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# War on Drugs: Examining the Effects on Social Disorganization and Crime in Cities

Ruben Ortiz

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War on Drugs: Examining the Effects on Social Disorganization and Crime in Cities

A Thesis Presented

by

RUBEN ORTIZ

Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies Bridgewater State University Bridgewater,  
Massachusetts

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Criminal Justice

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### **Abstract**

The work of Shaw and Mckay (1942) paved the way for researchers to study inner-city crime by focusing on the environment and its effects on residents. Social disorganization, characterized by weakened institutions led researchers to analyze and predict patterns of crime in urban areas. Researchers argue that social disorganization theory arguments developed from this approach, but lost appeal among researchers due to limited empirical tests. The theory experienced a renewed interest in the 1980s, as structural factors (eg. poverty, heterogeneity, residential mobility, racial inequality, and family disruption) were considered, all of which allowed researchers to study patterns of crime in large urban areas. The latest argument put forward in the 1990s is that wider macro-structural forces, may actually promote structural antecedents that lead to community social disorganization, which Bursik (1989) and Sampson & Wilson (1995) discuss as conscious political decisions. This study seeks to examine drug law enforcement as a macro structural force which implicates past and current social policy. In other words, drug-related policy measures are examined as explanatory variables linked to elements of social disorganization. The study uses US cities from the 2000 Census with populations of 250,000 or more as the unit of analysis. Results from OLS regression techniques will be used to discuss the study's implication for social disorganization theory and US public policy. Additionally, the study implicates arguments by Quinney (2001) about potential social problems related to police discretion.

*Keywords:* drug law enforcement, social disorganization theory, OLS regression, crime

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Amidst the current opioid and heroin epidemic, communities across the country are calling for a softer approach to drug use and addiction. A recent New York Times article, discusses this trend, regarding suburban New Hampshire areas. The article starts out with the story of a typical middle class family, where a student, Courtney, who played French horn in high school, and had a bright future, died of a heroin overdose at age 20. Courtney's father noted that when he was younger and had an office in New York City he saw junkies everywhere, and according to him, "they were the worst." But, his personal tragedy along many others in suburban towns across the northeast are changing the negative perceptions people used to have about drug addicts years ago. The growing number of families whom have lost loved ones to drug addiction are now using their influence, anger, and resources to curve the governmental response to drugs into a gentler approach, which emphasizes treatment not incarceration (Seelye, 2015).

Michael Botticelli, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, and a former addict himself explains the shift in the conversation regarding drug use and addiction. He argues that the demographics of people affected are different (white). They are more apt to "call a legislator", "get angry" and advocate through the right venues. Contrary to the previous years during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the tough on crime and punishment rhetoric is out, while compassion and treatment is the new focus. This has become evident in the recent debates both for Democrats and Republicans, who share stories of how addiction has touched their families and are now calling for a softer, treatment oriented approach to drugs. While this approach is certainly welcomed, one cannot ignore the stark differences between previous drug

scars and the governmental response to them. As Kimberle Williams Crenshaw notes, “one cannot help but notice that had this compassion existed for African-Americans caught up in addiction and the behaviors it produces, the devastating impact of mass incarceration upon entire communities would never have happened.” (Seelye, 2015, p.3)

Indeed, the response to drug problems and violence in the last four decades has been everything but compassionate or soft, especially for communities of color. For example, in four short decades the racial and ethnic composition of US prisoners has reversed, from 70% white at the mid-century point to approximately 70% black and Latino in recent years (LaFree et al., 1992; Sampson & Lauritzen, 1997). Todd Clear (2007) argues that most of the growth in prison population had little to do with crime; rather, it has been the product of a series of broad policy choices. Policy choices like the abolition of parole statutes in the 1970s, mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and disparate sentencing guidelines for crack vs cocaine have been essential in maintaining and increasing a prison population in times where crime rates have decreased (Clear, 2007; Mauer, 1999; Tonry, 1995; Sirin, 2011). Furthermore, these policies have been grounded on the assumptions of deterrence and rational choice theory, in which the offender calculates the perceived risks associated with crime before engaging in it. Following this logic, drug policy has employed draconian sentences for drug offenders in hopes of deterring them from drug use and trafficking.

In the wake of a perceived crack-cocaine epidemic in the 1980s, the death of University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias triggered a response from legislators who saw the overdose as the tipping point of a crack epidemic. The response to the crack epidemic frenzy came in the form of the Anti-Abuse Act of 1986, and the Omnibus Drug Abuse Act of 1988, both acts triggered massive new allocation of funds to fight the war on drugs. The acts enhanced

mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses, established a 100:1 ratio for crack cocaine offenses in which 5 grams of crack triggered the same mandatory minimum sentence as 500 grams of cocaine (Sirin, 2011). Both acts increased funding for law enforcement agencies, which deployed aggressive tactics aimed at seeking and arresting drug offenders at any cost. The rhetoric at the time also fueled calls for more aggressive tactics in dealing with drugs and violence concentrated in minority urban enclaves.

According to Banks (2009), public policies can be identified by one of three different motivators, ideologically based, empirically based, or ethically based. Policies based on ideology are desirable because they fit into the assumptions and preconceived notions of those who seek to pass them. Empirically based policies are based on the scientific knowledge that is available at the time, these policies emphasize knowledge. Ethically based policies are centered on a moral compass of good and right or bad and wrong. These policies come as a reaction of moral panics, in which media portrayal of the events are often exaggerated, biased, and inaccurate in nature (Banks, 2009; Cohen, 1973). According to Banks (2009), politicians react to these panics in a visceral and instinctive manner rather than in a rational and informed manner, which can in turn exacerbate the problems a given policy seeks to alleviate. This study argues that a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between race and crime in urban areas would be incomplete without considering public policy and its effect on cities. Thus, the focus of this study will be placed on the consequences of a visceral and instinctive reaction to drug problems in major cities.

Ecological theories of crime seeking to explain spatial variations in urban crime rates by the ability of communities to control its residents have largely ignored the impact of state control strategies on processes of neighborhood organization and crime (Clear, 2008). Rose and Clear,

(1998) argue that state social controls, typically directed at individual behaviors have important effects on family and neighborhood structures, which in turn may exacerbate the problems that lead to crime in the first place. This is especially true in the case of drug law enforcement, which is concentrated in neighborhoods with very dim ecological contexts to begin with. Sampson and Wilson (1995) seek to build on traditional social disorganization theory and explore the relationship between race and crime by taking into account the larger political and macro-structural forces (racial segregation, structural economic transformation, housing discrimination, etc.) responsible for the differential distribution of blacks into communities characterized by a concentration of poverty, family disruption, and residential instability (Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Cullen & Agnew, 2011).

By emphasizing complex interactions of individual level predictors of crime and community characteristics, the social disorganization framework is suited to address problems associated both to drugs and drug law enforcement practices that are concentrated in poor inner city neighborhoods. The literature appears silent on the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and its effect on structural determinants of social disorganization theory and crime. This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature and empirically test the arguments put forward by Sampson and Wilson (1995). Influenced by analyses in a preliminary study (Grantham, 2005) and arguments by Robert Grantham (2012) in *Urban Society: The Shame of Governance*, this study conceptualizes drug law enforcement activities as conscious political decisions related to the disproportionate confinement of minorities into communities characterized by structural social disorganization and cultural isolation. The questions guiding this study are as follow, (1) What is the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and structural antecedents of social disorganization theory (poverty, family disruption, residential

instability, and residential segregation) in cities with 250,000 residents or more? (2) What is the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and violent crime rates in cities with 250,000 residents or more? The hypotheses are as follow: (1) As drug law enforcement activities increase, structural antecedents of social disorganization will increase, and (2) As consistent with the literature, as structural determinants of social disorganization increases, violent crime rates will increase.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

The following section will provide the reader with a background on social disorganization theory, its development and evolution. While providing a comprehensive background on the theory, this study focuses on arguments put forward by Sampson and Wilson (1995). The war on drugs and its development will also be discussed, along with the purpose of the war, when it was launched and the consequences it has had on minority communities. This war is one of the few federal policies passed since the 1970s to address the social ills that concentrate in large cities. However, this urban policy seems to be more focused on criminalizing and containing the dangerous populations in urban centers than on revitalizing urban centers. Unfortunately, United States politics have been characterized by the exploitation of moral panics about crime (Chambliss, 1994), which in turn has helped establish an increasingly repressive law and order regime (Becket, 1997). This regime raises questions of legitimacy regarding the criminal justice system for black communities, which are disproportionately affected by a series of policies that use incarceration for the purposes of social control (Bobo & Thompson, 2006).

#### **Social Disorganization Theory**

Over half a century ago, researchers Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942) argued that the structure of communities mattered more in explaining delinquency and crime, than the individual characteristics of offenders. The theory focused on the relationship between community characteristics and delinquency, mainly the extent in which differences in economic and social characteristics of local areas helped to predict variations in crime and delinquency

(Shaw & McKay, 1942). Shaw and McKay were the first ones to empirically test this relationship. They plotted the residential location of delinquent youths on a map, and found that the residential location of delinquent youths were located in areas of the city that were marked by a prevalence of neighborhood characteristics such as residential mobility, poverty, transiency and ethnic/racial heterogeneity; and closest to the central business district in the city. In these areas, delinquency rates were steadily high, pointing to the neighborhood as a catalyst for delinquency, not the individual traits of residents.

These findings paved the way for the creation of social disorganization theory and the ecological study of crime for years to come. Their study showed that delinquency, crime and deviance were prevalent in areas that experienced other social problems like poverty, unemployment, broken families and residential mobility. Contrary to individualistic theories, crime and delinquency in these areas were thought of as “the normal reaction of normal people to abnormal social conditions” (Plant, 1937, p.248). Shaw and McKay broadly suggested that social disorganization referred to the breakdown of the social institutions in a community. For example, in the inner city, families would be disrupted, schools would be substandard, adult run activities would be lacking, and people would not participate in political groups or communal organizations like church. The breakdown of these social institutions meant that adults would be unable to control youths and prevent them from joining gangs or engaging in delinquent acts. Lacking control and supervision from adults in the community, youths would come in contact with older juveniles who would transmit criminal values and skills (Kubrin et al 2009; Sampson & Groves, 1989). Although Shaw and McKay gained an understanding of the process by which youths became embedded in delinquency through in depth interviews (see Shaw & McKay,

1969), a shortage of empirical tests on this portion of the theory led researchers to abandon the theory (Cullen & Agnew, 2011).

Despite the emergence of more individualistic theories of crime in the 1960s and 1970s, Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory experienced a renewed interest in the 1980s. Researchers acknowledged the value of the theory because of a general interest in the ecology of crime, or variation in crime rates by ecological units such as neighborhoods, cities, or states (Kubrin et al, 2009). In 1982, Judith and Peter Blau got the attention of social disorganization scholars. They examined 125 of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States, and found that violence was more prevalent in areas marked by socioeconomic inequality, especially by a wide economic gap between African Americans and Whites. They concluded that "high rates of criminal violence are apparently the price of racial and economic inequalities" (p.126). The study showed the importance of community characteristics in understanding the root causes of crime in urban America. Moreover, the study showed that conservative governmental policies embraced during the 1980s, might fuel criminogenic social conditions, thus making streets less safe.

