

Robert S. Griffin
www.robertsgriffin.com

In a new book, *Out of Bounds: Inside the NBA's Culture of Rape Violence, & Crime* (Harper/Collins), author Jeff Benedict reports that 40% of NBA players have been charged with a serious crime. "That's right—40%!" exclaims Benedict. And the cause of all this crime according to Benedict? The NBA's stars' lives of "excess and privilege."

What evidently didn't occur to Benedict—or did occur to him and he decided he had better stay clear of it if he wanted to get his book in print and have people to eat lunch with—is that he may have simply revealed the criminal tendencies of young underclass black men. Benedict's sample was virtually all black (he omitted foreign born players, who are, with very few exceptions, the only white players in the league). One recalls the statistic that somehow slipped into the mainstream media that one-third of young black men in the Washington, D.C. area are involved with the criminal justice system (in jail, on parole, awaiting trial, being sought by the police). And that statistic is a snapshot—what is going on at a moment in time; it doesn't take life history into account. It wouldn't take too many past transgressions to run this one-third up 7% to the NBA's "shocking" total of 40%.

It's too bad that Benedict didn't compare the criminal behavior of the blacks in his NBA sample with a sample of non-NBA-playing blacks. Then readers would be able to get a better sense of just how much being in the NBA accounts for the crime rate. The guess here is that the NBA lifestyle contributes much less to criminality than Benedict asserts, and that the absence of any consideration of race as a causal factor in this book says more about the way Benedict has been conditioned to look at the world—or report to the world—than it does about reality.