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Cocaine usage and sentencing of African American males

Harun Hazim

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COCAINE USAGE AND SENTENCING
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Harun Hazim
June 1998
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Date
ABSTRACT

This study will explore the differences among African American and Caucasian male's cocaine usage and type of sentencing. This study also compares education, support systems and employment history of African American and Caucasian males. The researcher examines the inequality of the sentencing guidelines of crack cocaine compared to powder cocaine. This study attempts to determine if the sentencing guidelines are discriminatory against African American males. It appears that African American males are being adversely affected by the current sentencing guidelines. An assumption of this research is that African American males have a higher probability of using crack cocaine because of its low cost and availability within the lower socioeconomic regions of America. It is hypothesized that crack cocaine users are generally younger and less educated than powder cocaine users. A sample population of 14 African American male cocaine users and 10 Caucasian male cocaine users are observed. The population is taken from various Narcotic Anonymous groups in San Bernardino County. To test the hypothesis, the analysis of data is provided in terms of the offenders drug of choice, educational attainment, work history, family support and age of onset of drug usage. The results of this study indicate that African American men are more prone to indulge in the use of crack cocaine than powder cocaine. One hundred percent of the African American male respondents identified crack cocaine as the primary drug of usage. This research failed to support the hypothesis that crack cocaine users tend to be less educated, younger, and more likely to be unemployed than powder cocaine users.
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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Americans in the lower socioeconomic class have historically been treated unequally compared to their affluent counterparts. The lower class is growing rapidly everyday and so are the numerous social problems that seem to be embedded within this population. In 1995, more than 38 million people lived below the federal “four-person household” poverty level of $14,673.00. There are more poor people in the United States than there are seconds in a year and almost one in every four children live in poverty (Day, 1997). Poverty is kind to no man or woman and effects all ethnic and racial groups. Society’s misfortunes seem to originate within the inner cities, ghettos and urban areas in this country. Within the parameters of these desolate areas remain a disproportionate number of African Americans. West (1996) asserted that in 1993, 2.3 million Black men were sent to jail or prison while 23,000 received a college diploma--a ratio of one hundred to one. African American families have a 30.9 percent poverty rate, or more than three times that of White families, although African Americans constitute only 12.8 percent of the population (Day, 1997). The median American household income was $32,264 in 1993, however for African American families it was a mere $21,027 (Day, 1997).

It is argued that African Americans have been treated unfairly throughout the history of this country. They have survived a multitude of setbacks throughout their existence in the United States. Strong family bonds and social support networks of African Americans have been the prevailing factor for the survival of the Black community. African Americans have had to endure poverty, crime, violence, deprivation, racism, and various other social ills that are present in their communities and in society. Now a new foe faces Black
folks. This new ominous adversary is crack cocaine.

The crack cocaine epidemic is devastating many neighborhoods in our society. The drug epidemic is contagious and dangerous and effects everyone in America irregardless to race. However, the unfortunate truth is that certain races are at a higher disposition to use specific drugs because of the price, availability, location or type of sub-culture that most drugs are associated with.

The research in this case will be conducted around crack cocaine and powder cocaine because of the salient differences in the price, environmental surroundings, population and controversial sentencing guidelines surrounding cocaine. This research will compare and contrast the sentencing, type of cocaine usage, age, social/family support and employment backgrounds/patterns of African American and Caucasian males.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Crack cocaine is threatening the intergenerational survival of African American families. Crack is a deadly drug that was introduced to the inner cities in the mid-1980's. This drug mysteriously started to appear in large quantities in major metropolitan areas across America. Crack has destroyed and is currently decimating many urban families across our nation. It is effecting African American males at an unprecedented and disproportionate rate. Sarner (1995) found that 90 percent of federal inmates with crack cocaine sentences were African American males, while 6 percent are Hispanic and 4 percent White.

This drug epidemic is two-fold. The Black community is being destroyed by a drug that seems to disproportionately effect African Americans along with sentencing guidelines that also seem to target Black folks. The current sentencing guidelines punish crack cocaine offenders at a 100 to 1 ratio compared to their powder cocaine counterparts. Powder cocaine is usually associated with White suburban America, while crack cocaine has been associated primarily with African Americans in the inner cities. Crack cocaine is also derived from powder cocaine. The two drugs are pharmacologically the same substance.

