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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MEASURES AND PATTERNS OF CRIMINALITY AMONG NARCOTIC  
ADDICTS - THE ROLE OF NONNARCOTIC DRUGS

GRANT NO. 82-IJ-CX-0031

The analyses supported by this grant (82-IJ-CX-0031) were primarily designed to answer six specific questions which were stated in the original research proposal. Since these six questions constituted the core issues which guided the analytical strategies employed, it would seem most appropriate that this Executive Summary be organized around these questions. In view of this, and following a description of the data base and the procedures utilized in the analyses, each of the six questions will be stated serially and the findings pertaining to each question will be summarized following each question.

Data Base

Between July 1973 and January 1978, detailed confidential interviews were conducted with 354 male narcotic (principally heroin) addicts from the Baltimore metropolitan area. These 354 addicts represented a stratified random sample from a population of 6,149 known narcotic users arrested (or identified) by the Baltimore police department between 1952 and 1976. The sample was unselected for criminality but stratified by race and year of police contact. Over 90% of the men selected were actually interviewed, usually at study offices. Subjects were paid \$15.00

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for their participation, and the confidentiality of all information obtained is protected by Maryland law. Of the 354 subjects, 195 were Black and 159 were White. Mean age at interview was 34.1 years, with a standard deviation of 7.9 years.

To be eligible for inclusion in the study, subjects had to have used narcotics on at least four separate days a week for a period of at least one month while at large in the community. Since a major purpose of the interview was to obtain detailed chronological information concerning crime, narcotic addiction, and nonnarcotic drug use from the time of first regular narcotic use to the time of interview, each subject was asked to describe in detail his narcotic addiction, abstinence, and incarceration periods, with the criteria for successive periods of addiction being the same as that for inclusion in the study.

#### Criminal Activity Measures

All crimes reported were placed into one of five categories, and the total number of days that each subject committed one or more crimes while actively addicted to narcotics was estimated for each category. Similar estimations regarding crimes committed while subjects were not actively addicted to narcotics were also made. The five crime-days measures, all of which refer conceptually to 24-hour periods during which one or more crimes of the type specified were committed, are as follows:  
Crime-Days Theft (includes all property thefts not involving violence to persons, such as shoplifting, larceny, and burglary);

Crime-Days Violence (includes all crimes involving physical violence against persons, such as robbery, assault, and murder); Crime-Days Dealing (involves sales of all illegal drugs--mere drug use or possession not included as crimes); Crime-Days Confidence Games (includes forgery of checks and drug prescriptions as well as all confidence games); and Crime-Days Other (includes all offenses not included in the previous four categories, especially illegal gambling, pimping, and selling stolen goods).

Each of the above five crime-days measures was further refined by **annualizing**, i.e., the total number of crime-days accumulated by each subject in each category while at large in the community (days incarcerated or hospitalized excluded) and actively addicted to narcotics was expressed as **crime-days per year at risk** by taking the ratio of crime-days to total days at large and multiplying by 365. Similar calculations were performed for each subject with regard to total time at large during which he was not actively addicted to narcotics. Thus, criminal activity in each of the five areas was expressed as a yearly rate which in this sense is independent of actual length of time at large in the community. Through the use of such measures, it becomes possible to compare rates for different individuals and for different types of crime, even though the actual time at large may vary considerably.

#### Nonnarcotic Drug Use Measures

As noted earlier, all of the participants in this study met the operational criteria for narcotic addiction, although many had periods of nonaddiction to narcotics and/or were not actively addicted at the time of interview. All subjects were also extensively questioned concerning their use of nonnarcotic substances during each period of narcotic addiction or nonaddiction. Afterwards, for the purposes of certain of the analyses reported herein, use of each nonnarcotic drug was expressed for each subject as a rate, i.e., number of times used per year at risk, for each period separately as well as for all addiction periods combined and for all nonaddiction periods combined. It should be noted in this connection that the nonnarcotic drug use measures, unlike the criminal activity measures, incorporated multiple uses of a specific drug, or class of drugs, on a given day in calculating rates of use.

#### Statistical Analyses

For all of the analyses reported herein, the data base was subdivided into four sections, since the bases for this subdivision, namely, race (Black/White) and narcotic addiction status (actively addicted/not addicted to narcotics) have been shown to have a profound impact on all measures and variables investigated. The statistical analyses employed included the use of frequency and percentage frequency distributions, univariate significance tests for differences between proportions and means, bivariate product-moment correlations, and the multivariate

techniques of multiple regression analysis, factor analysis, and cluster analysis.

#### Findings Regarding Specific Questions Posed

1. Is the use of certain types of nonnarcotic drugs, such as amphetamines, barbiturates, or cocaine, associated with the commission of particular types of crime, such as crimes of violence, etc.?

As noted earlier, the relationship of nonnarcotic drug use to crime is a function of race and narcotic addiction status. For Blacks during periods of active addiction to narcotics, the following statistically significant relationships were observed: cocaine use was positively correlated with theft, dealing, confidence games, and total crime-days. Amphetamine use was correlated positively with dealing and with confidence games. Benzodiazepine use was negatively correlated with theft as well as with total crime-days. Quaalude use was positively correlated with violent crime. Total use of nonnarcotic drugs was positively correlated with theft, dealing, confidence games, and total crime-days.

Among Whites during periods of active addiction to narcotics, barbiturate use was positively correlated with dealing, as was the use of benzodiazepines and inhalants. Placidyl use was positively correlated with confidence games, while Quaalude use was positively correlated with theft. Total nonnarcotic drug

use was positively correlated with dealing but not with total crime-days. Interestingly enough, no significant associations between cocaine use and criminal activity were noted among Whites during their periods of active narcotic addiction.

