RESEARCH BRIEF

Violent Crime on Campus: A Case for More Research

Cindy G. Roper, M.S.

While there exists a rich dataset of information on crime victimization in the United States, it appears that little of these data have been utilized to critically examine differential crime victimization rates between African American and other students on college campuses. However, one study suggests that a positive relationship exists between race and crime (Sloan, 1994). Another study that did examine student victimization on campus found no relationship between race and either violence or theft (Fisher, Sloan, Cullen, & Lu, 1998). Other studies have looked at victimization but not race (Henson & Stone, 1999).

On the other hand, a 2005 study by Baum and Klaus used the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to examine violent crime and victimization of college students (see Table 1 for definitions of violent crime). While this study addressed race and ethnicity in a limited fashion, data indicate that:

- **White students have the highest overall rates of violent crime as well as the highest rates of simple assault.**

- **African American students are robbed at higher rates than any other students and at a rate nearly three times that of Hispanics and twice that of White students.**

- **The rate of serious violent crime, which includes rape/sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault, is highest for African American college students.**

The Baum and Klaus (2005) study initially compared college students to those not enrolled in a college or university. They found that, overall violent crime rates were diminishing and that students enrolled in college generally experienced lower rates of victimization than their peers who were not in school.

For aggravated assault, rates were similar for Whites, African American, and Hispanic students. However, the rate for robbery for African Americans was 4.3 per thousand higher than that for Whites and 5.9 per thousand higher than for Hispanics (see Table 2). African American students also accounted for the highest victimization rate for serious violent crime which includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. While White students were more likely to be victims of violent crime, data indicate that simple assault contributes to most of the cases in this category (see Table 2). With the exception of rape/sexual assault, male students were more likely to be victims of violent crime than females (Baum & Klaus, 2005).

**A CASE FOR MORE RESEARCH**

Existing studies have looked at campus crime and race and ethnicity as part of a larger effort; not as the primary focus.
Although the Baum and Klaus (2005) study answers some key questions about violent crime, race, and college students, it leaves many important issues unanswered. In future studies, a greater emphasis on race, ethnicity, and campus crime would allow researchers to determine if significant differences exist in victimization rates, in what areas they occur, and what might be done to facilitate improvement.

Campus crime impacts students in a variety of ways. Victims may have problems with their coursework and may withdraw from social activities. These students may also develop stress-related symptoms that impact their mental and physical health or they may even have to leave school (Carr, 2005). The negative impact of crime on students, especially for those already at risk of dropping out, may increase their risk for academic failure and impair their ability to remain in school and graduate (Cureton, 2003).

In 2004, 37% of the students enrolled in postsecondary institutions were minorities; of these, 14% were African Americans (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). As the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities, women and part-time students increase on college and university campuses, diversity will increasingly be one of the challenges facing administrators and law enforcement personnel (Sloan, Lanier, & Beer, 2000).

It is evident from Figure 2 that rates of crime victimization on college campuses vary by race; however, it is not clear if these variations are related to other factors. There is little empirical research on this subject on which to base policies related to campus security. Policymakers need to encourage and support further research in this area in order to be able to effectively address security for all students.

### References


Correspondence regarding this report may be sent via e-mail to: houston@clemson.edu

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<p>| Table 2. Violent Victimization of College Students by Category of Crime and Race: 1995-2002 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Simple Assault</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>Aggravated Assault</th>
<th>Serious Violent Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>43.3&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<sup>a</sup> Average annual rates per 1,000 persons aged 18-24