

REASSESSING TRENDS IN BLACK VIOLENT
CRIME, 1980–2008: SORTING OUT THE
“HISPANIC EFFECT” IN UNIFORM CRIME
REPORTS ARRESTS, NATIONAL CRIME
VICTIMIZATION SURVEY OFFENDER
ESTIMATES, AND U.S. PRISONER COUNTS*

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KEYWORDS: race, Hispanics, disparities, violence, incarceration, trends

Recent studies suggest a decline in the relative Black effect on violent crime in recent decades and interpret this decline as resulting from greater upward mobility among African Americans during the past several decades. However, other assessments of racial stratification in American society suggest at least as much durability as change in Black social mobility since the 1980s. Our goal is to assess how patterns of racial disparity in violent crime and incarceration have changed from 1980 to 2008. We argue that prior studies showing a shrinking Black share of violent crime might be in error because of reliance on White and Black national crime statistics that are confounded with Hispanic

* For their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article, we thank Miles D. Harer, Derek Kreager, and Edward Shihadeh. Direct correspondence to Darrell Steffensmeier, Department of Sociology and Crime, Law, and Justice, The Pennsylvania State University, 211 Oswald Tower, University Park, PA 16802 (e-mail: d4s@psu.edu).

offenders, whose numbers have been increasing rapidly and whose violence rates are higher than that of Whites but lower than that of Blacks. Using 1980–2008 California and New York arrest data to adjust for this “Hispanic effect” in national Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data, we assess whether the observed national decline in racial disparities in violent crime is an artifact of the growth in Hispanic populations and offenders. Results suggest that little overall change has occurred in the Black share of violent offending in both UCR and NCVS estimates during the last 30 years. In addition, racial imbalances in arrest versus incarceration levels across the index violent crimes are both small and comparably sized across the study period. We conclude by discussing the consistency of these findings with trends in economic and social integration of Blacks in American society during the past 50 years.

The extent of race disparities in violent crime and whether those disparities are narrowing or widening are issues that adjoin core concerns of sociology and criminology, as well as larger American societal concerns. This issue has been a prominent topic of study for criminologists since at least as far back as the early twentieth century. In addition, criminologists have been focused for a long time on crime patterns and trends (i.e., epidemiology of crime). Identifying the race effect on violent or serious crime and its temporal trends is indispensable for the development of theoretical explanations and for enhancing the rationality of public policies and public expenditures related to crime (Blumstein and Rosenfeld, 2009). In addition, race disparities are a policy concern because the symbolism of equality before the law is at the heart of the U.S. legal system and because race differences in arrest or *officially recorded* rates of violence at least might be caused partly by racial bias in the enforcement or administration of law. A large Black–White gap in arrests can be perceived as threatening the value we place on equity in this system.

Race remains an important dimension of differentiation and stratification in U.S. society. Black–White violence differences are perceived as a consequence of inequality because race differences in violence are thought to stem from inequalities in structural disadvantage and social disorganization. Furthermore, not only does structural disadvantage and inequality cause crime but also the Black–White disparity in violent crime can be treated as an indication of the degree of social mobility achieved by Black Americans (or lack thereof). As Blau and Blau (1982) observed, high levels of criminal violence are the “*apparent price*” [emphasis added] of racial and economic inequality in U.S. society. Thus, trends in Black violence (as in the Black–White gap or in Black percent of total arrests) can be viewed as a benchmark of social change.

Recent investigations have sought to determine whether the relative Black involvement in violent crime has increased or decreased in recent decades, using the nation's two major sources of longitudinal data on violent offending in which the offender's *race* is reported—arrest statistics of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) *Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR) and survey statistics of the *National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCVS) (in which the victim identifies the race of the offender). For our purposes here, we pay special attention to two sets of studies—one by Tonry and Melewski (2008) in which the focus is on the Black fraction of total violence and the other by LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer (2006) and LaFree, Baumer, and O'Brien (2010) in which the focus is on the Black–White gap in violence over time. These studies are noteworthy because of their high visibility; because they are in general agreement that the trend is one of convergence in Black–White rates of violent crime or, similarly, that the Black percentage of all persons arrested for violent crime has been declining; and because both studies attribute the (apparent) recent decline in Black violence to presumably greater social integration and improved economic well-being of African Americans during the past 25 years. That is, they interpret the trend as a benchmark of positive social change for African Americans.¹

In his 2007 presidential address to the American Society of Criminology and a follow-up piece (Tonry and Melewski, 2008), Michael H. Tonry tracked 1982–2005 Black arrest percentages for four violent index crimes. These pieces report that the Black percentages of all arrestees have been declining across all four violent crimes, especially since the early 1990s, and that the percentages were much lower in 2005 than in 1982. Tonry and Melewski (2008: 18) wrote that “[although African Americans] continue to be overrepresented among arrestees, the degree of overrepresentation has been falling for a quarter century.” Tonry and Melewski also reported a parallel decline in the Black percentage of violent crime (robbery and aggravated assault) in 1980–2004 NCVS offender estimates. They interpret the UCR and NCVS trends as a by-product of improved Black mobility during the past several decades (see the “Good News” section).

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1. The LaFree, Baumer, and O'Brien analysis (2010) used 80 large cities as the study unit and is limited to tracking Black–White trends for homicide, whereas the LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer (2006) analysis is for the nation as a whole and tracks Black–White trends for each of the four violent index crimes. The two studies yield somewhat different findings relative to post-1980 trends—little in the way of Black–White convergence for homicide using arrest statistics representing the 80 large cities versus convergence across all index violent crimes using national arrest statistics. The latter set of findings is our main point of reference in light of our overlapping concern with national trends.

Adding prominence to the Tonry and Melewski (2008) analysis, moreover, is their conclusion that racial disproportionality in criminal punishment—the arrest–incarceration disparity for Blacks as compared with Whites—apparently has worsened during the past 20–30 years. A main contention of Tonry and Melewski is that the Black percentage of U.S. prisoners *should have* declined during the past 20–30 years because they conclude that Black violent crime arrests have declined. Therefore, the decline in Black arrests for violent crime is both “good news” and “terrible news.” The “good news” is that racial disparities in violent crime are declining and that this decline can be taken as evidence that “the Civil Rights Movement has borne fruit in the forms of increased economic and social integration of blacks in American society” (Tonry, 2008: 23). The “terrible news” is that, despite the hopeful expectation that racial disparities in imprisonment would have fallen commensurately with arrests, Blacks continue to make up approximately half of the prison population and approximately the same percentage of Death Row inmates as in the 1980s. Tonry and Melewski (2008: 23) concluded that “the declining involvement of blacks in serious violent crime has had no effect on racial disparities in prison.” For Tonry and Melewski, this discrepancy is strong evidence of ongoing racial discrimination in the U.S. criminal justice system.

Second, LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer (2006) compared the annual ratio of Black with White arrests for the four violent index crimes (homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery) from 1960 to 2002 and 1973 to 2002. Based on inspections of Black–White arrest ratios and applying statistical tests for assessing convergence or divergence between Black and White arrest levels over time, they concluded that UCR arrest data show moderate to substantial narrowing of Black–White gaps for all four violent crimes, most notably during the 1970s. Similar findings are reported using race-specific data collected in the NCVS series (for 1973–2002), although the extent of Black–White convergence in violent offending is diminished. The authors cautiously interpret these results as evidence of greater assimilation and improved social and economic well-being among Blacks during the past 20 years. LaFree, Baumer, and O’Brien (2010) focused on Black–White homicide arrest gaps for 80 large cities from 1960 to 2000 and reached generally similar conclusions to their 2006 study (see footnote 1). In addition, they found that Black–White homicide gaps narrowed to a greater extent in cities that saw greater Black–White convergence in single-parent family rates, greater population growth, and growth in the Black population.

On both substantive and methodological grounds, however, reasons persist for being skeptical about these assessments of trends in the relative Black effect on violent crime (whether measured as the Black–White gap or as the Black fraction of total arrests). First, it is difficult to draw firm

conclusions about the extent of increased economic and social integration of Blacks in American society. The issue is a complicated one and competing perspectives exist on the degree to which the racial socioeconomic divide has lessened, as we will discuss in detail.

A second reason for skepticism is methodological. Prior studies relied on UCR arrest statistics or on NCVS offender counts, both of which include a code for “race” but do not collect data by “ethnicity.”² Some evidence suggests that Hispanic violence levels fall (somewhere) between White and Black levels; Hispanics are more involved than Whites but less involved than Blacks (Martinez, 2002; Steffensmeier et al., 2010). Hispanics represent an important and growing segment of the U.S. population, including its offender population, and their overall proportion in the criminal justice system is increasing, whereas White and Black/African American proportions are fairly static (Hartney and Vuong, 2009). Because most Hispanics identify as White (approximately 93 percent) and few as Black (approximately 4 percent) and because crime-reporting programs typically record Hispanic arrests as White arrestees, failing to separate ethnicity from race—in particular, failing to separate Hispanics from non-Hispanic Whites—not only limits understanding of ethnic involvement but also hides the true disparity between Whites and Blacks. Rates that blend Hispanic origin across race inflate White rates and deflate Black rates, making 1) the disparity between the two groups seem less extreme than when Hispanic ethnicity is considered (Demuth, 2002, 2003; Hartney and Vuong, 2009; Steffensmeier and Demuth, 2000) and 2) possibly creating an illusion of Black–White convergence or a shrinking Black proportion of overall violence.

To be sure, the lack of tests that include or distinguish Hispanics does not stem from a lack of substantive or theoretical interest. The major problem, and the focus of our analysis here, has been the lack of data. Using arrest data from California and New York that provide codes for both race and Hispanic ethnicity, our *main aim* in this article is to assess whether the observed decline in the racial disparity in violence is an artifact of the growth in Hispanic peoples and the increasing numbers of Hispanic offenders (e.g., that inflate “White” offender counts in the UCR data). Because they

2. The NCVS program codes the perceived race of offenders as “White,” “Black,” “other,” and “not known.” Hispanics generally are lumped into the “other” category (although it is unclear as to how many might actually be coded as “White” or “Black”). Thus, as we discuss in more detail in the Data/Methods section, we adjust for the presence of Hispanics in the bulk of our analyses (i.e., trends in UCR Black–White arrest ratios and in Black percentages of UCR arrests and of NCVS offender estimates) but use the original White and Black classifications when tracking NCVS Black–White offending ratios.

include a separate identifier for “Hispanic” arrestees and provide “White” and “Black” categories that are not confounded with Hispanic offenders (e.g., as is the case with UCR arrest figures), the California–New York data can be used to adjust or correct race disparities in national crime figures (UCR and NCVS) by removing the effects of the rapid increase in arrests of Hispanics in recent years on 1) Black and White crime trends and 2) on the Black fraction of total arrests. An ancillary objective is to address the issue of pronounced racial disparities in imprisonment—that, although Black involvement in violent crime (apparently) has declined substantially during the past 25 years, racial disproportions in American prisons have not.

We begin by highlighting key findings from research on the social integration or “full citizenship” of American Blacks that suggest durability as much or more than change in Black social mobility since 1980. Then, we provide a brief overview of recent trends in the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population. We next describe the data and methods for our analysis, after which we present the findings—both “clean” (without Hispanics) and “confounded” (with Hispanics)—on trends in Black involvement in violent crime as reflected in arrests, in victim-based offender reports, and in prisoner statistics covering the past 25 years (i.e., roughly 1980–2008).

BLACK–WHITE CONVERGENCE IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING?

What is meant by “social integration,” “social and economic well-being,” or “incorporation” into mainstream American society defies easy definition or classification. Useful conceptual frameworks that we draw on for examining and interpreting long-term changes in Black mobility and White–Black relations include the following sociological approaches: 1) assimilation, defined as “the decline, and only at some ultimate endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic distinction and its allied differences” (Alba and Nee 1997: 863; Alba and Nee, 2003); 2) citizenship, defined as “a claim to be accepted as full members of the society” (Marshall, 1950: 113) and as entailing in particular, legal rights, economic well-being, and social inclusion (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul, 2008); and 3) Merton’s conceptualization of culturally extolled success goals (as a central element of his anomie theory) as entailing both monetary and nonmonetary cultural mandates that revolve around *social inclusion* and *full citizenship*, as when Merton (1964: 217) says “aspirations for place, recognition, wealth and socially prized accomplishments are culturally held to be appropriate for all, whatever their origins or present condition.”

These perspectives, taken together, suggest markers of incorporation into American society (and whether the racial divide is lessening or widening)

including the following: acceptance as in-group members and full citizens, sharing in the collective economic well-being, and sharing in culturally extolled aspirations and goals. Also, as we will highlight, incorporation might occur along some economic or social dimensions but be moving in the opposite direction along others. The extent of increased economic and social integration of Blacks in American society is a complicated issue, and competing views persist on whether the Black–White divide has lessened.

