earn a legitimate living than peers with no prison sentence. This reduction in social capital has a broader negative impact when it disproportionately affects minority communities and has a cyclical effect with future generations. For most crime, offending peaks in late teens. But in predominantly black neighborhoods the risk of first-time imprisonment increases with age and does not peak until late twenties (Pettit and Western 2004). Generally, males that arrive at their mid-twenties without arrest or imprisonment have lived past their greatest chance of serving a prison sentence, but in black neighborhoods the risk of incarceration continues to increase with age (Pettit and Western 2004).

The belief that minorities must be committing a higher proportion of crime if they make up a greater proportion of the prison population, is prevalent throughout American

society. However, minorities are targeted more frequently than whites in police surveillance and arrests and receive longer sentences for drug offenses (Beckett et al. 2006, Pettit and Western 2004, Brownsberger 2000, Beckett and Western 2001, Crawford et al. 1998). Blacks in particular have a much higher risk of incarceration due to their arrest rates for drug crimes (Blumstein 1993). Disproportionate spending of police resources in minority neighborhoods accounts for some of the disparity in prison population. Beckett et al. (2006) found law enforcement to have a significantly stronger focus on crack, a drug associated with disproportionately black users, and outdoor drug venues in Seattle. Outdoor drug venues such as parks and urban gathering spaces are more popular amongst minority drug users and dealers, whereas indoor venues like homes are more accessible by white drug offenders. These researchers also found that indoor drug busts have a much greater payoff in terms of quantity of drugs recovered, and the disruption in drug transmission that is caused by the level of offender apprehended, than outdoor busts. Essentially, street arrests are typically low-level dealers and users, but indoor dealings contain greater quantity and higher-level dealers, yet the former is more frequently targeted. Additionally, in this mixed-method study they found black heroin users to be targeted more for arrest than white heroin users, despite self-report evidence of more white heroin users than black users in the city. This study provides substantial evidence against the arguments that minorities are targeted more often because they deal or use drugs more frequently, that the drugs minorities use at greater rates cause the most social harm, or that outdoor drug busts are more effective for stopping the transmission of drugs than indoor busts. These researchers found no evidence of prosocial benefit that supports law enforcement practices targeting minority neighborhoods or drug venues (Becket et al., 2006).

Another factor that should be considered in examining racial disparities as they relate to mass incarceration is Private Prison Management. The War on Drugs and the subsequent boom in prison population resulted in the proliferation of private prison management, or as it is more commonly referred to, for-profit prisons (Pratt, 1999). As state-run prisons started to experience overcrowding and deteriorating conditions, governments turned to prison management corporations to handle the day-to-day prison operations in exchange for a per-inmate payment. Management companies operate on an economy of scale, so the larger the inmate population, the lower the cost per inmate to operate the prison, and therefore the greater the profits (Pratt, 1999). To increase profits, for-profit prison managers utilize overcrowding and reduce inmate quality of life, such as through educational, nutritional, hygienic, and rehabilitative services (Dolovich, 2005).

Prison management companies have also gained political power since the 1980's. As mentioned, to keep costs per inmate lower it is beneficial for management to keep prison beds full. Private prison management companies lobby for longer prison sentences, whether those sentences are in line with the offense or if they provide a return on investment in terms of reduced recidivism (Dolovich, 2005). These management companies have the political clout to influence these policy decisions through close relationships with law enforcement, the judicial branch, and politicians alike. For many prisons in the United States, the goal is "heads on beds" rather than rehabilitation. This operational model is not only troublesome for the treatment of offenders or the cost of incarceration; it serves the cycle of mass incarceration and harsher sentencing of minorities.

I have examined a variety of ways that minorities have been disproportionately targeted in the criminal justice system. But, if incarceration is not an effective deterrent or

path to desistance, and if the social and financial costs of mass incarceration are so great, why does the United States continue to incarcerate at a higher rate than any other industrialized country? Additionally, if there is no evidence that minority offenders cause more social harm than white offenders, why are minorities more frequently targets of police supervision? One theory that may provide explanation of this phenomenon is the racial threat hypothesis.