Social disorganization theory gained popularity as researchers were able to better conceptualize and test the mediating processes by which structural antecedents (poverty, family disruption, mobility, and heterogeneity) affected crime. Social disorganization refers to the inability of local communities to realize the common values of their residents or solve commonly experienced problems (Kornhauser, 1978, p.63). The theory posits that when structures of community social organization are prevalent and strong, crime and delinquency should be less prevalent. When the same structures are weak or non-existing, crime and delinquency are prevalent (Cullen & Agnew, 2011). For example, Sampson (1986) argued that crime was high in

inner cities because the residents were not able to exercise informal social controls, especially in areas where most families were broken. Kornhauser (1978) defined informal social controls as the scope of collective intervention that the community directs toward local problems. Moreover, weak structures of formal and informal social control tend to decrease the costs associated with alternate norms and rules, making high crime rates and delinquency more likely (Bursik, 1988).

The social disorganization model is based on the systemic model in which local communities are viewed as a “complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and ongoing socialization processes” (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974, p.329). Thus, local ties and informal social controls take center stage because they mediate the relationship between structural antecedents and crime in urban areas. If residents in a neighborhood are not engaging in their community, then they are not able to develop friendship and kinship networks that will later help regulate the behavior in their community. As argued by Skogan (1986), when residents form local ties, they strengthen their capacity for social control because they are better able to recognize residents from strangers and engage in guardianship actions against victimization and or crime (p.216). Moreover, a strong community in which neighbors work together to address potential problems and or care for each other is more likely to regulate behavior effectively. In the systemic model, social organization and disorganization are viewed as opposite ends with respect to networks of community control (Kubrin et al. 2009). Hence, disorganized communities will experience more crime and delinquency while organized communities will not.

In 1989, scholars Robert J. Sampson and W. Byron Groves were able to empirically test social disorganization theory in full. Up to this point, researchers were not able to empirically test community level social disorganization, nor the availability of informal social controls due to

measurement issues. Rather, previous research had only included the structural antecedents as predictors of crime and delinquency, leaving out indicators of social disorganization itself (Kubrin et al. 2009). Past research on ecological determinants of crime, or structural determinants of social disorganization theory have focused on poverty (Bailey, 1984; Lee, 2000; Parker, 1989; Sampson, 1985), Unemployment (Grant & Martinez, 1997; Miethe, Hughes, & McDowall, 1991), Income inequality (Blau & Blau, 1982; Farley, 1987; Shihadeh & Ousey, 1996), family disruption (Sampson, 1987; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shihadeh & Steffensmeier, 1994; Beaulieu & Messner, 2010), and population mobility as key predictors of urban crime rates (Crutchfield, Geerken, & Gove, 1982, Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1969). These studies were successful in providing empirical validity for structural antecedents of the theory as predictors of crime and delinquency.

Sampson and Groves (1989) analyzed survey data from over 10,000 residents in 238 localities to test the theory. They constructed measures of social ties (local friendship networks) and informal social controls (Unsupervised teenage peer groups and low organizational participation). Respondents were asked, "How many of your friends reside in the local community? Defined as the area within a fifteen minute walk from your home". This measure encompassed the availability of local social ties. To measure levels of informal social control, and local organizational participation respondents were asked 2 questions. First, "How common is it for groups of teenagers to hang out in public in the neighborhood and make nuisances of themselves?" Second, respondents were asked about their social and leisure activities for each day of the week, broken down by type of activity (Sampson and Groves, 1989). This was the first time researchers were able to test the availability of informal social controls and local ties, or the

mediating variables of social disorganization theory. In the Sampson and Groves study, these variables were theorized as key in mediating the effects of structural antecedents on crime rates.

In their study, Sampson and Groves (1989) found that residents living in socially disorganized communities had low levels of local friendship networks, organizational participation; and high levels of unsupervised teenage groups. Consequently, these communities had high levels of delinquency and crime. The study rendered support for the intervening measures of social disorganization, giving the theory much anticipated empirical validity. Warner and Roundtree (1997) tested the role of social ties as a mediator between structural conditions such as poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, residential stability and crime rates in neighborhoods. In their results, they found that social ties have a direct effect on crime. However, it did not mediate the relationship between structural conditions and crime. Bellair (1997), examined the role of social ties, using victimization survey data from cities in New York, Florida and Missouri. Unlike Warner and Roundtree, Bellair found that measures of social interaction mediated much of the effects of structural conditions on crime, consistent with the theory (Bellair, 1997). More recent studies such as Lowenkamp et al. (2003) further validate social ties and informal social controls as mediators of structural conditions and crime.

In another study, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) make a clear distinction between social disorganization concepts, and the ecological processes that alter the ability of communities to self-regulate, which in turn result in crime and delinquency. They view social disorganization as “the regulatory capacity of a neighborhood that is imbedded in the structure of that community’s affiliational, interactional, and communication ties among the residents” (Bursik, 1999, p.86). They identify three types of social controls that would be helpful in preventing crime. Private, which includes intimate friendship and kinship relationships. Parochial, comprised of less

intimate and secondary group relationships like people from church. Public, which refers to linkages to groups and institutions located outside the neighborhood, like the ability of a neighborhood to influence local politics, among others (Kubrin et al. 2009). Again, local and organizational ties are key in regulating the effects of structural antecedents of social disorganization and crime in a community.

Sampson et al. (1997) expand on community level social disorganization measures, and propose collective efficacy as a new construct which captures trust among neighbors and the willingness to intervene for the common good of the neighborhood. They argue, that social ties and networks may be necessary for social control, but not sufficient if they do not engage in purposive action. In other words, how the ties are activated and resources are deployed to enhance social control matter more than the availability of those alone. For example, if a neighborhood is faced with people selling drugs in the corners, neighborhood social ties and informal social controls may not be effective in dealing with the issue unless they come together and act to tackle the issue at hand. However, Sampson et al. (1997) argue that neighborhoods with high levels of collective efficacy should have low levels of crime, and that collective efficacy should largely reduce the effects of poverty, residential instability, and other community characteristics of crime. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) provide support for this claim in a study of Chicago neighborhoods. They found that even though structural antecedents of the theory were responsible for social and physical disorder in neighborhoods, measures of collective efficacy greatly reduced this social and physical disorder, pointing to the meaningful actions of local ties.

More recently, some new measurements pertaining to social disorganization's mediating concepts have surfaced. Social capital, defined as those intangible resources produced "in

relations among persons that facilitate action” for mutual benefit (Coleman, 1988: 100). Social capital, like collective efficacy, local ties, and informal social controls, can help residents combat the disruptive effects of structural social disorganization. Researchers such as Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) argue that it is the resources transmitted through social ties that are key in facilitating social control, not the ties themselves (p. 377). Thus, residing in a community occupied by the most disadvantaged segments of the population, in terms of economic, social, and cultural values, means that opportunities for advancement in the job market and other areas through personal or local ties are few if any. More on the importance of local ties and informal social controls will be discussed later.

### **Toward a Macro-Structural Approach**

Although studies have been able to provide much empirical validity to social disorganization theory as stated by Shaw and McKay, the lack of contemporary applications of the theory has caused criticism from researchers (Bursik, 1988; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Recent arguments by Sampson and Wilson (1995) have extended social disorganization theory and placed it within the realities of contemporary America. They accept the basic thesis of the theory that a breakdown of community controls caused by structural conditions is criminogenic, but they argue that social disorganization is not a natural part of the process by which cities grow (Cullen & Agnew, 2011). Following Blau & Blau's (1982) argument, Sampson and Wilson argue that variations in social disorganization are linked to racial inequality shaped by "macro-structural factors". These factors are responsible for disproportionately consigning African Americans into neighborhoods marked by a concentration of severe poverty and family disruption.

The basic thesis of their work is that "macro social patterns of residential inequality give rise to the social isolation and ecological concentration of the truly disadvantaged, which in turn leads to structural barriers and cultural adaptations that undermine social organization and hence the control of crime" (Sampson and Wilson, 1995, p.38). They point to the very different ecological contexts that blacks and whites reside in as being responsible for disproportionate rates of violent crime. In other words, a question guiding this line of research is to what extent are African Americans as a group exposed to criminogenic structural conditions compared to other races? For example, Sampson (1987) argues that in not one city over 100,000 in the United States do Blacks live in ecological equality with whites in terms of economic and family structure. He continues by stating that the worst urban context in which whites reside are

considerably better than the average context of black communities (Sampson, 1987 p. 354). For example, in his study, out of the 156 largest cities, only one had a percentage of Black female headed households at or below the mean percentage for white households. Furthermore, only three cities in the sample had a higher Black per capita income than the white mean (p.361). As stated by Plant (1937), crime is “the normal reaction of normal people to abnormal social conditions” (p.248). Thus, the different ecological contexts in which large groups of people reside is of ultimate importance.

Sampson and Wilson (1995) point to the social transformation of inner cities in recent decades as responsible for concentrating the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population, those who are poor and female-headed families with children. Whereas one out of every five poor blacks resided in extreme poverty areas in 1970, nearly two out of every five poor blacks resided in extreme poverty by 1980 (W.J. Wilson et al. 1988, p.131). This is important because basic institutions of an area like churches, schools and recreational facilities, are more likely to remain viable if the core of their support comes from more economically stable families living in the same communities. This also has an effect on the social capital of the city or neighborhood, as more affluent or stable neighbors leave, the chances of job referrals or mentoring for youths disappear. So, the concentration of disadvantaged segments of the population into an area means that this area will become isolated from the realm of opportunities and values that are afforded to mainstream America.

The macro structural factors that Sampson and Wilson (1995) discuss can be both historic and contemporary. They include racial segregation, structural economic transformation and black male joblessness, class linked outmigration from the inner city, housing discrimination, among others (Cullen & Agnew, 2011). These factors are responsible for concentrating minorities into

communities that are marked by a concentration of disadvantage and family disruption, leading to cultural and structural social disorganization. Korhauser (1978) defines cultural disorganization as the “attenuation of societal cultural values” (p.85). She argues that structurally disorganized cities are conducive to the emergence of cultural value systems that seem to view violence, crime and deviance as an expected part of everyday life (Sampson and Wilson, 1995). In other words, while residents in these communities may not approve of, or promote violence and or crime, such is viewed as an expected daily occurrence which is unavoidable regardless of personal values or self-control (see Anderson, 1999). Because people and families in these communities have to constantly worry about the economic and social hardships they experience, the regulation of behavior in the neighborhood might not be a pressing concern or priority.

This reality may influence the probability of other harmful and deviant behaviors in the community like drug use and using violence to settle possible disputes. Also, because many inner city communities are isolated from mainstream opportunities, culture and society, inner city residents may be in constant conflict with behaviors and expectations considered normal by mainstream society (Anderson, 1999). For example, while society outside these communities may emphasize hard work and education as means to succeed in life, these communities may rely on other illegal venues as means to acquire the same success in life. Residents in these communities are not consciously choosing to engage in illegal activity to get by or get ahead in life, rather the lack of legitimate opportunities leaves them with no other option. In short, the goal to become financially successful is universal across cities and communities, but the means available to do so is not (Merton, 1938). Hence, illegal markets are expected to develop in areas that are economically depressed in order to compensate for the lack of legitimate opportunities and achieve a shared goal of success.

Sociologists, Criminologists, and other social science scholars argue that because social capital and opportunities are scarce in these communities, organizations and institutions are essential for socializing youths into acceptable behaviors, and provide them with opportunities which are compatible with those in other cities. For example, Sampson (2012) points to the importance of community level organizations in predicting levels of collective efficacy, collective civic actions, and consequently crime. Organizations such as community newspapers, family planning clinics, counseling or mentoring services, treatment centers for alcohol and drug addiction and other local agencies typically act to ensure the well-being of larger community areas. Communities marked by structural social disorganization and broken down institutions will expose residents to subcultural values and behaviors that are not consistent with mainstream culture (Anderson, 1999). Because of the lack of effective institutions and local organizations, residents in these communities will not be exposed to opportunities that may help them better their lives and the communities in which they reside. Furthermore, the lack of institutions and organizations may lead those residents who are better off financially to move out of the neighborhood, thus continuing to concentrate the most disadvantaged communities into urban areas marked by structural social disorganization and cultural isolation. Lastly, businesses and investors might also shy away from these areas, as they are not seen as a potential for economic growth or a savvy investment opportunity (Clear, 2007).