On the one hand, Blacks have narrowed the gap somewhat with Whites in educational attainment, placement in skilled blue-collar or white-collar jobs, and earnings (Cancian and Danziger, 2009; Farley, 1984; Parker, 2008). These gains are observed especially in the growing strength of the African American middle class, in the progress Blacks have made in securing managerial and professional jobs in government and business, and in their gains in election or appointment to political office (Bean and Stevens, 2003; Bositis, 2007; LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer, 2006). Consistent and sizable change also has been noted in the attitudes of White Americans in the direction of endorsing broad goals of integration, equality, and equal treatment without regard to race (Bobo and Charles, 2009: 254). These gains are supportive of what William Julius Wilson (1978) argued in *The Declining Significance of Race*, claiming that the direct effects of race on economic opportunities have diminished significantly since the 1960s and contending that race per se and the racial characteristics of one's parents matter less than social class in determining one's life chances. Thus, although racial differences in earnings might persist, they are now more likely to stem from racial differences in education rather than from direct racial discrimination. In effect, the "racial divide" or color line between Whites and Blacks in the United States has become much less sharply drawn (see also Sakamoto, Wu, and Tzeng, 2000).

On the other hand, this picture of Black–White social and economic convergence has not gone unchallenged. Indeed, Wilson (2009; Wilson et al., 1998) himself has become less sanguine about the degree of positive change. First, Black economic progress is said to be concentrated among the Black middle class and those with higher levels of education. Blacks with lower levels of education continue to experience severe disadvantages and tend to be consigned to extremely poor urban neighborhoods, where they are exposed to a cluster of disadvantages and an isolated existence decoupled from mainstream life (Charles, 2000; Quillian, 2003; Sharkey, 2008; Shihadeh and Flynn, 1996). Second, progress in reducing some pernicious effects of direct racial discrimination (voting and government jobs) has not been matched by substantial progress in reducing the effects of indirect racial discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2007), such as the consequences of residential segregation of Blacks in limiting opportunities (e.g., housing, schools, and safe streets). Furthermore, it is still the case that the

“one-drop rule” seems to apply, in which a child from a Black–White union can be considered Black but never White (Yancey, 2003: 48).

Recent research across numerous domains suggests a persistent racial divide in U.S. society and the durability of inequalities faced by those of African descent. In particular, we note the following social, attitudinal, and economic dimensions along which Black–White differences seem to be relatively durable.

RIGIDITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD INEQUALITY

Racial inequality in America’s neighborhoods that existed a generation ago has been transmitted, for the most part unchanged, to the current generation. Using data from the Panel of Income Dynamics, one recent analysis found that more than 70 percent of Black children who grow up in the poorest quarter of American neighborhoods remain there as adults and that, since the 1970s, more than half of Black families have lived in the poorest quarter of neighborhoods in consecutive generations compared with just 7 percent of White families (Sharkey, 2008). As Sharkey (2008: 962) pointed out, “the most common experience for black families since the 1970s has been to be surrounded by poverty over consecutive generations. . . . This type of persistent contextual disadvantage is nonexistent for whites.” Similar results are reported in Quillan’s (2003) research on mobility into and out of poor neighborhoods.

PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE AND WORK QUALITY

Disparities in quality-of-life assessments and workplace satisfaction often are perceived as reflections of racially distinct experiences (Lundquist, 2008). During the past 30 years, longitudinal analyses of the General Social Survey repeatedly find persistent Black–White differences along a continuum of quality-of-life measures, with Blacks reporting that they are less satisfied (Hughes and Thomas, 1998; Moch, 1980; see review in Lundquist, 2008).

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE LEGAL SYSTEM, POLICE, AND CRIME CONTROL

A persistent racial divide has characterized attitudes about crime and its punishment, perceptions of injustice, police behavior, and capital punishment (for a review, see Unnever, Cullen, and Jonson, 2008; Weitzer and Tuch, 2006). Specifically, African Americans are much more likely to believe that the criminal justice system is marked by injustice and that they, in particular, are treated unfairly by criminal justice officials; the racial gap in beliefs is relatively unchanged currently as compared with 20–30 years ago (Buckler, Unnever, and Cullen, 2007; Tyler and Huo, 2002).

Some other trends in key markers of racial inequality are mixed at best and present a murky picture of the degree to which socioeconomic well-being of African Americans and Whites have converged. The persistence of racial stratification is observed in the following interrelated areas.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Blacks have made employment gains in securing managerial and professional jobs in government and business, with workplace-level segregation declining after the Civil Rights Act of 1964; however, recent reviews also show that racial segregation is persistent and actually might be moving in the direction of greater segregation (Leicht, 2008; Shihadeh and Barranco, 2010; Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas, and Johnson, 2005; Tomaskovic-Devey et al., 2006).

HOME OWNERSHIP

An increase has been noted in Black home ownership (occurring mostly in the suburbs) in the 1990s, but the Black–White difference in home ownership rates actually increased during that decade (Darden, 2007).

WEALTH GAP

Black–White differences in wealth assets have widened since 1980, although differences in median income have narrowed (National Urban League, 2009; Rank, 2009).

EDUCATION

Blacks have made gains in high-school graduation and college attendance; yet, during the past 20 years, U.S. school districts have become more racially segregated (Frankenberg and Lee, 2002). In 2000, more than 70 percent of African American students attended schools where students of color were in the majority; 40 percent of African American students attended schools that were 90–100 percent Black. School segregation is linked strongly to racial inequality.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

On the one hand, the ratio of Black-to-White unmarried teenage pregnancy has converged considerably (from approximately 4:1 in 1980 to 2:1 in 2004). Today only approximately 6 percent of all Black births and 3 percent of all White births involve unmarried teens. On the other hand, an increase has occurred since 1980 in female-headed households (with children)

among Blacks and that increase is greater than among Whites or other racial groups (Cherlin, 2005; Furstenberg, 2009). Family structure often serves as a major marker of stratification (poverty) and of neighborhood social controls, and it is a fairly robust predictor of community-level violence rates. Indeed, LaFree, Baumer, and O'Brien (2010) found that Black–White gaps in homicide were wider in cities characterized by greater Black–White gaps in single-parent families.

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Residential segregation has declined modestly during the last 30 years (mostly because of middle-class Blacks moving to mostly White suburbs; Farley and Frey, 1994), but Black–White segregation remains at overall high levels (Charles, 2003; Iceland and Wilkes, 2006). In major metropolitan areas where most African Americans live, segregation levels changed little between 1990 and 2000 (Bullard, 2007: 32). Also, the hypersegregation of Blacks, defined as high levels of spatial segregation on several dimensions, has persisted in recent decades (Logan, 2003; Massey, 2001; Shihadeh, 2009).

How African Americans have fared relative to other minority groups is also a murky issue. Although the contemporary growth of Hispanic (substantially Mexican) and Asian migrants is a transformation that in some ways has loosened existing racial and ethnic boundaries in U.S. society, the trends for employment, intermarriage, and multiracial identification tend to demonstrate that Hispanics and Asians are making considerably more progress toward full incorporation than is the case for African Americans. For example, a notable trend in employment has been the increasing dominance of Hispanics in job sectors traditionally occupied by Blacks (Bean and Stevens, 2003; Griffith, 2005). Second, intermarriage rates in the late 1990s for Blacks remain low, at approximately 10 percent of all Black marriages as compared with approximately 30 percent among both Asian and Hispanic marriages (Cherlin, 2005). Intermarriage is perceived as a measure of decreasing social distance, declining racial prejudice, and changing racial boundaries (Bean and Stevens, 2003; Qian and Lichter, 2007). Third, the 2000 Census reports that only approximately 4 percent of Blacks claim a multiracial background as compared with 16 and 12 percent of Hispanics and Asians, respectively (Bean and Stevens, 2003: 241). Like intermarriage, multiracial identification reflects changing racial boundaries. Fourth, the “one-drop rule” persists, which states that “a child from a black/white union can be considered black, but never white” (Yancey, 2003: 48). These developments are indicative of a symbolic shift from the traditional White/non-White divide to a new Black/non-Black divide (Bean and Stevens, 2003; Frank, Akresh, and Lu, 2010; Gans, 1999; Vargas, 2006;

Yancey, 2003) and might mean greater rather than less relative deprivation for Black Americans.

In light of these observations, it is hardly surprising that leading U.S. scholars on racial stratification seem markedly circumspect, even pessimistic, about recent trends in Black economic mobility and incorporation into mainstream U.S. society (e.g., Bean and Stevens, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2007; Hacker, 2003; Yancey, 2003; also Wilson, 2009; Wilson et al., 1998). Overall, it seems that reductions have occurred in racial divides on some dimensions of racial stratification, but others remain intact or perhaps even enhanced. Owing in large part to gains in legal rights, it seems that Blacks made substantial gains in the 1960s and 1970s on some dimensions of economic achievement and integration, but since then, Black mobility and incorporation into American society has leveled off or even reversed. A growing bifurcation also seems to be present in Black America, with a growing middle class as well as a growing hypersegregated and disadvantaged segment.

THE GROWING HISPANIC PORTION OF THE U.S. POPULATION

So far, our review raises doubts about the hypothesis that trends in Black upward mobility and integration might account for the recent decline in the Black share of arrests for violent crime. A second reason for skepticism, and the focus of our analysis here, involves the growth in the Hispanic population and its effects on the racial disparity in violence as reflected in national sources of longitudinal data on violent offending. The U.S. Hispanic population has grown explosively since 1980, as a result of high levels of immigration and high fertility rates (Durand, Telles, and Flashman, 2006). In 2005, the Hispanic population of the United States surpassed 42 million, and approximately 15 percent of U.S. residents are Hispanic compared with 5 percent in 1960 and slightly more than 6 percent in 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). If these increases continue, then population projections predict that the Hispanic population will triple in size by 2050 and will account for nearly one third of the U.S. population (Moeller, 2010; Passel and Cohn, 2008).

An overwhelming majority of the U.S. Hispanic population is classified as White (approximately 93 percent), whereas approximately 4 percent of Hispanics are considered Black, 2 percent are American Indian, and 1 percent are considered Asian based on year 2000 population figures.³ In 2000, Hispanics accounted for approximately 14 percent of the White

3. We note two issues regarding racial/ethnic identification (we would like to thank two reviewers for bringing these questions to our attention). First, because of

population and 22 percent of American Indians but much smaller shares of the Black and Asian population (approximately 4 percent and 3 percent, respectively) (Hartney and Vuong, 2009; National Center on Health Statistics, 2009). Among U.S. Hispanics, most reported being Mexican (approximately 60 percent), with the next largest groups being Puerto Rican (approximately 10 percent) and Cuban (approximately 4 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).⁴

On both theoretical and empirical grounds, good reasons exist to expect that first, like race, Hispanic ethnicity is a telling demographic trait for forecasting crime rates because of increasing numbers and because their violence rates are relatively high compared with Whites but relatively low compared with Blacks.⁵ Second, therefore, an adjustment for Hispanic arrest patterns will affect estimates of Black crime trends and the magnitude

awareness of racial stratification in the United States and in an effort to avoid discrimination, Hispanics might be more likely to identify themselves as White than Black. That is, research suggests that Hispanics recognize the benefits of a “White” racial designation and might label themselves as “White” even when wider society does not accept such a classification (Frank, Akresh, and Lu, 2010). To the extent that this self-labeling might impact our Black–White gaps in crime (see the Methods section), it would tend to produce more conservative estimates; because White crime rates (or counts) are already so low, the Black–White gap responds more to changes in Black rates (or Black counts) than White, and the disproportionate identification of Hispanics as White would result in our adjustments having less of an impact than if more Hispanics identified as Black. Second, some observers question whether ethnicity is even a salient self-identification (i.e., whether Hispanics perceive their own ethnicity outside of typical racial categories). Evidence from the 2000 Census suggests that, in most cases, Hispanics identify both ethnicity and (to a lesser extent) their racial classification, with most Hispanics classifying themselves as White-Hispanic, Black-Hispanic, or other-Hispanic (Rumbaut, 2006).

4. The Census Bureau has changed its racial and “Hispanic” classifications. Prior to the 1980 decennial census, respondents were asked to classify themselves only in reference to a single racial group (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Asian or Pacific Islander). Beginning with the 1980 census, respondents also could be classified as “Hispanic” or “Latino.” Then, in the 2000 census, respondents could classify themselves into more than one racial group and Hispanic respondents could classify themselves by ancestry (e.g., from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other countries).
5. As an approximate estimate of how Hispanic rates (both overall and by offense type) compare with White rates and Black rates, 2000 CA–NY arrest and population figures were used to calculate Black, White, and Hispanic rates/100,000 for each of the violent offenses. Key results are as follows. For the Hispanic–White comparison, the Hispanic level is 4.0 times greater than the White level for homicide, 3.8 times greater for robbery, 2.8 times greater for rape, and 2.3 times greater for aggravated assault. For the Hispanic–Black comparison, the Black level is 3.1 times greater than the Hispanic level for homicide, 4.1 times greater for robbery, 2.4 times greater for rape, and 1.9 times greater for aggravated assault. For

of the Black–White gap in crime. Most notably, the “Latino Paradox” states that Hispanic populations experience lower levels of violence than their levels of disadvantage would lead one to expect (Steffensmeier et al., 2010). Many social and economic problems confronting African Americans also confront Mexican Americans and most Hispanic groups, including poverty, unemployment, failing educational systems, gang delinquency, and crime (Feldmeyer, 2009; Healey, 2006; Martinez, 2002). Like African Americans, many Hispanics reside in neighborhoods plagued by a tangle of social circumstances conducive to high rates of predatory crime (Healey, 2006; Moore and Pinderhughes, 1993). Political resources and power are disproportionately unavailable to Hispanics, and a long tradition of prejudice has persisted against those of Hispanic descent.

