

Racial Disparities in the Arkansas Criminal Justice System: Highlights of the Research Findings

Tara V. DeJohn, PhD, LCSW
UALR School of Social Work

Adjoa A. Aiyetoro, MSW, JD
UALR Bowen Law School

Purpose

- To examine the longstanding racial disparities in the Arkansas Criminal Justice System
 - To make recommendations for policy, practice, and community programming based on findings from the research
-

Scope

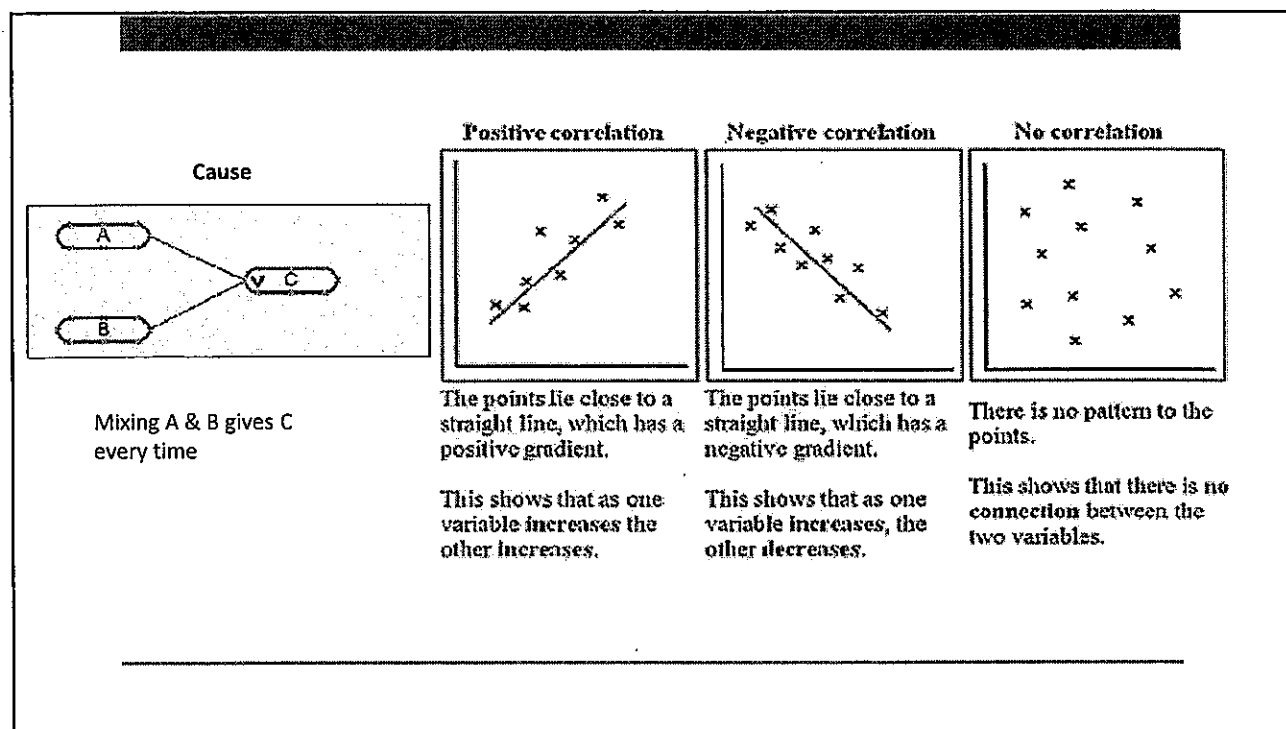
- For those convicted of murder, what role, if any, does race/ethnicity play in the type of charge and length of sentence (punishment) awarded in Arkansas
 - Determination of cause for involvement in the Arkansas Criminal Justice system or predictors of committing homicides **is not** within the scope of this project
-

Number of Records

- As of Spring, 2013 there were 1033 prisoners who met the criteria for the research project
 - 836 prisoners consented to have their records reviewed
 - 538 prisoner records were reviewed
-