### **Conscious Political Decisions and the War on Drugs**

In this study, the war on drugs is conceptualized both as an historic and contemporary macro structural force responsible for isolating minorities into communities marked by structural social disorganization and cultural isolation. While drug use has been a part of society across continents and generations, public consciousness about drugs has been largely shaped by public policy heavily influenced by racial politics (Reddington & Bonham, 2012). Drug scares have acted as perfect scapegoats, they are moral panics often construed as responsible for an array of preexisting social problems. Moreover, racial minorities and immigrants have always been the target of drug laws and the enforcement of such. Rainarman (1989) argues that drug scares and the creation of repressive laws have nothing to do with crime, rather they are used as a political maneuver to deflect attention from pressing issues and attain political goals at the expense of the most disadvantaged groups of the population. Three broad drug scares will be discussed below to provide the reader with some background on the processes by which drug scares emerge.

The first drug scare was over opium, leading to America's first real drug law, the 1875 San Francisco anti-opium den ordinance. Although opiates had long been widely and legally available without a prescription in various potions and elixirs (Musto, 1973), smoking opium was specific to Chinese immigrants. Opiate use or addiction was not a concern for lawmakers, rather the ordinance focused exclusively on the "Mongolian Vice" or opium smoking by Chinese immigrants in dens. Chinese immigrants came to California as cheap labor to build the railroads and dig the gold mines, the practice of smoking opium came along with them. Once the railroads were completed and the gold reserves were dwindling, Chinese immigrants became a threat to white Americans in the decade long depression that followed. The white Workingsman's Party provoked racial hatred toward these immigrants, who were deemed responsible for the social ills

at the time. Hence the criminalization of opium dens was the first of many laws enacted to harass and control Chinese immigrants, who were seen as a threat to the economic wellbeing of white Americans (Morgan, 1978). The first drug law had more to do with a general context of recession, class conflict, and racism than concerns over public health or the control of vice (Reddington & Bonham, 2012; Morgan, 1978).

The second drug scare was perhaps one of the biggest. Temperance Movement leaders constructed this scare in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century against alcohol use, portraying the substance as being responsible for societal decay and in need of restriction (Alcohol was portrayed as causing violence, family breakdown, poor job performance, etc...). The passage of the national prohibition act in 1919 had little to do with actual alcohol drinking, rather it stemmed out of a threat felt by middle class suburban Protestants over the working class, Catholic immigrants who were filling up American cities during a time of industrialization. Gustfield (1963) termed Catholic immigrants as “unrepentant deviants”, who drank constantly despite social norms condoning it. The rhetoric during the prohibition was more representative of a cultural conflict in which people behind the temperance movement attempted to establish their morality as the dominant one in America. The temperance movement leaders instilled the fear that bars where alcohol was consumed served as the breeding grounds for all sorts of immoral behaviors at the time (Workers seeking to form unions and anarchist seeking to recruit supporters). For example, corporate leaders at the time funded the temperance movement in efforts to control working class drinking that was thought to affect productivity, along with concerns over unionizing (Rumbarger, 1989). Once again, alcohol served as a scapegoat for most of the existing social problems (poverty, crime, and moral deviance).

The drug scares of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on opiates, marihuana, and cocaine (especially crack cocaine), and led to several anti-drug laws at the federal level. Again, these scares had more to do with class and racial conflicts, pressing social issues surrounding the labor market and the economy, than the actual dangers associated with these drugs (Reddington & Bonham, 2012). During the great depression, Harry Anslinger (head of the Federal Narcotics Bureau) pressured Congress into passing a federal law against marihuana, claiming it was a “killer weed” which incited violence among Mexican Americans. These claims were never evaluated and marihuana was criminalized in 1937 (Musto, 1973). During the 1960s political and moral leaders re-branded the “killer weed” as the “drop out drug” that was leading America’s youth to rebellion and deviance (Himmelstein, 1983). Although the marihuana scare was initially directed towards Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, it morphed into the perfect scapegoat for a multi-faceted political and cultural conflict between generations, that is, younger generations were revolting against conventional values. The scare resulted in the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Control Act of 1970, which is responsible for the current scheduling of drugs (Reddington & Bonham, 2012).

Despite the fact that the prevalence of cocaine use quadrupled in the late 1970s, the crack cocaine scare began when crack emerged only in a handful of major urban cities (Reinarman & Levine, 1989a). In 1986, politicians and the media linked crack cocaine to rampant unruliness and violence in inner-city, minority enclaves. Politicians were quick to claim that crack contained special properties making its users incredibly violent and powerful. Politicians also linked crack to rampant abuses on welfare benefits by mothers who abandoned kids and used their benefits to purchase more crack (Jordan-Zachery, 2003). The response to the crack scare came in the form of the Anti-Abuse Act of 1986, and the Omnibus Drug Abuse Act of 1988,

both acts triggered massive new allocation of funds to fight the war on drugs. The acts enhanced mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses, established a 100:1 ratio for crack cocaine offenses in which 5 grams of crack triggered the same mandatory sentence as 500 grams of cocaine (Sirin, 2011). Both acts increased funding for law enforcement agencies, which deployed aggressive tactics aimed at seeking and arresting drug offenders at any cost. The rhetoric at the time also fueled calls for more aggressive tactics in dealing with drugs and violence which concentrated in minority urban enclaves.

In each of these scares, more repressive and draconian laws were passed to deal with constructed drug problems. Although politicians claimed that these laws would reduce drug use and drug problems no experts were consulted in drafting these laws, unsurprisingly, no evidence has been found supporting these claims after the implementation of these policies (Tonry, 1995; Mauer, 1999, Clear, 2007). However, these laws were able to greatly increase the quantity and quality of social control directed towards groups perceived as dangerous and threatening. Drug scares have been placed as a mainstream issue thanks to media magnification, in which the media recrafts worst case scenarios into typical cases to augment the scope of the problem. As argued by Becker (1963), moral entrepreneurs, those who define and enforce the rules at any cost, are often political elites who have interests of their own in defining the problem and drafting an appropriate response. Political elites use drugs as a functional evil, allowing them to deflect attention from problems for which they would have to take some responsibility otherwise, or be held accountable. Furthermore, being tough on drugs and crime for that matter, allows politicians to take a firm stand without losing any votes or political contributions, regardless of how absurd that stand might be or the consequences that follow (Becker, 1963; Rainarman, 1989; Tonry, 1995; Mauer, 1999). Hence, there has been no serious discussion on the social

consequences of the tough on crime movement, nor the fiscal implications of such outside of academia and the social sciences.

The lack of a serious attempt at creating or implementing federal urban policy since early in the Carter administration came as the result of lack of importance of the city electorate (Goetz, 1996; Kaplan, 1995; McLain, 1995). The diminished importance of cities in terms of national policy agenda came partially as a result of the irrelevance of cities in national elections. For example, only 12% of the 1984 presidential votes came from large cities (Kaplan, 1995). The administrations of Reagan and Bush have largely ignored the needs of cities, placing the needs of US corporations and businesses as a top priority (Hackworth, 2007; Harvey, 2005). This led policy makers to ignore cities as valuable in terms of cultural, social, or economic units, rather the focus was on how these cities contributed to the national economy, or their potential for economic output (Robertson & Judd, 1989). While major urban redevelopment programs have been cut (federal housing and economic development), federal assistance facilitated the movement of capital and population out of old cities into more productive areas (Squires, 1993; Rich, 1993). The social ills that followed this massive disinvestment were blamed on the behavioral problems of people living in these areas. Public discourse on urban problems followed this trend, resulting in massive investments in the form of social control, not actual social programs (Goetz, 1996).

The war on drugs has brought criminalization to urban areas masked as revitalization efforts. As other drug scares, most of the social ills faced in urban areas were blamed on the availability of drugs, drug use and addiction, and the drug trade itself, not the social ills which preceded these problems. Another way to think of this would be that the symptoms of a disease were blamed for the causes of the disease not the other way around; and while the symptoms can

be managed, unless the causes of the disease are treated, symptoms will reappear sooner or later. This ensures a vicious cycle in which the causes of a problem are ignored while directing all attention towards symptoms, which can serve to exacerbate the causes. Therefore, the government was able to cut most if not all social programs and replace them with law enforcement and community policing programs, sold as a comprehensive new approach to urban renewal (Goetz, 1996). One example of this strategy is the weed and seed programs, in which police forces were to weed out destructive forces in these cities (i.e. anyone involved with drugs) and seed or establish social programs to cultivate acceptable social behaviors and practices. One special feature of the program was to establish law enforcement zones in which offenders would receive more stringent federal charges if arrested (Goetz, 1996). At the outset of the program, the legislation called for 80% of funds to be allocated to seeding and 20% to weeding out. However, upon implementation of the weed and seed programs across the nation, this allocation ratio reversed leaving communities at the mercy of eager police departments looking to weed out problems. Furthermore, in hopes of revitalizing the area, residents in these neighborhoods faced stiffer sentences in the name of urban renewal (Goetz, 1996; McLain, 1995).

Indeed, the scale of the criminal justice response, public fear about crime and drug abuse among US residents and politicians bears no relationship to the magnitude of the actual crime problem (Sharp, 1994). Legislative viciousness in the name of public safety has torn minority communities apart and divided the country along racial lines. Chambliss (1994) and Becket (1994) argue that policy efforts to address the drug problems cannot be explained by public opinion nor a rise in the crime problem, rather these policies have emerged as a conscious political strategy by politicians. These issues are maintained in the public spotlight through constant media reinforcement (Petersilia, 1992), regardless of the actual problem. This is a great strategy for

politicians to run as tough on crime and mobilize the white electorate who feel the urge to back the candidate who is determined to address these issues at any cost (Gordon, 1994). Once again, political elites benefit at the expense of minority urban communities.

## **Deterrence Theory**

Policies developed in the past four decades to address the crime and drug problem in America have been based on deterrence theory and incapacitation. In the simplest terms, deterrence theory is based on the belief that prior to committing a crime, the potential offender weighs the perceived gains and consequences from committing crimes. Following this reasoning, the offender is perceived as a rational individual who engages in a cost-benefit evaluation prior to any act of delinquency, thus crime is seen as a rational choice. (Kubrin et al, 2009).

Incapacitation refers to preventing someone from committing a crime through incarceration. To achieve this, the state has to incapacitate an offender through their active offending years, roughly from 15 to 29 years of age (Kubrin et al, 2009). Based on this theoretical framework, the policies passed under the umbrella of the war on drugs offer some face validity. However, upon close examination, this face validity and simplistic reasoning fades away.

One cannot ignore the relationship between incarceration and crime, whether it be positive or negative. A relationship supportive of incapacitation and deterrence theory would have to be an inverse relationship, that is as incarceration and tougher sentences become more prevalent, the crime rate should (in theory) decrease. However, the available evidence on incarceration and crime does not follow said logic. For example, while the US prison population began to rise in 1973, and continued to rise every year thereafter, crime rates have not followed a consistent pattern. In 1972, the rate of state level imprisonment grew from just under 84 per 100,000 citizens to 432 per 100,000 residents in 2004, this represents a 400% increase in the rate of imprisonment. Crime rates as measured by the FBI crime index on the other hand experienced a 3 percent increase in the same time period (Clear, 2007). There is a clear disconnect between

incarceration and crime prevention, so the relationship between punishment and crime is not as simple as stated by incapacitation or deterrence theory advocates.