However, the contours of Hispanic socioeconomic disadvantage are different from Black disadvantage. Some important differences are noted between the historical and contemporary experiences of African Americans and Hispanics (Bean and Tienda, 1987; Healey, 2006; Martinez, 2002; Moore and Pachon, 1985), and the extent to which they experience stratification on par with Blacks is questionable (Lundquist, 2008; Steffensmeier et al., 2010). Discrimination apparently has not been as rigid or as total as the systems that controlled African American labor under slavery and segregation. Mexican Americans were in close proximity for maintaining strong ties with their homeland and could keep their Spanish language and much of the shared Mexican heritage alive, which provide the basis for group cohesion and unity. Also, the high value Hispanics place on family relations and obligations is often the basis for support networks

the White–Black comparisons, the Black level is 12.7 times greater for homicide, 15.6 times greater for robbery, 6.7 times greater for rape, and 4.5 times greater for aggravated assault. One caveat here is the underenumeration of Hispanics (e.g., uncounted immigrants), which leads to an overestimation or enlarging of the Hispanic rate. Fewer Hispanics counted means a smaller denominator (Hispanic population) while raising the numerator (e.g., Hispanic homicides). Thus, these Black–White–Hispanic comparisons are better viewed as approximate estimates. Nonetheless, they are likely to be more accurate or “reasonably robust” than estimates from other sources that typically are derived from a small geographic unit and are not offense specific. Also, it is worth noting that the calculations we use in our analysis avoid the underenumeration problem by partialling out Hispanic arrest counts prior to the calculation of Black and White rates (see the Methods section). Although it is beyond the scope of this article, one caveat of this method is that we do not account for differences in the age structure of White, Black, and Hispanic populations as these might impact trends in the arrest disparity over time. (We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.) Future research would do well to explore the extent to which the growing Hispanic population consists of younger, more crime-prone individuals than the Black or White populations and how taking account of these distinct age-composition differences in correcting crime counts over time might yield unique patterns.

and cooperative efforts that help to lessen the effects of discrimination and provide occupational opportunities (Feldmeyer and Steffensmeier, 2009). The more communal culture of Hispanics (e.g., Mexicans) than African Americans also is perceived as a source for the lower crime rates of Mexicans (Steffensmeier et al., 2010). Also, in light of recent research on spatial and social proximity (Mears and Bhati, 2006; Tienda and Mitchell, 2006), it might be that Hispanics are less likely to reside in localities at a greater risk for the spillover of violence or other problems from nearby communities (e.g., Hispanic communities are more likely to border White areas).

CURRENT STUDY: DATA AND METHODS

Thus, divergent views exist about Black social mobility at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, prior research on Black and White violence trends has not taken into account the growth in the Hispanic population and the ways it might affect the measurement of racial disparities in violent crime as reported in national databases. Recent assessments and conclusions about trends in Black violence (notably, that it is declining) are based mostly on national statistics on persons arrested in the United States as published annually in the FBI's UCR. These statistics provide the number of arrests categorized by offense and indicate the following race categories: White, Black, Asian, or Native American. Drawing on these statistics, for example, Tonry and Melewski (2008) observed that the Black percentage of total arrests for the four violent index crimes (homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) was smaller in 2005 than in the early 1980s or 1990s. This finding led them to conclude that "although black Americans continue to be overrepresented among arrestees, the degree of overrepresentation has been falling for a quarter century" (2008: 18).

Although this conclusion seems straightforward and warranted, the matter is complicated by a key shortcoming of the FBI's UCR Program—the lack of data on ethnicity. In particular, it does not identify arrestees by Hispanic origin. Similarly, the NCVS survey data are limited to whether the offender was "Black," "White," or "other"; thus, as is the case with all offenders who are non-White or non-Black, Hispanic offenders are coded as "other" on the survey reports.⁶ As a result, trend analyses based on UCR

6. The implications for our analysis are 1) that LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer's (2006) analysis of Black-White disparities using the NCVS data is not confounded by the "Hispanic" effect, whereas 2) the Tonry and Melewski (2008) analysis that uses the Black fraction of total NCVS offenders is confounded. Relative to our analysis here, therefore, we apply adjustment procedures to NCVS comparisons involving total offenders (as in Tonry and Melewski, 2008) but not to NCVS Black-White comparisons (as in LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer, 2006).

arrest or NCVS offender counts do not adequately take into account that 1) violent crime is strongly race–ethnic sensitive, 2) Hispanic violence rates fall between White and Black rates, 3) Hispanic arrestees are overwhelmingly categorized as “White” in UCR arrest counts, 4) a sharp growth has been noted in the Hispanic makeup of the U.S. population in recent years, and 5) Hispanics represent an important and growing segment of the U.S. criminal justice system. Arrest or offender counts that blend those of Hispanic origin into a simple Black/White categorization tend to inflate White rates and deflate Black rates, making the disparity between the two races seem less extreme than when ethnicity is considered (Demuth, 2003; Steffensmeier et al., 2010). The nation’s violent crime rate and the contribution of Black arrests to it, therefore, is likely to be affected strongly by the Hispanic composition of the population and thus might show changes in the Black share of arrests (or NCVS offender counts) simply because of changes in Hispanic populations and arrests.

At issue, more broadly, is one of the most frequently occurring problems in epidemiology and vital statistics in general—the comparison of the proportion or rate for some event or characteristic across different populations or for the same population over time. If the populations were similarly constituted with respect to the factors with the event under study (factors such as age or sex or, as is the case here, race–ethnicity), then it would be possible to compare the proportions or rates as they stand. However, if the populations are not similar or the population attributes are not constant over time, then the direct comparison of the rates (e.g., White to Black) might be misleading. For example, more Hispanics means a larger numerator (e.g., more homicides) without raising the denominator (White-Hispanic population) as much.

Thus, a main objective of our analysis is to assess trends in the Black share of criminal violence after applying adjustment procedures to the national data that take into account the sharp increase in the Hispanic makeup of the U.S. population and the U.S. criminal justice system. The estimates that we generate for the adjustments are derived from two states (California and New York) that report arrest data on index crimes that identify ethnic origin and have done so since at least 1980. The California and New York data (CA–NY) classify arrestees into “White,” “Black,” and “Hispanic” groups (also “American Indian” and “Asian”).⁷

7. The California and New York arrest data treat “Hispanic” ethnicity as a distinct category from “White,” “Black,” and other race/ethnic groups but do not separate Hispanics into more refined racial/ethnic categories, such as “White-Hispanics,” “Black-Hispanics,” or the various subgroups of “Hispanics” (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban). The CA and NY data use the term “Hispanic,” whereas U.S. Census data and much prior research on race/ethnicity and crime use the terms

An indication of the importance of adjusting the national data is established in figure 1, which displays arrest trends for CA–NY index violent arrests involving Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. The key observation here is that the Hispanic proportion of all arrests has been increasing (as we would expect based on their population growth). For example, the Hispanic fraction of all homicide arrests in 1980 is approximately 30 percent. That figure increases to 43 percent in 2008, whereas the figures for Blacks drop from 44 percent to 34 percent and for Whites drop from 25 percent to 20 percent. For robbery, the other reliably reported violent crime, the Hispanic fraction increases from approximately 22 percent in 1980 to 30 percent in 2008, whereas the fraction for Blacks drops from 56 percent to 50 percent and the White fraction declines from 22 percent to 18 percent.

The use of California and New York arrest statistics for correcting national race-specific arrest figures seems reasonable. First, their populations are large and diverse; together they are home to more than 27 million Whites, 5 million Blacks, and 14 million Hispanics and account for approximately 14 percent of all Whites, 16 percent of all Blacks, and 40 percent of all Hispanics living in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Second, as figure 2 shows, although Hispanic numbers are larger in CA–NY, recent shifts in the population composition of California and New York generally parallel those for the nation as a whole. A third advantage of the CA–NY data is that arrests for violent index crimes in these two states make up a sizable share (approximately 15 to 20 percent) of all arrests for violent crime in the nation as a whole.

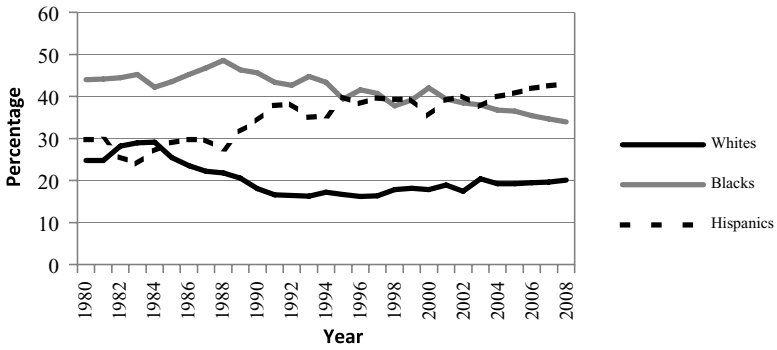
ADJUSTMENT METHOD

We implement an adjustment procedure to account for the rapid increase in arrests and imprisonment of Hispanics in recent years and to correct for the “Hispanic effect” on Black and White national crime data from 1980 to 2008. Because arrest counts by race in the UCR are confounded by the placement of Hispanic arrests in White and Black categories (thus tending to inflate estimates of White crime and deflate estimates of Black crime), we draw on the more refined race and ethnic designations in the CA–NY data as a proxy for estimating the Hispanic effect in national UCR data. The

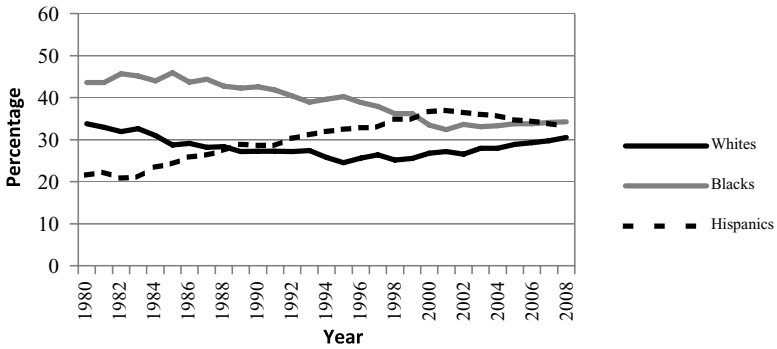
“Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably to refer to individuals with origins from Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean (e.g., Dominican Republic and Cuba) or those individuals who self-identify as “Latino,” “Hispanic,” “Hispanic-American,” “Spanish,” and so on (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Following practices of prior research and the designations provided in arrest and population data, we use the term “Hispanic” to identify men and women with origins from these countries.

Figure 1. CA–NY Arrest Percentages by Race–Ethnicity, 1980–2008

A. Homicide



B. Rape



C. Robbery

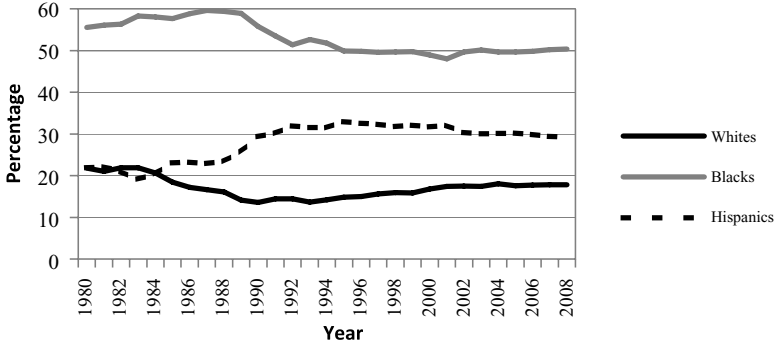
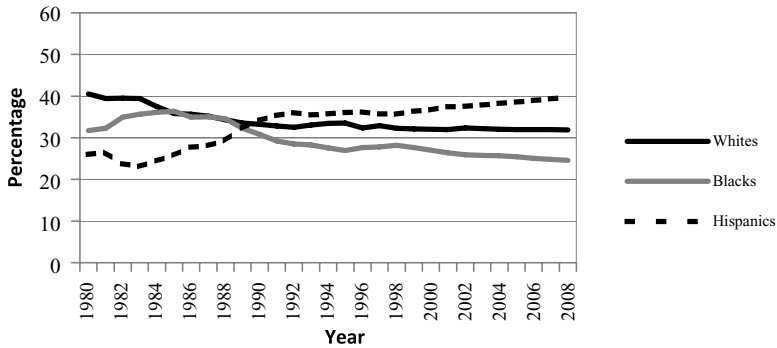


Figure 1. Continued**D. Aggravated Assault**

method is straightforward and involves the generation of correction factors (for each race, offense, and year) that can be used essentially to remove Hispanic arrests from UCR figures and create estimates of clean White and clean Black arrest counts that do not include Hispanics.⁸ Because a full description (along with a computational example) is provided in appendix A, we only briefly outline here the key steps involved in the adjustment procedure.⁹

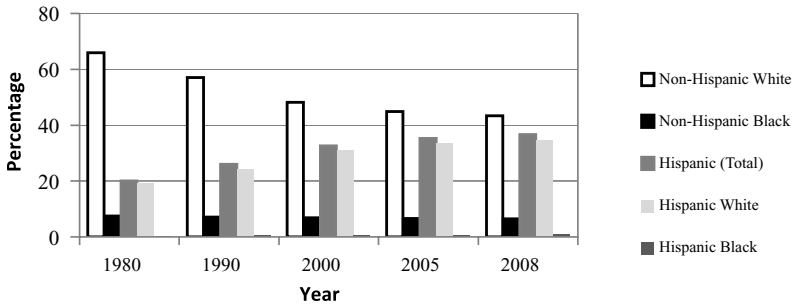
First, we use the CA–NY data to mimic the Hispanic effect present in the “confounded” national UCR arrest figures by adding Hispanic CA–NY arrests into the White and Black categories to create confounded CA–NY arrest counts (see equation A.1 in appendix A). Recall that, because CA–NY classifies arrest figures into mutually exclusive White, Black, and Hispanic categories, they are already free of the confounding effect of Hispanics. We refer to these original White and Black arrest counts as clean CA–NY arrest counts. *Second*, we (downward) adjust the confounded

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8. The adjustment procedures we apply are drawn from parallel demographic-adjustment applications in the criminology and demography literatures (e.g., see Chilton and Jarvis, 1999; Passel, 2005; Steffensmeier and Harer, 1999; Steffensmeier, Rosenthal, and Shehan, 1980; Van Hook et al., 2006; Western and Pettit, 2000).
 9. Although, for economy of space, our description of the adjustment methods targets the calculation of “clean” Black–White gaps in arrests (per LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer, 2006), the contours of the approach are extended easily to partial out the effects of Hispanic arrests on total arrests to compute “clean” Black percentages of total arrests (per Tonry and Melewski, 2008). The method is also easily applied to adjust offender by race estimates provided in NCVS victim reports where it is assumed that the “Hispanic effect” observed in the arrest data parallels that for the NCVS offender estimates.