The U. S. sentencing committee, which was created by Congress to draft and implement nation wide sentencing guidelines outside the political arena, weighs each gram of crack cocaine as though it were 100 grams of powder cocaine (Hopkinson, 1996). In 1988, Congress set mandatory minimum sentences for first time offenders of crack cocaine and powder cocaine (Hopkinson, 1996). A first time offender with possession of 5 grams of crack cocaine will receive 5 years in a federal prison, while a first time offender of
powder cocaine can possess up to 500 grams and receive the same 5 years (Evans, 1993). A first time offender with possession of 50 grams of crack cocaine warrants 10 years in jail, while a powder cocaine offender can possess 5,000 grams (5 kilos) and only receive the same 10 year sentence (Evans, 1993). The penalties increase proportionally and dramatically if a person is not a first time offender. When guns, violence or other aggravating factors are involved, the penalties are even further enhanced. More and more often, ten years is only the starting point. Parole has been abolished for all federal inmates so the sentence imposed is the sentence served.

Samer (1995) found that in 1993, almost 88 percent of the offenders convicted in the federal court system for the distribution of crack cocaine were African Americans. These statistics imply that African Americans are primarily the only people who are being effected by these harsh sentencing guidelines. Therefore, African Americans are the target population that is directly being punished by these guidelines. Petty drug dealers are regularly being sentenced as though they were kingpins because of these guidelines. The reality of federal sentencing policy is that the higher-level powder cocaine distributors are routinely being sentenced much less severely than the street level retailers they supply.

What of the true kingpins who bring hundreds of pounds into America everyday? It seems that Congress and the President are trying to make a point by taking a firm stance on the “war on drugs.” Getting tough on those who sell or use crack is a high-benefit, low-cost way for politicians to signal to voters that they are doing something about crime. This stance is not the proper one to take. It is irrational, unnecessarily harsh and lacks objective support for the penalty differential. The sentencing guidelines are targeting the street level dealers
who are the lowest in the chain, most often the poor, minority street-level retailers, who spend many years of their lives in jail, while their suppliers get the breaks. Thousands of young Black men are literally being warehoused in federal and state prisons across the country because they happened to choose crack instead of another illegal substance.

This 100 to 1 sentencing disparity in crack cocaine versus powder cocaine undermines our sense of justice by punishing low-level retail peddlers and users more severely than the high level narcotics suppliers and traffickers. This disparity further marginalizes the minority communities where it has been disproportionately applied. How can it be that the African American community, which represents less than 14 percent of the overall population, comprise almost 90 percent of the federal crack defendants (Waters, 1995)? Such a disparity, even if unintentional, should be addressed and corrected. The racial undertones of these guidelines must be addressed. This is an issue of fundamental fairness.

This study will include the usage of crack cocaine and powder cocaine to examine the drug use patterns of Caucasian males and African American males. This study will explore the hypothesis that powder cocaine users tend to be middle to upper-class Caucasian males and crack cocaine users tend to be lower-class African American males. Thus, the sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine compared to powder cocaine could hold true to being discriminatory towards African American males.

Powder cocaine is more popular within the suburbs and among young White urban professionals who can afford to purchase this expensive substance. Crack cocaine is more popular among inner city Blacks who sell and use the cheap substance on the street corners. Crack cocaine is derived
from powder cocaine. Crack cocaine is processed from powder cocaine by using ammonia or baking soda and water and heating it to remove the hydrochloride (Belenko, 1991). The result is a pebble-sized crystalline form of cocaine base. Usually the crack cocaine dealer purchases his substance from the powder cocaine dealer and then transforms it into crack cocaine. With the absence of powder cocaine, there could be no such substance as crack.

