

## DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT (DMC) OF YOUTH WITHIN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN A SOUTHERN STATE

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### ABSTRACT

*Minority youth experience much harsher sentencing for similar crimes compared to Non-minority youth. Previous research has established that Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) exists in every state, and every state in the United States is required to address DMC as a core requirement of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). While it is known that DMC exists within the juvenile justice system, research to document the extent to which DMC occurs is limited. The purpose of this study was to examine the extent of disproportionality of minority versus non-minority youth involved within the juvenile justice system. This quantitative study utilized the differential association theory, the social control theory, and attribution theory as the theoretical basis. A random sample of 500 juvenile offender case files was selected from the juvenile court system of a Southern State. These data were examined by comparing ethnic identity of juvenile offenders to determine if there were differences in the types of criminal offenses committed and the dispositions received. A chi-square test of independence was utilized to test associations between minorities versus non-minority youth. Results of this study revealed no association between ethnicity and the types of offenses committed. However, there is a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the dispositions received. This study can lead to positive social change by establishing a consortium of social services prior to court intervention and by developing a database to track youth involvement in the juvenile*

*justice system. These results can be employed by judges, schools, and probation officers in their efforts toward reducing DMC to provoke positive social change throughout the United States.*

**Key Words:** *Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), Sentencing, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), Minorities, Non-minorities, Disproportionality.*

## INTRODUCTION

Disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in the juvenile justice system in the United States has been identified as a serious issue (Leiber & Rodriguez, 2011). DMC is a phenomenon in which juveniles of minority backgrounds have a disproportionate rate of contact with the justice system than their non-minority counterparts. DMC is a bias that is prevalent within the juvenile justice system and needs to be addressed immediately. DMC is a problem in this Southern State because it has the highest incarceration rate of any state in the country (see Sustainable Communities, 2012; Kempf-Leonard, 2007; Ketchum, 2008; King Jr., 1990; King Jr., 2013; Knoll & Sickmund, 2010; Kobrin & Klein, 1981; Krisberg, 2009; Kurtz, Linnemann, & Spohn, 2008). In an effort to help states fulfill the requirement to address DMC, the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) developed a technical assistance strategy (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009; 2012) in every state. These institutional attempts to address DMC indicate the severity of the issue.

Race and ethnicity have been shown to be the major predictors of arrest outcomes in the arrest phase than the actual crime committed (W. Haywood Burns Institute, 2014; 2011). Judges, in addition to court personnel needed to obtain a thorough understanding of the existence of racial disparity in the juvenile justice system and its impact on society. Tapia (2010); (2010); (2011); and Fox and Leiber, (2005) asserted that police officers make arrests for serious offenses at a similar rate, but a racial disparity definitely existed when the offense committed was of an insignificant nature. The study examined DMC in an attempt to contribute to an understanding of the problem. Information obtained from this research could be utilized by judges, probation officers, service providers, parents, essential school personnel, prosecutors, public policy personnel, and political leaders to enable them to evoke positive social change in public policies that directly impact DMC.

The study examined the impact of DMC has on the juvenile justice system in a Southern State by assessing the extent of disproportionate involvement with the juvenile justice system during 2007 to 2009. Prior years failed to depict a true assessment of the extent of DMC because of youth being displaced after Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, these years were chosen for the study because people migrated back to the area after

Hurricane Katrina. The findings of this study highlighted the importance of addressing DMC at every entry point within the juvenile justice system.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the degree of association that race has on DMC between minority and non-minority youth that were involved with the juvenile justice system in a Southern State. Authoritative figures needed to obtain a thorough understanding of the existence of racial disparity in the juvenile justice system and the impact that it had on society. Information obtained from this research could be utilized by judges, probation officers, service providers, parents, essential school personnel, prosecutors, public policy personnel, and political leaders.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ivan Nye's social control theory and Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory functioned as the theoretical foundation for this study (Skrzypiec, 2013). Both theorists employed dissimilar methods to clarify the causes of delinquency. The relationship between delinquent acts and dispositions received could be justified by propositions from Nye's social control theory and Sutherland's differential association theory. According to (Skrzypiec, 2013), Sutherland's differential association theory received disapproval because of the lack of experiential testing. However, on an individual level, differences in regard to biology, mental state, and environment could perhaps negatively impact interactions between juveniles and their peers (Hartinger-Saunders, 2011). Researchers such as Skrzypiec (2013) have concentrated on empirically supporting the differential association theory.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted *ex post facto*, which signified that the research is conducted after the variations in the independent variable had already naturally occurred (Stringer, 2013). This type of research attempted to find the differences or causes that already existed between groups or individuals that had already occurred by comparing previously established data to determine what created the differences.