### **Racial Threat Hypothesis**

The racial threat hypothesis argues that members of the racial majority perceive growing proportions of a minority population as threatening, and in response, take actions to reduce the perceived threat (Blalock 1967, Blumer 1958). There are two types of perceived racial threat: economic and political. In terms of economic threat, Blalock (1967) theorized that as minorities compete for jobs and other economic resources they increasingly become a threat to the well-being of whites, so social controls are enlisted to keep minorities from participating in the economic sphere. Additionally, he explains that whites perceive blacks as a threat to political power as their population grows, and in response, whites increase social controls to maintain political dominance. Social controls in the form of police surveillance, arrests, and incarceration can be employed to limit the economic and political power of a minority group. The spike in prison population in the United States following the implementation of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 may provide evidence of racial threat, especially when there is little evidence of prosocial benefits of enlisting such social controls.

Evidence of the racial threat hypothesis is mixed, but this is perhaps a result of the variance in units of measure (cities, states, etc.), the definition of “minority,” and the limited use of statistical controls. Many studies, though, have found support for the hypothesis in the

form of disproportionate police surveillance. With increases in black population also come growth in police force, police and criminal justice expenditures, police use of deadly force, and a higher total arrest rate (Parker 2005, Beckett et al. 2006, Brownsberger 2000, Crawford et al. 1998, Jacobs and Helms 1999), and minorities receive longer sentences for drug offenses (Blumstein 1993, Beckett and Western 2001). Black offenders are also more likely to be sentenced as a habitual offender than equally eligible white offenders for drug and property crimes (Crawford 1998). The evidence in support of racial threat here is not only that black offenders are 2.3 to 3.6 times more likely to receive this (habitual offender) sentence, but also that the drug and property crimes that they *do* receive harsher sentences for could be perceived as greater threats to the white community than other offenses in which they receive sentences similar to white offenders' (Crawford 1998).

There is also support for racial threat in the form of social policy. In their state-level analysis of the relationship between welfare and incarceration, Beckett and Western (2001) found states with more punitive attitudes toward crime to also be those with more restrictive welfare policies, which also happened to be states with higher proportions of poor and black populations. Additionally, states with Republican-dominated legislatures were more likely to adopt this policy position (Beckett and Western 2001). If tighter restriction on welfare and higher incarceration rates disproportionately affect minority communities, the cycle of diminished opportunities will persist, making this study a strong support for evidence of racial threat.

Other tests have failed to support racial threat hypothesis. Multiple studies have found lower rates of black male incarceration in cities with a greater proportion of black residents (Stolzenberg et al. 2004, Parker et al. 2005). Although this finding contradicts the general

aggregate racial threat hypothesis, one explanation of this finding may be the exclusion of Hispanic population either as a minority population or as a statistical control. Since Blalock developed the racial threat hypothesis in 1967, the Hispanic population in the United States has grown from 4.5% in 1970 to 16.3% in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010). The rate of growth in the Hispanic population should not be underestimated in its importance when evaluating the racial threat hypothesis; the black population in the United States has only grown 1.5% between 1970 and 2010 compared to 11.8% growth in Hispanic population of the same time period (U.S. Census, 2010). In fact, Parker (2005) found that rises in the Hispanic population in cities led to fewer arrests in the black population. Additionally, Hispanics make up about 22% of the state and federal prison population in the U.S. (BJS, 2015), so their inclusion in tests of racial threat is essential.

An additional explanation of the inverse relationship between arrests in communities with greater proportions of black residents could be more static demographics in larger cities. King and Wheeler (2007) suggest that the influx of minority populations is associated more with perceived threat than the proportion of minority population alone. Studies that have focused on larger cities may be including those cities which have always had a higher proportion of minority residents as compared with the rest of the country. To address this issue, I will look at the county level to include the area surrounding cities and capture demographic change in suburban areas.

