

**Comparison of Background Characteristics and Behaviors of African American,
Hispanic, and White Substance Abusers Treated in Federal Prison:
Results from the TRIAD Study
Executive Summary - 2002**

Overview of Study

Consistent with other drug treatment outcome evaluations, the results from the Treating Inmates Addicted to Drugs (TRIAD) study indicated that the Federal Bureau of Prisons' residential drug abuse program (DAP) reduced arrests and drug use in both the six months and three years following subjects' release from prison. The TRIAD study improved upon previous research by considering the effects of self-selection into treatment and comparing the outcomes for those who entered and completed treatment to those who did not.

In addition to treatment outcomes research, describing the various subgroups who participate in treatment programs is an important research area. There is currently little information available about minority substance abusers who enter treatment. In an effort to increase the information available about minorities in drug treatment, this study described and compared selected behaviors and characteristics of adult male African American, Hispanic, and white substance abusers in the TRIAD study who entered residential treatment. The sample included 279 African American, 72 Hispanic, and 512 white male substance abusers who were treated in 16 prison-based residential drug treatment programs from 1991 to 1995. A wide range of background characteristics, including family background, criminal behavior, drug use history, and social environment were examined.

There were numerous significant differences in demographic, family background, and criminal history characteristics but few differences in pre-incarceration behaviors and social environment among African American, Hispanic, and white inmates treated in the DAP program (see Tables 1 and 2). The most pronounced differences were between African American and white participants, with the former appearing to come from substantially more disadvantaged backgrounds than the latter. Hispanic participants reported some experiences that were more similar to African American participants and others which were more similar to white participants.

Compared to white participants, African Americans were younger, less educated, less likely to be legally employed prior to incarceration, and more likely to meet diagnostic criteria for antisocial personality disorder. In contrast, African Americans were less likely to meet criteria for a diagnosis of depression. White participants differed from African American participants in that they were more likely to have a family background characterized by parents who first married then divorced, a father who was in the workforce, an immediate family member who had an alcohol problem, and personal experience of physical abuse before age 18. Hispanic participants were distinguished from the other groups by a higher proportion who were incarcerated for a drug offense, and by a lower proportion who reported divorced parents, working mothers, daily drug or alcohol use, and prior drug treatment.

The three racial and ethnic groups did not differ in their pre-incarceration social network.

All groups reported similar levels of association with friends or family members who used illegal drugs and similar levels of opposition of drug use by family members. There were no differences in the proportion reporting being under the influence of illegal drugs or attempting to get money for drugs at the time of their arrest. Regarding criminal history there were no differences in history of incarceration or age first involved in criminal activity.

Treatment Implications

The findings point to a number of important treatment implications for both prison- and community-based substance abuse treatment programs. Of particular clinical relevance is the fact that treatment participants from the three groups evaluated in this study presented with very similar behavior just prior to entering prison. Therefore, although individuals from all three race and ethnic groups would present to treatment with similar problems they differed in the context of their demographic and background characteristics. Addressing participants' treatment needs within the context of their cultural characteristics (e.g., family background and social environment) would likely enhance the effectiveness of treatment. Drug treatment professionals can start by identifying the unique opportunities treatment might offer participants from various subgroups and providing an easily recognizable context for setting and meeting their treatment goals. For example, drug treatment can represent an opportunity for African American substance abusers, who come from backgrounds characterized by unemployment and poverty, fatherlessness, and multiple generations of criminal involvement and problematic substance use, to access a scarcely-available health services resource. The goal of treatment might be to acquire the multifaceted skills needed to navigate the social and economic terrain of both their own social environment and that of the American mainstream. Likewise, drug treatment with white participants might represent the uncommon opportunity to address their mental health disorders, issues associated with childhood physical abuse and family problems. Even with the cultural diversity of the Hispanic participants (e.g., mainly of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Cuban descent) in our sample and in general, it is likely that like African Americans, they would derive enhanced benefit from treatment that offered the opportunity for them to learn the skills needed to function successfully both in the social environments of their specific cultures and in mainstream American. Addressing the specific needs of treatment participants as they relate to differing socio-cultural contexts can be readily incorporated into the individual psycho-social assessments and individualized treatment plans which are components of BOP treatment clinical practice.