Chi-square is a general test designed to evaluate whether the difference between observed frequencies and expected frequencies under a set of theoretical assumptions is statistically significant. If the differences between the observed and expected frequencies were large as to only occur rarely, the null hypothesis was rejected (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The mean differences between racial or ethnic statuses (minority or

non-minority) of juvenile offenders were compared as it related to the following outcomes: the type of offenses committed and the disposition received from a Southern State Juvenile Court.

The data collected in the proposed study was analyzed using a chi-square test for independence. Two assumptions had to be met in order to justify the use of the chi-square test. The first assumption was that the observations were independent. No two scores could be related to each other. The second assumption was that the expected frequencies in each cell were greater than 5. If either of these assumptions was violated, a chi-square test could not be used to test for independence (Green & Salkind, 2010).

### **This study hypothesized two major hypotheses which were;**

The following research questions and hypotheses were derived from the review of existing literature pertaining to DMC.

**Research question 1:** Was there a statistically significant association between racial or ethnic status (minority or non-minority) and the types of offenses committed by juvenile offenders?

**Null hypothesis 1:** There was not a statistically significant association between racial or ethnic status (minority or non-minority) and the types of offenses committed by juvenile offenders.

**Research question 2:** Was there a statistically significant association between racial or ethnic status (minority or non-minority) and the disposition received from the Southern State Juvenile Court by minority juvenile offenders?

**Null hypothesis 2:** There was not a statistically significant association between racial or ethnic status (minority or non-minority) and the disposition received from the Southern State Juvenile Court by minority juvenile offenders.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES**

The data set consisted of 500 youth who resided in a Southern State during the years 2007 through 2009. These juvenile case files were evaluated based on race to determine if there were differences in the types of offenses committed and the disposition they received. The demographic information that was collected for analysis included the following: race, age, gender, type of offense committed, and disposition received. However, some juveniles had multiple offenses thereby receiving a separate disposition for each offense. These cases were evaluated individually by race/ethnicity and the offense committed to analyze if there was a

statistically significant association in the disposition received. The last disposition received was utilized for purposes of evaluation in this study.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Mac was utilized to perform the data analysis. The SPSS statistical package was one of the most widely available and used software packages in the social sciences (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). SPSS was designed for the analysis of social science data and contained most of the test utilized by social scientists. All data and scores were entered into a database for further analyses.

## DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

For the sake of clarification of the types of database collected and classified, the tables and figures were tagged as tables 4.1...and figures 4.1...and so on.

### *Gender of Offenders*

Table 4.1 represented the gender of the individuals in the analysis and showed a total of 363 male and 137 female juveniles who committed offenses. Expected counts in the tables were the set of proportions that should be true in the chi-square test. The expected counts for this test were 250 African Americans and 250 Caucasian Americans total for all offense categories. The observed counts were the set of proportions that were observed after the chi-square test was performed (Walden, 2014). The male juveniles were 72.6% of the overall population examined ( $n = 500$ ); female juveniles were 27.4% of the population examined. The male juveniles committed 122 property offenses, which accounted for 24.4% of the sample population. The female juveniles committed 71 property offenses, which accounted for 14.2% of the sample population. The male juveniles committed 42 drug offenses, which accounted for 8.4% of the sample population. Female juveniles committed only 3 drug offenses, which accounted for 0.6% of the sample population.

