

Baumgartner, POLI 203

Spring 2016

Race of Inmate and Victim studies

February 8, 2016

Central Prison Visits

- Sign-up sheets here after class, 30 per trip, max.
- See class web site for details on where to meet, how to dress (!), what to bring (an ID but pretty much nothing else), etc.
- Dates:
 - Fri 2/26
 - Mon 2/29
 - Mon 3/28
 - Fri 4/22
 - Fri 4/29

From last time

- Article from the Washington Post about the use of jailhouse fabricators from Feb 3 2016:
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/va-murder-trial-may-become-part-of-national-debate-on-jail-informants/2016/02/03/eb12993a-ba28-11e5-829c-26ffb874a18d_story.html

News on exonerations

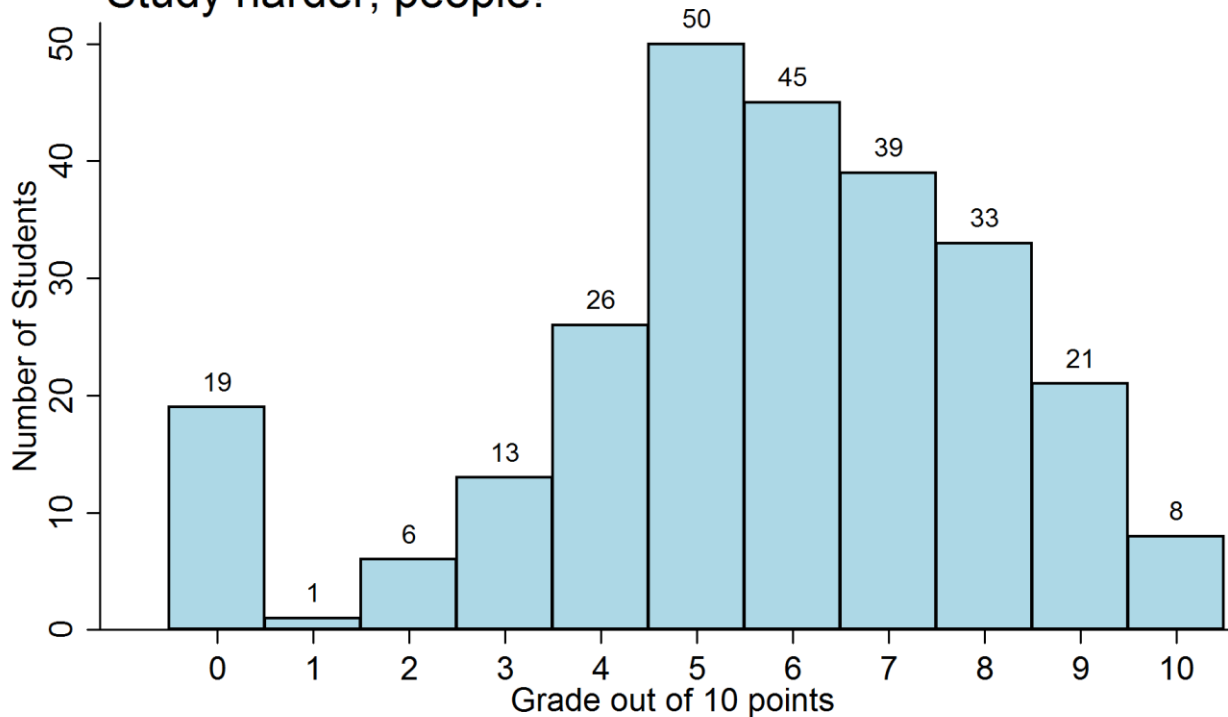
- From The New York Times Feb 4, 2016
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/04/us/record-number-of-false-convictions-overturned-in-2015.html>
- Record number (58) of homicide exonerations in 2015, including 5 from death row; see National Registry of Exonerations

Review of quiz

- According to lecture, about what percent of capital trial defendants are indigent?
85-95%
- According to lecture, about what percent of death sentences are eventually overturned? 60-80%
- The case of Herbert Richardson is described in *Just Mercy*. Herbert Richardson was a Vietnam veteran suffering from mental illness who built a bomb so he could save his ex-girlfriend. As a result, a little girl died and he was sentenced to death.
- African Americans are excluded from juries at higher rates than whites, which is a practice known as jury bleaching.
- Give the name of the US Supreme Court decision that exempted the mentally handicapped from the death penalty. Atkins v. Virginia
- To what Alabama county was the trial of Walter McMillan moved?
Baldwin
- How did Judge Robert E. Lee Key describe Walter McMillan to Bryan Stevenson during their first phone conversation after Stevenson had decided to take up McMillan's case? drug kingpin
- Before 1910, what was the primary method of execution used by the state of North Carolina? hanging
- Where was Walter McMillan during the murder of Ronda Morrison?
church/fish fry
- According to lecture, what city has the highest rate of homicides per 100,000 people?
New Orleans

