

Digging Up the Root:  
The Radical Belief of Reallocation

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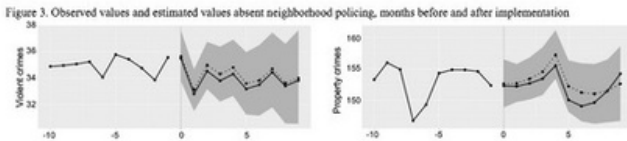
In March of 2020, the world had a front row seat to a view of police brutality and corruption. As protests and calls to defund the institution of the police arose around the country, people began to finally question the validity of the policing system as something that can truly control crime and perpetuate safety. Though 2020 may have been the mark of most of the populations turning against the policing institution and acknowledging their general ineffectively, the knowledge that police have virtually no effect on crime rate has been the result of studies for a very long time. The theoretical implementation of this policy plan focuses mainly on the state of New York, and so, in coalition with that the NYPD and recent experiments done with the dispatching of its patrolling officers will be cited as evidence and example. The NYPD's budget is supported by a combination of city, federal and state funding. However, the city alone pays 95.3 percent of the total funding allocated to the NYPD. In total, the department obtains a budget of \$5.44 billion for the current fiscal year, which means New York City alone funds \$5.18 billion of that (New York City Council, 2023). But if the police are ineffective, could this money be better spent elsewhere?

In order to best prove the ineffective nature of policing in relation to crime rates, one must look no further than the recent implementation of the NYPD's Neighborhood Policing Program. This program increased neighborhood patrols by more than double, and hired hundreds more on-ground officers. In various papers and press conferences, the NYPD officials expressed that their first priority with this program was to reduce crime. However, during the years of the program implementation it was determined that there was no impact on crime whatsoever. Neighborhood

policing did not influence either violent or property crime at a statistically significant level at any time point observed. **Figure 1** below exemplifies this. Because the estimated values' confidence intervals contain the observed values at each point, statistically speaking the original hypothesis of the observational study stands: that neighborhood policing does not affect these outcomes. It is important to note that crime did in fact fluctuate, but not at any rate that largely disagrees with normal seasonal fluctuation. **Figure 2** below shows that the change from time of implementation (2015-2018) follows the same relative pattern as years prior. This fluctuation is caused by change in season: higher rates in the summer, lower rates in the winter. Simultaneously, reports of police misconduct increased, spiking within the first few months of implementation and increasing 35% overall, shown in **Figure 3** below (Beck, et.al, 2022). So once again, the question begs to be asked, why are we spending billions of dollars on an institution that does not work effectively, and creates more disserve to the population than mitigation of anything else? The answer is, we do not have to, and at this point we should not continue to. There are viable avenues that if funded would pose as effective and efficient options to lower crime. In this paper, three specific options are presented, and these include subcategories that pose as options for specific funding endeavors. **The three main funding avenues would be reallocation in community centers, reallocation in city education programs and staffing, and reallocation into productive forms of recidivism reduction.** These options not only would significantly lower crime but fix sociological pressures that contribute to crime rates providing long-term solutions, while simultaneously contributing to economic growth. The avenues aim to improve mobility rates, especially in impoverished communities that have

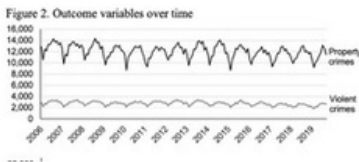
been systematically stunted due to targeted and biased policies, and allow for correction of classist systems and processes entrenched in the criminal justice system. However, these avenues will also boost economic growth in the long-run, aligning with macroeconomic concepts, and Keynesian theory. Explicitly identified in the following paragraphs, these avenues will pose huge reductions in crime by addressing the root-cause of what actually factors into criminal behavior and providing solutions for those causes on a broad and productive scale. Because the policing institution is obviously not effective at doing this, my proposal is that we utilize the funds usually spent on this department and reallocate this resource into the 3 avenues identified in this research. With the reallocation of the NYPD funds to these avenues there will be a betterment of society as a whole, socially and economically, and a revitalization of our people.