**Table 4.1**  
*Gender of Offenders*

| Offense      |                | Gender        |        | Total |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------|-------|
|              |                | (male/female) |        |       |
|              |                | Male          | Female |       |
| Person       | Count          | 60            | 13     | 73    |
|              | Expected Count | 53.0          | 20.0   | 73.0  |
| Property     | Count          | 122           | 71     | 193   |
|              | Expected Count | 140.1         | 52.9   | 193.0 |
| Drug         | Count          | 42            | 3      | 45    |
|              | Expected Count | 32.7          | 12.3   | 45.0  |
| Public Order | Count          | 55            | 15     | 70    |
|              | Expected Count | 50.8          | 19.2   | 70.0  |
| Status       | Count          | 84            | 35     | 119   |
|              | Expected Count | 86.4          | 32.6   | 119.0 |
| Total        | Count          | 363           | 137    | 500   |
|              | Expected Count | 363.0         | 137.0  | 500.0 |

### Dispositions According to Gender

Table 4.2 represented dispositions received by gender of the sample in the analysis and showed a total of 250 minority and 250 non-minority juveniles for this part of the analysis. A total of 233 cases were terminated or closed for males, which represented 73.5% of the total number of cases closed from both genders. On the other hand, only 84 cases were closed for females that constituted 26.5% of the total of 317 cases that were closed. Only 29 individuals received incarceration, of which 26 were male that represented 89.7% of that sample and 3 were female that represented 10.3% of that disposition by gender.

The expected count for termination/closed disposition for males were 230.1 and the observed count was 233. On the other hand, the expected count for females was 86.9, while the observed count was 84. However, this represented 73.5% and 26.5%, of the total 317 dispositions that resulted in terminating or closing the case, respectively. A total of 73 males received juvenile probation, which represented 20.1% of the sample and 18 females that represented 13.1% of the sample that received juvenile probation.

**Table 4.2**  
*Dispositions According to Gender*

| Disposition Received |                | Gender |        | Total |
|----------------------|----------------|--------|--------|-------|
|                      |                | Male   | Female |       |
| Termination/Closed   | Count          | 233    | 84     | 317   |
|                      | Expected Count | 230.1  | 86.9   | 317.0 |
| Incarceration        | Count          | 26     | 3      | 29    |
|                      | Expected Count | 21.1   | 7.9    | 29.0  |
| Juvenile Probation   | Count          | 73     | 18     | 91    |
|                      | Expected Count | 66.1   | 24.9   | 91.0  |
| Other Disposition    | Count          | 31     | 32     | 63    |
|                      | Expected Count | 45.7   | 17.3   | 63.0  |
| Total                | Count          | 363    | 137    | 500   |
|                      | Expected Count | 363.0  | 137.0  | 500.0 |

**Results for the Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The chi-square test of independence was employed to examine if there was a statistically significant association between racial or ethnic status (minority or non-minority) and the types of offenses committed by juvenile offenders as it related to specific outcomes in the Southern State Juvenile Court. These specific outcomes included the types of offenses committed (person offense, property offense, drug offense, public order offense, and status offense), and the disposition received from the Southern State Juvenile Court (termination/closed, incarceration, probation, and any other disposition received) by minority versus non-minority juvenile offenders.

The researcher examined the independent variable of race or ethnicity (minority, non-minority) and the dependent variables of types of offenses and disposition received from the Southern State Juvenile Court. A chi-square test of independence was utilized for this study because both variables were nominal and had at least two categories. The Pearson’s chi-square test was the best known and most frequently used test when trying to examine the differences between the expected and actual counts (Field, 2013). Chi-square could be used to review the statistical significance of the differences between the variables in this study (Green and Salkind, 2010).

Table 4.3 below represented the offenses committed by race or ethnicity (minority, non-minority) for this analysis. Minorities’ committed 40 person offenses that equal to 54.8% of the total person offenses committed.

Of the total number of youth who committed person offenses, minority youth represented 54.8% as compared to 45.2% of non-minority youth. Minorities' committed 43.5% of the total of 193 property offenses committed. Conversely, non-minorities committed 109 property offenses of the total of 193 property offenses that were committed. As shown in Table 4.3 minority youth committed 38 public offenses that were more than the expected count.