Epstein (1995) disproves several myths about crack cocaine and powder cocaine. The first myth is that crack cocaine is more addicting than powder cocaine. The truth is that crack and powder cocaine are pharmacologically identical and produce the same physiological and psychotropic effects. Neither is psychologically addictive, though both are physiologically addictive. Research has found that the intensity with which cocaine will effect its user depends more on the method of administration than the form of cocaine. Injecting powder cocaine intravenously will produce an effect as intense as smoking crack cocaine (Epstein, 1995). In other words, powder cocaine is just as addicting as crack when it is intravenously injected. Traditionally, powder cocaine users would sniff the substance through their nasal passage, however the new trend among powder cocaine users is to inject the substance intravenously. This is becoming a popular fad within the new drug culture. When powder cocaine is injected intravenously, it is equally or more addictive than crack cocaine. Based on the above information, there is no basic premise for a harsher punishment solely on the form of cocaine. Both forms can be equally addicting depending on the route of admission.

Popular mythology also holds that crack distributors should be punished more severely than powder cocaine distributors because crack is more prevalent. This is simply not true. Studies confirm that powder cocaine
usage is far more prevalent than crack usage. The National Institute on Drug Abuse showed that approximately 22,895,000 Americans have used powder cocaine whereas, only about 3,765,000 have used crack (Epstein, 1995). This study shows that the use of powder cocaine is more of a common and significant national problem than crack. Yet, the guidelines continue to treat offenders as though the opposite were true.

Another myth is that crack use results in greater pharmacologically induced crime. Much of the violence associated with crack tends to be associated with the drug trade in general and not the specific drug (Epstein, 1995). The inner cities have a long history of violence throughout it’s neighborhoods long before crack cocaine began to flourish through the community. Crack is not causing the inner cities to become violent. The inner cities were violent long before crack usage became prevalent. Crack is just the newest scape goat that politicians are using to take responsibility for the lack of intervention by the government to help ameliorate the problems of the inner cities. Drugs do not make people violent, people are generally violent through human nature. In many situations, stress and frustration are the cause of violence. It is evident that stress and frustration flourish throughout the inner cities.

There is also a great price differential between crack cocaine and powder cocaine. Crack cocaine is much cheaper than powder cocaine. This is why there is an abundance of African Americans who use this drug and are directly effected by the guidelines. Members of the lower socioeconomic class are unable to generate the large sums of money that is necessary to support or even initiate a powder cocaine habit. Most crack addicts survive by purchasing $5 dollar bags of crack cocaine one at a time. A street level crack
dealer will only generate $750 dollars selling 5 grams of crack cocaine and will receive 5 years in prison. A mid-level cocaine dealer can generate $50,000 from drug sells and warrant the same sentence (Epstein, 1995). How do you think the cocaine dealer is making his money? He sells his drugs to hundreds of low level drug dealers and generates a tremendous amount of money while taking much smaller risk. The drug dealer who is generating $50,000 from drug money should be locked up much longer than the dealer who is only making a few hundred. The powder cocaine dealer will have more clients because the large sums of money he acquires will enable him to buy more drugs. This cycle will continue and repeat itself more rapidly each time. The emphasis of the criminal justice system should be to stop the circulation of the 500 grams of cocaine and this would curtail the distribution of the 5 grams of crack. These statistics underscores the utter irrationality of the 100 to 1 ratio.

There has been previous research that coincides with the hypothesis of racial discrimination in these guidelines. The U.S. District Court prosecuted no Whites for crack offenses between 1988 and 1994. Instead, the Caucasian first time offenders were left to state courts which have far fewer mandatory minimums (Waters, 1995). First time offending Blacks convicted in federal courts receive a 10 year mandatory minimum. Whites prosecuted in state courts face a maximum of five years and often receive no more than a one year sentence (Rankin, 1995). This trend holds true in other jurisdictions as well. In 1992, minorities were prosecuted for crack cocaine in federal courts in 17 states. Minorities represent an average of 96 percent of those prosecuted for crack nationally in federal courts from 1992 to 1994 (Wickman, 1997).

Hopkinson (1996) conducted a study of Central California federal court records. She examined 53 cases from 1991 to 1993 in the Los Angeles area
involving crack charges. She could not identify one Caucasian defendant out of the 53 cases examined. Belenko (1991) compared crack cocaine arrest to powder cocaine arrest. He found that crack cases had a higher probability of pretrial detention (time served in jail before the trial), felony indictment (being charged with a felony for the crime), and jail sentencing (time the judge sentenced the offender to serve in jail for the offense). Belenko (1991) also discovered that offenders who were charged with a felony for selling crack were significantly more likely to be transferred to superior court for prosecution as felonies and had a significantly lower likelihood of pleading guilty to a misdemeanor.