FIGURE ONE



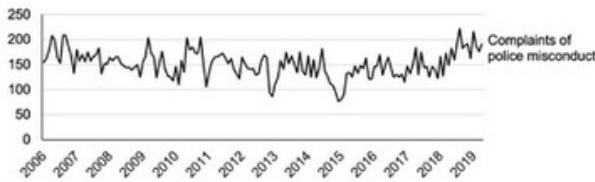
(Beck et.al, 2022)

FIGURE TWO



(Beck et.al, 2022)

FIGURE THREE



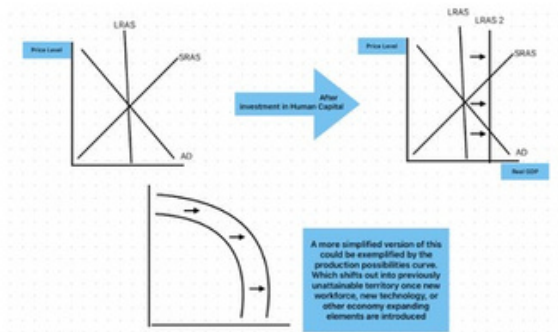
(Beck et.al, 2022)

What would economic growth look like, and how would it happen through these avenues of reallocation?

In macroeconomics there is a graph that details aggregate demand, short-run aggregate supply, and long-run aggregate supply. This research will focus on the shifting of LRAS rightward, which demonstrates long-run economic growth. Though many factors shift aggregate demand, which demonstrates short-run growth in the economy, there are only few things that shift LRAS. One shifter would be investment in human capital. Human capital consists of the knowledge, education, experience and skills a population has. These factors help enable them to be productive members of the economy. An example of investment in human capital would be allowing people to go to college for free. This would naturally result in a more educated workforce, additionally a more diverse and representative workforce, but it would also shift the LRAS because there is now more efficiency and productivity throughout the economy. Another shifter of LRAS would be government investment in infrastructure. Unlike plain government spending, which only shifts AD, government investment in infrastructure shifts LRAS because of the addition to the productive capacity of the economy and because infrastructure has a strong multiplier effect (Ciuriak, 2011). A visual description of this shift is shown in **Figure 4** below. The investment in human capital and government

investment in infrastructure are two shifters that will be of primary focus during this work. Though the main goal is to reduce crime, it is important to note that by reallocating these funds the economy will be stimulated in positive ways, making reallocation an even more attractive solution.

FIGURE FOUR



### **Community Centers**

The first avenue of reallocation should be from the police force into community centers. This could either be constructing infrastructure in impoverished neighborhoods, or funding the centers that already exist. Examples of community centers could be libraries, parks, recreation centers, or even one set infrastructure building that houses various stands of outreach organizations to provide service to the community. These centers foster community engagement, provide resources and accessibility, while simultaneously impacting the well-being and health of the community's people.

In specifically New York City, the most impactful form of community center seems to be libraries, with 95% of New Yorkers

saying that they believe their communities would be impacted if the local library were to close. This is not only because of the decline in knowledge accessibility that would take place, but also because 65% of impoverished communities would no longer have access to the internet, and 73% say that children and teens in those communities would have few or no alternative free out-of-school programs (MAHER, 2022). Libraries play a crucial role in supporting peoples' access to all kinds of resources and provide avenues of career exploration and training, connections to social services and material support, which is especially essential in impoverished communities. In Washington Heights for example, the assembly members office sees about an average of 500-550 constituents a month, most of whom are only looking for help to fill out social service or welfare applications. A lot of the politician offices are understaffed in constituent service representatives, and truly the community would be better served if there was a library that provided this service to them, without the 3 hours wait and with individuals who had the time to explain to them what the exact process was. This would help impoverished communities be uplifted and would provide more understanding of the process' and systems, connecting these individuals more to the community, and potentially lowering crime rates if given the opportunity to have stability provided by a social safety net. Recreation centers and libraries with more funding can also utilize their space to provide activities for youth. The hours of 3pm-6pm during the weekdays are the hours of which violent crimes committed by youth are the highest. This is in line with the ending of the school day, and because a lot of poorer school districts do not have clubs, sports, or affluent afternoon programs, an activity hour hosted by the local recreational center or library could be the perfect