A sensible observer should wonder how the United States has sustained a growth in imprisonment for the last 40 years, without a stable effect on crime. Blumstein and Beck (2005) have argued that this growth in imprisonment can be broken down into three different periods. The 1970s experienced an increase in incarceration of 40% with a similar increase in crime of 50%, during this period most of the increase in incarceration was due to crime, or justified by the crime problem. The 1980s began and ended with about the same crime rate, dropping during the first 4 years and returning to its 1980 level by 1991. However, the incarceration rate more than doubled, from 140 to 310 residents per 100,000. As Blumstein and Beck (2005) argued, this was fueled by the increased likelihood of offenders going to prison on a drug felony. Lastly, during the 1990s the prison populations experienced an increase of about 80% (between 1990 and 2000), while the crime rate was steadily dropping at a rate of about 30%. Blumstein and Beck conclude that between 1980 and 2001:

Growth in incarceration is attributable first to the 10-fold increase since 1980 in incarceration rates for drug offenses. Beyond drugs, no contribution to that increase is associated with increases in crime rate or increases in police effectiveness as measured by arrests per crime. Rather, the entire growth is attributable to sentencing broadly defined – roughly equally to increases in commitments to prison per arrest... and to increases in time served in prison, including time served for parole violation (2005:50).

The periods described by Blumstein and Beck show no stable pattern as one would expect taking deterrence and incapacitation into consideration. If deterrence was at work, one could expect fewer people engaging in drug crimes during this period of time, and if incapacitation was at work, people committed to prison would be younger, as this is how incapacitation works. On the first point, arrest for drug crimes not only failed to decrease, they

actually experienced a five-fold increase between 1970 and 2004 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). On the later point, the average age of prison commitments actually rose in the same period of time, especially for those who received long mandatory sentences (Clear, 2007; Mauer, King, & Young, 2004; BJS, 2006). One would also expect lower recidivism rates as sentencing guidelines called for tougher sentences for repeat offenders. Again, the evidence does not support this claim. In fact in 1983, 62% of offenders released from prison would get rearrested within 3 years, and in 1994 the recidivism rate had grown to 68% (Hughes, Wilson, & Beck, 2006). From the evidence available, deterrence and incapacitation have not been effective in controlling crime, never mind reducing crime. In fact, the war on drugs has served to exacerbate the problems it intended to address.

Some researchers argue that the public health consequences of our nation's drug control efforts are an important area of research. For example, Drucker (1999) along with Duncan (1994) analyzed whether drug law enforcement had a negative effect on public health outcomes. Both studies found that enforcement strategies are exacerbating the negative public health consequences of illicit drug use by demonstrating an increase in emergency room visits and fatal drug overdoses. Drucker (1999) noted that during the 1980s and 1990s when resources for drug law enforcement increased dramatically, the death and public health outcomes associated with drugs rose dramatically in urban areas with large minority populations (p.15). Furthermore, Duncan (1994) found a statistically significant relationship between drug law enforcement expenditures and drug-induced deaths, noting that the evidence "does not support the view that the enforcement of drug laws protects the public health" (p.226). Although the war on drugs was supposed to eradicate drug use and the ills associated with such, it has actually exacerbated negative public health consequences of drug use.

For example, one of the most notorious drug policies is the federal ban on needle exchange programs. Day (2002) studied the spread of drug related aids and hepatitis C among African Americans and Latinos. She found that more than 165,000 African Americans and 96,000 Latinos were living with injection related aids or had already died from it by 2001. This did not include the thousands more who were infected by the virus in this period. Among those who inject drugs African Americans are 5 times as likely as Whites to get AIDS and Latinos are at least 1.5 times as likely as whites to get AIDS. Even more disturbing is the fact that despite all the medical advances in AIDS treatment by the year 2000, AIDS was still among the top 3 leading causes of death for African Americans aged 25-54 years, and among the top 5 for Latinos of the same age group. More than half of those deaths were caused by contaminated needles (Day, 2002). This policy is regarded as a gross disregard for human dignity and human lives by many human rights organizations (Bowen, 2012).

More recently, Shepard and Blackley (2004) evaluated the relationship among federal anti-drug law enforcement expenditures, education and treatment expenditures with public health outcomes. Using data from 1981 to 1998, they found that increased expenditures for drug control strategies as opposed to expenditures for treatment and education were statistically associated with drug induced deaths. They noted that a 10% reduction in enforcement expenditures is associated with a long run reduction of approximately 3,000 deaths per year. Their results are consistent with the literature evaluating drug enforcement and public health outcomes. Furthermore, results supported the hypotheses advanced by Friedman (1998), Nadelman (1988), and Drucker (1999) which state that an increase in expenditures for drug control strategies will have an adverse effect on public health outcomes and drug induced deaths. These adverse public

health outcomes are also found to concentrate among African Americans, whether it be the number of deaths or age adjusted mortality rates.

Seeking to measure the impact of community oriented policing services (COPS) grants on rates of police productivity (arrest), Zhao et al. (2011) used city level data from 1990 to 2000. Between 1994 and 2000, COPS grants awarded more than \$ 7 billion in grants to local law enforcement agencies to hire new police officers focusing on quality of life issues such as loitering, public drinking and drug dealing. Using a two-level hierarchical multivariate linear module (HMLM) for the longitudinal data analysis, Zhao et al. (2011) found the COPS grants to be associated with increased arrests in the most disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, while arrests for property crimes experienced a modest increase, the most rapid and considerable increase in arrests were for drug offenses. The findings are consistent with the literature on police strength. In several studies, findings demonstrate a positive relationship between police strength (number of police officers) and crime incidents (see Jacobs & Helms, 1997; Levitt, 1997; Marvell & Moody, 1996). However, the literature consistently shows a significant statistical relationship between drug law enforcement and drug market violence. Thus, an increase in COPS grants aimed at reducing violence and disorder in disadvantaged urban areas may be counterproductive.

Werb and colleagues (2011), embarked in a systematic review of the literature in order to analyze the effects of drug law enforcement on drug market violence. Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, 15 studies were identified that evaluated the impact of drug law enforcement on drug market violence. While the studies used a variety of research designs and statistical techniques, (11 longitudinal analysis using linear regression, 2 mathematical drug market models, and 2 qualitative studies)

the majority of studies concluded that drug law enforcement had an adverse effect on drug market violence (Werb et al., 2011). The findings suggest that increasing drug law enforcement activities actually increase drug market violence. These findings call into question the standard governmental approach toward drug related problems, which is more funding to increase enforcement strategies. Thus, empirical research on drug enforcement and its effects on violence and public health outcomes raises some serious questions about the current approach towards drugs, its related problems, and governmental legitimacy in the eyes of minority individuals who see the war on drugs as unfair by design (Mauer, 1999; Tonry, 1995; Bobo & Thomson, 2006).

### **Catalyst for Structural and Cultural Social Disorganization**

Although drug use is widely distributed across the population, drug law enforcement and the negative consequences it brings are concentrated in large urban communities comprised mainly of minority individuals. The discretionary nature of drug law enforcement left disadvantaged urban communities vulnerable to over enforcement of drug laws by police departments pressured to show results on the war on drugs (Mauer, 1999). As a result, many black communities experienced an unprecedented increase in rates of imprisonment. Pettit and Western (2004) argue that among the age cohort of 30-34 in 1999, 60 percent of black men without a high school diploma had been incarcerated at some point, a threefold increase for the same cohort before the war on drugs. Moreover, drug law enforcement activities contribute to family breakdown, often leaving children behind in the child welfare system, creating massive disfranchisement for those with felonies, and prohibiting ex-convicts from receiving social services such as welfare, food stamps, and access to public housing. This has great consequences for the family and community structure of African Americans. For example, African American children are 9 times more likely to have a parent incarcerated than white children (ACLU, 2006).

African American males are disfranchised at a rate that is 7 times the national average; and as a result of other legislation addressing drug offenders, there is a lifetime disqualification from the receipt of welfare for anyone convicted of a drug felony, unless states opt out of this provision (ACLU, 2006). This means that people who need these services the most to stay afloat and reintegrate into society are left with no support or means to do so.

Racial disparity linked to proactive enforcement of drug laws and the application of mandatory minimum sentences for crack cocaine is quite disturbing. For example, despite the fact that whites and Hispanics form the majority of crack users, African Americans comprise the majority of those convicted for crack cocaine offenses (Sirin, 2011). In 1980, the black arrest rate for drug possession or use was about twice the white arrest rate, and by 1989 it had increased to 4 black arrest for every 1 white arrest (ACLU, 2006; BJS, 2012). In the same period, the white arrest rate for drug possession or use increased 56% compared to a 219% increase for blacks (BJS, 2012). The disparities were even greater for African American women who experienced an 800% increase in incarceration rates between 1986 and 2006 (ACLU, 2006). Overall, while arrest rates for murder, forcible rape, larceny-theft, gun law violations declined from 1990 to 2010, overall drug arrest rates increased by 80% in the same period of time (BJS, 2012).

Disparate incarceration rates in disadvantaged urban communities are also coupled with disparate violent victimization of its residents. For example, by 1990 black women and men were four and six times more likely than their white counterparts to be murdered in their lifetime (Reiss & Roth 1993, p.63). In 1995, the leading cause of death among black males and females between the ages of 15 and 24 was homicide (National Center for Health Statistics, 1995). Because these forces concentrate in poor, minority, urban cities, the ripple effect caused can be very disruptive, which in term can affect social networks, local ties and informal social control.

### **Labor Markets and Poverty**

The most crippling effects of incarceration are the lifelong consequences of having a criminal record in terms of employment and income. For example Mauer states that “An 18-year-old with a first time felony conviction for drug possession now may be barred from receiving welfare for life, prohibited from living in public housing, denied student loans to attend college, permanently excluded from voting, and if not a citizen, be deported” (2005, p.610). Adding to this hardship, states place additional restrictions on employment for those with a criminal record, especially those with a drug related conviction. For example, in New York, there are 283 employment restrictions for those with records (Clear, 2007). This limits the dim prospects people living in these urban areas already have in terms of finding employment, never mind rejoining the labor force after a prison sentence. Moreover, once released from prison young men of color keep facing hardships related to probation and or parole. For example, for those in the community under the supervision of probation or parole, states have increased the practice of regular drug testing, sometimes placing a supervision fee on parolees to cover for this. This creates a semi-permanent prison population who cycle in and out of these urban areas (Clear, 2007; Blumstein & Beck, 2005). Furthermore, the impositions of fees while on parole is placing the cost of social control on those who are targeted the most, increasing the financial burden of incarceration even when it is over.

For people who see their family members and neighbors caught up in this vicious cycle of state crime control, visiting these family members and maintaining contact while they are in prison can become an enormous financial strain. Family members earning money contribute to the financial stability of their family, whether the source of income is legal or comes from the drug trade. For example, Edin and Lein (1997) show that in order to sustain their families,

mothers rely on regular and substantial financial help from people in their networks, because neither welfare nor available jobs provide sufficient cash to cover their expenses. The study points to 55% of mothers receiving cash from their families and networks, and 41% receiving cash from their child's father. Thus, cycling residents of these communities through the criminal justice system on drug charges can put families at great economic disadvantage.