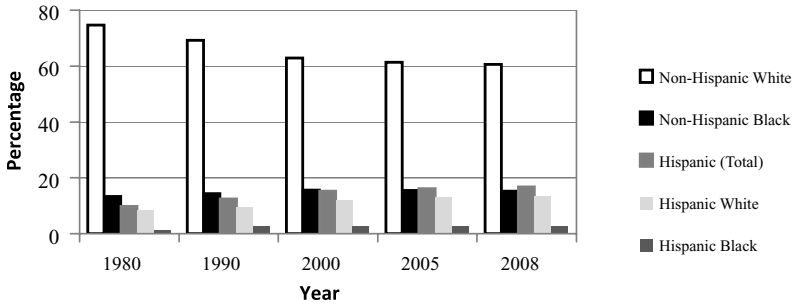
CA–NY arrest counts to take into account the greater relative presence of Hispanics in California and New York than for the nation as a whole (equation A.2 in appendix A). *Third*, we create White and Black correction factors calculated as the ratios of clean CA–NY arrest counts over the confounded CA–NY arrest counts (equation A.3 in appendix A). These

Figure 2. Population Trends by Race–Ethnicity for CA, NY, CA + NY, and the United States (1980–2008)

A. Population Proportions in California by Race–Ethnicity, 1980–2008



B. Population Proportions in New York by Race–Ethnicity, 1980–2008



C. Population Proportions in CA+NY by Race–Ethnicity, 1980–2008

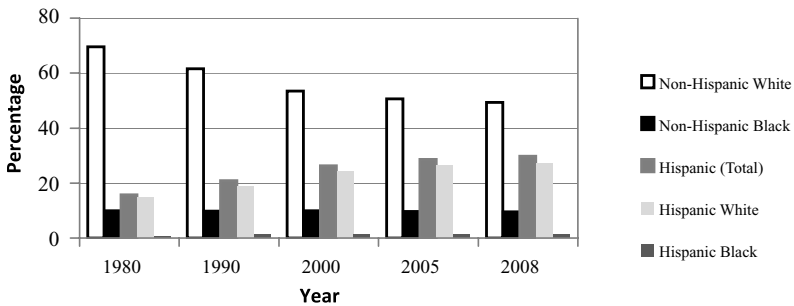
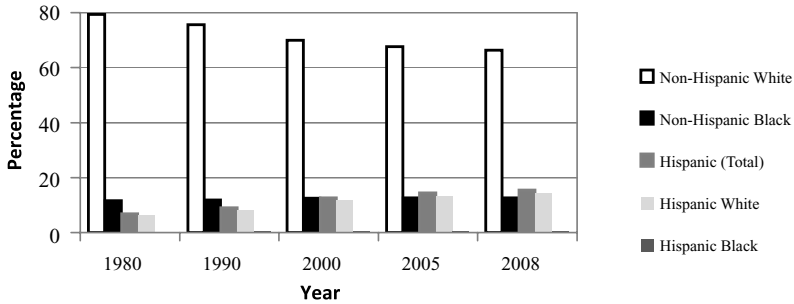


Figure 2. Continued**D. Population Proportions in United States by Race-Ethnicity, 1980-2008**

correction factors are calculated for each race (White or Black), offense, and year and represent the proportion of arrests that need to be removed from national UCR White and Black arrests, respectively, to nullify the Hispanic effect.¹⁰ *Fourth*, we multiply the confounded national UCR arrest counts for both Whites and Blacks by the appropriate correction factors created in the previous step to produce clean UCR arrest counts (equation A.4 in appendix A).¹¹

ANALYTIC PROCEDURES

Following procedures applied by LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer (2006) and after applying the correction factors for the "Hispanic effect" described previously, we use the following methods to examine national trends in the Black share of violent offending for our study period (1980–2008):

10. Our estimates are likely to be more accurate or "reasonably robust" than estimates assuming that Hispanic crime rates fall midway between those of Whites and Blacks or estimates from other sources that typically are derived from a small geographic unit and are not offense specific (e.g., Block, 1985; Bradshaw et al., 1998). Our correction factors take into account that Hispanics are largely counted as White in arrest estimates and "downward adjust" White arrest counts to a greater extent than Black arrest counts for each offense and year. For example, across the 1980–2006 period, the average White correction factor for homicide is approximately .580 compared with an average Black correction factor of .987 for the same offense, whereas the average White correction factor for aggravated assault is approximately .711 compared with an average Black correction factor of .982.
11. We would like to thank Miles D. Harer (personal communication) for an alternative adjustment formula for correcting national Black and White UCR estimates for the confounding effect of Hispanics (see the "Alternative Adjustment Method" in appendix A).

1) visual plots of the Black share of offending (i.e., Black percentage and Black–White ratio) for straightforward identification of shifts in the relative Black effect on offending and 2) times-series techniques (Augmented Dickey–Fuller [ADF] tests) to identify statistically significant increases/decreases in the Black share of offending over time.¹² Our plots include both the unadjusted (confounded) Black shares of offending obtained from UCR or NCVS data as well as the Hispanic-adjusted (clean) Black shares of offending, whereas our ADF analysis includes only the adjusted (clean).

Strengths and weaknesses are present in our assessment. The strengths, first, include a database that allows for an estimation of the Hispanic effect on crime trends. Second, the database includes the nation’s two major sources of longitudinal data on violent offending, the UCR arrest data and the NCVS offender data. Third, the database covers a time frame long enough for applying advanced time-series tests to identify statistically significant increases/decreases (and trendless or stable trends) in the Black share of violent offending. One weakness of the database is that its “White,” “Black,” and “Hispanic” breakdown is only one of several race/ethnicity classifications. For example, it can be argued that the Hispanic grouping is too broad; the data also should distinguish offenders whose ancestors come from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other countries. Another weakness is that, even though they comprise large and diverse populations that are fairly representative of the U.S. population as a whole, the estimation of the Hispanic effect was derived from only two states—California and New York. Unfortunately, as with the desire for more detailed race/ethnicity classification schemes, analysts (including us)

12. We use 1980 as the starting point or base year for our trend assessment for the following reasons: 1) California and New York arrest data that include an Hispanic identifier are available from the late 1970s (1978 for California and 1979 for New York); 2) the U.S. Census classification of Hispanic begins with the 1980 census; 3) a dramatic surge has occurred in Hispanic population size since 1980; 4) 1980 closely approximates the point at which Black mobility gains leveled off and the racial divide began to shift from White/non-White to Black/non-Black); and 5) “trends over the past quarter century” is the time frame for Tonry and Melewski’s (2008: 18) position that “Black Americans involvement in violence is declining.” Note also that we use 2008 as the end year for analysis of UCR arrest data because it is the most recent year for which the data are available. However, we use 2006 as the end year for analysis of NCVS data because 2007 and 2008 NCVS offender estimates fluctuate so wildly that they are essentially unusable. A severe “quality control” reduction seems to have occurred in the administration of the NCVS survey in recent years (perhaps because of budgetary cutbacks) that has resulted in highly unreliable offender estimates both in general but especially by race (Blumstein and Rosenthal, 2009; National Research Council, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2009).

are constrained by the scarcity of race/ethnicity-disaggregated data on crime both in general but, in particular, over time.

Last, as often is the case with time-series data, our trend analysis is complicated by sizable *base rate* differences in levels of violent crime across comparison groups. Notably, sizable base rate differences are present in Black as compared with White levels of homicide and robbery. Higher Black arrest rates have much greater room to fall, whereas the much smaller White rates can fall only so far before “bottoming out” or before a floor effect is observed.¹³ Furthermore, this “base rate” problem is likely to have become more pronounced in recent years as rates of violent crime have declined rapidly for all groups from the peak levels of the early 1990s.

FINDINGS

We begin by examining trends in the Black percentage of UCR arrests and NCVS offenses for the index violent crimes (see Tonry and Melewski, 2008), after which we examine trends in the Black–White gap in UCR and NCVS rates (see LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer, 2006) and then examine the arrest–incarceration disparity issue raised by Tonry and Melewski (2008). The Black percentage of UCR arrests (or NCVS offender counts) is calculated as Black arrests/offenders divided by the total arrests/offenders and multiplied by 100, with the calculation performed both with Hispanics (confounded) and without Hispanics (clean) included in Black and White arrest or offender counts. The Black–White gap (here, the Black–White rate ratio) is calculated as the Black rate divided by the White rate, with the calculation performed both with “confounded” and “clean” arrest or offender counts.¹⁴

The index violent crimes are viewed as the most serious crimes and generally attract the most police attention. We focus on homicide and robbery, which are the most reliably measured. Aggravated assault and forcible rape both exhibit important measurement problems relative to whether the incident is reported to the police and the charges that are filed. These problems

13. The lower the baseline of a rate, the harder it is to have a substantial decline. For example, if the White rate was 10 robberies/100,000 population and the Black rate was 50 robberies/100,000 and if each fell by 5 robberies in a decade (a 50 percent drop for the White rate and a 10 percent drop for the Black rate), then the White rate would be zero in a matter of only 20 years. In contrast, the Black rate has much farther to fall and would yield a sizable robbery rate across a much longer period of time. The reverse is also true in that the higher the baseline of a rate, the harder it is to have a substantial increase.

14. Our population estimates for the 1980–2007 period are taken from the U.S. Census Population Estimates Series (1980–1989) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s WONDER Bridged-Race Estimates (1990–2007), available at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/population>.

have been exacerbated in recent years by the changing culture of violence control contributing to broader or “stretched” definitions of assault (and rape) and tougher enforcement aimed at less serious forms of violence. What evidence is available suggests that the police have “upgraded” the recording and classification of rapes and assaults over time, such as classifying a physical attack or threat as an assault that they in the past would have treated as a lesser offense (e.g., disorderly conduct, harassment, terroristic threat, and resisting arrest) or even ignored (Schwartz, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2009; Steffensmeier and Harer, 1999).

TONRY AND MELEWSKI: TRENDS IN BLACK PERCENTAGE OF ARRESTS/OFFENDERS

UCR ARREST TRENDS

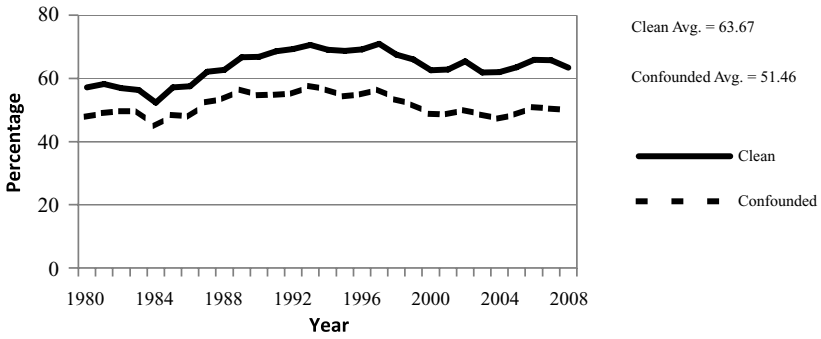
We plot in figure 3 trends in the Black percentage of arrests for each of the index violent crimes during the 1980–2008 period. Each figure includes both the *confounded* (used by Tonry and Melewski, 2008) and the *clean* (Hispanic adjusted) estimates, enabling a handy comparison between them. For economy of space, our discussion focuses on changes in the Black percentage of arrest in 2008 relative to 1980 (note that the end point and base years in Tonry and Melewski’s study are 2005 and 1982, respectively) and places greater emphasis on racial disparities in the more reliably reported crimes of homicide and robbery. To minimize year-to-year fluctuation, we use the 3-year average for 1980–1982 and for 2006–2008 to describe base year versus endpoint disparities.