solution. Though recent data has shown that the police force may have no effect on violent crime, these institutions within the community can. Funded community centers can provide spaces of distraction, safety, and foster a sense of purpose in especially the youth. All of this is done by providing career resources, workshops, homework help, or even just free meals and a safe space to hang out. This is not solely theory either, research has repetitively shown that opportunities for learning and skill development are huge proponents of reducing crime rates because they provide economic opportunity, which is exactly what is needed in impoverished communities as a whole, but especially in their youth (MAHER, 2022). Libraries are a huge proponent of this sort of socialization and community resourcing. Yet, instead of increasing their funding, NYC has just made a \$50 million budget cut to all public libraries. The recent budget cuts made by current NYC Mayor, Eric Adams, have already started to pose major consequences for these institutions including an announcement of closures and a loss of weekend service (STARTMAN, 2023). This will also affect their ability to host free programs and development workshops, provide space for the community, and allow for community success; this is especially detrimental in already struggling neighborhood libraries, and definitely detrimental to the neighborhoods that do not have easy access to libraries already. The police agency could absorb this cut much easier, having just spent \$500 million on upgrading radios so that the public can no longer tune in (MARCIUS, 2023). These budget cuts are an exact example of what should not be happening. The police are not effective at controlling crime, and they are certainly not effective at building community morale and allowing for mobility and economic opportunity; the budget cuts should have been made to this agency instead of the library system.



Reallocation away from the police force back into the libraries would address the root causes of crime, which is lack of involvement, lack of resources and lack of mobility. By funding this type of institution, we would be opening up new ways of integrating members with their surroundings, hosting safe spaces, and uplifting impoverished communities that have been plagued by systematic inequality. Though it may seem more obvious that this would have economic benefit, the mechanics of it are still blatantly telling. Allowing for free training and skill development are important factors in fostering a healthier, more productive workforce. This is the exact definition of investment in human capital. Not only would funding libraries, and recreational centers in impoverished communities be spheres of safe social distraction and areas of minimizing the wealth gap, but they would boost economic growth in the long-run for everyone. Investment in human capital shifts the LRAS to the right, and would continue to break people out of the poverty cycle and perpetuated systematic inequality our society has pushed them into. This allows for their mobility, and a great reduction in their chances of interacting with the criminal system, but also benefits the economy and growth on a macro level.

### **City- Education Programs/System**

The second form of reallocation would be improvements to the city education system. This would be laid out in two particular ways that I believe would pose more opportunity to students and social safety nets. One would be increasing the trade learning opportunities, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in New York City public schools, and creating similar programs throughout the community. The second would be

investing in school counselor recruitment, mental health professional resources, and overall, helping impoverished school districts have a productive ratio between students and counselors.

The reality is, academia is not for everyone, and while it might seem reasonable to say that if we funded academic resources these students would automatically take interest and be enriched through the opportunity, it is not true for all types of students. For the individuals who truly do not bode well with academia, there has to be some alternative option for their empowerment and skill development. This is where CTE programs and trade learning spheres come in. CTE programs integrate academic learning with hands-on training that allows students to explore specific career paths and gain relevant skills. Many of these CTE programs provide opportunities for students to earn industry-recognized certifications. These certifications can significantly enhance their employability, and oftentimes can put students directly into the workforce giving them more independence, mobility, and stability. Students may find these particular opportunities presented by the CTE trainings and programs to be more compelling than regular academic performance. Rather than drop-out of school, these students are presented with an opportunity to enter the productive workforce. By providing students with practical skills and industry-specific certifications, graduates of these programs are more likely to secure employment within a fruitful trade related firm or business. This entrance reduces the economic desperation that can lead to criminal activity in impoverished communities. This social distraction, or element of socialization, provides empowerment and a sense of purpose that is contrary to the overwhelming sense of hopelessness these types of students usually feel; a feeling that has a