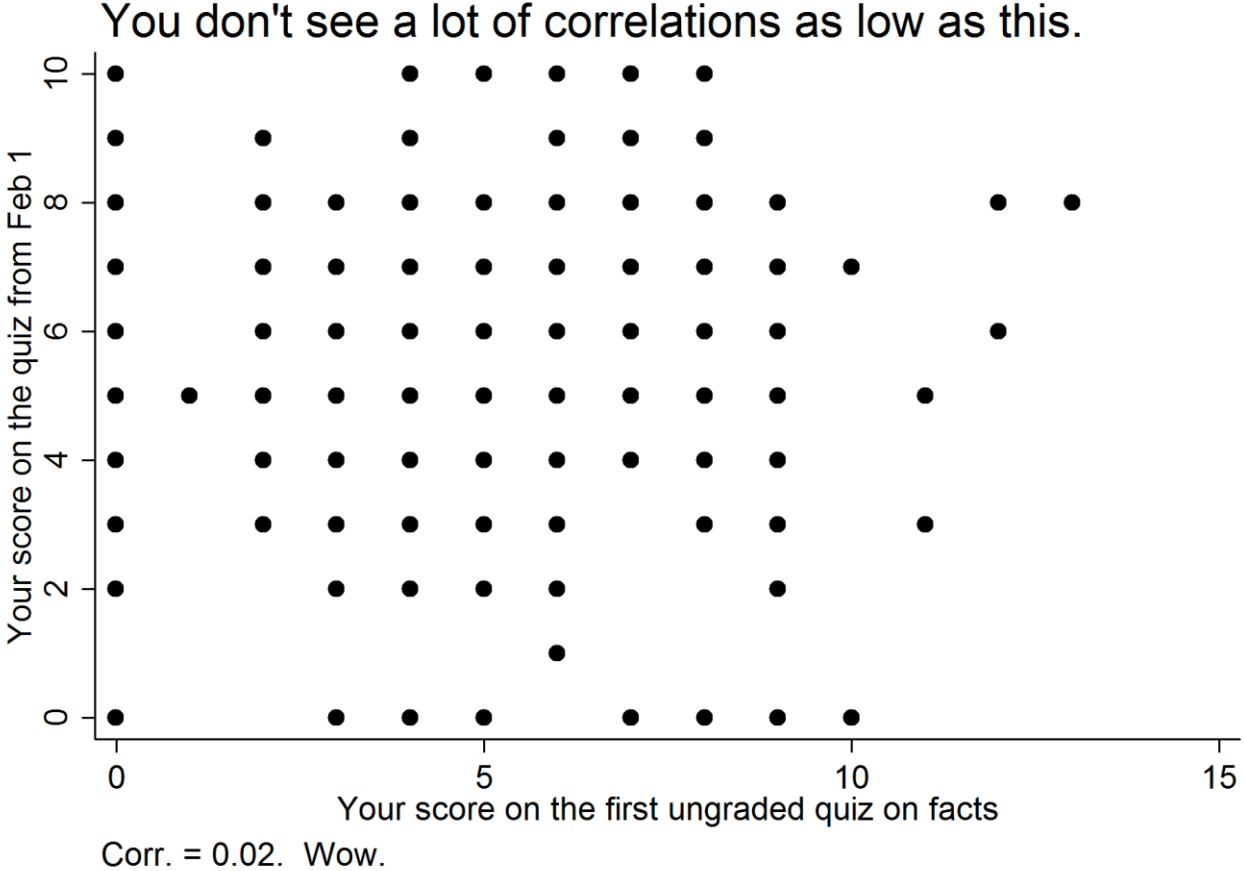
Your quiz results: Aggh!

First graded quiz, Feb 1, out of 10.
Study harder, people!



This is not really very good. Just because it's Poli Sci does not mean you don't have to read.... Mean grade: 5.68; Median grade, 6. N = 242 / 261.

First-day of class quiz has zero correlation with Feb 1 quiz, wow.



Race of Victim and Race of Inmate

- PGI studies, tables and figures
- Biblio study first
 - Decision to prosecute
 - Life or death from the jury and judge
- Then national study
 - Pay attention to Appendix B, the list of 17 cases
- Limitations to the study: all homicides, not only capital eligible ones.
- Note: Race of inmate by itself not a strong effect, for reasons explained below: depends on the victim.