Three important findings are revealed in figure 3. The first concerns the magnitude or size of the Black percentage of arrests, depending on which measure (*clean* or *confounded*) is used. Notably, the relative Black effect on violence is much larger or robust when Hispanic arrests are removed from the comparison (i.e., when the “total” in the Black fraction encompasses the four racial groups, Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Native-Americans). When averaged across the entire study period, the Black percentage for homicide is enlarged from 51 (confounded) to 64 (clean) percent, from 59 to 70 percent for robbery, from 41 to 49 percent for rape, and from 37 to 45 percent for aggravated assault. In essence, classifying Hispanic arrestees with Whites or Blacks deflates the Black fraction of arrests.

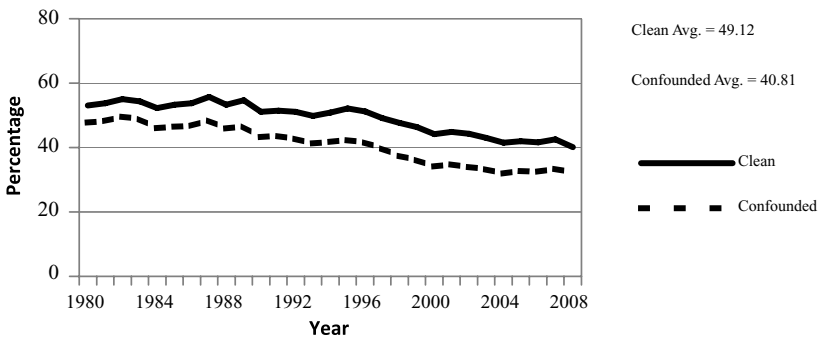
Second, notable ebbs and flows are found in the Black fraction of arrests for violent crime. We note in particular the increase in the Black fraction in the late 1980s and early 1990s as well as its subsequent decline in the late 1990s. The increase apparently coincides with the development of the crack-cocaine market in the mid-1980s and its dramatic effect on levels of

Figure 3. Clean and Confounded UCR Black Percent of Arrests, 1980–2008

A. Homicide



B. Rape



C. Robbery

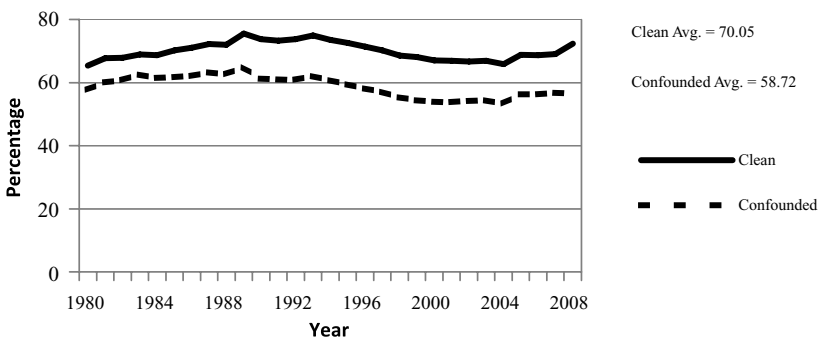
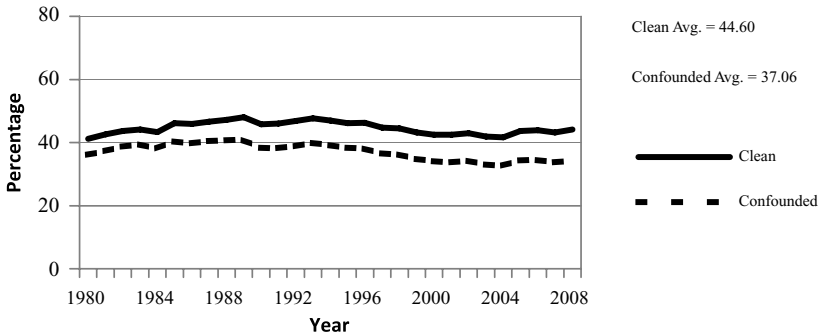


Figure 3. Continued**D. Aggravated Assault**

violence among inner-city Black (and Hispanic) male youth (Blumstein, 1995; Pennsylvania Crime Commission, 1991; Steffensmeier and Harer, 1999). In turn, the decline in the Black percentage of arrests from approximately the mid-1990s to 2000 reflects an abatement of the crack epidemic. This temporary divergence in trends (roughly 1988–1994) suggests a natural statistical correction for unusually high Black rates or percentages (i.e., Black rates rose and were so high by the mid-1990s that they were bound to come down), resulting from large decreases in Black violence rates following large increases in Black rates from approximately 1985 to 1993.

The third key finding concerns the main issue raised by Tonry and Melewski (2008), the extent to which the Black fraction of arrests has declined during the past 25 years. We find, regardless of whether clean or confounded figures are used, little overall change in the Black fractions from 1980–1982 to 2006–2008. Indeed, when the clean fractions are examined, they actually show a *small increase* in the Black share of arrests for homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault. The specific trends in *clean* (and confounded) Black percentages of index violent crimes are as follows:

1. A small-to-moderate *increase* in the Black fraction of homicide from 57 to 65 percent (vs. virtually no change [49–50 percent] in the confounded Black fraction).
2. A small *increase* in the Black fraction of robbery, from 67 to 70 percent (vs. a small decline in the confounded Black fraction from 60 to 57 percent).
3. A small *increase* for aggravated assault, from 42 to 44 percent (vs. a small decline in the confounded Black fraction, 37 to 34 percent).

4. A large decline in the Black fraction for rape, from 54 to 42 percent (vs. an even larger decline in the confounded Black fraction, 48 to 33 percent).

Our findings here are instructive, as well, in warning us about the caveat of picking and choosing this or that year when demonstrating crime trends as well as the importance of using a longer time frame. Our results indicate that it can be misleading to focus only on short-term trends (e.g., mid-1990s to present) because the long-term trends might show little in the way of overall change (e.g., 1980–2007). Notably, when trends for racial involvement are considered across the period as a whole rather than short-term changes, Black-adjusted percentages have been erratic but essentially stable (actually with small increases) for the index violent crimes except for declines in the Black fraction for rape (see the subsequent discussion). We revisit this issue when we apply ADF time-series methods, a strategy that also avoids the arbitrariness of picking specific years or only endpoints of a series to describe change.

NCVS OFFENDER TRENDS

We plot in figure 4 the *confounded* and *clean* Black percentages of violent offending using 1980–2006 NCVS offender counts (based on victim identification of the perpetrator’s race as “White,” “Black,” or “other”) for robbery, aggravated assault, and rape.¹⁵ The plots reveal, first, that the relative Black effect on violence is larger when Hispanic offenders are removed from the comparison. When averaged across the entire study period, the overall mean for the *clean* Black percentage of NCVS offender estimates is considerably higher than the overall mean for the *confounded* Black percentage; the percentage goes from 24 (confounded) to 30 percent (clean) for rape, from 28 to 32 percent for aggravated assault, and from 47 to 58 percent for robbery.

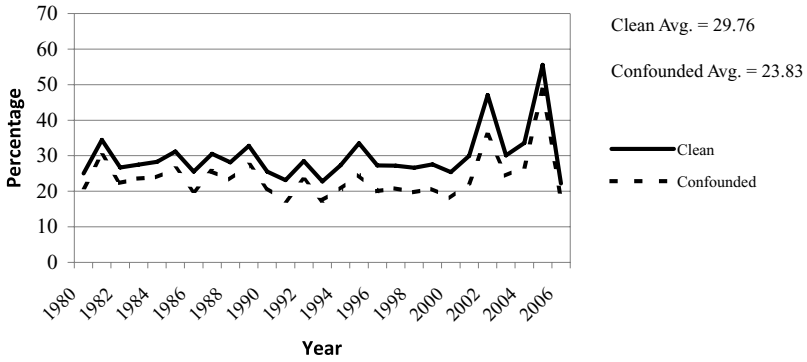
Second, although considerable ebb and flow was noted in the Black percentage of NCVS offending estimates over the study period, the overall pattern is one of little change in Black involvement in violence. We observe the following:

1. A small *decline* in the *clean* Black percentage of NCVS robbery offenders, from 57 percent in the early 1980s to approximately 54 percent in the mid-2000s (as compared with *confounded* fractions of 46 percent and 44 percent, respectively).

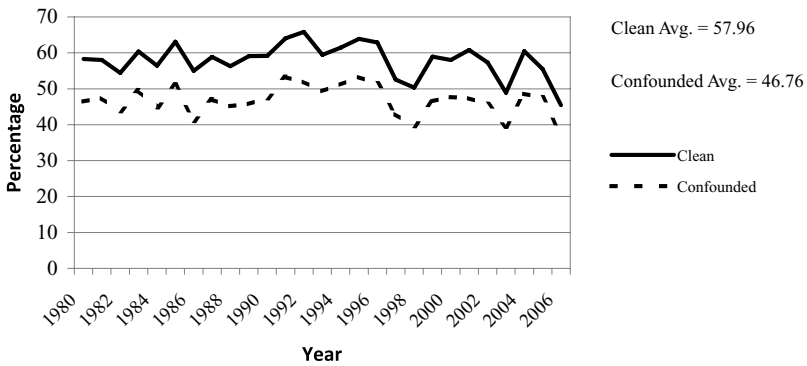
15. We followed procedures established by Rand, Lynch, and Cantor (1997) to adjust for changes in NCVS survey methodology implemented in 1992 to include a wider range of violent behaviors that the earlier NCS often failed to detect (details available from authors).

Figure 4. Clean and Confounded NCVS Black Percent of Arrests, 1980–2006

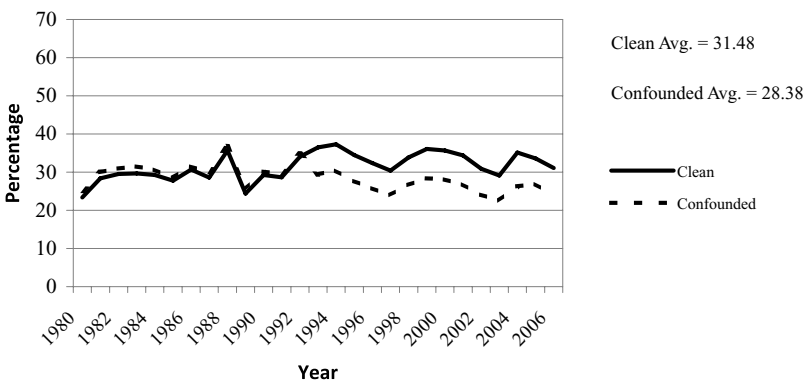
A. Rape



B. Robbery



C. Aggravated Assault



2. A small-to-moderate *increase* in the *clean* Black percentage of aggravated assaults, from 27 to 33 percent (as compared with a small decline in the *confounded* fraction from 29 to 26 percent).
3. A small *increase* in the *clean* Black percentage of rape, from approximately 27 percent in the early 1980s to 29 percent in the mid-2000s (as compared with a small decline in the *confounded* fractions from 25 to 23 percent, respectively). [Note: We used here the 2003 figure for rape instead of the 2005 “outlier” figure to calculate the average for 2004–2006.]

Taken together, therefore, the UCR and the NCVS data are in general agreement about trends in the Black percentage of violent offending during the past 25 years. Both databases indicate that the size of racial disparities is greater when the true or clean percentages are observed. Both reveal ebbs and flows in the Black percentages during the study period, and both sources indicate little in the way of overall change in Black involvement in violent crime (i.e., for robbery, aggravated assault, and homicide). One exception is rape in which the NCVS shows virtually no change in the Black percentage as compared with a large decline in the UCR.

LAFREE AND COLLEAGUES: TRENDS IN BLACK–WHITE DISPARITIES

We turn next to an assessment of the “Hispanic effect” on trends in Black-to-White violent offending, focusing on the *Black–White gap* in UCR arrest rates and in NCVS offender rates. Here, we address the question posed in LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer (2006; see also LaFree, Baumer, and O’Brien, 2010)—“Is the gap between black and white arrest rates narrowing?” As reviewed earlier, LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer’s (2006) assessment involved both a long-term (1960–2002) and a short-term (1973–2002) series, employed descriptive (e.g., plots of Black–White rate ratios) as well as advanced time-series methods, and was based on *confounded* Black and White arrest figures (i.e., those provided in UCR arrest tables where Hispanic arrests typically are coded as “White” arrests). LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer (2006: 192–3) summarize their findings as follows:

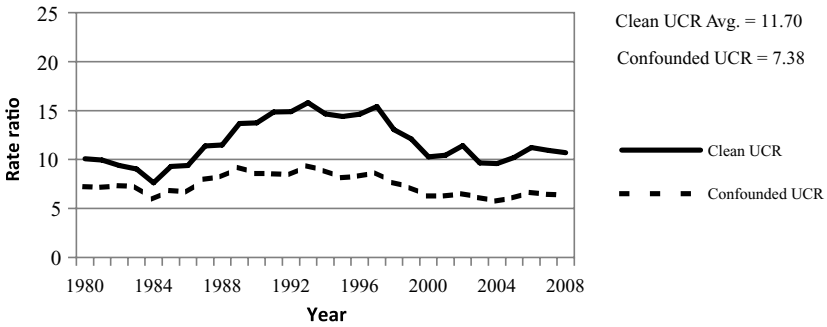
UCR arrest data show substantial evidence of convergence for all four personal crimes, especially during the 1970s and the 1990s . . . There has generally been convergence in the rates of violent crime for Blacks and Whites as recorded in UCR arrest rate data. This convergence appears for both the 1960–2002 and 1973–2002 periods.