The results of a study that Ringwalt (1989) conducted indicated that crack cocaine users were younger than powder cocaine users, made poorer grades, were more depressed and were more likely to be alienated from family and friends. Kang (1994) interviewed male adolescents who were in custody in New York City Department of Corrections at the Adolescent Reception Center on Rikers Island. The inmates were interviewed to examine the correlates of cocaine or crack use. He found that current crack users were more likely to use alcohol, marijuana, intranasal heroin, to be out of school, and to have substance abusing parents. Moore (1995) tried to explain the incidence of drug trafficking and chemical dependency among adolescent Black males. She discussed the social science theories of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Molefi Asante in an effort to bring about a better understanding of the behaviors and the consequences of those behaviors of young Black males who participate in the consumption of illegal drugs. Edwards (1995) explored the effects of race and drug of choice and adjustment among male offenders in a minimum security detention center. He found that the most poorly adjusted offenders
were found to be Black offenders who identified cocaine as their primary drug of choice.

Leo Carrol (1976) examined racial bias in the decision to grant parole. Prisoners were eligible for parole after completing one-third of their sentence. Carrol found no evidence of direct discrimination, however he found evidence that the board differentiated between Black and White prisoners in selecting and weighting information when deciding parole. Compared to White prisoners, Black prisoners had an additional criterion to meet in order to be paroled. This additional criterion came in the form of treatment programs.

Belgrave (1994) examined Africentric values among black youth. Africentric values encourages race pride among Black people and lifts to a higher level their consciousness of themselves and about what their position in the world should be. Afrocentric philosophy also denounces drug abuse among Black people and states that the use of “unnatural substances” is unhealthy. Belgrave (1994) further investigated the relationship among Africentric values, self-esteem, Black identity and drug attitudes among Black youth. The results show that Africentric values make a small but significant contribution to understanding drug attitudes. Africentric values were conceptualized to directly influence drug attitudes and indirectly influence drug attitudes through their influence on self-esteem and Black identity. The enactment of Africentric values may be useful in drug prevention programs and efforts.

The racial discrepancies in these sentencing guidelines effect the field of social work in a direct manner. The welfare and overall survival of all families has historically been a major focus of the social work profession. The African American family is deteriorating due to the psychological and physical strains
that Black people face, especially Black folks in the ghettos across America on a consistent and daily basis. The crack cocaine sentencing guidelines are being used as another means to ruin and separate the Black family. In many cases, the perpetrator (or victim?) is selling illegal substances to feed and shelter his loved ones. Social workers will have the responsibility of intervening with the offenders wife, children and any other significant family members that are left to fend for themselves. There are serious ramifications for the offenders family if the offender is incarcerated for 5 to 10 years of his life for a first time offense. If the offender is a single parent, which many are, his children will be placed in foster care through welfare agencies, further dividing the family. If he was the sole financial provider, then his family will be introduced to AFDC and other public welfare arenas in which the members will now be eligible for.

The rehabilitation of the offender is also a necessary step which will call upon the efforts of social workers. The government will spend millions of dollars building new prisons to warehouse offenders, but no money is set aside for rehabilitation programs while the inmate is incarcerated. Social workers should take the responsibility and rehabilitate the offender upon release. Social workers efforts will be set fourth by conducting and constructing rehabilitative, vocational, and educational programs for the offenders, as well as support therapy groups for the offender and his family members.

The state of African American families in the 1990's indicates significant signs of deterioration and regression. Lum (1992) discovered that only 37.7 percent of all African American families, as compared to 79 percent of White families, have both parents present in the home and 51.2 percent of African American families are single female-headed households, as compared to 16.2 percent of their White counterparts. This could be indicative
of individual and institutional discrimination that Black folks face on a daily basis. The racism, discrimination and disparagement encountered by African Americans in all phases of their lives impedes the development of self-esteem and confidence and sustains the high drop out rate and poor educational attainment prevalent among its youth.