Cause, Correlation and Coincidence

- Cause – means that one thing creates a change in another thing; it can be consistently proven that “a” add to “b” will create “c”.
- Correlation – means that two things share some kind of relationship; it can be consistently shown that when “a” is present with “b” more often than not, “c” will occur
- Coincidence – means that two things may occur at the same time, but this happens by random chance and there’s no clear way to determine if it will happen again or how often



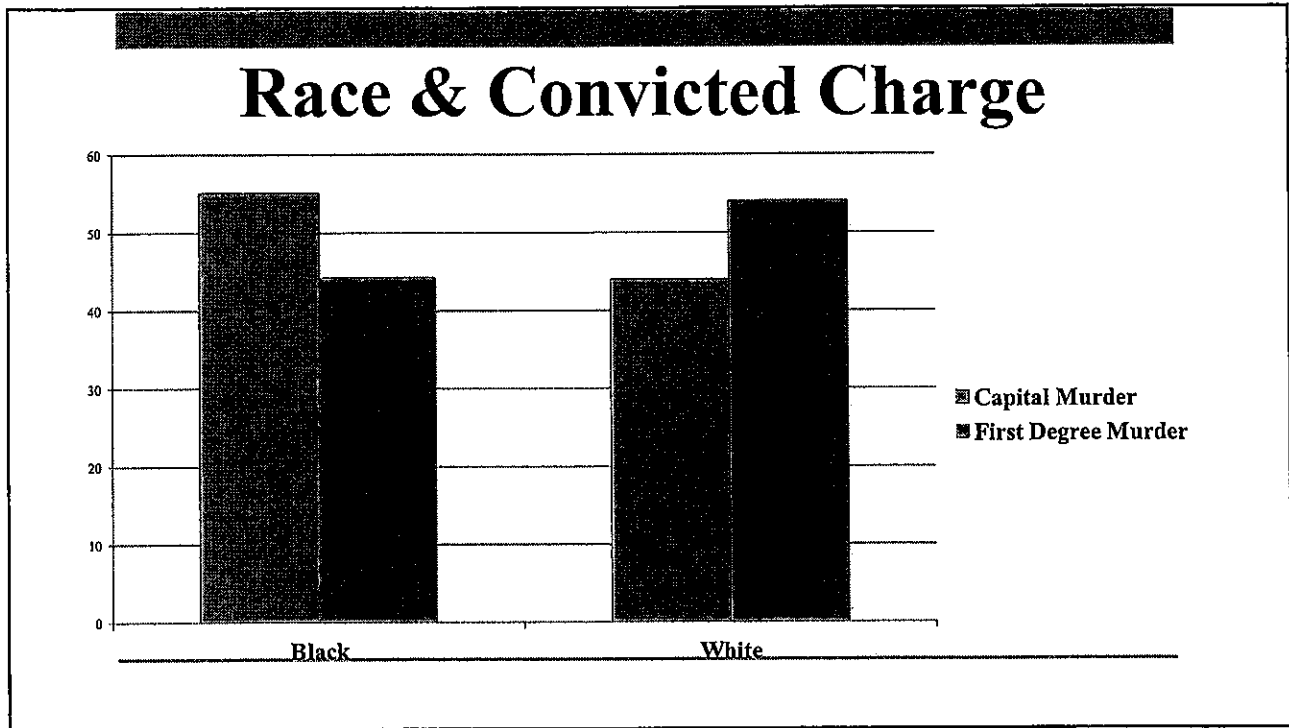
Connection between Correlation and Key Findings

99% certain that the relationship between race and charge and race and sentencing do not exist by chance/coincidence

- The key findings presented all found a significant relationship between race and charge and race and sentencing
-