Lastly, the concentration of drug law enforcement and incarceration in these communities impede access to jobs for youths because it decreases the pool of men who can serve as mentors and link them to the labor force. This process can generate a sort of employment discrimination against entire communities (Roberts, 2004). Also, an extended reliance on welfare, and a lack of work and life experiences can remove residents from mainstream society and the opportunities it affords (Roberts, 2004; Browne, 1997). Wide-spread poverty and unemployment also affect the few businesses that operate in these communities given that purchases of products and services are reliant on the availability of resources. Indeed, the erosion of local labor markets is a precursor for higher rates of crime. As presented in previous sections, economic hardship is one of the strongest predictors of crime rates. The socially imbedded nature of crime, unemployment, and incarceration ensures and or leaves residents with no other option than to engage in crime to survive, and settle disputes (Clear, 2007; Hagan, 1993). Furthermore, these economic hardships affect the availability and sustainability of informal social controls and local ties in the community.

### **Families**

Perhaps as many as 700,000 US families have a loved one behind bars on any given day (Clear, 2007). Because drug law enforcement and incarceration primarily removes young men from these communities, the rate of single female headed households is higher than other areas

without the same phenomena, or areas that are predominantly white (Clear, 2007). For example, in 1986, of the 28.6 million African American households, 50% were headed by single females (Williams, 1993). This means that women and their children are increasingly and consistently forced into poverty and state dependency, something which clearly does not promote emotional well-being nor harmony among family members. On the simplest grounds, the removal of a father creates negative feelings for their significant other and their children. Anecdotal accounts, show that in these communities there is a feeling of desperation, things are the way they are and nothing will change. For these families, the removal of a father, brother, uncle or cousin is almost an expected occurrence in their lifetime, hence, the financial difficulties that follow are also an expected occurrence (see Clear, 2007).

Murray (2005) provides a review of close to a dozen studies evaluating the effects of male incarceration on the family unit he left behind. He notes that one of the most prominent effects is extreme financial hardship, caused by the removal of financial support from the incarcerated partner along with the expenses associated with maintaining ties with the father. It is estimated that the number of children with a parent in prison run as high as 2.3 million, this represents almost 3-5% of children under the age of 18 (Clear, 2007). Among black children, roughly one fifth have a parent with a history of incarceration, and the figure goes up to 33% among those children with fathers who did not finish high school (Murray, 2005). Murray and Farrington, (2008) conducted a systematic review of studies looking at how incarceration affects children. The study shows that parental incarceration is a risk factor for later delinquency, and having a parent incarcerated makes children 3 to 4 times more likely to develop a juvenile record. The strict reliance on incarceration without establishing clear guidelines and programs

for successful re-integration into the community after a prison sentence, ensures that people from these communities will return sooner or later, making freedom an almost unattainable goal.

Previous research suggests that communities with high levels of family disruption experience a weakening of formal and voluntary organizations, which in turn play a crucial role in socializing youth to other social institutions (Sampson, 1986a, 1986b). As Kornhauser, (1978) argues, in these communities “the messages and methods of the various institutions with which the child has contact are conflicting and uncoordinated” (p.81). Sampson and Groves (1989) argue that high levels of family disruption may decrease community networks of informal social control which are responsible for supervising general youth activities and intervening in case of disturbances. Bloom (1966) found that areas with high family disruption had low rates of participation in community politics, along with recreation and educational activities such as YMCA and library memberships. Lastly, Kellam and colleagues (1982) found that single-parent mothers in a Chicago slum were less likely to participate in social and political organizations than two-parent families in the same community. In these communities, affiliation to the few local institutions that provide social control are hindered by the prevalence of single headed female households. In the simplest terms, having only one person to sustain a household, leaves the head of the household without much time to engage in social activities, given that the head of that household is responsible for things such as food-shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc...

Areas with high prevalence of family disruption also experience attenuated informal social controls (Sampson, 1986b, 1987; Felson & Cohen, 1980). Examples of informal social control include neighbors being able to identify strangers in the community and question them, watching over resident's property, and supervising local youth activities (Sampson & Groves, 1989). In simplest terms, having only one parent present in most households makes it harder for

people in the neighborhood to watch over other people's kids and property. As Felson (1986) argues "The single parent household gives the community only one parent to know and hence reduces the potential linkages which can be invoked for informal social control" (p.124). The concentration of drug law enforcement activities in predominately poor and minority communities ensures that young minority males will be incarcerated, producing high levels of family disruption. In turn, informal and formal social control networks are diminished and crime and delinquency flourish.

### **Neighborhood Isolation**

In an effort to combat street crime and drugs, many police departments and community organizations across the country have engaged in an aggressive inter-agency assault on drug trafficking and drug use. In the 1990s, local law enforcement agencies combined drug enforcement operations with housing inspections as a pragmatic approach to clean up neighborhoods (Goetz, 1996). For example, in St. Paul Minneapolis, the city council formed the FORCE (Focusing Our Resources for Community Empowerment) program in 1992. The team conducted widespread outreach, going door to door on neighborhoods deemed problematic by law enforcement (primarily low income, and minority neighborhoods) conducting drug raids and a housing inspection immediately after the raid. This allowed the city to condemn the unit and force the eviction of a household regardless of the result of the drug raid. By having a housing inspector in the FORCE team, city officials were able to essentially evict anyone due to the low eviction threshold which was usually met by drug raids themselves. For example, drug units conducting a drug raid usually enter the house with force, breaking doors, windows, tipping furniture over, etc... These are all triggers used to condemn a housing unit and evict residents regardless of the presence of illegal narcotics (Goetz, 1996).

In St. Paul alone, from October 1992 through the end of 1994, the FORCE team conducted 424 raids, averaging just under 16 raids per month (Goetz, 1996). Much like the war on drugs, the raids were concentrated in poor minority neighborhoods. Although African Americans comprised less than 10% of St. Paul's population, 93% of the raids were conducted in African American households. Moreover, these households were 14 times more likely than households of all other races combined to be targets of these raids. Of these raids, 55% resulted in condemnations, forcing households out of the unit in less than 24 hours (Goetz, 1996). While these condemnations remove everyone from the household regardless of culpability, less than half of the raids resulted in any arrests. Thus, initiatives aimed at increasing public safety in the name of drug control were arbitrarily and proactively removing minority residents from communities that were valuable to other residents. As stated by the commander of the FORCE unit himself "The whole philosophy behind the unit is to move [the drug dealing]. What you have to understand is that I only want to move it outside city limits. Let them go to Roseville or Maplewood, I don't care as long as it isn't in the city of St. Paul" (Graves, 1993 as cited in Goetz, 1996).

Unfortunately St Paul was not the only city using these tactics, in 1995 a survey of the 30 largest US cities revealed that 77% had programs in which drug units combined forces with housing inspectors and other agencies (Goetz, 1996). This tactic along other war-like tactics have been used in large cities in the name of drug control without having much tangible effects in terms of drug seizures. For decades now, the federal government has equipped state and local law enforcement agencies with military weapons and vehicles. Police militarization has resulted in tragedies to civilians and police officers, it escalated the risks of violence in the underground drug market, caused destruction of personal property and undermined civil liberties for the

purpose of drug control (ACLU, 2014). In a 2014 study conducted by the ACLU, researchers noted that when SWAT teams or paramilitary tactics were deployed in drug searches, the primary targets were people of color, whereas when paramilitary tactics were used in a hostage or barricade scenarios, the primary targets were white [a much more suitable occasion for these tactics]. Again, most of the time, these searches do not produce anything other than terrified residents. For example, in 54% of the cases in which the SWAT team forced an entry into a person's home using a battering ramp or breaching device the SWAT team either did not or probably did not find any weapons (ACLU, 2014). When SWAT teams and other drug units are aggressively deployed to these disadvantaged communities, a feeling of isolation and vengeance are nothing but inevitable among residents. Military tactics emphasizing force are for enemies of war, not for people in disadvantaged communities who need help.

### Chapter 3

#### Data and Methods

This cross sectional study is an empirical test of Sampson and Wilson's (1995) thesis, which states that "macro structural factors" or conscious political decisions are responsible for the disproportionate consignment of African Americans to inner-city neighborhoods that are plagued by a concentration of poverty and family disruption, which are known correlates of social disorganization and crime (Sampson, 1987; Sampson & Groves, 1989). The study conceptualizes drug law enforcement activities as both historic and contemporary conscious political decisions. The research questions guiding the study read as follow, (1) What is the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and structural antecedents of social disorganization theory (poverty, family disruption, residential instability, and residential segregation) in cities with 250,000 residents or more? (2) What is the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and violent crime rates in cities with 250,000 residents or more? My hypotheses are as follow: (1) As drug law enforcement activities increase, structural antecedents of social disorganization will increase, and (2) As consistent with the literature, as structural determinants of social disorganization increase, violent crime rates will increase.

In order to empirically test the argument and test my hypotheses, I have constructed a data set using data from the County and City Data book, and the Summary Population and Housing characteristics of the U.S. Census Bureau (2001, 2003). Information on violent crime rates, homicide, and non-negligent manslaughter are taken from the data collected by the FBI in the Uniform Crime Reports for 2000. Information on police department employees and officers were also taken from the FBI UCR data tool for the year 2000. Data on city level law enforcement expenditures and the number of police employees assigned to drug units were taken

from the 2000 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics for Individual State and local Agencies with 100 or more officers (2004). The original sample in this study consisted of 71 cities with populations of 250,000 or more, however after removing cities without all the information necessary to conduct the analysis, the final sample consists of 63 cities.

I will use multivariate regression analysis (MRA) as the analytical technique for my models, consistent with various studies of social inquiry (Peterson & Krivo, 2000; Kovandzic et al. 1998, Borg & Parker, 2001; Miethe et al. 1991; Ousey & Lee, 2004, 2008; Kent & Carmichael, 2013). MRA is an extension of simple linear regression. It is often used in social inquiries because it allows researchers to make predictive statements about a phenomenon (dependent variable) based on the value of two or more variables, hence multiple regression. It also allows researchers to determine the overall fit of the model and the relative contribution of each of the predictors (IV) on the overall variance (Allison, 1999).

In order to analyze data using MRA, one ought to check to make sure that the data can actually be analyzed. The data being used must meet 8 assumptions. (1) The dependent variable must be measured on a continuous scale, (2) there has to be at least two or more independent variables, either continuous or categorical, (3) there needs to be an independence of observation, (4) there needs to be a linear relationship between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables, (5) the data needs to show homoscedasticity, (6) your data must not show multicollinearity, (7) there should be no significant outliers, high leverage points or highly influential points, and finally (8) the residuals (error) should be approximately normally distributed (Allison, 1999). All the data in this study is measured at the continuous level. Furthermore, an initial scatterplot of the standard error coefficients or residuals indicated that the errors are random and normally distributed, thus abiding by all 8 assumptions of MRA.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The decision to use cities with 250,000 residents or more as the unit of analysis comes after careful consideration of the literature on homicide, drug market violence, and social disorganization. While previous homicide studies have utilized states as the unit of analysis (Smith & Parker, 1980), aggregation at the state level can include vastly different ecological units. For example, the state of Illinois is home to large cities like Chicago with close to 3 million residents and small towns like Adair, with less than 300 people. Because of this variability, researchers have discontinued the use of states as unit of analysis (see Messner 1982; Parker, 1989). The same criticism applies to the use of SMSAs (standard metropolitan statistical areas) as unit of analysis in studies of crime. For example, Parker (1989) argues that homicide is largely a central city problem, and Kovanzic and colleagues (1998) demonstrate that for SMSAs with 100 homicides or more, 76% occur in the largest central cities. Thus, states and SMSAs would be inappropriate levels of aggregations to explore the relationship between drug law enforcement, social disorganization, and crime.