Nineteen percent of youths in state-operated juvenile facilities reported that they first used drugs before the age of ten and about 40 percent reported that they first used drugs before the age of twelve (McCutcheon, 1995). The government is spending from $20,000 dollars to $25,000 dollars a year to incarcerate one individual. The cost of incarcerating the 1.1 million Americans behind federal, state and county bars is $20.3 billion (C.D.C, 1996). Eventually there will be no more available space or funds to continue building prisons.

This is where the practice of social work intervenes. This researcher finds it self evident that the emphasis of rehabilitation in this country should be directed towards preventive drug and educational programs. This researcher proposes that social workers should establish community drug and alcohol awareness programs. These programs could be held at various elementary and junior high schools, after the children are finished for the day with their required curriculum. The parents who are not working can also attend and the family can learn together. If the guardians are working, then this program could be used as a means to keep that child supervised until the caretaker comes home from work. Weekend workshops would also be available for that child and his or her parents who are unable to attend on a weekday. The onset of a child's drug experimentation is becoming lower each year. If social workers can expose these children to the dangers and harsh realities of crack and other addicting drugs in the preadolescent years, then maybe these programs could prevent
the children from developing into another prison statistic. This would also save
the United States billions of dollars.

A second proposal is to have social workers develop some type of drug
rehabilitation program within the prison system. Records and surveys of newly
admitted felons in years 1988, 1989 and 1990 indicated that approximately
three out of four inmates reported having a recent drug abuse history (C.D.C.,
1996). Eighty percent of state prison inmates have used drugs, and over 60
percent have used drugs regularly. About one in three reported using drugs at
the time of their offense (C.D.C., 1996). These numbers are alarming. Social
workers could be implemented in the prison system in terms of developing drug
treatment programs for these individuals who are sentenced to serve a
substantial part of their life in prison. Most inmates do have a drug problem.
Instead of being warehoused in prisons, they could be exposed to substance
abuse treatment and educational services. If the inmates do not receive any
treatment within the system, it is most likely that they will succumb to the
pressures of their environment and embrace drug usage and crime once again.
This turns into a vicious cycle.
METHODS

Design

Discrimination is more easily perceived than proved. Discrimination is seldom defined in the majority of cases. Several definitions will be provided to avoid misunderstandings. Discrimination is an action. It is the denial of opportunities and equal rights of individuals because of their membership in a particular racial and/or ethnic group. Discrimination that is attributed to the normal operation of society's institutions is called institutional discrimination. Nelson (1994) states that disparities are measurable differences in how persons are processed and cannot be attributed to differences in control variables that are considered to legitimately affect case-processing decisions. In this research, race will be used as a control variable to estimate the disparities in sentencing and education.

Sampling

The sample population will included 24 male participants in various Narcotics Anonymous meetings in San Bernardino County. The researcher examined the data on 10 White participants who identified any cocaine substance as their primary drug of choice and 14 Black participants who identified any cocaine substance as their primary drug of choice. Each individual was in the Narcotics Anonymous program and at least 18 years of age.

Purpose

This study will attempt to answer the following questions: Are the sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine and powder cocaine discriminatory towards African American males? Are first time crack cocaine offenders generally younger than first time powder cocaine offenders? Do
crack cocaine offenders start their usage at an earlier age? What is the education level of crack cocaine offenders compared to powder cocaine offenders? Are the support/family systems different for crack cocaine and powder cocaine users and is there a difference in the employment patterns/history of crack cocaine and powder cocaine users?

Data Gathering and Measurement

The sample population was collected non-randomly. This is a descriptive and cross-sectional study. The unit of analysis is the individual. Data was obtained from questionnaires that were distributed and completed at Narcotics Anonymous meetings. The questionnaires consisted of eight closed ended questions (See Appendix C). The subjects completed the questionnaire within three to six minutes. The questionnaire solicited basic demographic background information about the individual, such as education, drug of choice, employment patterns, family background and the age of onset of cocaine usage.

The researcher visited various Narcotics Anonymous meetings in western San Bernardino County. At the beginning of each session, the researcher announced his intentions and solicited participation from any member who met the criteria for the research subject. Only subjects who identified themselves as primarily users of crack cocaine or powder cocaine were obtained. Therefore the results are not generalizable.