Given the continued disproportionality of the prison population, and the negative community effects associated with mass incarceration, another test of the racial threat hypothesis is warranted. When county-level interactions such as economics and population change are considered, we can attempt to address how these factors in counties throughout

the U.S. affect how much is spent on police supervision. Consistent with racial threat hypothesis, I hypothesize that as the proportion of the minority population increases (black or Hispanic), police expenditures will also increase. This is in line the theory of racial threat, because it can be speculated that increases in police spending in conjunction with increases in minority population are a reaction to changing demography. Police spending is a dynamic variable that can be adjusted to meet the needs of a community, should those change. Increased crime and poverty are factors that likely lead to increased police spending, but if these variables are accounted for and there is still increased spending with rises in minority population, then perhaps a reaction to a perceived threat is causing the increase in spending.

Lastly, because I am including black and Hispanic populations in the analysis, the interaction of these populations should be considered. Hispanic population has grown rapidly over the last 40 years, while the black population has remained essentially stable. Because of this population change, a “new” racial threat of Hispanics may be perceived. To evaluate the degree of racial threat that may be perceived by each group, I will examine these racial groups separately.

## CHAPTER 2. DATA AND METHODS

Many tests of the racial threat hypothesis are focused on a single city or state, or they utilize national trends. Although these studies may provide evidence of bias in policing or other expressions of racial threat, they lack the external validity that a comparative analysis may provide. A comparison of counties throughout the United States captures changes in crime where it is happening more accurately than state incarceration rates can, and controls for differences in state policies, populations, and economic conditions that single city or state studies do not. The counties included in this study are 66 of the most populous counties in the United States (see Appendix A), which were chosen for their availability of police expenditure data.

First, we must look at county populations to establish changes in demography. This data comes from the 2000 and 2010 United States Census. The variables include percentage of population that identify as Hispanic or Latino, the percentage that identify as black or African American, and the percentage that identify as white. Races in the decennial census are divided into two categories: one race, or alone or in combination with one or more other races. The race categories under “alone or in combination with one or more other races” were utilized for this study because they more closely reflect racial categorization in prisons.

The basis of the racial threat hypothesis is that as racial minority populations grow, the racial majority will establish stricter controls and punishments on minorities to maintain economic and social power. To thoroughly test this hypothesis, it is necessary to look at population changes over time, and how they interact with crime and incarceration rates. These proportions of minority population will be used as the measure of “racial threat” in a county.

It is also necessary to include the economic conditions of counties in the study, given the correlation between poverty and incarceration. Counties and states vary greatly in terms of household income, so the following four variables are used to establish the economic status of counties: median household income, educational attainment, poverty rate, and unemployment rate.

Police expenditures, even their changes over time, are too unidimensional to help us evaluate the validity of the racial threat hypothesis. To establish the true effect of racial threat on police spending, we must control for the actual amount of crime being committed. To do this, the crime rates in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be utilized. The UCR includes the amount and types of crime reported to every law enforcement agency in the country and is currently the best tool we have for estimating crime rates. For the purposes of this study, the crime rate is utilized as a control variable to establish the relationship between racial demography and police expenditures while accounting for the actual difference in reported crime. The crime rate in this study is crimes reported per capita for each county instead of utilizing the FBI's per 100,000 residents crime rate. The FBI utilizes this method to make crime rates a better point of comparison across counties and states, but for the purposes of this study we are looking at change within county so per capita is a more effective measure. The crime rates from 2000 and 2010 are used to account for change over time.

Police expenditures, specifically, the dollars spent on police protection in a county for 2000 and 2010, are the dependent variable in this study. This data comes from the Criminal Justice Employment and Expenditures data series, published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Police expenditures are adjusted for inflation and are divided per capita to

accurately reflect change in expenditures, independent of population or economic change. These figures vary widely by county, and they are a direct reflection of the county's priority on criminal justice and police supervision. They do not include capital projects, judicial, or corrections expenses, and include equipment and personnel expenses. Police expenditures are used here as the measure of response to racial threat by examining their relationship to minority population growth.

By controlling for economic factors and crime rates, analyzing the relationship between police expenditures and racial demography will help to get a clear picture of how racial demography affects incarceration rates. This is a more thorough test of the racial threat hypothesis than those that only look at one city or state, because single cities or states may host additional confounding variables that contribute to higher incarceration rates. Comparing counties with varied demographics and political profiles will also help to understand if there are areas of the country where racial threat is a more valid hypothesis than others. Counties that vary by political leaning, level of racial diversity, and counties in all regions of the country will be included to account for some of these differences.