**Table 4.3**  
*Offenders: Minority and Non-Minority*

| Offense              |                | Minority | Non-Minority | Total |
|----------------------|----------------|----------|--------------|-------|
| Person Offense       | Count          | 40       | 33           | 73    |
|                      | Expected Count | 36.5     | 36.5         | 73.0  |
| Property Offense     | Count          | 84       | 109          | 193   |
|                      | Expected Count | 96.5     | 96.5         | 193.0 |
| Drug Offense         | Count          | 26       | 19           | 45    |
|                      | Expected Count | 22.5     | 22.5         | 45.0  |
| Public Order Offense | Count          | 38       | 32           | 70    |
|                      | Expected Count | 35.0     | 35.0         | 70.0  |
| Status Offense       | Count          | 62       | 57           | 119   |
|                      | Expected Count | 59.5     | 59.5         | 119.0 |
| Total                | Count          | 250      | 250          | 500   |
|                      | Expected Count | 250.0    | 250.0        | 500.0 |

Table 4.4 represented the chi-square test of independence for the types of offenses committed, which was used to answer Research Question 1. If the p-value was less than 0.05 in social sciences, then there was evidence in the data to conclude that the association between racial/ethnic status (minority/non-minority) and each type of offense committed is statistically significant (Field, 2013). However, the alpha level was .221 which indicated that there was no statistical significance between racial/ethnic status (minority/non-minority) and each type of offense committed.

Consequently, utilizing the chi-square test of independence to test the research hypotheses concluded that there was no significant relationship between the ethnic/racial status (minority/non-minority) and the types of offenses committed by juveniles who came into contact with the Southern State Juvenile Court. Results of this non-parametric statistical test suggested that the types of offenses committed did not vary according to race or



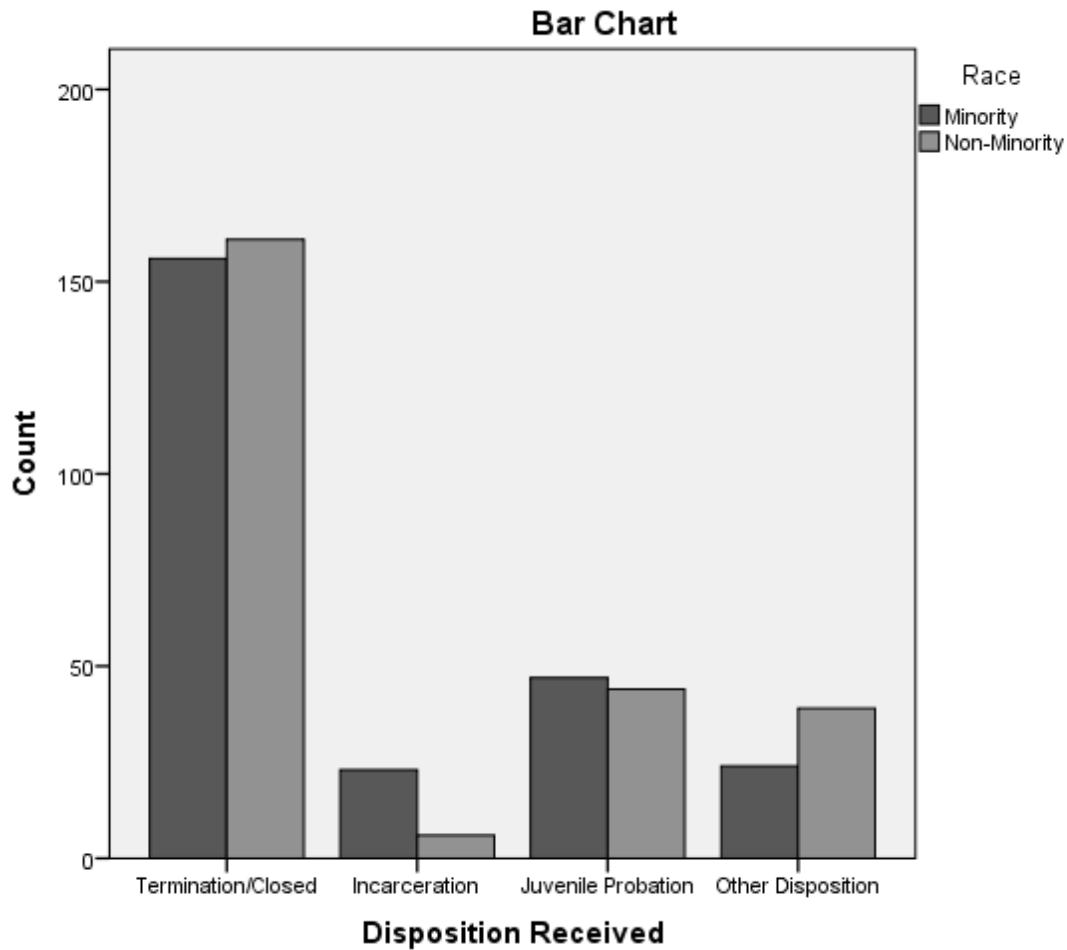
ethnicity. Minorities committed seven more person offenses than non-minorities. On the other hand, non-minorities committed 109 property offenses, whereas minorities committed 84 property offenses.