Protection of Human Subjects

Permission was obtained from the Human Subjects Review Committee of the University by completing the required application for human subjects research. The cover letter for the participants explained the purpose of the research, expected completion date and where to obtain results. The
researcher's name, research advisor and the Social Work Department's phone number and address were provided if the respondents had any questions pertaining to the research project (See Appendix A).

The consent to participate form was attached to each questionnaire which the respondent was to sign with an “x” mark and return with the completed questionnaire. The form explained that participation was voluntary and that all information is confidential. The “x” mark was utilized so the subjects identity would not be revealed (See Appendix B).
DATA ANALYSIS

The independent variable for this study was race. Type of drug used, education, employment, family background and age were the dependent variables that were correlated with race. A quantitative analysis was used to study the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. All collected data were analyzed using SPSS+.

Cross tabs, t-test and frequencies are used to examine the data. Cross tab tables were implemented to examine the different variables that were collected. Frequencies and cross tab analysis allowed the researcher to elaborate on a relationship between two variables. T-test were also used. T-test ascertained the probability that the observed relationships are due to sampling error or chance.
RESULTS

Seven questions in this study dealt with demographic information relating to this study sample. One question dealt with sentencing knowledge. The information was gathered to help characterize the sample population. Information related to race, drug of choice, age of onset, educational attainment, employment history, family background and the knowledge of sentencing guidelines were collected.

The demographic data revealed several areas in which both groups of African American and Caucasian cocaine users were similar. The majority of the population were African Americans (58 percent), compared to the Caucasian males (42 percent). The largest proportion of the participants identified themselves as crack cocaine users (100 percent of African Americans and 60 percent of Caucasians). A smaller percentage of Caucasians (40 percent) identified powder cocaine as their drug of choice. Table 1 displays the subject's cocaine usage by race.

Table 1
Cocaine Usage by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Type of Cocaine</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crack</td>
<td>Powder</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows the comparable educational attainment by race. The educational level of African Americans and Caucasians were measured on four different levels. The levels consisted of the completion of junior high school, G.E.D., high school diploma or some college courses. Thirty six percent of blacks had attained a high school diploma compared to 40 percent of whites. Other notable data on education yields that 7 percent of blacks and 10 percent of whites had only completed junior high school, while 21 percent of blacks and 20 percent of whites earned their G.E.D. Additionally 36 percent of blacks and 40 percent of whites had taken some college courses (See Table 2).

Table 2
Educational Attainment by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.E.D.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Table 3, the household composition by race percentages displayed that 43 percent of blacks, compared to 50 percent of whites were raised in a two parent home. Furthermore, 57 percent of blacks came from a single parent home, while 43 percent of whites were reared by one parent (See Table 3).
Table 3

Household Composition as a Child by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Single Household</th>
<th>Dual Household</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 gives employment patterns of Caucasian and African American males for the previous three years. Significant differences between the Caucasians and African Americans employment patterns were found. Thirty six percent of blacks over the past three years maintained full time employment, whereas only 10 percent of whites worked. Furthermore, 36 percent of blacks and 50 percent of whites engaged in part-time employment and 21 percent of blacks and 40 percent of whites were unemployed. There was one black respondent who was retired (See Table 4).

Table 4

Previous 3 Year Employment Patterns by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Patterns</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20
Table 5 shows the age range of the respondents. There were significantly more African Americans males in the older age range than Caucasian males. There were no Caucasian males in the 44 to 63 age bracket, compared to the 5 African American males in this age bracket. The participants ages ranged from 19 to 62 (See Table 5).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 - 33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 - 43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 - 63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 provides the age of onset for drug usage of African American and Caucasian males. There was a significant difference in the onset of drug usage amongst this population. Five African American men began their drug usage between the ages of 19 and 20, whereas only one Caucasian male
began his drug usage within this age range. The age of onset of the respondents ranged from age 13 to 20 (See Table 6).

Table 6

The Age of Onset for Drug Usage by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Onset</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 - 15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows the awareness of the respondents on the sentencing guidelines. The majority of the respondents are unaware of the sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine. Seventy one percent of blacks were not aware of the guidelines. Ninety percent of whites had no prior knowledge of the guidelines either (See Table 7).
Table 7

The Awareness of Sentencing Guidelines by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th></th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that African American men are more prone to indulge in the use of crack cocaine than powder cocaine. One hundred percent of African American male respondents identified crack cocaine as the primary drug of usage. These results tend to support what Waters postulated in the literature review. Waters (1995) stated that the African American community represents less than 14 percent of the overall population, however African American males comprise almost 90 percent of the federal crack defendants. The results of this study yielded higher statistics on African American males and crack cocaine than Waters postulated.