Since the reaction to demographic change over time is the central thesis of racial threat, it was important to create change variables to reflect the amount of growth for black and Hispanic populations, the change in per capita police expenditures, and the change in crime rates. A factor analysis was also completed with the economic variables, including median household income, educational attainment, unemployment rate, and the poverty rate in each county. Factor analyses for 2000 and 2010 were conducted, and then a variable for the change between 2000 and 2010 was created. This variable (poorchng) is a measure of the

change in “poorness” of a county, which serves as a control since poverty and crime are highly correlated.

### Findings

The initial analysis of the relationship between minority population growth and police expenditures provides a picture of when counties increase expenditures, although the results were not statistically significant. First, a simple means plot of the level of Hispanic population growth divided into three growth categories and the mean percentage of change in per capita police expenditures was conducted. The results of this plot (Figure 2) indicate a jump from an average of \$14.96 increased per capita spending to an average of \$23.05 per capita increased spending in counties with medium Hispanic growth compared to those with low Hispanic growth.

A similar means plot was repeated for black population growth, and a similar trend occurred. Again, the difference was not statistically significant at .150, but counties that experienced above average black population growth also saw a spike in change in police expenditures from \$16.63 for average growth counties to \$32.88 increase in per capita spending (Figure 3).

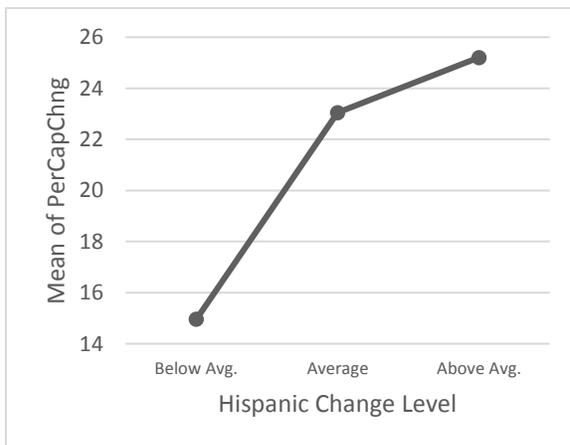


Figure 2: Hispanic Population Change and Police Spending

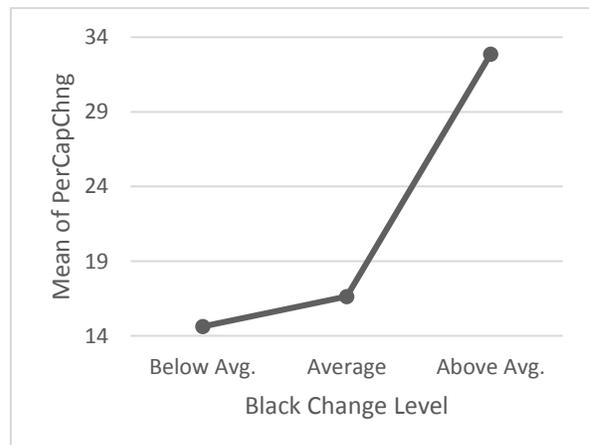


Figure 3: Black Population Change and Police Spending

While these plots are interesting and provide surface-level support for the racial threat hypothesis, they do not control for additional factors that influence police expenditures such as crime or correlates of crime. To account for these additional influences, regressions for the individual years of 2000 and 2010 were conducted, as well as a regression of the change between the years. These analyses included the following independent variables: percentage Hispanic, percentage black, crime, population, and the economic factor score. The dependent variable was per capita police expenditures. (See Appendix B for a complete list and definitions of variables.)

The regression analysis for the year 2000, shown in Table 1, indicates the proportion of Hispanic population in a given county to be the most significant influence on increased per capita police expenditures, followed by the economic factor, and then the increase in black proportion of population. The 2010 analysis (Table 2) showed a change to the black population proportion as more significant than the Hispanic proportion. In that year, a point of growth in Hispanic or black population growth led to an increase of over \$2 per capita in police spending.