Key Finding #1

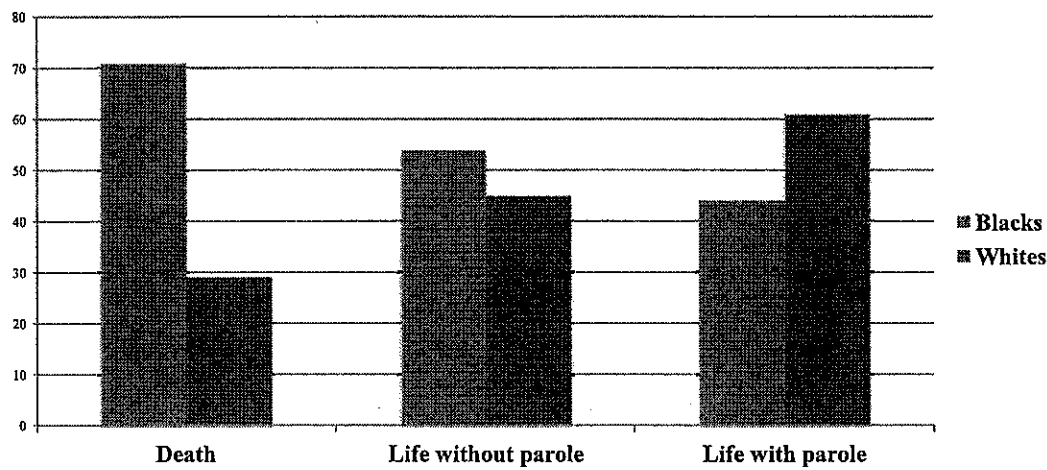
- Blacks were more likely to receive capital murder charges than whites
-



Key Finding #2

- Blacks were more likely to receive more severe punishment than whites, especially the death penalty

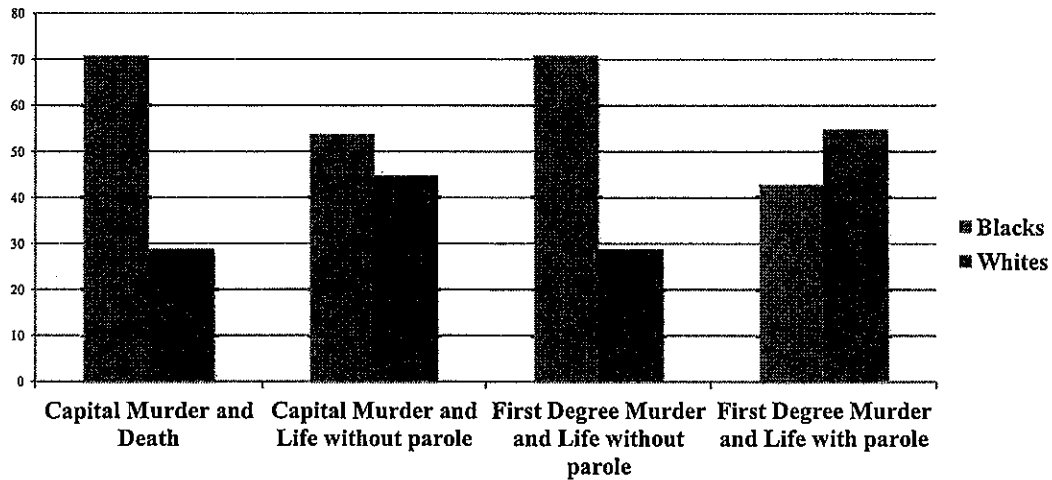
Race & Sentence



Key Finding #3

- Even for the same type of conviction, blacks were more likely to receive more severe punishment than whites

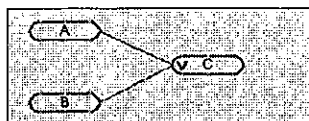
Race & Sentence by Convicted Charge



Conclusion

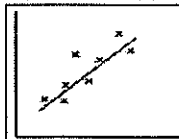
It is 99% certain that type of charge & length of sentence are influenced by race of offender

Cause



Cause - No

Positive correlation

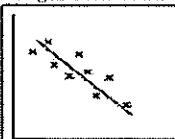


The points lie close to a straight line, which has a positive gradient.

This shows that as one variable increases the other increases.

Correlation - YES

Negative correlation

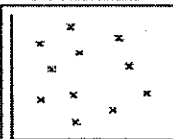


The points lie close to a straight line, which has a negative gradient.

This shows that as one variable increases, the other decreases.

Coincidence - No

No correlation



There is no pattern to the points.

This shows that there is no connection between the two variables.