The results failed to support the hypothesis that African American crack cocaine users were younger than Caucasian powder cocaine users. The mean age of African Americans in this study was 35 years of age. The mean age of Caucasian males in this study was 30 years of age. One alarming piece of data found in this research is that there were five African American respondents that were within the 44 to 63 age range. This is a salient statistic in that no Caucasian males were in this age group. This statistic suggest a contradiction with Ringwalt (1989), who found that crack cocaine users were younger than powder cocaine users.

This research also failed to support the other hypothesis that crack cocaine users tend to be less educated, more likely to be unemployed and less likely to have knowledge of the current sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine. The results also failed to show any significant difference between African American and Caucasian cocaine users in the areas of education, family background and knowledge of guidelines. Most of the percentages displayed on the above areas were evenly distributed across color lines. One significant
difference, in the demographic background variables, was in employment history. The majority of African Americans had maintained stable employment over the past three years compared to their white counterparts.

Another unanticipated result of this study was the age of the participants. The average age of African Americans was 35 years and Caucasians were 30. A possible explanation of the older age of the participants is that the sample population was extracted from cocaine users who were members of Narcotics Anonymous. The majority of the members of Narcotics Anonymous are currently making efforts to become sober or have maintained sobriety for several years. Many of the members of Narcotics Anonymous began using drugs when they were much younger and became addicted to substances in their youth. Members of Narcotics Anonymous have attained a certain level of control and awareness of themselves and their drug habit that many addicts do not reach. This level is admitting that they have a drug problem and voluntarily setting fourth the effort to seek help to rid themselves of their damaging drug habit. A person usually must reach a certain age before he or she realizes that he or she is a drug addict. The realization of a person's addiction usually stems from difficult and disappointing life experiences that are directly linked to drug abuse. This researcher believes that this explanation may account for the older age of the participants, along with the later age of onset and the surprisingly high employment patterns.

One weakness of this study is the similar socioeconomic class of the subjects in the sample population. Social stratification and classism are important variables that are inter linked within this sample population. Class stratification is the division of society into strata based on economic resources and assumes that other social indicators depend on income (Day, 1997).
Glassism is prejudice against those in the lower socioeconomic class. A large number of drug addicts across America are derived from the lower socioeconomic class. The current information was collected at Narcotics Anonymous meetings in very disenfranchised areas of San Bernardino. All of the meetings were held in low income areas. These neighborhoods consisted of many abandoned buildings, homes and apartments.

The sample population was not divided by social class as the researcher intended. This is the reason why the majority of the participants identified crack cocaine as their primary drug of choice. As the literature related earlier, crack cocaine is less expensive than powder cocaine, therefore the financially disadvantaged are more likely to use crack cocaine (Epstein, 1995). The results from this study should not be generalized towards the general population because of the lack of diversity in the sample population.

The older age of the participants was a major weakness of the study. None of the participants revealed themselves as current cocaine users. In fact, one participant indicated that he had not used cocaine since 1981. These individuals have exceptional strength and courage and are in charge of their lives. They do not fall under the category of the typical cocaine abuser. The researcher also identified the small sample size and the lack of broad geographical distribution as limitations to this study. Only 24 participants were sampled.

Strengths of this data collection method include convenience of distribution and collection of the instrument, elimination of interviewer bias and decreased time consumption for participants. Limitations include the fact that all data collected was derived from the same geographical area. The sample population was not diversified along race, socioeconomic class or geographic
Institutional discrimination permeates the American system so deeply that we may not be aware of it. Different types of institutional discrimination interact with classism, further enforcing the status quo in our society for some people. People discriminated against are more likely to be poor minorities. African Americans have a remarkable gift of resiliency. Black people know that they can not change their experience in America, however, they have developed coping mechanisms to deal with their everyday life experiences. The sentencing guidelines may never be amended. This will be just one of many external factors that the Black community must adhere to and another latent facet of institutional racism. The fundamental issue of fairness needs to be addressed towards these sentencing guidelines. The criminal justice system was created to equally punish individuals in our society who do not conform to the societal laws. The punishment undoubtedly is suppose to fit the crime. If these sentencing guidelines are found to be discriminatory against African American males, then this is one punishment that does not meet the crime.