**Table 1. Coefficients for Year 2000 Regression**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	43.103	41.284		1.044	.301
pop00	-8.692E-7	.000	-.014	-.101	.920
crimeper00	-463.279	669.044	-.115	-.692	.491
perblack00	1.688	.957	.275	1.764	.083
perhisp00	2.180	1.017	.371	2.143	.036
poor00	-30.443	16.199	-.368	-1.879	.065

a. Dependent Variable: percap00

**Table 2. Coefficients for Year 2010 Regression**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	29.000	52.567		.552	.583
pop10	2.773E-6	.000	.039	.289	.773
crimeper10	-381.010	1172.826	-.057	-.325	.746
perblack10	2.432	1.122	.338	2.168	.034
perhispanic10	2.089	.970	.330	2.154	.035
poor10	-42.341	17.271	-.430	-2.452	.017

a. Dependent Variable: percap10

Lastly, a regression using change variables was completed to attempt to evaluate how fluctuating demographic characteristics and crime rates affect change in police expenditures. Independent variables of change in population, crime rate, black population, Hispanic population, and economic factor are utilized, as well as the dependent variable of change in per capita police expenditures. In this model, shown in Table 3, we see that crime and economic characteristics are not significant influences on police spending, but change in black population proportion does have a significant influence.

**Table 3. Coefficients for Change Regression**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.150	10.187		.309	.758
popchng	1.024E-5	.000	.055	.372	.711
crimechng	49.383	395.507	.016	.125	.901
blackchng	5.360	2.450	.294	2.188	.033
hispanicchng	2.168	2.127	.154	1.019	.312
poorchng	5.123	11.291	.062	.454	.652

a. Dependent Variable: percapchng

b. Adjusted R Square Value = .038

By comparing the static models of the individual years 2000 and 2010 to the model utilizing change variables, we can see that the influence of Hispanic or black population growth may have significant influence on increasing police spending one year, but not the next. Over time, however, increases in the proportion of black population have led to increases in police expenditures. Broward County, Florida is perhaps the best example in this data as an expression of racial threat. Broward County ranked third in both black population growth and Hispanic population growth and had the second highest increase in per capita police spending, despite a .42% *decrease* in crime. In fact, only thirteen counties in the study had increases in crime per capita, ranging from only .08% to 1.86%, and these counties were not ranked the highest for minority population growth.

With this data set, we see an increase of \$5.36 per capita in police spending for every percentage increase of the black population. When common correlates of crime and crime rates are controlled for, increases in police expenditures that accompany increases in minority population are seemingly unjustified. Therefore, this model and data provide support for the racial threat hypothesis.

### CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSION

Although this study provides evidence supporting the racial threat hypothesis, additional opportunities for further study exist. Data constraints were a considerable challenge throughout the course of this study, without which the sample size could have been much more robust and multiple dependent variables could have been tested. For example, while police expenditures are a dynamic variable and provide a good reflection of the values and priorities of county administration, they may be affected by additional influences.

Period effects, for example, may be a contributing factor to this data set. The years included in this study are pre and post-September 11, 2001, after which many large cities increased security against terrorist threats. Additionally, 2010 was a year hard-hit by the Great Recession, and police expenditures may not have been as high as counties would have preferred. An overview of the median home values of U.S. cities shows a dip in values between the years 2005 and 2010, and because counties and cities budgets are derived from property taxes, the tax base may have been considerably smaller in 2010 than 2000. This would lead to a per capita police expenditure smaller than expected if the recession had not occurred. As with all studies of crime, there may be additional unobserved factors that are not accounted for in this study.

Using only the most highly populated counties in the United States could be problematic as well. Adding rural counties where a large minority population does not already exist may provide stronger results. Perhaps the economic threat perceived by the majority is lessened when minority populations experience high unemployment and mass incarceration. If so, if minority populations in these areas were already poor and

disproportionately incarcerated prior to 2000, this study's time frame is too late to observe the effects of racial threat.