high probability of leading to criminal behavior. There is also a lot of community mentorship within these programs. This is oftentimes involving community partnerships with positive influences and community leaders. This does two things: firstly, it helps to guide youth away from negative influences, and secondly, provides support for students who may not have that support at home. This fosters connection, which is imperative for developing youth. Also, most of these mentors and partnerships would involve collaboration between the student and local businesses and community organizations, which helps create emotions of community responsibility. The most obvious benefit to funding programs like this, is that now these individuals are enabled to break out of the cycle of poverty their community has been systematically pushed into. As individuals from impoverished communities gain financial stability, this cycle is interrupted, which would drastically reduce the socioeconomic factors that often contribute to crime. Though there is already a CTE program in high schools, it needs to be funded better in order to provide equal opportunity for districts across the city. As of right now roughly 100 high schools across the city are getting money through the newly developed “FutureReadyNYC” initiative that helps implement career and technical education courses (Elsen-Rooney, 2023). The funding for these schools was a total of \$18 million dollars, but with recent city budget cuts made to education programs by Mayor Eric Adams, these new initiatives are the first to go (Zimmerman, 2023). In a city where 30% of students are looking to pursue careers that do not require a college degree, these programs need to be more plentiful and better funded instead of defunded. At this same time, a government investment in the trades is imperative to lift up that declining field, but also because a lot

of ethnic minorities rely on this sort of labor force to survive. With free training available these communities will be able to grow in skill development, setting them up for lasting careers. Trade programs that are funded throughout impoverished communities pose a very real solution for individuals with language barriers, and additionally those who may not be able to thrive in a traditional academic setting. This also would potentially open up the door of opportunity to individuals who dropped out of school previously, who are working minimum wage jobs but are in need of more income, and so many others. This type of program can be held not only in schools but in recreational centers, or any type of central community location that provides access for individuals to participate. This could also present employment opportunities for others in the community, those who know trade skills already could help facilitate workshops with the funds helping to provide them with payment. This loops back to fostering community involvement and connection, producing pride and community responsibility. I understand that trade skill development and crime may seem as if they have no connection, but just like traditional academic opportunity, this creates employability and even entrepreneurial opportunities; both of these things help to address poverty which is crucial for crime reduction as it diminishes some of the root causes of criminal behavior. Contrary to the policing system, which solely poses punitive measures that neglect the radical causes.

### **Staffing School Counselors: A Healthy Ratio**

The recommended student to counselor ratio is 250 students per counselor, but the New York State average is about 350 students per counselor which is well above. An audit by the state comptroller found that NYC's schools are especially in a dire

shortage. The audit found that more than 400 of the system's schools lacked a single social worker, and of the schools that did have one, 80% failed to meet the recommended ratio. Additionally, while most city schools have at least one guidance counselor, 64% failed to meet the same ratio (DiNapoli, 2022). Though the DOE has pretty consistently denied this report -- along with the numerous others that have all come out after the 2020 investigations into mental health support in city schools -- the reality is, a lot of city school children do not have the ability to turn to a social worker, trained mental health professional, or adequate guidance counselor in times of distress or inquiry. The detriments of this are huge. Obviously, there is an intersection between mental health and crime, and when intervention happens very early on there can be very helpful solutions, coping mechanisms, and aid provided to the individual. During the development stage, children's brains are even more susceptible to mental illnesses which can collide with dangerous activity that can lead to criminal behavior. This introduces these youths into the criminal justice system very early on, and if they are lower-class and/or a minority the probability of them being sentenced is extremely high. If a professional is able to intervene at an early stage after seeing signs of emotional and behavioral issues in students, they can potentially prevent the escalation of the mental illness that may lead to criminal behavior later on. Crisis intervention and trauma response is also imperative to addressing the root causes of why an individual would commit a crime, especially when it comes to violent crime. Mental health professionals are trained to provide coping mechanisms and help students acknowledge the underlying factors of their behavior and disorder. This also fosters a social emotional learning skill set within the student, and with

professional help students can thrive in an academic setting without disruptive behaviors. A lot of trauma markers and habitual behavior starts when someone is very young, and when their brains are still developing. By having a healthy amount of mental health professionals and social workers within the schools, the government is performing a preventative measure by addressing some of the root causes of criminal behavior right when they start. This significantly reduces the chances of an individual actually committing the crime. Some schools in NYC that do not have mental professionals on staff have a police officer that polices inside the school building. This tends to escalate conflicts that might have been resolved had a mental health professional been present and been able to provide conflict resolution tactics and mediation. This teaches students a valuable lesson of peaceful resolution, rather than a violent and punitive end. Secondly, we need to put more funding into hiring guidance counselors for NYC public schools. It is utterly ridiculous that one child in NYC can go to Regis high school and have a private pre-college advisor, while someone in the public school system is completely on their own for the college process. This results in students who have no idea how to fill out forms, have no idea when deadlines are, and miss opportunities that they could have succeeded in. Not only that, but this severely impacts our resulting workforce and collegiate bodies, with people of certain demographics being completely left out of the equation. Guidance counselors also help to encourage academic reliability, this empowers students and results in higher performance levels. This leads to greater employability, more collegiate acceptances, and greater mobility overall. If the impoverished community districts do not have access to this kind of assistance when it comes to this sort of life-altering information and