Using cities as the unit of analysis is consistent with the literature on ecological theories of crime (Sampson, 1986, 1987; Krivo & Peterson, 1993, 2000; Messner & Golden, 1992; Parker and McCall 1997). Doing so, also allows for greater comparability with other studies of crime, and the data is more plentiful at this level of aggregation. Researchers exploring the relationship between drug law enforcement and drug market violence tend to use counties (Benson et al., 1998, 2001; Shepard et al., 2005) and cities (Brumm, 1995; Resignato, 2000). I select cities with 250,000 residents or more as the unit of analysis for three reasons. First, the war on drugs has been predominantly fought across the nation's largest cities. Tonry (1995) states, that the war on drugs began an era of targeting the urban and disproportionately Black population of American

largest urban centers. For example, in New York City alone the number of drug arrests rose by 70,000 between 1980 and 1988 (Belenko, Fagan, & Chin, 1991). Second, the ecological landscape of large urban areas may create important structures (i.e. open air drug markets) that may render offenders to be more vulnerable to proactive and zealous enforcement of drug laws (Mauer, 1999; Tonry, 1995). Lastly, since 1960s poverty has become more concentrated in large cities, where almost three-fourth of poor people reside (Kovandzic et al., 1998; Sampson, 1987). Therefore, the use of cities with 250,000 people or more is empirically, conceptually, and theoretically justified.

### **Dependent Variables**

Wilson (1987) and Sampson and Wilson (1995) have argued that high rates of violence in cities come as a result of the concentration of disadvantage and community instability. The dependent variables in this study seek to measure the concentration of disadvantage and community instability consistent with social disorganization theory. The focus will be placed on racial residential segregation, community instability, family disruption, and levels of poverty. Residential segregation, as argued by Massey and Denton (1993) is a structural cause of crime because it serves as a precursor to concentrated disadvantage for minorities (Krivo et al. 1998, Peterson and Krivo, 1999). Furthermore, subcultural explanations argue that certain groups develop deviant or adaptive responses to socioeconomic hardships, deviant values are then transmitted to future generations through socialization with people who are similarly situated in these distressed communities (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967). In order to measure the effect of drug law enforcement activities on levels of residential racial segregation for African Americans and Hispanics separately, I will include two separate variables with the index of dissimilarity (one for each group).

Racial residential segregation is measured by the index of dissimilarity. This index measures how evenly distributed African Americans are across census tracts in a city. Values for the index of dissimilarity range from 0, representing an even distribution across census tracts, to 1, representing complete segregation across tracts. The distribution across tracts is based on the percentage of minorities (Black or Hispanic in the current study) in the city. For example, if 15% of a city's population is black, then a measure of 0 (index of dissimilarity) will mean that the specific census tract is representative of the city population, or 15% black. The index of dissimilarity is commonly used as a measure of racial residential segregation in structural studies (Peterson & Krivo, 2000; Borg et al., 2001; Parker & McCall, 1999). In this study, this measure is provided for Blacks and Hispanics separately.

The percentage of vacant housing units is used as a proxy measure to capture the stability (or instability), organization, and health of a city. This is based on empirical research linking city decay to levels of collective capacity (Borg and Parker, 2001). The reasoning is pretty similar to broken windows theory, abandoned buildings, graffiti, broken windows and trash could indicate potential offenders that people do not care, and that the area is in decay (Hartnett & Skogan, 1999). Also, in order to achieve a meaningful change, residents have to come together and demand services and/or actions through the right venues, so lots of vacant housing units can signify the lack of common goals and collective efficacy in a city (Sampson et al., 1997). This collective capacity is affected by the people cycling through neighborhoods, and new people coming in and out cannot form the ties necessary to take care of these problems. Vacant housing units also provide spaces without capable guardians and neighbors may be reluctant to intervene in the case of criminal activity since there will be a diffusion of responsibility (Sampson, 1987, Ousey & Lee, 2004).

Family disruption is measured as the percentage of female headed households with children under the age of 18, which is consistent with previous studies analyzing structural covariates of crime (Sampson, 1986, 1987; Sampson & Groves, 1989). This measurement of family disruption is well suited for our model which emphasizes the power of informal social controls and guardianship. Households with only one parent are less likely to engage in neighborhood activities, care for other children, and interact with other parents (Sampson & Groves, 1989). The last variable in our model is for poverty, which is measured as the percentage of the population below the social security administration's poverty line (Peterson & Krivo, 2000; Sampson, 1987, Wilson, 1987). This measure of poverty is consistent with previous studies, thus providing comparability between studies.

### **Independent Variables**

Drug law enforcement in this study is operationalized with two different variables. The first one is the number of full time sworn employees assigned to a special drug unit in that city (DLE per capita 1). The second one, is the number of full time sworn employees assigned to a multi-agency drug task force (DLE per capita 2). These variables were converted into a per capita rate to better fit the model and assumptions of the study. Drug law enforcement is considered as a governmental policy that can affect structural determinants of social disorganization theory and crime. Several researchers point to the disproportionate consequences of drug law enforcement in urban communities. As stated by a 2006 ACLU report, "...national drug enforcement and prosecutorial policies and practices have resulted in inner city communities of color being targeted almost exclusively." (p.7). Consequently, it affects the stability of predominantly minority communities by crushing labor markets, family and marriage prospects, financial viability, public health, public safety, and attitudes toward authorities (Clear,

2007; Mauer, 2000, 2004; Tonry, 1995; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Western, 2006; Braman, 2004; Thomas & Torrone, 2006).

Drug law enforcement is of ultimate importance in this study, because these practices are concentrated in poor minority communities. As Tonry argues, “ the institutional character of urban police departments led to a tactical focus on disadvantaged minority neighborhoods... it is easier to make arrests in socially disorganized neighborhoods, as contrasted with urban blue collar and urban or suburban white collar neighborhood (1995, p.105). He continues by shedding light on the fact that most daily activities of life, including drug transactions occur in the streets and alleys in poor communities. On the other hand, activities, including drug transactions are usually conducted indoors in working class and middle class neighborhoods. Thus, it is much easier and convenient for law enforcement agents to focus on low income neighborhoods or cities, than to go after actors that might be better protected by ecological features of their neighborhoods and/or city.

The study focuses on the number of full time sworn police employees assigned to city and multi-agency drug unit for several reasons. First, drug enforcement activities/strategies are proactive and labor intensive in nature. For example, drug arrests come as a result of undercover buy-and-bust operations or field interrogations (Conlon, 2004). Second, these activities involve a relatively high level of police discretion when it comes time to decide whether an offender will be arrested or not. Other offenses (violent or property crimes) may have a lower level of police discretion because a complaining third party is usually involved, in which case the police is pressured to make an arrest (Ousey & Lee, 2008). For example, if a bloody assault victim points his/her finger at the assailant, the police is compelled to make an arrest. On the other hand, the interactions between police and a drug suspect who has been found to possess drugs is much

more private. Unless there's a third party, or a crowd pointing fingers at the suspect, the officer can still cut him/her loose despite breaking the law (Ousey & Lee, 2008; Conlon, 2004). Lastly, using the number of full time sworn police employees assigned to drug units can serve as a proxy to measure conscious decisions by police administrators who fund and deploy these drug units toward distinct black communities that are perceived as hot spots for drug activities. Thus, the structural contexts (racial residential segregation) of major cities makes it easier for administrators to over police and oppress these communities (Ousey & Lee, 2008).

### **Control variables**

The inclusion of control variables is based on a review of previous studies for factors that are most consistently found to have a theoretical and empirical relevance to homicide and violent crime rates (Peterson & Krivo, 2000; Kovandzic et al, 2001; Borg & Parker, 2001). Controls are included for the percentage of the city population that is Black (Black Model), and the percentage of the city population that is Hispanic (Hispanic Model). As Sampson & Groves (1989) argued, ethnic heterogeneity is associated with crime rates because it reduces the ability of residents in a city to achieve consensus regarding goals and behaviors. Studies of police strength and social control also find a relationship between the percentage of minority groups in a city and increases on police expenditures (Jackson, 1989; Nalla, Lynch, & Leiber, 1997; Kent & Carmichael, 2014). Intergovernmental transfers and a measure of a city's budgetary health (computed as revenues/expenses) was used to control for the availability of resources in a city for policing and social programs. For example, between 1994 and March, 2000, community oriented policing services (COPS) grants awarded more than \$7 billion in grants to law enforcement agencies, which provided funding for over 109,000 community police officers focusing on quality of life issues (i.e. drug use/dealing) (Zhao et al., 2011). The unemployment

rate is included to control for its impact on poverty and community levels of deprivation (Chiricos, 1987). Lastly, a control is included for the local law enforcement crime control capacity (operationalized as the number of police officers per capita).

## Chapter 4

### Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for all the variables in the models as found in other studies in the literature (Krivo & Peterson, 2000; Borg & Parker, 2001). These descriptive statistics show a pattern of racial residential segregation across our sample, both for Blacks and Hispanics. The mean index of dissimilarity for Blacks is 55%, this means that in order to be evenly distributed with whites across census tracts in the sample, 55% of Black residents would have to move. The mean index of dissimilarity for Hispanics is 46%, this means that in order to be evenly distributed with whites across census tracts in the sample, 46% of Hispanic residents would have to move. Moreover, the mean of the population that is Black is 22.8%, and the mean of the population that is Hispanic is 19.97%. The mean percentage of vacant housing units is 9.4%, and the mean percentage of people living in poverty is 18.6%. The mean percentage of female headed households in the sample is 59.52%, therefore in these cities growing up without a parent is an almost expected reality. This points to the nature of big cities as having highly segregated and disadvantaged areas as consistent with the literature (See Sampson, 1987).

The means for the index of dissimilarity for Blacks and Hispanics support the argument that racial residential segregation has grown stronger each decade since 1980, and it remains a pervasive feature of the social landscape in many U.S. cities (Wilson, 1987; Sampson & Wilson, 1995; Kent & Carmichael, 2014). The residential segregation of minorities has been linked to higher rates of infant mortality (McFarland & Smith, 2011), greater arrest rates of African Americans (Liska & Chamlin, 1984), an increase in the size of police departments (Kent & Jacobs, 2005), increased detention facilities (Carmichael, 2005), and the prison population

(Liska, Lawrence & Benson, 1981; Kent & Carmichael, 2014). Ousey & Lee (2008), argue that cities with higher levels of segregation produce opportunities for conscious or unconscious racial biases, which lead to disparate arrest rates for criminal offenses such as drug and weapon violations (pp. 330-331).

Table 2 presents the regression results predicting rates of racial residential segregation for Blacks, community instability, family disruption, and poverty. The table reports the standard errors, standardized coefficients, t statistics, and the significance levels, which is consistent with other studies in the literature (Miethe et al., 1991; Pratt & Godsey, 2003). The model does not show a statistical significant relationship between the drug law enforcement variables and the levels of black residential segregation, community stability, and family disruption.

However, the drug law enforcement variable (DLE per capita 1) shows a statistically significant positive relationship with the level of poverty at the .05 alpha level. This means that as the number of full time employees assigned to a city's drug unit increases, the poverty rate in that city increases. The r square for the model is 0.637, which means that 63.7% of the variance in the level of poverty is explained by the model. While a statistical relationship was expected between the drug law enforcement variables and levels of segregation, instability, and family disruption, one of the drug enforcement variables is still a strong predictor of poverty in the Black model. Among the control variables, the percentage of people who are black show a statistically significant positive relationship with the level of poverty at the .001 alpha level. This is consistent with previous studies showing a positive relationship between percentage black and disadvantage.

