

Examining Racial Disparities in Capital Punishment

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Abstract

We explore disparities in U.S. capital punishment. Our hypotheses align with studies indicating that Black Americans are incarcerated at higher rates than other groups. We examine measures of difference in administrative data on life in prison and the death penalty.

Overview

Bohm (2016) outlines theories and practices related to capital punishment in the United States. Other scholars, such as Alexander (2021), analyze prisons and the historical. Fewer studies look at capital punishment. As more researchers consider capital punishment, base studies need to be conducted.

Collapsed categories in capital punishment data guided the analysis:

- **Executed:** The legal process by which a person sentenced to death is put to death as a form of punishment.
- **Exonerated:** A legal declaration that a person previously convicted of a crime is officially cleared of all charges.
- **Resentenced to Life or Less:** A judicial action where a defendant’s original sentence—often a death sentence or a lengthy prison term—is reduced to a lesser sentence, such as life imprisonment without the possibility of parole or life with the possibility of parole.
- **Sentence Commuted:** The reduction or alteration of a defendant’s original sentence by a executive authority (such as a governor or president), which shortens the length of imprisonment or changes the nature of the punishment.
- **Died (Other):** Death by means other than execution, such as dying on death row.

Research Questions

1. What are the sentencing outcome distributions: Executed, Exonerated, Resentenced, Sentence Commuted, and Died?
2. Are defendants proportionally represented across sentencing outcomes, or do disparities exist indicating that either racial group (Black-White) is overrepresented or underrepresented?

Methodology

Data

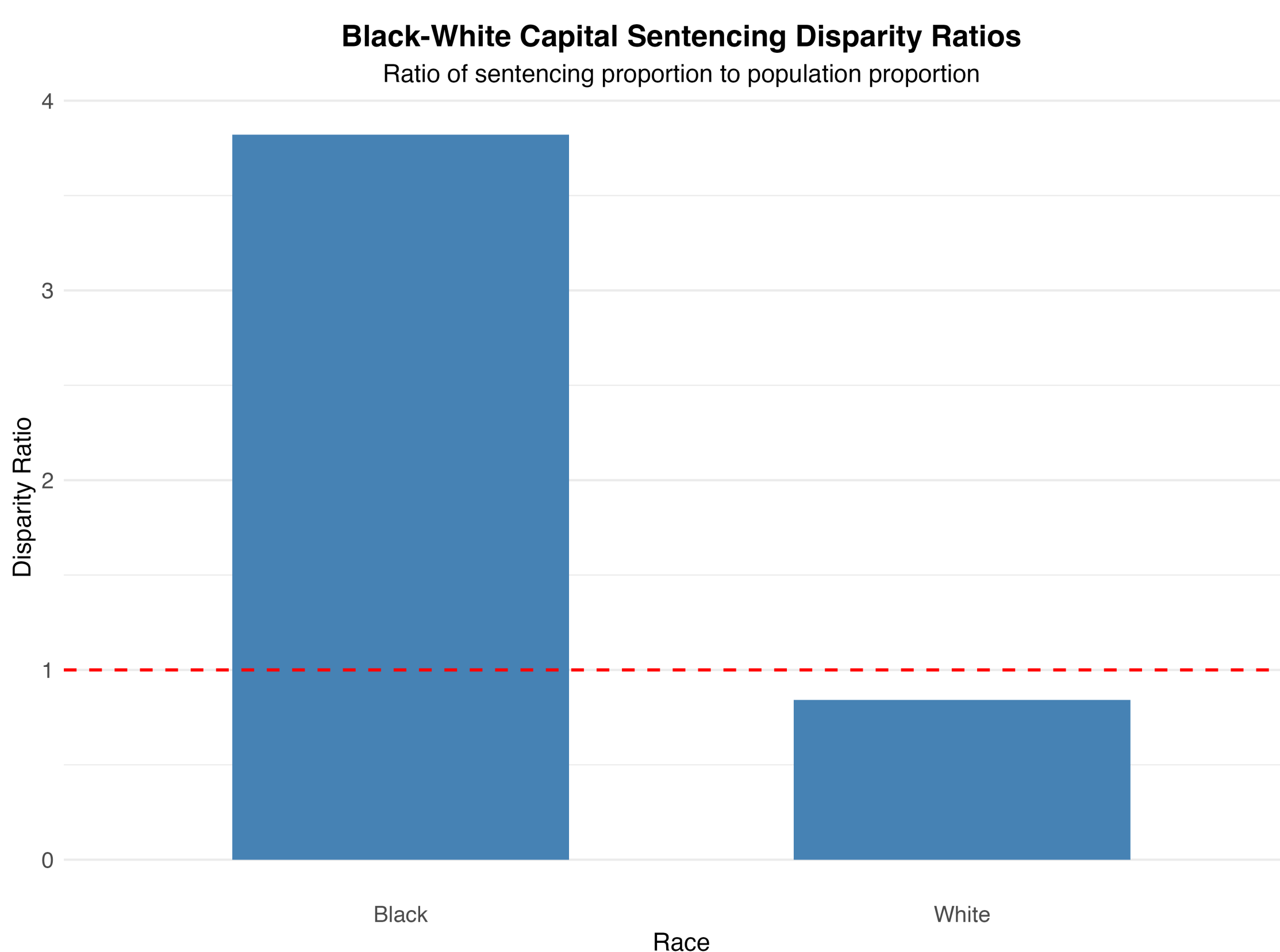
- Capital Punishment Data (historical)
- U.S. Census Data (2023 ACS 5-year Estimates)

We cleaned and integrated data values across both databases.

