

Violent Crime on Campus: A Case for More Research

Cindy G. Roper, M.S.

March 2008



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

Figure 1. Average Rates of Violent Crime for College Students by Race 1995-2002

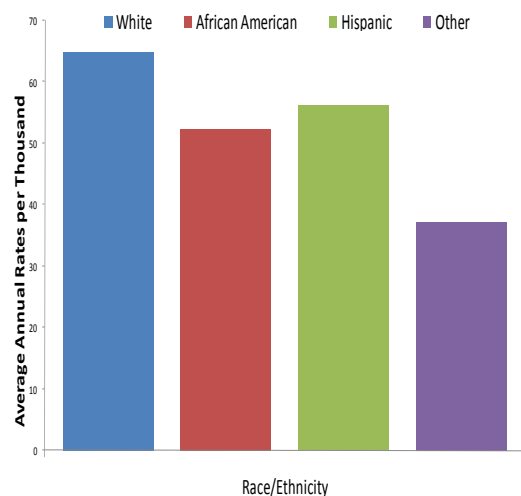


Table 1. Categories of Violent Crime

Simple Assault	Includes an attack with no weapon resulting in no or only minor injuries
Aggravated Assault	An attack or attempted attack using a weapon regardless of injury or an attack without a weapon resulting in serious injury
Robbery	Attempted or completed theft of property or cash, directly from a person, with or without a weapon regardless of injury

Source: Baum and Klaus, 2005

(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.

Table 2. Violent Victimization of College Students by Category of Crime and Race: 1995-2002

Race/Ethnicity	Simple Assault	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Serious Violent Crime
White	43.3 ^a	4.4	13.2	21.6
African American	24.9	8.7	15.6	27.5
Other	18.4	7.0	9.8	18.8
Hispanic	33.4	2.8	15.4	22.8

Data source: Baum, K. and Klaus, P. (2005) Violent Victimization of College Students, 1995-2002. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>. Accessed March 2008.

^a Average annual rates per 1,000 persons aged 18-24

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.

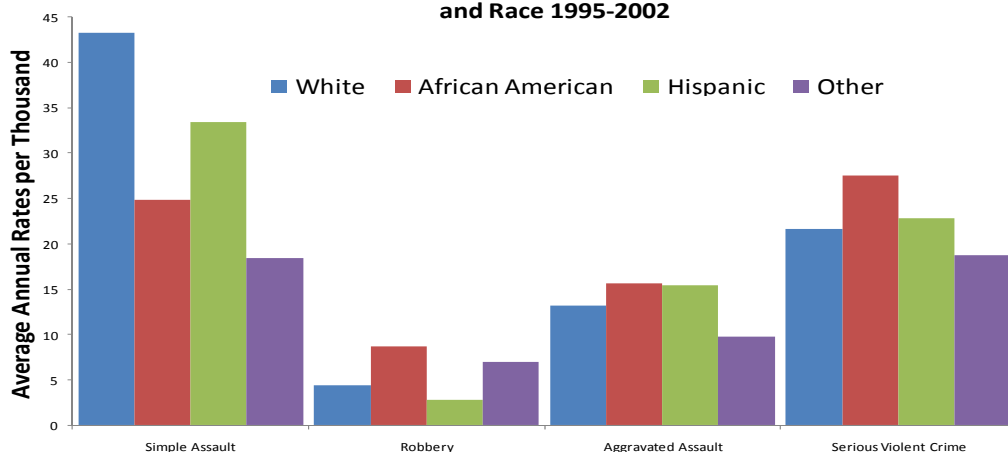
Although the Baum and Klaus (2005) study answers some key questions about violent crime, race, and college students, it leaves many important issues unanswered. In future studies, a greater emphasis on race, ethnicity, and campus crime would allow researchers to determine if significant differences exist 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

Figure 2. Violent Victimization of College Students by Category of Crime and Race 1995-2002



References

- Baum, K., & Klaus, P. (2005). *National crime victim survey: Violent victimization of college students, 1995-2002*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.
- Carr, J. L. (2005). *American college health association campus violence white paper*. Baltimore, MD: American College Health Association.
- Cureton, S. R. (2003). Race-specific college student experiences on a predominantly white campus. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(3), 295-311.
- Fisher, B. S., Sloan, J. J., Cullen, F. T., & Lu, C. (1998). Crime in the ivory tower: The level and sources of student victimization. *Criminology*, 36, 671-710.
- Henson, V. A., & Stone, W. E. (1999). Campus crime: A victimization study. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27(4), 295-307.
- Sloan, J.J. (1994). The correlates of campus crime: An analysis of reported crimes on college and university campuses. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 22(1), 51-61
- Sloan, J. J., III, Lanier, M. M., & Beer, D. L. (2000). Policing the contemporary university campus: Challenging traditional organizational models. *Journal of Security Administration*, 23(1), 1-20.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *Table 210. Number and percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions, by level, disability status, and selected student characteristics: 2003-04. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:04)* Washington DC.

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

To access a *Research Brief* log on to: <http://www.clemson.edu/houston/researchandscholarship/researchbrief.html>

Suggested Citation: Roper, C. G. (2008). *Violent crime on campus: A case for more research*. (CHHC Research Brief, March 2008, No. 2) Clemson, SC: Clemson University, Eugene T. Moore School of Education, Charles H. Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Education.