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Index of Dissimilarity (Black)	0.5525	0.15246
Index of Dissimilarity (Hispanic)	0.4551	0.10602
Percent Vacant Housing Units	9.416	9.455
Female Headed Households	59.52	5.65
Poverty	18.667	5.53
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
DLE per capita 1	0.0084	0.00733
DLE per capita 2	0.0019	0.00206
<b>Control Variables</b>		
Intergovernmental Transfers	643783.19	2817223.83
City Expenditure/Revenue	687824.28	1264294.54
Unemployment	4.47	2.08
Percent Black	0.228	0.188
Percent Hispanic	19.997	19.0859
Police Per Capita	0.344	0.133

**Table 1**

**Table 2**

	<b>Index of Dissimilarity</b>				<b>Percent Vacant Housing</b>				<b>Female Headed Household</b>				<b>Poverty</b>				<b>VIF</b>
	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	
<b>DLE per capita</b>	2.90	0.137	0.992	0.326	224.48	-0.237	-1.363	0.178	137.9	0.147	0.825	0.413	84.01	0.26	2.34	.023*	<b>2.363</b>
<b>DLE per capita 2</b>	7.80	-0.124	-1.188	0.24	600.33	0.039	0.297	0.768	368.8	-0.051	-0.384	0.702	224.60	0.067	-0.803	0.426	<b>1.336</b>
<b><u>Control Variables</u></b>																	
<b>Intergovernmental Trfs</b>	0	-0.031	-0.21	0.835	0	0.214	1.167	0.248	0	0.033	0.173	0.863	0	-0.234	-1.995	0.051	<b>2.634</b>
<b>Expense/ Revenue</b>	0.02	0.182	1.616	0.112	1.40	-0.086	-0.608	0.546	0.86	-0.145	-0.999	0.322	0.52	0.109	1.207	0.233	<b>1.565</b>
<b>Unemployment</b>	0.01	0.072	0.72	0.474	0.57	-0.259	-2.059	.044*	0.35	0.033	0.258	0.797	0.21	0.589	7.316	.000***	<b>1.24</b>
<b>Percent Black</b>	0.11	0.484	3.795	.000***	8.11	-0.425	-2.649	.011*	4.98	0.278	1.692	0.096	3.03	0.391	3.82	.000***	<b>2.012</b>
<b>Police per capita</b>	.25	0.213	1.573	0.121	12.90	0.311	1.83	0.073	7.40	-0.624	-3.579	.001***	4.52	-0.099	-0.91	0.367	<b>2.264</b>
<b>R Square for the model</b>	<b>0.554</b>				<b>0.297</b>				<b>0.262</b>				<b>0.713</b>				
<b>*p&lt;.05,**p&lt;.01,***p&lt;.001</b>																	

**Table 3**

	<b>Index of Dissimilarity</b>				<b>Percent Vacant Housing</b>				<b>Female Headed Household</b>				<b>Poverty</b>				<b>VIF</b>
	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig</b>	
<b>DLE per capita</b>	2.35	0.404	2.504	.015*	224.40	-3.55	-2.049	.045*	129.23	0.179	1.07	0.289	89.99	0.418	3.508	.001**	<b>2.151</b>
<b>DLE per capita 2</b>	6.51	-0.215	-1.706	0.094	620.75	0.088	0.648	0.52	357.43	-0.045	-0.345	0.731	248.92	-0.154	-1.654	0.104	<b>1.317</b>
<b><u>Control Variables</u></b>																	
<b>Intergovernmental Trfs</b>	0	-0.109	-0.642	0.524	0	0.344	1.876	0.066	0	-0.035	-0.196	0.845	0	-0.372	-2.958	.005**	<b>2.403</b>
<b>Expense/ Revenue</b>	0.02	0.151	1.032	0.307	1.50	-0.128	-0.813	0.42	0.87	-0.052	-0.342	0.734	0.61	0.076	0.706	0.483	<b>1.769</b>
<b>Unemployment</b>	0.01	-0.12	-9.38	0.352	0.62	-0.416	-3.037	0.004	0.36	0.198	1.496	0.14	0.25	0.665	7.064	.000***	<b>1.345</b>
<b>Percent Hispanic</b>	0	0.454	3.285	.002**	0.07	0.195	1.313	0.195	0.04	-0.305	-2.129	.038*	0.03	0.014	0.139	0.89	<b>1.577</b>
<b>Police per Capita</b>	0.13	0.221	1.411	0.164	11.89	0.176	1.047	0.3	6.85	-0.614	-3.776	.000***	0.12	0.111	0.962	0.34	<b>2.025</b>
<b>R Square for the model</b>	<b>0.335</b>				<b>0.231</b>				<b>0.283</b>				<b>0.637</b>				
*p<.05,**p<.01,***p<.001																	

**Table 4**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
(1)	1														
(2)	.425**	1													
(3)	-.357**	-.078	1												
(4)	-.236	-.180	-.260*	1											
(5)	.575**	.267*	-.429**	.005	1										
(6)	.494**	.356**	-.157	-.171	.298*	1									
(7)	.040	-.027	-.015	-.170	.110	.154	1								
(8)	.275*	.303*	.082	-.179	.035	.618**	.029	1							
(9)	.210	.359**	.026	-.183	.049	.225	-.068	.584**	1						
(10)	.350**	.094	-.316**	-.083	.718**	.186	.161	.096	.050	1					
(11)	.685**	.123	-.410**	-.016	.627**	.476**	.089	.066	-.060	.401**	1				
(12)	-.313*	.317**	.082	-.111	.066	-.213	.046	.029	.294*	.229	-.434**	1			
(13)	.592**	.233	-.086	-.426**	.370**	.632**	.285*	.379**	.133	.359**	.620**	-.272*	1		
(14)	.603**	.182	-.342**	-.171	.592**	.449**	.164	.022	-.043	.385**	.728**	-.203	.493**	1	
(15)	.591**	.225	-.329**	-.175	.546**	.460**	.094	-.005	-.031	.393**	.865**	-.269*	.604**	.784**	1

\*p<.05,\*\*p<.01,\*\*\*p<.001

1 Dissimilarity Index Black	6 Drug Law Enforcement 1	11 Percent Black
2 Dissimilarity Index Hispanic	7 Drug Law Enforcement 2	12 Percent Hispanic
3 Vacant Housing	8 Intergovernmental Transfers	13 Police per Capita
4 Female Headed Households	9 Expenditure / Revenue	14 Violent Crime
5 Poverty	10 Unemployment	15 Homicide

Table 3 presents the regression results predicting rates of racial residential segregation for Hispanics, community instability, family disruption, and poverty. The drug law enforcement variable (DLE per capita 1) performs much better in explaining the Hispanic model. The variable shows a statistically significant positive relationship with the level of segregation for Hispanics at the .05 alpha level. This means that as the number of full time employees assigned to a city's drug unit increases, Hispanics in that city become more segregated. The model is able to explain 33% of the variance in the level of segregation. The variable also shows a statistically significant positive relationship with the level of community instability at the .05 alpha level. This means that as the number of full time employees assigned to a city's special drug unit increases, the percent of vacant housing units (more vacant housing units signal more instability) also increases. Thus, the city becomes more unstable or disorganized. The model is able to explain 23% of the variance. The variable also shows a statistically significant positive relationship with the level of poverty at the .01 alpha level. This means that as the number of full time employees assigned to a city's drug unit increases, the poverty rate in that city increases. The model is able to explain 63% of the variance in poverty.

Table 4 presents the bivariate correlations between all variables. The city drug law enforcement variable (DLE per capita 1) shows a statistically significant positive relationship at the .01 alpha level with the index of dissimilarity for Blacks, Hispanics, the violent crime rate, and the homicide rate. The variable also shows a statistically significant positive relationship at the .05 alpha level with the poverty rate. This means that in a bivariate relationship, as the number of full time employees assigned to a city's drug unit increases, the level of segregation increases for Blacks and Hispanics. Moreover, as the number of full time employees assigned to a city's drug unit increases, the violent crime and homicide rate in that city increase, along with

the poverty rate. Consistent with other studies, the index of dissimilarity for blacks shows a statistically significant positive relationship with poverty, violent crime and homicide rates.

### **Collinearity**

Several researchers have noted that high multicollinearity might be present among structural covariates in homicide studies (Land et al., 1990; Messner, 1982; Smith & Parker, 1980). In order to check for collinearity and to ensure the data is clean of severe errors, a residual scatterplot was conducted. Upon close examination, the errors seem to be random and do not follow a pattern, thus abiding by the 8 rules mentioned in the previous section. Secondly, an inspection of the correlation matrix (Table 4) reveals 4 correlations that exceed .70; the unemployment rate (.718), percent black (.865), intergovernmental transfers (.945), and the violent crime rate (.784). However, high correlations among explanatory variables are not necessarily a problem when it comes to inference (see Maddala, 1992; Kovandzic et al., 1998). Thus, upon first examination, there are no signs of problematic multicollinearity. In order to further evaluate possible issues of multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) scores were examined (Table 2 and 3) (see Kovandzic et al., 1998; Fisher & Mason, 1981; Neter et al., 1990). VIF scores are usually seen as problematic if they exceed 4 and VIF scores of 10 or greater are generally considered signs of harmful collinearity (Kovandzic et al. 1998; Kennedy, 1985; Neter et al., 1990). After carefully revising the residual scattered plot, bivariate correlation matrix, and the variance inflation factor scores, the data seems to be free from significant and/or harmful multicollinearity.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in the social disorganization literature by empirically testing the arguments put forward by Sampson and Wilson (1995), in which they argue that wider macro structural factors or conscious political decisions (conceptualized in this study as drug law enforcement activities) are responsible for disproportionately consigning minorities into communities marked by structural social disorganization and cultural social isolation. The study was guided by the following questions, (1) What is the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and structural antecedents of social disorganization theory (poverty, family disruption, residential instability, and residential segregation) in cities with 250,000 residents or more? (2) What is the relationship between drug law enforcement activities and violent crime rates in cities with 250,000 residents or more? The hypotheses stated that (1) As drug law enforcement activities increase, structural antecedents of social disorganization will increase, and (2) as consistent with the literature, as these structural antecedents increase, violent crime rates will increase.

The literature review provided the reader with an overview on social disorganization theory and the war on drugs. By emphasizing complex interactions of individual level predictors of crime and community characteristics, the social disorganization framework is suited to address problems associated both to drugs and drug law enforcement practices that are concentrated in poor large urban areas. In this study, the war on drugs was taken as the only federal urban policy that has been passed since the 1970s to address the social ills that concentrate in large cities. However, because the war on drugs came as a visceral and instinctive reaction to a moral panic, the social problems the policy intended to remedy were exacerbated. A

review of the literature points to drug law enforcement as increasing drug market violence (Werb et al., 2011), drug induced mortality rates (Shepard & Blackley, 2004), and negative public health outcomes (Drucker, 1999).

As stated by Chamliss (1994) and Becket (1994), policy efforts to address drug problems cannot be explained by public opinion, nor a rise in the crime problem, rather these policies have emerged as a conscious political strategy by politicians who seek to deflect attention from pressing issues; and attain political goals at the expense of the most disadvantaged groups of the population. Most of the social problems in urban areas were blamed on the violence and unruliness of the drug trade, thus justifying the elimination of much needed social programs. These programs were replaced with law enforcement and community policing programs sold as a comprehensive new approach to urban renewal. However, these programs increased the intensity and frequency of social control leaving urban areas vulnerable to aggressive over policing of drug laws. Such efforts were responsible for a sustained increase in rates of incarceration while having no serious effect on the crime problem.