**Table 4.4**  
*Chi-square for Offenders: Minority and Non-Minority*

|                                 | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig.<br>(2-sided) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square              | 5.723 <sup>a</sup> | 4  | .221                     |
| Likelihood Ratio                | 5.738              | 4  | .220                     |
| Linear-by-Linear<br>Association | .707               | 1  | .400                     |
| N of Valid Cases                | 500                |    |                          |

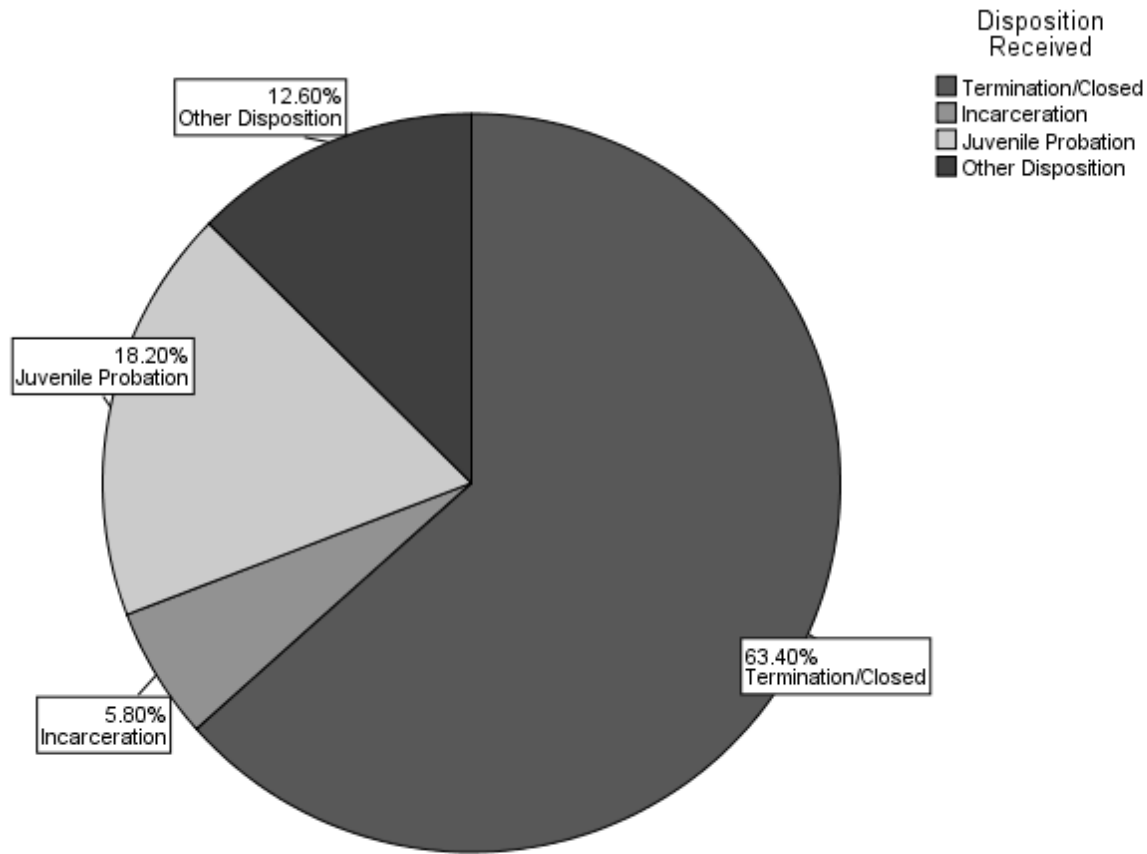
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.50.

*Figure 4.1* represented the bar chart in offenses committed by race with juvenile offenders in the Southern State Juvenile Court during the years 2007 through 2009. The figure showed that non-minority offenders at a higher rate as compared to minority offenders were committing property offenses. This appears to be the only area of offenses committed where non-minority offenders had more offenses. However, in regard to status offenses and public order offenses, t no obvious statistical insignificant differences existed in types of offenses committed based on an offenders' race.