and process, then society is missing out on hearing their stories, and benefitting from them in the workforce. This also results in a greater push into the poverty cycle. Without the ability to move upwards in education or in job preparation, these individuals will be more susceptible to poverty and desperation; not because of their own doing, but because the system failed them.

Both of these methods largely have to do with the education system, which just took a \$550 million budget cut. Instead of hiring mental health professionals and more guidance counselors NYC schools are now in a hiring freeze. Additionally, cuts are expected in January and again in the spring of 2024, which means that the Education Department could face up to \$2.1 billion in cuts (Elsen-Rooney & Zimmerman, 2023). With this sort of austerity happening crime is going to increase, rather than decrease. Root issues will continue to be overlooked, and the students will lose the ability to either benefit from career and technical trainings, or have someone to turn to when in times of distress. To reiterate the overwhelming point: impoverished communities will face the largest effects of this. This type of austerity will stunt growth by not investing in human capital, and will also continue to perpetuate disparity and inequality which is shoving students and their families back into the systemic poverty their own government created. The NYPD's recent upgrades to their radios, something frivolously unneeded, totaled \$500 million. That money, if reallocated, could have helped our students, our safety, and our economy as a whole.

## **Accounting for Recidivism**

The third avenue of reallocation focuses more on the ever-rising recidivism rate, rather than the preventative measures that were detailed in the first two methods. It is important to detail the failures of our criminal “justice” system, which is the fact that it is classist, racist, and overtly not ethical nor just in current function. Also, that it fails to truly rehabilitate and prevent re-offense. This is because once an individual is incarcerated there is little to no programming that truly helps them develop and successfully aid them in reintegrating into society. Coupled with that is the bleak future of someone who is convicted of a crime and holds a record. There is a huge lack of ability to get a job, ability to partake in training programs, be eligible for aid and resources, and the added attentive scrutiny of law enforcement through probation. Instead of continuing to allocate funding towards an institution that does not solve or rehabilitate, funds should be reallocated into supporting programs that exist and help address root causes of habitual criminal behavior and ultimately reduce the recidivism rate.

### ***Subsidizing Employers who hire Previous Convicted Peoples***

Individuals with a criminal record often face significant stigma and discrimination when seeking employment, especially if they are POC. Subsidizing employers can incentivize them to look beyond the criminal record and give these individuals the ability to enter the labor force. Researchers have found multiple times that in the plethora of elements that factor into a re-offense, social stigmatization and inadequate employment or stability were among the most influential. The logic of this undoubtedly checks out: if an



individual cannot support themselves after release, they are potentially thrust into an even worse situation than they were in before, leaving them desperate and among the sociological pressures that led them to crime in the first place. Unemployment rates for “reentrants” is significantly high, last recorded at 27% in 2018, and is continuously rising in post-pandemic times (A Second Chance: The Impact of Unsuccessful Reentry and the Need for Reintegration Resources in Communities). There have been many attempts at subsidizing employers that allow these individuals to work, however, once the subsidy is pulled the employee is usually fired. With more funding not only would this not happen, but more reentrants would be able to find employment options. This would foster skill development and career advancement, but also assist with community reintegration and social responsibility which hinder potential criminal behavior while simultaneously reducing economic desperation.

### ***Pathways to Education and Technical Training***

Besides not being able to find a job, a lot of previous incarcerated people struggle to obtain needed skills for more substantial careers. After losing so much time because of the criminal justice system's harsh penal severity, those released are at a huge developmental disadvantage. One way of correcting this would be to offer more education opportunity outreach for those recently released. There are only few colleges across the US that participate in programs that help to support those recently released from incarceration, by providing resource referrals, educational and career counseling, hands-on training, and ability to enroll in classes once released.