The results of this study are not only supportive of the racial threat hypothesis; they provide some evidence which can be used in the formation of new public safety policies and budget decisions. The decision to heavily supervise minority neighborhoods while failing to address the other systemic causes of crime only serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and crime. Additional resources can be directed toward education, afterschool activities, employment and training programs, and safe housing rather than direct police supervision, and have a positive effect on crime. Policies and budgets that increase intervention activities along with police supervision could not only be more effective, but if successful, would reduce perceived racial threat.

**REFERENCES**

- American Factfinder. "Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, 2010." *Census.gov*. US Department of Commerce, 2010. Retrieved from Web. Oct. 2017.
- Beckett, Katherine, et al. "Drug use, drug possession arrests, and the question of race: Lessons from Seattle." *Social Problems* 52.3 (2005): 419-441.
- Blumer, H. (1958). Race prejudice as a sense of group position. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 1(1), 3-7.
- Blumstein, Alfred. "Racial disproportionality of US prison populations revisited." *U. Colo. l. Rev.* 64 (1993): 743.
- Brownsberger, William N. "Race matters: Disproportionality of incarceration for drug dealing in Massachusetts." *Journal of Drug Issues* 30.2 (2000): 345-374.
- Carson, Ann. "Prisoners in 2014." *BJS.gov*. Office of Justice Programs, Sep. 2015. Retrieved from Web. Oct. 2017.
- Carson, Ann. "Prisoners in 2015." *BJS.gov*. Office of Justice Programs, Dec. 2016. Retrieved from Web. Oct. 2017.
- Chandler, Redonna K., Bennett W. Fletcher, and Nora D. Volkow. "Treating drug abuse and addiction in the criminal justice system: improving public health and safety." *Jama* 301.2 (2009): 183-190.
- Crawford, C., Chiricos, T., & Kleck, G. (1998). Race, racial threat, and sentencing of habitual offenders. *Criminology*, 36(3), 481-512.
- Dolovich, Sharon. "State punishment and private prisons." *Duke LJ* 55 (2005): 437.

Federal Bureau of Prisons. "Offenses." *BOP.gov*. Federal Bureau of Prisons, 26 Aug. 2017.

Retrieved from [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics\\_inmate\\_offenses.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_offenses.jsp).

2 Oct. 2017.

Federal Bureau of Prisons. "Inmate Race." *BOP.gov*. Federal Bureau of Prisons, 26 Aug.

2017. Retrieved from [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics\\_inmate\\_race.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_race.jsp).

2 Oct. 2017.

Jacobs, D., & Helms, R. (1999). Collective outbursts, politics, and punitive resources:

Toward a political sociology of spending on social control. *Social Forces*, 77(4),

1497-1523.

King, R. D., & Wheelock, D. (2007). Group threat and social control: Race, perceptions of

minorities and the desire to punish. *Social Forces*, 85(3), 1255-1280.

Lanza-Kaduce, Lonn, Karen F. Parker, and Charles W. Thomas. "A comparative recidivism

analysis of releasees from private and public prisons." *Crime & Delinquency* 45.1

(1999): 28-47.

Parker, K. F., Stults, B. J., & Rice, S. K. (2005). Racial threat, concentrated disadvantage and

social control: Considering the macro-level sources of variation in

arrests. *Criminology*, 43(4), 1111-1134.

Pratt, Travis C., and Jeff Maahs. "Are private prisons more cost-effective than public

prisons? A meta-analysis of evaluation research studies." *Crime & Delinquency* 45.3

(1999): 358-371.

Pettit, Becky, and Bruce Western. "Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class

inequality in US incarceration." *American sociological review* 69.2 (2004): 151-169.

- Schnittker, Jason, Michael Massoglia, and Christopher Uggen. "Incarceration and the health of the African American community." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 8.1 (2011): 133-141.
- Schiraldi, Vincent, Barry Holman, and Phillip Beatty. "Poor Prescription: The Costs of Imprisoning Drug Offenders in the United States. Policy Report." (2000).
- Spohn, Cassia, and David Holleran. "The effect of imprisonment on recidivism rates of felony offenders: A focus on drug offenders." *Criminology* 40.2 (2002): 329-358.
- Stolzenberg, L., D'ALESSIO, S. J., & Eitle, D. (2004). A multilevel test of racial threat theory. *Criminology*, 42(3), 673-698
- Tonry, M. (1995). *Malign neglect: Race, crime, and punishment in America*. Oxford University Press.