**Figure 4.2 Bar graph showing dispositions received by minority and non-minority status**

Figure 3 was a graph of the dispositions received from the Southern State Juvenile Court. Other dispositions represented 12.6% of the total. Juvenile Probation represented 18.2% of the total population in this study. Incarceration represented 5.8% of the total population. The mean for incarceration was 1.12, with a standard deviation of .412. Termination/case closure consisted of 63.4% of the entire population for this study. The mean for terminations or closures was 1.51, with a standard deviation of .501.



**Figure 4.3 Pie Chart of Dispositions from the Southern State Juvenile Court**

Table 4.5 presented chi-square test of independence for the types of dispositions received from the Southern State Juvenile Court. As previously stated, if the p-value (Asymp. Sig.) was less than 0.5, and then there was evidence in the data to conclude that the association between racial/ethnic (minority, non-minority) and each disposition received is statistically significant. In this study, a statistical significance existed in the dispositions received by minority and non-minority youth. For that reason, utilizing chi-square test of independence to test Research Question 2 determined that there was a relationship between the ethnic/racial status and the types of dispositions received by the youth who came in contact with the Southern State Juvenile Court.

**Table 4.5**  
*Chi Square Test by Dispositions*

|                                 | Value               | df | Asymp. Sig.<br>(2-sided) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square              | 13.715 <sup>a</sup> | 3  | .003                     |
| Likelihood Ratio                | 14.417              | 3  | .002                     |
| Linear-by-Linear<br>Association | .755                | 1  | .385                     |
| N of Valid Cases                | 500                 |    |                          |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.50.

Table 4.6 represented the Cramer’s Phi, which was performed as a follow up test in chi-square to test the importance of the differences found. Values that are close to 1 suggested a very strong relationship. Cramer’s Phi value was .166, which signified a weak association between dispositions received by minority and non-minority youth. According to Field (2013), if Cramer’s Phi value was closer to 0, then the association was weak.

**Table 4.6**  
*Cramer’s Phi by Dispositions*

|                  |            | Value | Approx.<br>Sig. |
|------------------|------------|-------|-----------------|
| Nominal by       | Phi        | .166  | .003            |
| Nominal          | Cramer's V | .166  | .003            |
| N of Valid Cases |            | 500   |                 |