Among Blacks during periods of nonaddiction to narcotics, cocaine use was positively correlated with theft. Barbiturate use was positively correlated with theft, dealing, confidence games, and total crime-days. Marijuana use was positively correlated with dealing, as was total use of nonnarcotic drugs.

Among Whites during periods of nonaddiction to narcotics, use of marijuana was positively correlated with theft, as was use of barbiturates, inhalants, and total use of nonnarcotic drugs. Benzodiazepine use was positively correlated with dealing, as was use of hallucinogens and Phenergan. Barbiturate use also correlated positively with confidence games, as did use of amphetamines, meprobamate, Placidyl, and other nonnarcotic substances. Total crime-days was positively correlated with use of hallucinogens, inhalants, Phenergan, and total nonnarcotic drug use. As before with Whites, no association between cocaine use and criminal activity was found.

2. Does the use of nonnarcotic drugs increase or decrease during periods of active narcotic addiction, as opposed to periods of nonaddiction?

Both Blacks and Whites tended to use more nonnarcotic drugs during periods of active addiction to narcotics than during

periods of nonaddiction. In general, this conclusion appears to hold whether one considers the percentage of users or mean rates of use on a drug-by-drug basis. However, individual differences in rates of use are quite large, thus rendering many of the mean differences observed not statistically significant. In spite of the latter situation, it was found that both Blacks and Whites used significantly more cocaine and barbiturates during periods of active narcotic addiction. However, Blacks used significantly less marijuana during periods of active narcotic addiction.

3. Does the extent of nonnarcotic drug use account for the marked variation among individuals in levels of criminal activity engaged in during periods of active narcotic addiction?

Although it is axiomatic that naturalistic field research cannot, by definition, prove cause and effect relationships, it does seem clear that users of certain types of nonnarcotic drugs tend to commit certain types of crime more frequently than do nonusers. Moreover, the relationship between use of different nonnarcotic substances and the commission of various types of crime while actively addicted to narcotics is strongly dependent on race. Among Blacks, total use of nonnarcotic drugs was highly significantly associated with total crime-days. Multiple regression analysis revealed that this relationship was primarily associated with cocaine use. Interestingly enough, no association between cocaine use and criminal activity could be

demonstrated among Whites. However, drug dealing was associated with use of barbiturates, benzodiazepines, and inhalants among Whites. Multiple regression analysis revealed that only barbiturates and benzodiazepines made significant, independent contributions to the prediction equation. Overall, total nonnarcotic drug use was not significantly correlated with total crime-days among Whites during periods of active narcotic addiction.

4. Does the extent of nonnarcotic drug use account for the marked variation among individuals in levels of criminal activity engaged in during periods of nonaddiction to narcotics?

As noted above, cause and effect cannot be proven in the naturalistic field research context; however, several statistically significant relationships between nonnarcotic drug use and crime rates can be demonstrated, again depending on race (Black/-White). Among Blacks during periods of nonaddiction to narcotics, total crime was found to be strongly associated with barbiturate use and cocaine use in the context of multiple regression analysis. Use of these two substances was also associated with higher rates of theft, while dealing was correlated with the use of barbiturates and marijuana. Barbiturate use was also strongly associated with engaging in confidence games. Among Whites, multiple regression analysis revealed the following for periods of nonaddiction to narcotics: theft was



strongly associated with barbiturate and marijuana use; engaging in confidence games was strongly associated with amphetamine use; and total crime was associated with the use of benzodiazepines.

5. What drugs other than narcotics are most prominently associated with overall levels of criminal activity?

As before, the answer to this question depends on race and narcotic addiction status. By and large, nonnarcotic drug use appears to be more highly correlated with criminal activity among Blacks than among Whites. Among Blacks during periods of active addiction to narcotics, cocaine appears to be the drug most closely associated with criminal activity. Moreover, total use of nonnarcotic drugs is significantly correlated with different types of crime among Blacks, including total crime-days. Among Whites during periods of active addiction to narcotics, drugs associated with increased criminal activity were barbiturates, benzodiazepines, inhalants, Placidyl, and Quaaludes. Cocaine use was not found to be associated with increased criminal activity among Whites.

During periods of nonaddiction to narcotics, use of cocaine, barbiturates, and marijuana were found to be associated with increased criminal activity among Blacks. Among Whites during periods of nonaddiction to narcotics, a wide array of nonnarcotic substances was found to be associated with criminal activities. These substances included marijuana, barbiturates, inhalants,

benzodiazepines, amphetamines, meprobamate, Placidyl, hallucinogens, and Phenergan. Once again, cocaine use does not appear to be associated with increased criminal activity among Whites.

6. What proportion of total addict income is derived from illegal activities, as opposed to legal employment and other sources such as family, welfare, etc.?

A considerable majority of addicts, both Black and White, derive the bulk of their income from illegal sources during periods of active narcotic addiction. In contrast, the great majority of addicts get less than one-half of their income from illegal sources during periods of nonaddiction to narcotics. Under both conditions, however, Black addicts seem somewhat more dependent than White addicts on illegal income. Interestingly enough, there does appear to be a small group of addicts who have had no income from illegal sources at any time since the onset of addiction. This finding once again emphasizes the great diversity among addicts, and the attendant need to tailor countermeasures, both therapeutic and judicial, to the particular circumstances of the individual case.