We replicate the methodology established by LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer (2006) to perform a parallel analysis for the 1980–2008 period

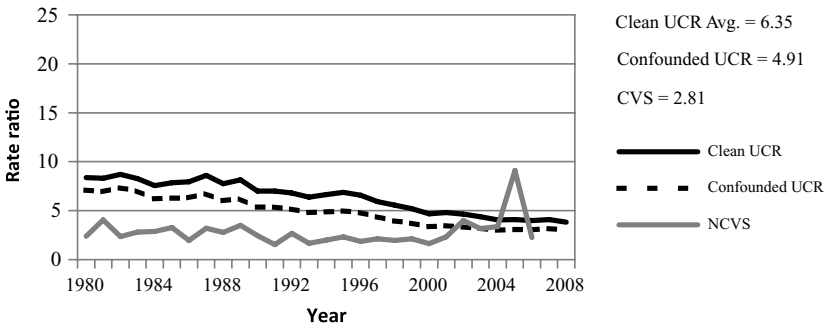
but used both *confounded* and *clean* national UCR arrest figures (where Hispanics are removed from both the White and the Black arrest figures). We plot in figure 5 trends in the Black–White UCR arrest and NCVS rate ratios and across the violent offense categories for the 1980–2008 period.

Figure 5. Clean and Confounded UCR and NCVS Black–White Rate Ratios, 1980–2006/2008

A. Homicide



B. Rape



C. Robbery

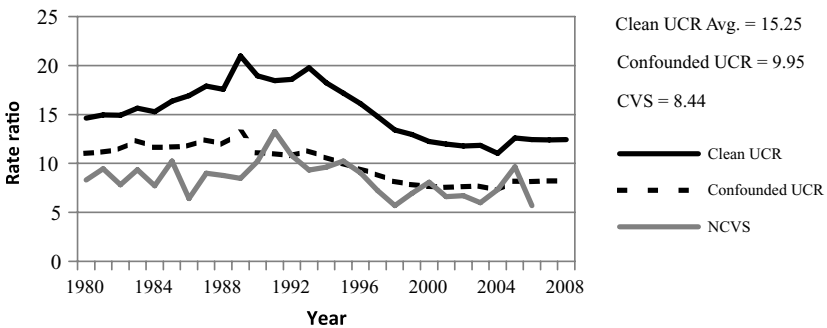
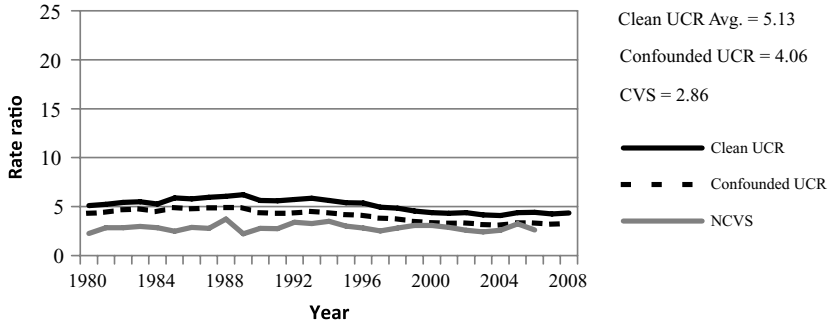


Figure 5. Continued**D. Aggravated Assault**

Key observations overlap those described when using the Black fraction as the measure for relative Black involvement in crime. First, considerable ebb and flow occurs in the Black–White arrest rate ratios over the period, with the Black–White gap in arrest rates peaking in the early 1990s, declining in the late 1990s, and then leveling off and ticking up a bit in recent years. This ebb and flow is observed for both the *clean* and the *confounded* arrest rate ratios. Note, however, that the vacillation in the rate ratio is more noticeable in the plot displaying the *clean* ratios (in which the Hispanic arrests are removed), as would be expected given the greater impact of the cocaine-crack drug epidemic on Hispanic than White arrests (Pennsylvania Crime Commission, 1991).

Second, the size of the Black–White disparity in arrests varies depending on whether one uses the *clean* or *confounded* rate ratios. Notably, when the ratios are averaged across the full study period, the *clean* Black–White ratio is considerably higher than the *confounded* ratio, which is described as follows: The average Black–White ratio for homicide is 7:1 using confounded figures and jumps to almost 12:1 with clean figures; jumps from 10:1 to 15:1 for robbery; jumps from 4:1 to 5:1 for aggravated assault; and jumps from 5:1 to a little more than 6:1 for rape. Thus, classifying Hispanic arrestees with Whites or Blacks deflates the Black–White arrest rate ratio, particularly for the more reliably reported offenses of homicide and robbery.

Third, turning to the central issue about whether the gap between Black and White arrest rates has converged during the 1980–2008 period, figure 5 reveals the following:

1. A small *increase* or divergence in the *clean* Black–White ratio for homicide from 10:1 in the early 1980s to 11:1 in mid/late-2000s (which

compares with a small decrease in the Black–White gap using *confounded* figures from approximately 7:1 to 6:1).

2. Small *declines* in the *clean* Black–White rate ratio for robbery from 15:1 to 12:1 and for aggravated assault from 5:1 to 4:1 (as compared with slightly larger declines using *confounded* rate ratios where robbery goes from 11:1 to 8:1 and assault goes from almost 5:1 in the early 1980s to 3:1 in the mid-2000s).

3. A large *decline* for rape using *clean* (from 8:1 to 4:1) or *confounded* rate ratios (from 7:1 to 3:1).

With the exception of rape, therefore, little exists in the way of overall change or convergence in Black-to-White rates of violent crime as recorded in UCR arrest data.

NCVS OFFENDER TRENDS

To gain more leverage on changes in the Black–White gap, we replicate and extend LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer (2006) by examining NCVS Black–White rate ratios for the index violent crimes from 1980 through 2006 (LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer use the years 1973–2002). Because the NCVS data are already coded into distinct “Black” and “White” categories with Hispanics lumped into the “other” grouping, it is not necessary to adjust or calculate “clean” NCVS offender estimates for assessing Black–White gap trends (see footnote 2). Thus, our treatment here is limited to a single set of comparisons based on Black–White rate ratios derived from NCVS “Black” and “White” solo offender counts.

The NCVS results, as displayed in the lower portion of the plots in figure 5, parallel those for the UCR arrest data in some ways but diverge in other ways. First, some ebb and flow is noted in the NCVS Black–White gaps, but the fluctuation is less extreme than in the UCR gaps. Second, the size of the Black–White gap in the NCVS data is fairly constant across the entire study period. We find the following:

1. A small *decline* in the gap for robbery from 8:1 to 7:1.
2. A small *increase* in the gap for aggravated assault from 2:1 to 3:1.
3. No change in the gap for rape, 3:1 in both 1980 and 2006 (if the 2005 outlier is dropped [9.1]; if it is included, then the gap widens to just less than 5:1 in 2004/2006).

Thus, the NCVS data are in agreement with the UCR data that the Black–White disparity has changed little for aggravated assault and robbery, but the two sources disagree about the trends for rape. When the UCR shows a large decline in the Black–White gap (convergence in Black–White rates), the NCVS shows essentially no change. Also, averaging across the entire 1980–2008 period, the overall Black–White gaps are considerably

smaller in the NCVS than the UCR. For robbery the NCVS gap is approximately 9:1 as compared with 15:1 in the UCR, for aggravated assault 3:1 versus 5:1; and for rape 3:1 versus 6:1. However, we might expect some differences in these rate ratios because our NCVS estimates are based only on solo offender cases.

AUGMENTED DICKEY–FULLER TESTS

To provide a more rigorous analysis of trends and consistent with the approach in LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer (2006), we also use advanced time-series techniques—ADF methods—to ascertain whether a statistically significant, reliable long-term change occurs in clean Black-to-White trends [or Black percentages of arrests] in violent crime between 1980 and 2006/2008. Because data are available during a relatively long time period, picking several points to examine the race–violence relationship might be arbitrary and ignores a large amount of available data. Moreover, although descriptive figures provide insight into changes in racial disparities, they also depict isolated fluctuations and statistically random “walks” that might give the appearance of a downward trend when no such long-term trend exists (e.g., peaking in racial disparities in early 1990s and then sharp declines). The ADF test is well suited to examine a systematic long-term change in the Black share of violent crime by accounting for random fluctuations and isolated “shocks” and by addressing the problem of autocorrelation (Liu and Messner, 2001; O'Brien, 1999; Schwartz and Rookey, 2008).

Following the convention of previous time-series analyses (including LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer, 2006), race disparities in index violent crimes are measured using the logged ratio of Black-to-White offending rates (UCR and NCVS).¹⁶ ADF tests would indicate that the Black–White gap in offending (i.e., the logged Black–White rate ratio) is increasing when the intercept or trend coefficient is positive and significant (Black rates are

16. To assess whether a time series contains a predictable trend or is randomly driven, we first classified each data series based on its statistical properties using formal statistical unit root tests (testing $p = 1$). If the series has a constant mean, variance, and autocovariance, then it does not contain a “unit root” and is considered a stationary or trend stationary series that requires no differencing to meet the assumptions of time-series analysis, which was the case for all NCVS series. Following the practices established by LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer (2006), we report coefficients and significance tests for the slopes of linear trend terms (δ) to assess systematic changes in Black–White violence for the NCVS series. UCR series all contained a unit root and required first differencing to become difference stationary and conform to time-series assumptions. Thus, we report the direction and significance of intercept values (α) for all difference stationary UCR series to assess trends in Black–White violence gaps. We also include necessary lagged terms as statistically warranted to account for autocorrelation.

diverging from White rates), declining when the coefficient is negative and significant (Black rates are converging with White rates), and is trendless or stable (i.e., not trending linearly) when the coefficient is nonsignificant. In addition to the Black–White gap, our ADF analysis also incorporates the NCVS and UCR series of the logged Black percentages of arrests (based on Tonry and Melewski, 2008) to provide an alternative test for assessing whether Black shares of arrests are systematically decreasing (based on a negative coefficient/intercept), increasing (positive coefficient/intercept), or trendless (nonsignificant coefficient/intercept).¹⁷

Table 1 presents the results from the ADF tests for the clean Black percentages of UCR arrests (panel A), the Black percentages of NCVS offender estimates (panel B), and the Black–White gaps in UCR arrests and NCVS offenders (panels C and D, respectively), where the intercept (α) and trend coefficients (δ) represent the direction and magnitude of the time trend.

The estimated intercept and trend coefficient tests displayed in table 1 involve Black percentages and Black–White disparities in which the Hispanic effect has been accounted for (i.e., only “clean” coefficients are presented; results using confounded figures are more congruent with LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer, 2006, and are available from the authors). The last column (labeled “trends in racial disparity”) identifies whether the overall movement in Black involvement is trendless (stable), convergent, or divergent, where *convergence* indicates a significant decrease in the Black percentage or a significant narrowing of the Black–White gap and *divergence* indicates an increasing Black share of violence or widening Black–White gap.

DIRECTION

We note first that the coefficients are evenly split in the direction of convergence in seven cases and in the direction of divergence in seven cases. Likewise, positive and negative coefficients fall evenly across UCR and NCVS comparisons; in each series, one half of the coefficients are positive and one half are negative, indicating mixed trends of both divergence and convergence in the Black share of violent crime. However, some differences are noted in directionality depending on the measure used to track the relative Black effect. When the comparisons are based on the Black percentage

17. A stable series indicates that the Black–White gap has not shifted over time (i.e., Black and White rates move in equilibrium), whereas a trendless series exists when the Black–White ratio has fluctuated randomly but has not systematically trended upward or downward over time. Although trendless and stable series are statistically distinct concepts, they are conceptually similar. Therefore, we use the terms “stable” and “trendless” interchangeably to describe a series in which the Black–White gap does not trend significantly.