**Implications for Social Work**

The research findings are important to social work practice and the drug addiction treatment field in general. Social workers can improve and increase the programs directed towards drug treatment and prevention. Records and surveys of newly admitted felons indicate that approximately three out of four inmates report having a recent drug history (C.D.C., 1996). These numbers are alarming. Social workers could be implemented in the prison system in terms of developing drug treatment programs for the offenders. Most inmates do have a drug problem. While the offenders are serving their sentences, they could be exposed to substance abuse treatment, educational services and vocational
training conducted by social workers.

Social workers could also establish more community alcohol abuse awareness programs. The results of the research showed that many of the subjects began using drugs between the age range of 13 to 15. Therefore, drug preventative programs could be held at various elementary and junior high schools on the weekends or after school. The parents could also attend these programs so the family could learn together. If social workers can expose these children to the dangers and harsh realities of crack and other addicting drugs in the preadolescent years, then maybe these programs could prevent the children from developing into prison statistics.

Recommendation for Future Research

It is recommended that this research project be replicated. Initially this research project was undertaken to determine if African American males were more likely to use crack cocaine compared to Caucasian males. In addition, the research was intended to extract information on demographic variables and how they relate to race and cocaine usage. A larger sample study would have provided a more meaningful and accurate statistical outcome. Thus if replicated, a larger sample size is recommended. Future researchers could extract a similar population from a prison system intended for civil addicts. Utilizing a prison system for civil addicts, the researchers could compare first time cocaine offenders to repeat offenders. Such a longitudinal approach would diversify the sample population in terms of race, geographical location and socioeconomic class. Also comparing and contrasting the sentences that the sample population receive according to the drug used would be useful to know. Having all respondents current drug users would add to the knowledge
about this population.
APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

This study is designed to examine the differences between powder cocaine users/sellers and crack cocaine users/sellers. This study will be conducted by Harun Hazim under the supervision of Dr. Ira A. Neighbors, Social Work Professor at California State University, San Bernardino. The address is 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA. 92407-2397. The phone number is 909-880-5501.

In this study you will answer a few closed ended questions that pertain to the drug you most frequently used, educational attainment, current age and age of drug onset, family support and employment pattern for the past year. The questionnaire should take no longer than 2 to 3 minutes to complete.

The information you provide will be held in strict confidence by the researchers. The questionnaire is designed to be confidential and anonymous. I am only requiring a “x” mark to identify your participation. The risks to you of participating in this study are minimal and at the study’s conclusion, you may receive a copy of the results.

Please understand that your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time during this study without penalty, and to remove any data at any time during the study.

By placing a mark in the space provided below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. By this mark I further acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Give your consent to participate by making a check or “x” mark here: __________

Today’s date is _____________________.

Harun Hazim, MSW Student
Dr. Ira A. Neighbors, Research Advisors
Debriefing Statement

The study you participated in is designed to distinguish any salient differences between crack-cocaine users and powder cocaine users. More specifically, the research data will examine the differences between Caucasian and African American substance abusers. The research data will be collected through the questionnaire you completed. All data collected will be kept confidential and anonymous. You may receive the final findings during the summer of 1998 by contacting Dr. Ira Neighbors, Professor of Social Work and project advisor at (909) 880-5501. If personal issues should arise after completing the questionnaire, referrals to appropriate services will be made available.
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer or circle the following questions.

1. Are you Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian or other?

2. Was the drug you most frequently used powder cocaine or crack cocaine?

3. How old are you?

4. How old were you when you first began using drugs?

5. How much education have you achieved (high school grad., college, G.E.D. etc.)?

6. Were you raised in a single or two parent household?

7. Which category best describes your employment patterns for the past two years: full-time, part time or unemployed.

8. Are you aware of the current sentencing guidelines for crack-cocaine?
REFERENCES