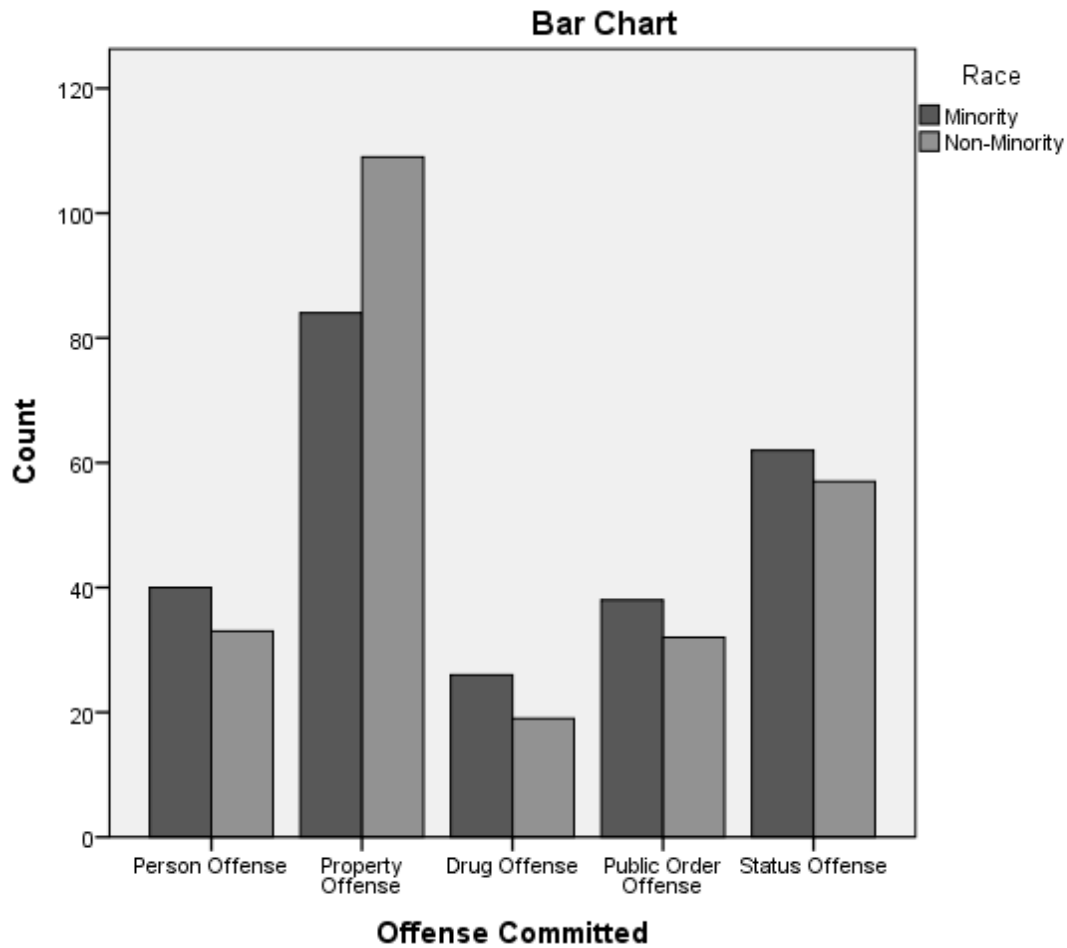


Figure 4.3

**Offenders: Minority and Non-Minority**

Table 4.6 represented the follow up test, Cramer’s Phi. This test was used as a follow up test to the chi-square test of independence. Cramer’s Phi ranged in value from -1 to +1. Values that were close to 1 indicate a very strong relationship. Values close to 0 indicated a weak relationship (Green & Salkind, 2010). Cramer’s Phi value resulted in .107 for this analysis, which is close to 0, and signifies a weak relationship. According to Green and Salkind (2010), .10, .30, and .50 represented small, medium, and large effect sizes respectively.

Cramer’s Phi follow up test the non-parametric chi-square test of independence basically indicated that there was not an adequate relationship determined between offenses committed and the race of the offender. Minorities and non-minorities committed similar crimes, resulting in no significant finding on the outcome of the chi-square test performed for this study. Ordinarily, it would be significant to report if the Cramer’s Phi follow

up test would have indicated a .30 or higher value. The alpha level for Table 4.6 is .221, so the results were not statistically significant.

**Table 4.6**  
*Cramer's Phi for Offenders: Minority and Non-Minority*

| Symmetric Measures    |            | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|-----------------------|------------|-------|--------------|
| Nominal by            | Phi        | .107  | .221         |
| Nominal               | Cramer's V | .107  | .221         |
| Valid Cases, <i>N</i> |            | 500   |              |

As shown in Table 4.7, minority youth received higher rates of incarceration based on the expected count of 14.5 and the observed count of 23. Of the total youth who were incarcerated, minority youth accounted for 79.3% as compared to 20.7% of non-minority youth. Non-Minority youth cases were terminated/closed at a rate of 50.8%, while minority youth cases were terminated/closed at a rate of 49.2%. These cases were closed for various reasons, such as dismissed by the state, petition dismissed, dismissed by the court and dismissed because there were no bases for court referral.

This data indicated that all juveniles were arrested at a very high rate, but over 50% of the arrest led to dismissal of charges for various reasons. Twenty-four minority offenders, as well as 39 non-minority offenders received other dispositions for offenses committed. Minority youth were placed on juvenile probation 51.6%, compared to non-minority youth at a rate of 48.4%, which did not indicate a great gap in dispositions received from this Southern State Juvenile Court. These statistics indicated that in all dispositional categories that non-minority youth received a higher percentage of the total dispositions received with the exception of terminations and case closures.

Table 4.7 showed that minority juvenile offenders received 156 terminations out of 317 total offenders or 49% of total terminations during the years 2007 to 2009. In contrast, non-minority juvenile offenders received 161 terminations out of 317 total terminations or approximately 51% of all terminations the same year. The medium expected (threshold) termination rate was 159 offenders. This number was higher than minority termination rates, but lower than non-minority termination rates.