Table 1. Trends in the Clean (A) Black Percent of UCR Arrests, (B) Black Percent of NCVS Offenses, (C) Black–White UCR Rate Ratios, and (D) Black–White NCVS Rate Ratios: Augmented Dickey–Fuller Time-Series Results, 1980–2006/2008

(A) Black percent of UCR arrests^a	Estimated value (α)	Trend in racial disparity
Homicide	.0037	Trendless
Rape	-.0127*	Convergence
Robbery	.0025	Trendless
Aggravated assault	.0015	Trendless
(B) Black percent of NCVS offenses^a	Estimated value (δ)	Trend in racial disparity
Rape	.0081	Trendless
Robbery	-.0034	Trendless
Aggravated assault	.0053†	Divergence
(C) Black–White UCR rate ratios^b	Estimated value (α)	Trend in racial disparity
Homicide	.0029	Trendless
Rape	-.0345*	Convergence
Robbery	-.0072	Trendless
Aggravated assault	-.0074	Trendless
(D) Black–White NCVS rate ratios^b	Estimated value (δ)	Trend in racial disparity
Rape	.0027	Trendless
Robbery	-.0100†	Convergence
Aggravated assault	-.0013	Trendless

NOTE: Based on unit root tests, UCR series were all treated as difference stationary and NCVS series were treated as nondifference stationary. Following LaFree, Baumer, and O'Brien (2006), our difference stationary series (UCR) were estimated by regressing the first differenced series on an intercept and any necessary additional lagged differences. Nondifferenced stationary series (NCVS) were regressed on a constant, linear trend, and any necessary autoregressive terms. No additional lagged differences were required for any of the series.

^aThe dependent variable is measured as $\log(\text{Black percentage})$. The Augmented Dickey–Fuller first differenced equation is specified as $yt - yt - 1 = \alpha + \delta_1(yt - 1 - yt - 2) + \delta_2(yt - 2 - yt - 3) + \dots + \mu t$.

^bThe dependent variable is measured as $\log(\text{Black rate/White rate})$.

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

(Tonry and Melewski [2008] measure), positive coefficients reflecting divergence or an increase in the Black fraction of violent offending are shown in most comparisons (five of seven), whereas the opposite pattern exists for comparisons/observations based on the Black–White gap (LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer [2006] measure) in which negative coefficients suggesting convergence are shown in most comparisons (five of seven).

SIGNIFICANCE

More importantly, regardless of their directionality, the coefficients reveal an overall *trendless* pattern in the Black share of violent offending (i.e., only the coefficients for rape [arrests] reach significance [at $p < .05$]).

The remaining coefficients are either nonsignificant (ten comparisons) or are only marginally significant (two comparisons). For the latter, one is in the direction of convergence ($<.10$, NCVS robbery), whereas the other is in direction of divergence ($<.10$, NCVS assault). Notably, the strongest evidence for convergence involves UCR trends for rape in which both the gap and the Black percentage coefficients are significant. In contrast, the coefficients describing NCVS trends for rape are nonsignificant and suggest divergence.

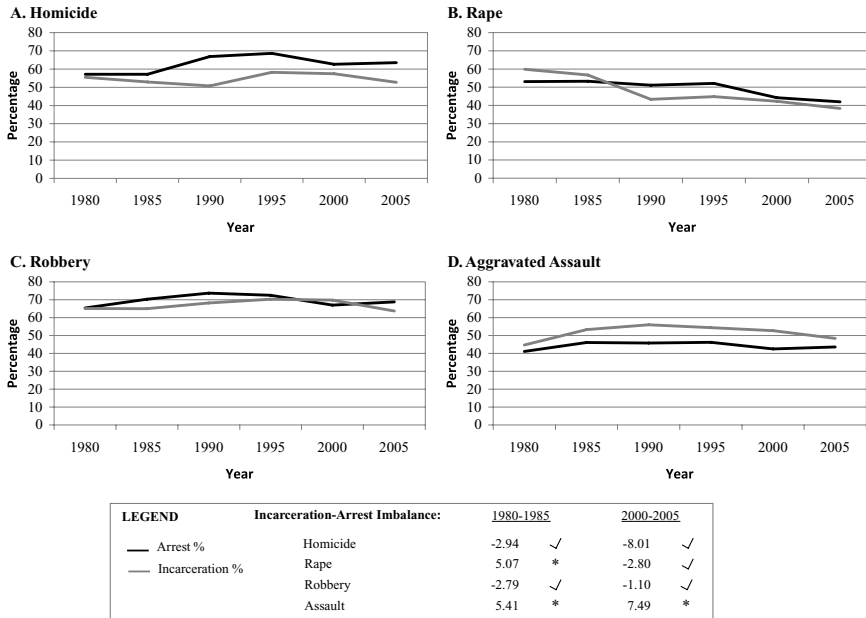
Taken together, based on the information displayed in figures 3–5 and especially the ADF tests, little evidence suggests convergence or a decrease in the Black share of violent offending. Instead, the predominant pattern is one of relative stability (i.e., a lack of a clear-cut upward or downward trend in racial disparities in violent crime during the 1980–2008 period).

ARREST–INCARCERATION DISPARITIES: TONRY AND COLLEAGUES

Although a full analysis is beyond the scope of this article, the remaining issue that we address involves a prominent conclusion in the Tonry–Melewski (2008) report, which states that pronounced racial disparities in imprisonment have persisted (“terrible news”) despite the (apparently) declining Black involvement in serious violent crime (“good news”). As described in Blumstein’s seminal 1982 article, the “racial disproportionality” question concerns whether the high representation of Blacks in prison is the result of proportionately more Blacks being arrested for serious crime or whether it is the result of racial discrimination in the administration of justice (see also Harris et al., 2009).¹⁸ Our approach here is to assess trends in the Black percentages for arrest and incarceration while applying the correction methods outlined earlier to partial out the Hispanic effect on in-stock prisoner statistics covering the 1980–2005 period (in 5-year intervals). We ask, does the risk of incarceration exceed the risk of arrest and does it do so in the direction of penalizing Blacks? As do Blumstein and Tonry and Melewski, we assess the extent to which Blacks are “over-incarcerated” given their arrest percentages.

18. Following Blumstein (1982, 1993), Tonry and Melewski (2008) report estimates of the “percent of racial disproportionality (black incarceration) unexplained by arrest.” However, this measure is 1) highly sensitive to small changes in either the Black percentage of arrests or the incarcerated inmates when little exists in the way of variation and is 2) highly unstable when large base rate differences are present between comparison groups (e.g., robbery). Our approach here (compare Black percentages of inmates and arrests) is less sensitive to small fluctuations in arrest or incarceration counts and is consistent with Tonry and Melewski’s discussion of racial imbalance patterns.

Figure 6. Incarceration–Arrest Imbalance: Clean Black Percentages, 1980–2005



NOTE: Check marks indicate no difference (less than 1.0) between incarceration and arrest or under-incarceration of Blacks relative to arrests (opposite predictions); asterisks (*) indicate over-incarceration of Blacks relative to arrests.

The results are displayed in figure 6 where we compare in 5-year intervals the *clean* Black percentages of arrests versus prisoner statistics.¹⁹ We find, first, that the *direction* of the incarceration–arrest imbalance is mixed; sometimes it suggests higher representation (or overincarceration) of Blacks relative to their arrest levels, but in other cases, it suggests their underincarceration. This mixed pattern is the case both in 1980–1985 and in 2000–2005. Second, the size of racial disproportionality is generally small across all violent offenses. Third, although some fluctuation occurred over the study period, little exists in the way of overall change in the extent of

19. Our incarceration estimates reflect the estimated number of prisoners under state jurisdiction and are taken from the Bureau of Justice Statistics annual reports “Prisoners in the United States” for every fifth year starting in 1980 and ending in 2005. Following the logic used to adjust for Hispanics in UCR and NCVS estimates, we also use 1991 and 1997 National Prison Survey race by ethnicity estimates to adjust for the presence of Hispanics in White and Black incarceration estimates (details available from authors).

racial imbalance in the arrest-to-incarceration relationship over the entire 25-year period. In sum, little evidence was found of aggregate increased punitiveness toward Blacks throughout the 1980–2005 period, at least as indicated by incarceration–arrest imbalances.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this article has been to assess how patterns of racial disparity in violent crime (and incarceration) have changed over the past 25 years (roughly 1980–2008). Our assessment was in response to recent studies suggesting a decline in the relative Black effect on violent crime in recent decades and then offering the proposition that this decline was a result of greater social and economic integration of American Blacks over the past several decades. The rationale for our assessment was driven by the following main concerns: first, that prior studies showing a shrinking Black share of violent crime might be in error because they relied on national crime statistics that do not include a code for classifying “Hispanic” offenders whose numbers have been increasing as a result of rapid Hispanic population growth. Because 1) Hispanic violence levels are higher than White rates but lower than Black rates and 2) Hispanic offenders are typically classified in national databases as “White” (approximately 93 percent), their cumulative year-to-year increase tends to inflate White rates and deflate Black rates of violent crime. Second, recent assessments of racial stratification in American society suggest durability as much or more than change in Black social mobility since at least approximately 1980 and perhaps even some reversal of Black gains made in the 1960s and 1970s.

Our approach was to use arrest statistics from California and New York that include a Hispanic identifier for the purposes of generating estimates of Black involvement in violent crime for the nation as a whole that partial out the effects of the rapid increase in arrests of Hispanics in recent years. Our analysis was conducted using 1980–2008 UCR arrest data and 1980–2006 NCVS offender data in which we compared racial disparities derived from both “confounded” (with Hispanics included) and “clean” (without Hispanics) crime figures. Our computations included measures of the Black–White disparity (per LaFree, O’Brien, and Baumer, 2006) and the Black percentage of total arrests (per Tonry and Melewski, 2008) for each of the index violent crimes (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault). Along with plots displaying relative Black involvement across the index crimes, advanced time-series analyses (ADF tests) were used to establish the trends. Key findings are as follows.

First, considerable fluctuation has occurred in racial disparities in violent crime during the 1980–2008 period, rising and peaking in the late 1980s/early 1990s and then declining sharply until leveling off and ticking

up a bit in recent years. Divergent conclusions about trends in Black involvement can be reached depending on which years are selected for the comparisons. Black involvement would be perceived as increasing sharply if one compares 1980 with the early 1990s, as decreasing rapidly if the comparison is from the beginning to the end of the 1990s, and as holding steady if one considers only the 2000 period.

Second, when viewed across the entire period, little overall change has occurred in the race–violence relationship. This is generally the case even when using the confounded racial disparities (with Hispanics included in the violence counts) but even more so when using the clean estimates (without Hispanics). This pattern of little overall change is the case regardless of 1) whether the Black–White gap or the Black percentage is used as the measure of Black involvement and 2) whether we are examining the UCR arrest trends or the NCVS offender trends. The UCR and NCVS together yielded 14 comparisons—8 based on the UCR arrest data (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and 6 on the NCVS offender data (rape, robbery, and aggravated assault). It is only the case for arrests for rape, using both the Black–White gap and Black percentage of arrests, in which we find statistically significant convergent trends in the race–crime relationship (although NCVS offender estimates show an increasing Black share or divergence). Notably, we do not find a single instance (across the 14 comparisons) in which UCR and NCVS both show convergence, even when the criteria for establishing a convergent or divergent pattern are relaxed (e.g., only consider directionality). That the relative Black involvement in violent crime has not diminished much, if at all, during the study period takes on added significance when viewed within the context of 1) high rates of Black violence relative to White levels (the base rate issue, whereby White rates have less room to decline) and 2) the recent sharp declines in violent crime across all population subgroups to levels that approach those in the 1950s.

Last, arrest–incarceration comparisons for the study period do not support a strong claim that racial disproportionality has worsened during the past 20–30 years toward greater overrepresentation of Blacks in prison relative to their arrest levels. Racial imbalances in arrest as compared with incarceration levels across the index violent crimes are both small and comparably sized across the study period *and* show mixed patterns of both underincarceration and overincarceration of Blacks. It is worth noting, however, that our analysis (consistent with that of Tonry and Melewski, 2008) used an “in stock” prison population as proxy for incarceration levels and was limited to examining arrest–incarceration trends for the index violent crimes. Obviously, more research is needed on the racial disproportionality in punishment issue, as ours and Tonry and Melewski’s analyses only scratch the surface. In particular, it is necessary to examine the

arrest–incarceration disparity using prison admissions, which better approximate time-wise the arrest estimates (see Harris et al., 2009). Likewise, more research is needed to examine the racial imbalance issue for drug offenses because of their sizable impact on incarceration levels of all population groups but on Blacks in particular. In light of our findings, it is crucial that these analyses be conducted in ways that take into account the growth in Hispanic peoples both in the U.S. population and in the criminal justice system.

Earlier, we discussed the notion of trends in Black violence as a benchmark for social change and discussed the decidedly mixed picture of Black and White convergence in socioeconomic well-being. Indeed, both Tonry and Melewski (2008) and LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer (2006) interpret recent (downward) trends in Black violence as a by-product of improved Black mobility. Our findings, however, show relative stability in the Black share of violence since 1980. A central finding in the LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer report (see also LaFree, Baumer, and O'Brien, 2010) is that the strongest evidence for convergence in Black–White disparities is for the mid-1960–1970s period. We do not dispute this contention. Both findings (little change in Black effect during the last 25 years but considerable convergence during the late 1960s–1970s period) are consistent, we believe, with trends in economic and social integration of Blacks in American society during the past 50 years or so.