Table 1. Demographic and Background Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity			
Characteristics	<i>AFRICAN AMERICAN</i> (N=279)	<i>HISPANIC</i> (N=72)	<i>WHITE</i> (N=512)
Average age at DAP admission	32.1 ^a	32.4	33.9
Highest grade completed - average	11.9 ^{a,b}	11.1 ^a	12.4
	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<u>Employment History</u>			
Never employed	9.5 ^a	4.2	1.7
Employed in month before incarceration	44.9 ^a	60.6	61.6
Unemployed in month before incarceration	45.6 ^a	35.2	36.7
<u>Other Sources of Income</u>			
Illegal activities	49.5 ^a	37.5	31.4
Welfare	13.5 ^a	11.1	7.1
<u>Living Arrangements Before Arrest</u>			
Living with spouse	41.1 ^b	65.3 ^a	42.9
Living with intimate partner	17.8 ^b	2.8 ^a	15.0
Not living with spouse or intimate partner	41.1 ^b	31.9 ^a	42.1
<u>Psychiatric Diagnoses(Lifetime)</u>			
Antisocial personality	31.4 ^a	23.2	27.4
Depression	5.0 ^a	7.1	10.9
Both	5.0 ^a	5.7	9.0
Neither	58.6 ^a	64.0	52.7
<u>Family Background</u>			
Parents never married	22.8 ^{a,b}	11.3 ^a	4.3
Parents ever divorced	36.6 ^{a,b}	22.5 ^a	40.9
Family ever on welfare	33.1 ^a	20.0	10.7
Father in the workforce	90.1 ^{a,b}	100.0	97.8
Mother in the workforce	75.6 ^{a,b}	47.8	59.6
Immediate family member had alcohol problem ^c	34.2 ^a	37.5	43.3
Immediate family member had drug problem ^c	23.4	22.2	16.7
Immediate family member spent time in jail ^c	28.0 ^a	21.1	14.2
Experienced physical abuse ^d	11.9 ^a	13.9	20.2
<u>Criminal History</u>			
Age committed first crime (average)	15.9	17.9	16.6
Previously Incarcerated	72.0	71.0	65.4

^a Significantly different from white participants, p<.05.

^b Significantly different from Hispanic participants, p<.05.

^c Prior to participants reaching age 17 years.

^d Prior to participants reaching age 18 years.

Table 2. Pre-Incarceration Behaviors and Social Environment by Race and Ethnicity			
<i>Pre-Incarceration Behaviors</i>	<i>African American</i> (N=279)	<i>Hispanic</i> (N=72)	<i>White</i> (N= 512)
	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<u>Drug and Alcohol Use Profile</u>			
Ever daily substance use	74.6 ^b	56.9 ^a	77.9
Prior drug/alcohol treatment	40.1	27.8 ^a	44.0
Pre-incarceration daily substance use ^c			
Alcohol	35.2	27.1	37.2
Marijuana	22.7 ^a	20.0	30.7
Cocaine/crack	24.8	20.8	20.2
Heroin/opiates	9.0	15.3	8.8
Other	2.5 ^{a,b}	9.7	14.2
<u>Type of Current Offense</u>			
Drug	47.0 ^b	75.0 ^a	53.7
Violent	2.8 ^b	1.4	1.1
Weapons	14.0 ^b	8.3	10.2
Robbery	22.6 ^b	8.3	18.6
Property	6.4 ^b	5.6	9.4
Other	7.2 ^b	1.4	7.0
Attempting to get money for drugs	35.7	46.8	33.5
Under influence of drugs	44.2	45.1	46.9
Under influence of alcohol	19.9 ^a	18.1	27.1
<u>Significant Social Time Spent with^d:</u>			
Only family members who used drugs	3.0	5.6	7.1
Both family members and peers who used drugs	9.3	5.6	11.0
Only peers who used drugs	36.9	45.1	35.3
Family and peers who did not use drugs	50.8	43.7	46.6
<u>Family Members:</u>			
Opposed participants' drug use	62.1	59.7	61.6
Encouraged participants' drug use	0.0	0.0	0.2
<u>Friends:</u>			
Opposed participants' drug use	11.2 ^a	19.3	21.0
Encouraged participants' drug use	36.8 ^a	37.1	24.1
Main source of drugs	12.6 ^a	12.9	19.8

^a Significantly different from white participants, $p < .05$.

^b Significantly different from Hispanic participants, $p < .05$

^c In the year prior to arrest for current offense. Categories not mutually exclusive.

^d People with whom participants spent at least one hour per day on five or more days in a typical week in the year before arrest - categories are mutually exclusive.