**Table 4.7**  
*Dispositions: Minority and Non-Minority*

| Dispositions       |                | Race     |              | Total |
|--------------------|----------------|----------|--------------|-------|
|                    |                | Minority | Non-Minority |       |
| Termination/Closed | Count          | 156      | 161          | 317   |
|                    | Expected Count | 158.5    | 158.5        | 317.0 |
| Incarceration      | Count          | 23       | 6            | 29    |
|                    | Expected Count | 14.5     | 14.5         | 29.0  |
| Juvenile Probation | Count          | 47       | 44           | 91    |
|                    | Expected Count | 45.5     | 45.5         | 91.0  |
| Other Disposition  | Count          | 24       | 39           | 63    |
|                    | Expected Count | 31.5     | 31.5         | 63.0  |
| Total              | Count          | 250      | 250          | 500   |
|                    | Expected Count | 250.0    | 250.0        | 500.0 |

Figure 2 showed data consistent with Table 4.6 data for the specific dispositions received in the juvenile court system during the years 2007 through 2009. Figure 2 showed that non-minority offenders were more likely to receive case terminations or closures than minority offender. Also, minority offenders were more likely to receive incarceration dispositions than non-minority juvenile offenders. Further, the figure showed that minority offenders were more likely to receive juvenile probation dispositions while non-minority were more likely to receive other dispositions than those received by minority juvenile offenders.

**DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

DMC unambiguously existed in the juvenile justice system in the United States and public policies should be established to ensure that the critical issues relevant to DMC and the future for juvenile offenders were addressed. To effectively address DMC, a thorough examination was needed of the practices currently in place that were geared toward circumventing the existence of the affect of DMC on Juvenile Public Policy. These practices did not clearly address disproportionality in a significant manner. Otherwise, the study would not have yielded a significant finding in the dispositions that minority juvenile offenders received compared to non-minority juvenile offenders. According to Kamalu, Coulson-Clark, and Kamalu (2010), Caucasian Americans had greater access to excellent treatment and complimentary social service programs prior to being referred to court. Inevitably, averting juveniles from crime and confinement and toward rehabilitation seldom resulting in a juvenile

record for the offender (see Erdelja et al., 2013; FBI, 2008; Feld, 1991; 1999; Fitzgerald, 2011; Fox, & Leiber, 2005).

It summation, it should be noted that DMC issues will continue to persist until additional researches are conducted to address current public policies that continue to have negative social implications for American youth especially for minority Americans. The findings in this study suggested that minority status plays a role in the disposition received for minority offenders. The mere acknowledgement of this statistical significance indicated that more exploration on the subject was needed to effect positive social change for all American youths.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

Studies showed that African American youth were disproportionately sanctioned at higher rates than white youth who committed similar crimes (Davis & Sorensen, 2010; 2013; W. Haywood Burns Institute, 2011). The disproportions had been documented, but had been ignored by agents of the criminal justice system and have led to DMC. As current agents of positive social changes dedicated to shedding lights on the disproportionality in the dispositions received in the Southern State Juvenile Court the publication of this study, will help to alleviate the negative influence that DMC has on Public Policy and Administration issues as they surround juvenile justice cases' processing.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study recommends that the following measures should be taken as to enhance knowledge about DMC nationally and statewide and to identify and implement strategies to minimize it:

1. Institute a consortium of social services in the Southern State Juvenile Court prior to a youth being referred to their system. These services can range from in home counseling such as Multi-Systemic Therapy or Mental Health Professional Counseling.
2. Establish a database at the police and sheriff's department to track the involvement of offenders in any crime or offense they might commit. Document the case outcome of all juveniles once they come in contact with their agency.
3. Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) need to be enforced by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). PBIS could potentially eliminate juveniles being referred to the court system to address issues that should be addressed within the school system (Willoughby, 2012).



The findings of this study should motivate the Southern State Juvenile Justice policy decision makers to revisit their guidelines for the initial referral of a juvenile to court for adjudication. Also, revisiting these policies should shed some lights on the impact of disproportionality, as it currently exists in dispositions that minority offenders receive. Addressing these sentencing guidelines will eventually lead to the redirection of viable resources toward the development of effective criminal justice policies which could bring about positive social change in the terms of equitable sentencing distributions to all offenders regardless of race.

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## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

We share no conflict of interest in this study.

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