**APPENDIX A. LIST OF INCLUDED COUNTIES**

1. Jefferson, Alabama
2. Maricopa, Arizona
3. Pima, Arizona
4. Alameda, California
5. Contra Costa, California
6. Fresno, California
7. Los Angeles, California
8. Orange, California
9. Riverside, California
10. Sacramento, California
11. San Bernardino, California
12. San Diego, California
13. San Mateo, California
14. Santa Clara, California
15. Ventura, California
16. Broward, Florida
17. Miami-Dade, Florida
18. Hillsborough, Florida
19. Palm Beach, Florida
20. Pinellas, Florida
21. De Kalb, Georgia
22. Fulton, Georgia
23. Cook, Illinois
24. Du Page, Illinois
25. Lake, Indiana
26. Baltimore, Maryland
27. Montgomery, Maryland
28. Prince Georges, Maryland
29. Norfolk, Massachusetts
30. Macomb, Michigan
31. Oakland, Michigan
32. Wayne, Michigan
33. Hennepin, Minnesota
34. Jackson, Missouri
35. St. Louis, Missouri
36. Clark, Nevada
37. Bergen, New Jersey
38. Essex, New Jersey
39. Hudson, New Jersey
40. Middlesex, New Jersey
41. Monmouth, New Jersey
42. Union, New Jersey
43. Erie, New York
44. Monroe, New York
45. Nassau, New York
46. Suffolk, New York
47. Westchester, New York
48. Cuyahoga, Ohio
49. Franklin, Ohio
50. Hamilton, Ohio
51. Montgomery, Ohio
52. Summit, Ohio
53. Oklahoma, Oklahoma
54. Multnomah, Oregon
55. Allegheny, Pennsylvania
56. Delaware, Pennsylvania
57. Montgomery, Pennsylvania
58. Shelby, Tennessee
59. Bexar, Texas
60. Dallas, Texas
61. Harris, Texas
62. Tarrant, Texas
63. Salt Lake, Utah
64. Fairfax, Virginia
65. King, Washington
66. Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## APPENDIX B. DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

### Definition of Variables

Variable	Definition
blackchng	Change in percentage of county population which identified as black in 2000 and 2010 U.S. Censuses.
crimechng	Change in rate of crimes per capita in county from year 2000 to 2010.
crimeper00	Crimes per capita in county according to 2000 Uniform Crime Report.
crimeper10	Crimes per capita in county according to 2010 Uniform Crime Report.
hispchng	Change in percentage of county population which identified as Hispanic or Latino in 2000 and 2010 U.S. Censuses.
perblack00	Percentage of county population identifying as black in 2000 U.S. Census.
perblack10	Percentage of county population identifying as black in 2010 U.S. Census.
percap00	Per capita police spending in county, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics.
percap10	Per capita police spending in county, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics.
percapchng	Change in county's per capita police spending from year 2000 to 2010, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics.
perhisp00	Percentage of county population identifying as Hispanic or Latino in 2000 U.S. Census.
perhisp10	Percentage of county population identifying as Hispanic or Latino in 2010 U.S. Census.
poor00	Variable of county poorness in year 2000 according to variables from U.S. Census: Median Household Income, Educational Attainment, Poverty Rate, and Unemployment Rate.
poor10	Variable of county poorness in year 2010 according to variables from U.S. Census: Median Household Income, Educational Attainment, Poverty Rate, and Unemployment Rate.
poorchng	Change in county poorness from year 2000 to 2010 according to variables from U.S. Census: Median Household Income, Educational Attainment, Poverty Rate, and Unemployment Rate.
pop00	Total county population according to 2000 U.S. Census.
pop10	Total county population according to 2010 U.S. Census.
popchng	Change in total county population from year 2000 to 2010 according to U.S. Census.