After running OLS regression analysis, the study found partial support for the hypotheses. As the number of full time police employees assigned to a city drug unit increases, the rate of poverty in the sample also increases, this is true for the Black and Hispanic models. The number of fulltime employees assigned to a city drug unit also has a statistically significant positive effect on levels of segregation and community instability for Hispanics. Furthermore, bivariate correlations show a positive relationship between the number of full time employees assigned to a city drug unit and violent crime rates along with homicide rates. Thus, the results are in line with the existing literature pointing to the negative consequences of aggressive drug

law enforcement in urban areas. The results, give partial empirical support for the arguments put forward by Sampson and Wilson (1995).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

As any other study in the social sciences, this study is not perfect or free from some limitations. One limitation is the measure of drug law enforcement activities as conscious political decisions. While the number of full time employees assigned to a city drug unit and the number of full time employees assigned to a multiagency drug unit are good measures for the current study, it may not accurately reflect all efforts to enforce drug laws. For example, some drug enforcement activities may use regular police officers and employees to enforce drug laws in a variety of ways, such as pretextual traffic stops outside areas that are considered hot spots for drugs. Community oriented policing strategies also seek to enforce drug laws, regardless of their employee affiliation in a given police department. For example, Zhao and colleagues (2011) evaluate community oriented policing grants and their effect on productivity, measured as arrests. They note that the biggest increase in arrest rates are for drug offenses. Another example is the enforcement of drug laws by gang units who seek to arrest and or infiltrate gangs. Thus, the nature of policing in general and especially drug enforcement makes it hard to effectively and accurately quantify drug enforcement efforts.

Future studies using this framework may include additional years of data to better gauge the effect of conscious political decisions on structural antecedents of social disorganization and crime. Also, different models with race specific independent variables may help researchers understand whether police department/ drug unit racial composition has an effect on crime and or arrest rates in these urban communities. Furthermore, a restructuring of the drug prevention and treatment budget at the federal and state level can also help researchers gauge how these

decisions affect problems related to crime, homicide, drug use and drug trafficking in large cities.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

The results show a promising future for studies examining conscious political decisions as precursors for social disorganization and crime in urban areas. Future inquiries should look at other policies that have been passed in efforts to address social ills in large urban areas, and how these policies affect the social disorganization-crime relationship. For example, tax breaks or subsidies for big companies to open up businesses in inner cities may promote aggressive housing development and displace current residents who were able to afford property in the area prior to these companies moving in (Grantham & Chorbajian, 2012). Also, tax breaks to promote business and economic development may hurt residents of the local area whom rely on government run programs or services to survive or maintain a decent livelihood. While economic growth in a city is certainly welcomed, those companies who will benefit from locating their businesses in a given area should contribute to the well-being of that area as any other taxpayer should.

Another fruitful area of research can be the evaluation of political contributions, and how these contributions lead to policy changes that can affect public health and safety. While the general public can advocate for changes in policies and laws, individual votes and requests carry little to no weight in a political process that is largely driven by money (Chambliss, 1999; Robinson, 2000). Instead, media reporting and more than 40,000 lobbying actions of more than a dozen interest groups affect legislation (Brunk & Wilson, 1991; Walker et al., 1996). For example, in terms of sustaining the prison population, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is notorious for spending money to see their interest preserved through legislative action. While minorities were being funneled through the criminal justice system at astronomical rates,

CCA's common stock soared, rising 385% in 1995. A major investment newsletter even published an article recommending these stocks, claiming that crime could indeed pay (Robinson, 2000; ACLU, 2011). The lobbying efforts by CCA are funding political campaigns and securing contracts worth billions of dollars. CCA alone spent over \$18million in federal lobbying between 1999 and 2009, and close to \$1 million dollars in 2010 alone employing several firms to lobby for them (ACLU, 2011). It comes to no surprise that the sentencing disparities for crack vs. cocaine were upheld twice by congress without having any scientific or empirical data justifying the disparity. Congress upheld the sentencing disparity in 1995 and again in 2002, despite the recommendation of the US sentencing commission to eliminate the disparity in penalties due to its disproportional effects on minorities (Sirin, 2011).

Pharmaceutical companies are also spending millions of dollars lobbying to ensure their interests are met and preserved through legislative action. A report from the Center for Responsive Politics shows that between 1990 and 2015, pharmaceutical companies have donated close to \$1 billion dollars in a variety of ways including individual contribution, contribution from PACs, and soft/outside money to democrats and republicans (Center for Responsible Politics, 2015). While the government is waging war against the public on the basis of drug control, pharmaceutical companies are free to operate with little opposition to the deadly drugs they sell. While the consumption of hard street drugs has been on a steady decline, prescription opioid abuse has been rampant. From 1999 to 2010 overdose deaths due to prescription painkillers have quadrupled (NIDA, 2014). Pharmaceutical companies have been mass producing and introducing increasingly dangerous synthetic opioids to the American public with complete disregard for their safety. In 2010 alone, enough prescription painkillers were prescribed to medicate every American adult every 4 hours for a month (NIDA, 2014), yet there

has been no war on pharmaceutical companies or meaningful actions toward addressing this issue.

Is it ok for pharmaceutical companies to destroy millions of lives because they pay taxes and fund political campaigns while claiming to sell safe products? One cannot ignore the fact that prescription opioids are responsible for more annual deaths than all illicit drugs combined (NIDA, 2014). Yet, there are no stories on the news about pharmaceutical companies or pain clinics in Florida being raided by SWAT teams. Where is the sense of urgency that was seen amidst the so called “crack epidemic” in the 1980s? These questions should be of great concern for the public. The fact that police departments are able to deploy war like tactics on presumed mid-level dealers in minority communities, while ignoring the overt disregard for public safety by pharmaceutical companies that mass produce and deliver incredibly dangerous prescription opioids is quite disturbing.

Perdue pharmaceuticals has been charged with criminal misbranding of OxyContin by claiming that it was less addictive and less subject to abuse and diversion than other opioids. Perdue pharmaceutical was mandated to pay \$634 million dollars in fines, a small price to pay in the business of addiction (Art Van Zee, 2009). One ought to wonder whether the war on drugs has anything to do with public safety, since the emergence, mass production, and mass dispensing of prescription opioids pose the greatest threat to public safety when compared to other illicit drugs. In fact, in a recent study by Rigg et al. (2012) researchers noted that diversion of prescription opioids, defined as the transfer of a prescription drug from a lawful channel of distribution or use to an illegal one (p.145) is estimated to be a \$25 billion a year industry. Moreover, the qualitative study shows that the most utilized source through which mid-level and wholesale dealers obtained prescription drugs were pain management clinics. The study shows a

trend in which drug dealers are easily able to obtain powerful opioids and sell them illegally without much risk. According to law enforcement agencies, most prescription opioids that are confiscated in the black market, can be traced back to these pain clinics which operate under the protection of the law dispensing millions of powerful opioids without much scrutiny (Rigg, et al. 2012).

### **Policy Implications**

The United States has devoted most of its efforts on enforcement strategies, and the societal consequences of this approach have been grave. However, focusing on prevention interventions and treatment initiatives may provide a better outlook on the current state of affairs regarding drug use and drug related harms. Prevention interventions are geared at the potential end customer. Often called demand side strategies, these focus on education and awareness so that people are less willing to become involved with drugs and experiment with them. Treatment strategies, like prevention interventions seek to limit the demand for alcohol and drugs by engaging with current drug users in recovery oriented programs. Needle exchange programs can be considered a perfect example. Current injection drug users (IDU's) go to clinics and obtain clean needles, by doing so service providers are able to reach out to them and try to get them to commit to treatment or start the path to recovery (Ksobiech, 2003).

There are countless studies with suggestions in regards to best practices when dealing with issues of drug abuse, but the biggest issue in implementing these strategies is the current platform for politics. As Drucker (2013) notes, empirical data is plentiful on what works in terms of harm reduction strategies, but the biggest issue in the implementation of these strategies are politically motivated government officials who blatantly disregard science to run for office on moral righteousness. Drucker also points to the widespread ideological hostility and professional

ignorance that is associated with the treatment of heroin addiction by opiate substitution therapies (OST), in which addicts are provided with methadone, buprenorphine, morphine and injectable heroin. OST has a better prognosis than many other chronic medical or psychiatric conditions, yet the norm throughout the United States is to steer away from these practices, because politicians construct these practices as helping addicts get high, not sober (Drucker, 2013).

If in fact, government officials are reluctant to change the current state of affairs based on their moral righteousness, they should at least change it because of the obvious financial benefits that reform can bring. The fact is, that since the war on drugs has started, the bulk of drug arrests have been for drug possession (80%), not for drug trafficking or dealing (20%) (BJS, 2005). The US drug control budget allocates 36% of their resources to domestic law enforcement, 14% in interdiction, and 6% in international drug control (BJS, 2005). This represents 56% of the budget going to enforcement practices aimed at arresting or dismantling drug operations. Treatment, only accounts for 39%, and prevention tactics only account for 5% of the budget (BJS, 2005).

For every dollar federal and state governments spent on strict enforcement strategies, they spent 60 dollars shoveling up the consequences of aggressive enforcement and failed prevention strategies (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2009). The key to the war on drugs is prevention and treatment strategies, not aggressive drug law enforcement. Moreover, for every dollar spent on treatment the costs associated with crime and lost productivity are reduced by \$7.46 (Rydell & Everingham, 1994; (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2009). Regardless of political affiliations and moral stance, in a time where resources are scarce, legislators ought to evaluate their policies as investments. We have tried strict enforcement and

drug prohibition, and frankly the returns are not worth the investment. It is time to try a different approach and utilize empirical evidence and proven methods in addressing drug abuse and addiction.

A realistic goal is needed, there is always going to be drug related problems and there is always going to be drug addicts. However, the government ought to choose to deal with these issues in a way that promotes public health and safety while reducing negative social consequences. Portugal offers a radical approach on harm reduction practices; in 2001 the government decriminalized possession and use of all drugs. Drugs are still illegal, but there is no criminal proceedings when a person gets caught with drugs or using them (Hughes & Stevens, 2010). Although there has been a slight increase in rates of drug consumption by older citizens, overall, the decriminalization of possession and use of illicit drugs has had positive impacts, and rates of drug use are still lower in Portugal than in neighboring countries without decriminalization. For example, the burden of drug users in the criminal justice system has reduced. There has been a decline in reported illicit drug use among problematic drug users and adolescents. There has been an increased uptake of drug treatment, infectious diseases and opiate related overdoses have gone down. The amounts of drugs seized by authorities have increased, and there has been a reduction in the retail prices of drugs (Hughes & Stevens, 2010). Although Portugal doesn't share the same demographics or political ideologies with the United States, decriminalization offers some hope in future drug policy endeavors.

As Drucker (2013) argues, countless government funded studies have supported harm reduction strategies as successful in decreasing cases of infectious diseases and drug abuse. The belief that needle exchange programs and Opiate substitution treatment increase drug abuse is nothing but a myth. The reluctance to accept medical science and empirical data in addressing

drug related issues is costing billions of dollars along with thousands of lives. Enforcement strategies and supply side interventions have been in place for decades now, and the reality is that they just do not work. Politicians ought to do what is best for their constituents, not their political career, and begin to address the issues and consequences of strict enforcement strategies. Drug units should be cut at the city level, so that proactive enforcement of drug laws in minority communities come to an end. Instead, this budget should go toward treatment and prevention strategies which are empirically proven to do a better job at combating the issues associated with drug use and addiction, while having few negative social consequences. Also, by eliminating drug units at the city level, police departments will be forced to prioritize their efforts and target drug trafficking organizations and high level dealers without wasting time on enforcing simple drug possession offenses.

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