This should be a much larger project than it is now, and should be a primary focus of many of our leading institutions, but especially our city university system. In order to continue to do this, those schools need more funding, and part of productive reallocation would be to provide delegated funds to these institutions that help uplift this vulnerable community. This does not have to only take place outside of incarceration either. In San Francisco, a program called “The Last Mile” offers technical and trade skill training during incarceration for individuals who want to learn. This includes even software development curriculum and has proven to be extremely successful at providing technological skills, building resume and portfolio, and allowing these individuals to be released with some sort of access to technological career pathways that help reintegrate them into the community. In fact, though the national average of recidivism lies within 67% within the first 10 years, TLM graduates have a less than 1% re-offense rate. TLM reentrants also have an 82% employment rate, breeding success and stability for those released (A Second Chance: The Impact of Unsuccessful Reentry and the Need for Reintegration Resources in Communities). Opening a TLM chapter, or implementing a similar program would greatly benefit those in NYC jails and prisons, especially in a society that is so technologically advanced and dependent. The city spends an extreme amount of money on each incarcerated individual, and if the overall recidivism rate decreased, the number of inmates going into the prisons and jails would substantially decrease as a result. Thus, leading to an opening of even more funding for programs that can effectively prevent crime altogether by addressing key sociological pressure points.

### ***Therapeutic Intervention and Support***

The fact that mental health services and mandatory therapeutic treatment is not a fixture in our criminal justice system is a telling sign of its far-from-rehabilitating nature. As of right now, there are still legal fights going on that are advocating for access to mental health care for those with previously diagnosed mental illnesses. Though this is needed, a better step would be to fight for active mental health programs and therapy sessions within incarceration facilities. By funding this sort of fixture within the prison and jail system, individuals would be able to go through a series of psychological evaluations, discussions, and get truly rehabilitating help. By enabling those incarcerated to talk to a trained professional, the system is opening up the opportunity for them to identify the true cause for their criminal behavior and help them work to find effective and healthy coping mechanisms. Also, these professionals could point inmates in the direction of resources that are housed within the facility or outside of it. A program like this would drastically improve the mental space of those released and enable them to be more successful and stable members of society. Obviously giving people jobs and training a new workforce would increase economic growth in more obvious ways, but there is also something to be said about investing in the betterment of society's mental health as a whole and the economic and social value of that. The people incarcerated are oftentimes society's most mentally vulnerable, and providing them mental health care and support would uplift the entire society and result in not only lower recidivism, but increased safety and production.

### Why the Police Force?

Though hesitance can be understood to a certain degree, after looking at solidified facts and blatant statistics that reference the striking ineffectively of the police, it becomes increasingly obvious that this is the fund to reallocate from. The policing institution's main function is to prevent, stop, and report crime, yet repeatedly our society sees them fail at this --especially on the preventative end. However, it is also obvious that the police will never be able to truly prevent crime anyway. Rather, it is the systematic errors and discrepancies that factor into criminal behavior and it is truly our government's fault that those concerns and contributors have gone unaddressed, even as the nation continues to suffer from them. Of course, the great sociological pressures can be directly attributed to neoliberal policy largely implemented by the Reagan administration, which not only caused the upward spike in incarceration rates through the War on Crime and the War on Drugs, but also contributed heavily to deregulation of industry, the bifurcation of America's class system, and the lack of resources to help pull individuals and families out of the poverty cycle. Yet, with all these factors at hand, we continue to pump excessive funding into an institution that does not even productively use it. NYPD upgrades, their extremely flexible 'pass-down' pensions, and over-policing of impoverished communities and targeted police initiatives are just some of the instances of when the funding has gone to excessive or harmful avenues throughout the institution's history. The fact of the matter is, if the goal is to reduce crime and increase safety, then the police are not the way to do that. Rather allowing for mobility, increasing accessibility, uplifting communities, addressing root causes that factor into criminal behavior, providing education opportunity, and focusing energy on

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controlling the recidivism rate in ethical ways are more conducive to that end goal. Though this may be highly theoretical, we are at a point in society where it is not only plausible, but imperative.

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