Appendix

- The bibliographic studies
- The particular cases where whites have been executed
 - Crimes in prison
 - Explicit KKK crimes, such as Jasper, TX

Some interesting follow-ups

- Mendoza Line
 - <http://themendozaline.org/post/120961302906/the-disparate-racial-impact-of-the-american-death>
- Four state reports
 - MO, LA, FL, OH (so far)
 - Very simple presentations of the data
 - See DPIC graphics following, based on these reports

Race of Victim Discrimination

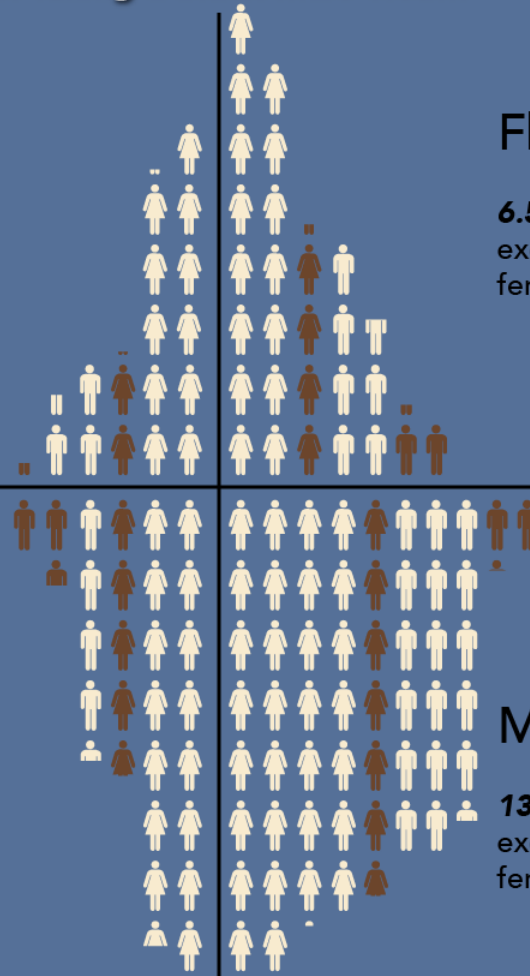
Throughout the country, a prisoner is much more likely to be executed for killing a white female than any other victim, and is least likely to be executed for killing a black male victim

Louisiana

48.8 times more likely to be executed for killing a white female than a black male

Florida

6.5 times more likely to be executed for killing a white female than a black male



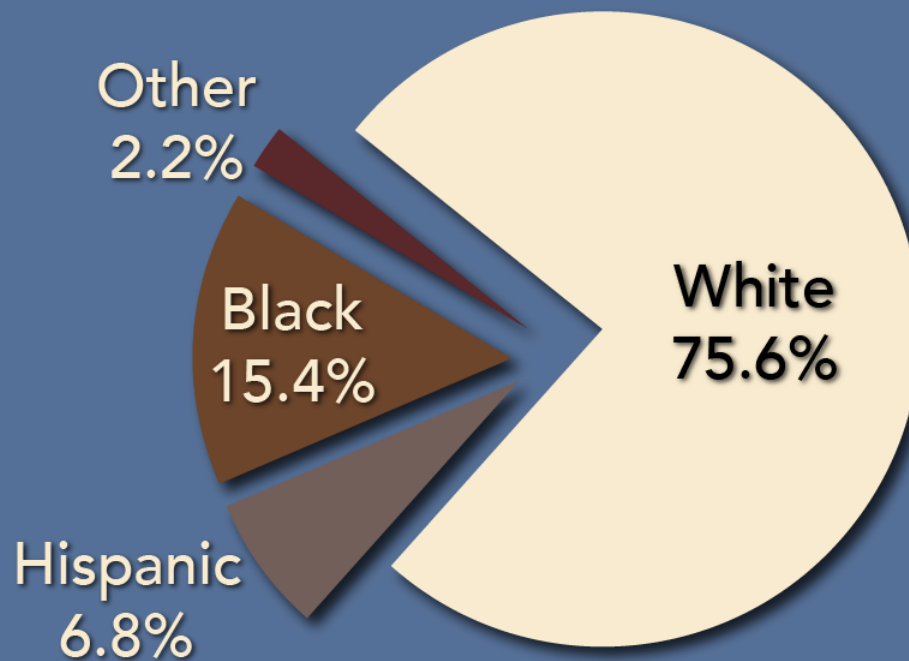
Ohio

6.2 times more likely to be executed for killing a white female than a black male

Missouri

13.7 times more likely to be executed for killing a white female than a black male

Race of Victims in Death Penalty Cases



Nationally, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though 50% of murder victims nationwide are white.

Very depressing, upsetting findings

- 400 years of history, no single cause
- Some possible causes:
 - Explicit racial bias on the part of those involved. (Very hard to demonstrate...)
 - Structural biases in factors that generate crime
 - Racial differences in poverty, opportunity, etc.
 - Structural biases in factors that generate capital prosecutions in some cases but not others
 - White female victims as a special class
 - Black male victims as a category with little official concern. From last time, we know they are BOTH the most likely offenders as well as the most likely victims. But crimes against them are rarely punished to the same extent...

Sorry!

- This research is extremely depressing and upsetting.
- One cannot improve our society by believing only in unicorns, rainbows, light, and honey.
- Sometimes you have to look it in the eye to recognize the darkest elements.
- Hopefully by recognizing the flaws, we can make them go away.
- Certainly, we cannot make them go away if we do not recognize them.