As we discussed, overall, it seems that reductions have occurred in racial divides on some dimensions of racial stratification, but others remain intact or perhaps even enhanced. Owing in large part to gains in legal rights, it seems that Blacks made substantial gains in the 1960s and 1970s on some dimensions of economic achievement and integration, but since then, Black mobility and incorporation into American society has leveled off or even reversed, and a new racial divide from “White/non-White” to “Black/non-Black” has emerged. A growing bifurcation in Black America seems to be developing, with a growing middle class, as well as a growing hypersegregated and disadvantaged segment. *This also means on theoretical grounds that, if we accept that crime is both a consequence and a marker of societal stratification and disadvantage across population subgroups, then it is hardly surprising that 1) racial disparities declined in the late 1960s and 1970s (e.g., as documented in LaFree, O'Brien, and Baumer, 2006) but that 2) the relative Black effect on violent crime has not changed or declined much during the past 25 years.* These two benchmarks of social change (not much change in the Black share of violent crime and not much change in Black social mobility during the last 25 years) is hardly the stuff of “good news” about race and inequality during the past 25 years.

We do not mean to dismiss the real gains in racial equality in the United States during earlier decades. However, our findings signify a need for

continued vigilance in addressing racial inequality. Tracking trends in African American social mobility and shares of violence will remain an important task for criminology during the coming decades in which we hopefully might find the news about race, inequality, and violence more encouraging.

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Appendix A. Hispanic Adjustment Procedure to Produce “Clean” UCR White and Black Arrest Counts

Note: *Confounded* arrest counts refer to White, Black, or total arrest figures that include Hispanics; and *Clean* arrest counts refer to White, Black, or total arrest figures that do not include Hispanics.

Our adjustment method for removing the “Hispanic effect” from White and Black UCR arrest figures follows a straightforward procedure that is elaborated subsequently and includes the following four steps: 1) mimic UCR national estimates in the CA–NY data by adding Hispanic arrests into White and Black arrest categories to create *confounded White and Black CA–NY arrest figures*, 2) downward-adjust these *confounded White and Black CA–NY arrest figures* (to account for the relatively larger Hispanic population in CA–NY than in the nation as a whole), 3) use *clean* and *confounded White and Black CA–NY arrest figures* to create *correction factors* for UCR data, and 4) apply these *correction factors* to UCR arrest figures to estimate *clean* national counts of White and Black arrests that do not include Hispanics.

The first step in our adjustment procedure is to mimic UCR estimates by using the refined race and ethnicity information provided in CA–NY data to generate *confounded* CA–NY White and Black arrest counts that lump Hispanics into White and Black arrest categories as found in the UCR. Recall that, in contrast to national UCR arrest counts, the CA–NY data include a separate identifier for Hispanic arrestees and thus already provide *clean* White and Black arrest categories. Therefore, our first step is to reallocate the clean CA–NY Hispanic arrests into White and Black categories based on the share of the Hispanic population in California and New York that is considered White or Black, calculated as follows:

$$C_{ijk} = U_{ijk} + (H_{jk} \times R_{ik}) \quad (\text{A.1})$$

where C_{ijk} are the *confounded CA–NY arrest counts* for race group i (White or Black), offense j , and year k ; U_{ijk} are the *clean* (original) *CA–NY arrest counts*; H_{jk} are the Hispanic arrest counts in the CA–NY data; and R_{ik} is the percentage of the CA–NY Hispanic population in race group i (White or Black) for year k .

Second, we recognize that the Hispanic effect on White and Black arrests counts is likely much stronger in CA–NY than in UCR data (because of the relatively greater presence of Hispanics in California and New York compared with the United States as a whole). Thus, we downward adjusted the size of the Hispanic effect on White and Black arrests in CA–NY data. Specifically, we multiplied the Hispanic arrest count in equation A.1 by

the ratio of the percent Hispanic in the U.S. White (or Black) population over the percent Hispanic in the CA–NY White (or Black) population. The following formula extends equation A.1 and illustrates this downward adjustment:

$$C_{ijk} = U_{ijk} \left[(H_{jk} \times R_{ik}) \times \left(\frac{P_{1ik}}{P_{2ik}} \right) \right] \quad (\text{A.2})$$

where P_{1ik} is the proportion of the race-group i population in the United States that is Hispanic for year k and P_{2ik} the proportion of the same race-group i population in California and New York that is Hispanic for the same year k .

Equation A.2 consists of two parts. The first part, described in equation A.1, involves the initial adjustment in which Hispanic arrests in CA–NY are reallocated into White and Black arrests to generate the *confounded CA–NY arrest counts* similar to those found in national UCR estimates. These counts then are multiplied by the second part of the equation (P_{1ik} / P_{2ik}), which downward adjusts the Hispanic reallocation into White and Black arrest counts that take into account the greater presence of Hispanics in California and New York relative to the United States as a whole. The end result proxies the confounded White and Black arrest counts found in national UCR estimates adjusting for the relatively greater presence of Hispanics in the CA–NY data.

Third, we compare the *clean* and *confounded CA–NY* arrest figures to create *correction factors* for removing the Hispanic effect on national UCR Black and White arrest figures, calculated as the ratio of *clean* over *confounded CA–NY arrest counts* (for each race, offense, and year), which is expressed as follows:

$$X_{ijk} = \frac{U_{ijk}}{C_{ijk}} \quad (\text{A.3})$$

where X_{ijk} is the *correction factor*, U_{ijk} is the *clean CA–NY arrest count*, and C_{ijk} is the *confounded CA–NY arrest count* for race group i , offense j , and year k .

Fourth, we apply the *correction factors* to the UCR arrest counts to estimate *clean UCR White and Black arrests* that exclude Hispanics, which is illustrated as follows:

$$Y_{ijk} = X_{ijk} \times A_{ijk} \quad (\text{A.4})$$

where Y_{ijk} are the *clean UCR arrest counts*; X_{ijk} are the *corrections factors* derived using the CA–NY data; and A_{ijk} are the *confounded (original) UCR arrest counts* for race group i , offense j , and year k . Combining

equations A.1 through A.4, which were previously described, yields the full equation for estimating *clean UCR White and Black arrest counts*, expressed as follows:

$$Y_{ijk} = \left\langle \frac{U_{ijk}}{\left\{ U_{ijk} + \left[(H_{jk} \times R_{ik}) \times \left(\frac{P_{1ik}}{P_{2ik}} \right) \right] \right\}} \right\rangle \times A_{ijk} \quad (\text{A.5})$$

A potential caveat of this technique is that it assumes the racial composition of CA–NY Hispanic arrestees matches that of the U.S. Hispanic population. Because of data limitations, we cannot assess the degree to which this assumption is true. However, it is worth noting that alternative adjustments using total U.S. race distributions of the Hispanic population are nearly identical to those obtained using CA–NY race/ethnic distributions. To test the robustness of our results, we used alternative adjustments in preliminary analyses to divide Hispanic arrests into “White” and “Black” categories, several of which placed higher shares of Hispanics in the “Black” category to account for the possibility that “Black-Hispanics” might be more likely to be arrested than “White-Hispanics.” Although these alternative methods produced some variations in the Hispanic effects on White and Black arrest rates, substantive findings from the alternative adjustments matched those reported. Our results, therefore, seem robust across alternative adjustments for the “Hispanic effect” in White and Black arrest figures.

EXAMPLE OF CORRECTION PROCEDURE

The following illustrates use of our adjustment procedure to remove the “Hispanic effect” from national UCR estimates to produce “clean” White and Black homicide arrest counts for 1990.

Assume the following based on 1990 homicide arrest and population figures:

1. *CA–NY arrest figures*:
 - a. 1,185 clean White homicide arrests (U_{ijk})
 - b. 2,997 clean Black homicide arrests (U_{ijk})
 - c. 2,244 clean Hispanic homicide arrests (H_{jk})
2. *Racial composition of CA–NY Hispanic population*:
 - a. 91.44 percent of the CA–NY Hispanic population was White (R_{ik})
 - b. 5.36 percent of the CA–NY Hispanic population was Black (R_{ik})

3. *Hispanic composition of White and Black populations in CA–NY:*
 - a. Hispanics accounted for 23.25 percent of the White CA–NY population (P_{2ik})
 - b. Hispanics accounted for 12.49 percent of the Black CA–NY population (P_{2ik})
4. *Hispanic composition of White and Black populations in the United States:*
 - a. Hispanics accounted for 9.86 percent of the White U.S. population (P_{1ik})
 - b. Hispanics accounted for 3.95 percent of the Black U.S. population (P_{1ik})
5. *UCR (confounded) arrest figures:*
 - a. 7,942 White homicide arrests (A_{ijk})
 - b. 9,952 Black homicide arrests (A_{ijk})

Substituting these values into equation A.1 yields *confounded* White and Black CA–NY arrest counts that include Hispanic arrests as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{White confounded arrest count} &= 1,185 + (2,244 \times .9144) \\ &= 1,185 + 2,052 \\ &= 3,237 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Black confounded arrest count} &= 2,997 + (2,244 \times .0536) \\ &= 2,997 + 120 \\ &= 3,117 \end{aligned}$$

However, these White and Black confounded arrest counts are calculated without taking into account that the “Hispanic effect” in CA–NY data are inflated because of the relatively greater presence of Hispanics in California and New York than in the United States as a whole. Thus, we use equation A.2 to account for this effect and downward adjust our estimates as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{White confounded arrest count} &= 1,185 + ((2,244 \times .9144) \times (.0986/.2325)) \\ &= 1,185 + (2,052 \times .4240) \\ &= 1,185 + 870 \\ &= 2,055 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Black confounded arrest count} &= 2,997 + ((2,244 \times .0536) \times (.0395/.1249)) \\ &= 2,997 + (120 \times .3163) \\ &= 2,997 + 38 \\ &= 3,035 \end{aligned}$$

Next, we derive White and Black correction factors by comparing *clean* and *confounded* CA–NY arrests using equation A.3 as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{White correction factor} &= 1,185/2,055 \\ &= .5766 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Black correction factor} &= 2,997/3,035 \\ &= .9875 \end{aligned}$$

Finally, we apply our White and Black correction factors to national UCR estimates using equation A.4 as follows to produce estimates of *clean* White and Black national homicide arrests that have removed Hispanic counts:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{White UCR clean arrest count} &= .5766 \times 7,942 \\ &= 4,579 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Black UCR clean arrest count} &= .9875 \times 9,952 \\ &= 9,828 \end{aligned}$$

ALTERNATIVE ADJUSTMENT METHOD

To exhaust the data and address the validity of our adjustment procedure, we also employed an alternative Hispanic adjustment procedure to correct the national UCR White and Black arrests.²⁰ First, we calculated CA–NY Hispanic arrest rates. Second, we estimated U.S. Hispanic arrests (for each offense and year) by multiplying the CA–NY Hispanic arrest rate by the U.S. Hispanic population. Third, we divided our estimate of U.S. Hispanic arrests (for each year and offense) into “White-Hispanic” and “Black-Hispanic” arrests based on the proportion of the U.S. Hispanic population that is White or Black. Fourth, we created *clean* White and Black U.S. arrest figures (that exclude Hispanics) by subtracting our estimates of White-Hispanic and Black-Hispanic arrests from the original White and Black UCR arrest counts. The formula for this method is expressed as follows:

$$Y_{ijk} = A_{ijk} - \left\{ \left[\left(\frac{H_{jk}}{HPI_k} \right) \times HP2_k \right] \times P_{ik} \right\}$$

where Y is the clean UCR arrest counts for race group i , offense j , and year k ; A is the confounded (original) UCR arrest counts; H is the Hispanic

20. We thank Miles Harer for suggesting this adjustment method.

arrests in CA–NY; HPI is the Hispanic population in CA–NY and $HP2$ is the Hispanic population in the United States; and P is the proportion of the U.S. Hispanic population that is White or Black.

Results obtained using the alternative adjustment method are nearly identical to those described, indicating that our findings are robust across various demographic techniques that might be used to adjust for the “Hispanic effect” on national UCR crime estimates. Additionally, although this alternative method is more methodologically straightforward, our adjustment procedure has several important advantages over the alternative method. First, our procedure adjusts for the “Hispanic effect” in California and New York before applying this correction to the U.S. crime figures, which enables it to account for effects of trending better in CA–NY Hispanic arrest estimates (e.g., the fact that Hispanic arrest trends in CA–NY have decreased dramatically in recent decades and might not be matched by similar declines in Hispanic crime throughout the rest of the United States). Thus, our method provides a more conservative estimate of the “Hispanic effect” on national arrest rates over time. Second, our adjustment is less susceptible to problems of misestimation and undercount in Hispanic population counts in census data. Specifically, our method corrects for Hispanic arrest counts before calculating White and Black rates, whereas the alternative method relies on Hispanic population counts from the U.S. Census (which have several well-documented problems, see Bean et al., 2001; Passel, Hook, and Bean, 2004) to create population-adjusted arrest rates to apply the adjustment.

Another alternative is to adjust the national arrest figures using a Hispanic rate that is set at the midpoint of White and Black rates. This midpoint represents a “ballpark” estimation that often is noted by commentators/analysts about race–ethnic differences in violent crime (i.e., Hispanic violence or crime levels relative to Whites and Blacks). Two main shortcomings are associated with the midpoint estimate; first, it is a ballpark estimate, and second, it is not offense specific but instead is referenced to violent crime in general and thus overlooks variation in the relative Hispanic effect by the type of violence or the type of crime. In contrast, our estimates are based on actual Hispanic violence figures representing two large states and by offense type, with the latter documenting considerable variation in the Hispanic effect by the type of violent crime.