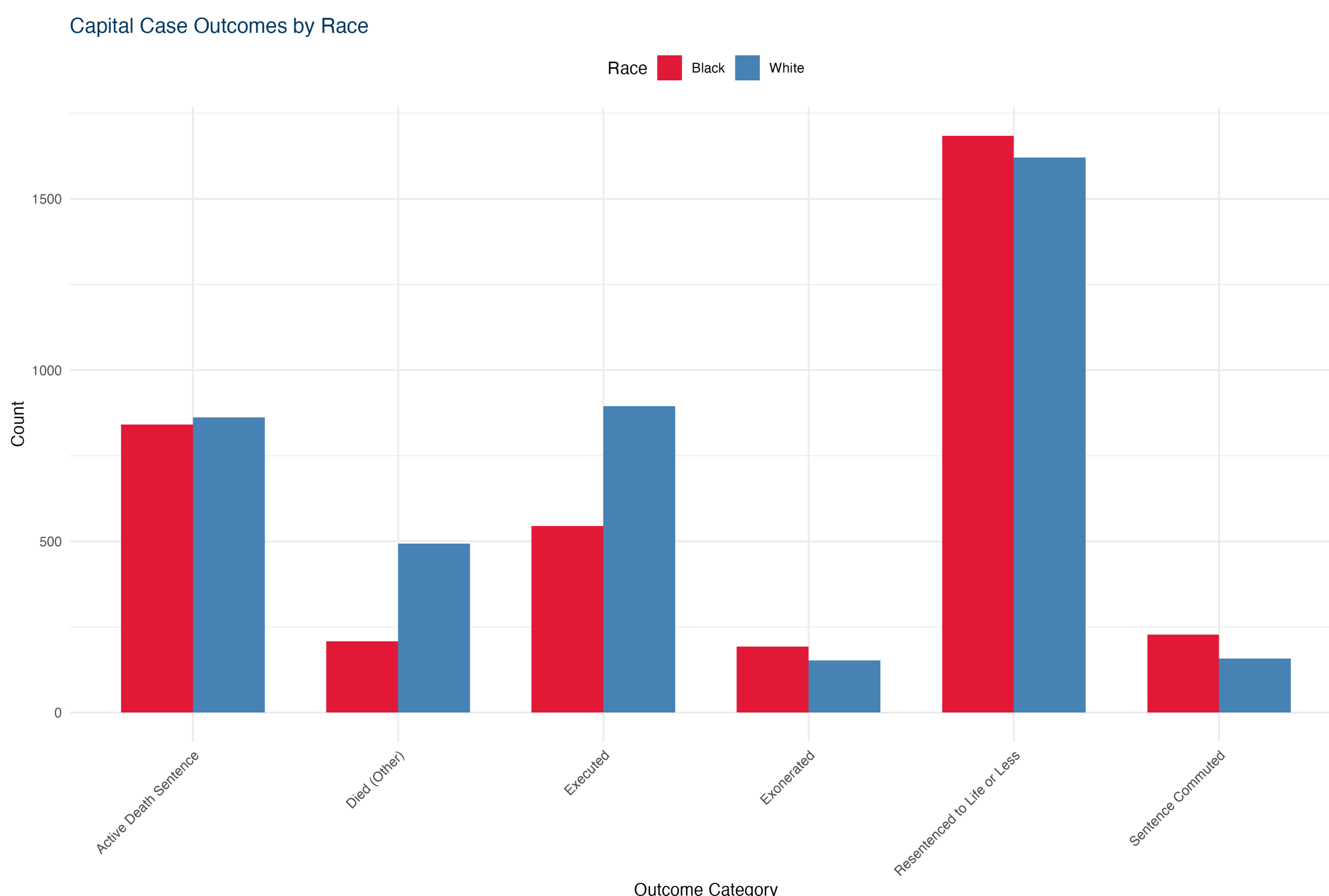
Disparity ratio

$$\frac{\text{Capital Sentencing Proportion}}{\text{Population Proportion}} = \frac{\frac{n}{\sum n}}{\frac{\text{estimate}}{\sum \text{estimate}}}$$

Findings



Race	Count	US Pop	US %	Sentenced %	Disparity Ratio
black	3705	41070890	0.12	0.47	3.82
white	4190	210875446	0.63	0.53	0.84



These are the findings.

Here is finding 1.

Here is finding 2.

Here is finding 3.

Here is finding 4.

Discussion

This is the discussion section (Alexander 2021).

This is the further discussion.

Conclusion

This is some concluding text.

Acknowledgements

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References

Alexander, Michelle. 2021. “The New Jim Crow.” In *Power and Inequality*, 300–304. Routledge.

Bohm, Robert M. 2016. *Deathquest: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Capital Punishment in the United States*. Routledge.