

**A Critical Examination of Gender Differences in Drug Selling for the Non-Violent
Street Level Drug Seller**

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THESIS

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SUMMARY

Amid the numerous theories that attempt to explain criminal involvement, Anomie and Strain Theory have been discounted as outdated and difficult to garner empirical support for. With the recent revival of the theory the focus has been on extending its application to account for explanations of the relationship between American social structure and how it may impact the crime rate. The objective of this study is to explore the juxtaposition of the belief in the “American Dream” and motivations for drug selling, specifically focusing on gender differences in motivations for drug selling.

Semi-structured interviews with n=20 Black women and n=20 Black men were conducted. This population currently accounts for a significant and disproportionate amount of the population incarcerated or on probation or parole for drug crimes.

Considerable examination is given to gender differences in drug selling for the two samples, with principal research questions centering on why participants choose drug selling as a form of illegitimate income, differences in reasons given by the two groups, and the impact of the American Dream on the decision to sell. The hypothesis is that men and women’s motivations for drug selling differ by gender. Women sell drugs primarily out of desperation and familial concern; the need to provide for children and dependent others. The main reason for men selling drugs is the accumulation of material goods.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the explosion of the prison population over the last 15 years, a significant amount of research has been centered on explaining the precipitating factors surrounding this increase (Hagan and Coleman, 2001; Tonry, 1994; Donziger, 1996; Blumstein and Beck, 1999). While criminological theory attempts to explain this phenomenon under one or another “grand unifying theory,” less effort is used to explain the motivational processes for certain crimes that have almost *exclusively* contributed to the dramatic increase of the incarceration rate, namely, drug crimes. This limitation is significant for analysis as incarceration is only a latent function of macro level societal problems (Lynch and Sabol, 2004; Blumstein and Beck, 1999; Mattick, 1959).

As drug crimes account for a significant number of arrests, convictions, and incarcerations (approximately one-third) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008), crucial becomes the task of understanding what compels individuals to commit this type of crime. The effects of the heavy law enforcement targeting of the drug economy, whether unintentional or intentionally aimed at specific populations, has resulted in the mass incarceration of a significant portion of young African American men and an ever growing number of African American women.

By midyear 2008, Black men accounted for almost 40% of state and federal prison inmates, while Black persons in general (male and female) comprised approximately only 12.8% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). While female incarceration rates are substantially lower than males, Black women make up a little over one-third of all females in jail, state, or federal custody and their numbers are continually growing (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). The combination of harsh drug laws,

changing patterns of drug use, and mandatory sentencing policies have lead to a significant increase in women's incarceration rates (Richie, 2001). A large number of women in prison in this country are incarcerated for nonviolent, drug related offenses that account for the largest source of the total growth among female inmates (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, drug offenses account for 53.5% of total convictions (*State of the Bureau*, 2007). Despite the fact that at the state level that number decreases to 19.5%, Blacks make up 22.5% of those convicted of drug offenses and women (of all races) account for a whopping 28.7%.

Turning to non-custodial correctional supervision, drug offenses account for 27% and 37%, respectively, of those on probation and parole, eclipsing any other crime category including property and violent crime (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). While this trend is both shocking and distressing, it makes pertinent the need to go beyond ostensible legal explanations and learn the social conditions that may contribute to this gross disproportionality, further highlighting the need for this research.

Central Question

This dissertation explores the central question of whether and how Black women's and Black men's motives for entrance to the drug trade differ along with their views on the American Dream and how it may have impacted their drug selling.

For men, "commodity worship" in the context of relative poverty increases risk for street level drug sales. Culturally driven strains and stressors make men more likely to have entered the drug trade for materialistic purposes, centered on achievement and posturing for peers. Pressure to provide familial support will be a peripheral factor in terms of motivation. Their *basic* needs may be met, but proximate social norms relative

to their environment compel them toward commodity worship. However, their ideals of social status and material goods are not necessarily driven by traditional or mainstream notions of material success.

Women, on the other hand, will be attracted to this form of illicit income chiefly due to absolute poverty and the associated family strains and burdens (i.e. being single parents, caring for dependent others). Absolute poverty can be defined as the measure of the number of people living below a certain income threshold or the number of households unable to afford certain basic goods and services (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

Potential Contribution

This research may be a step toward supporting Messner and Rosenfeld's suggestion that the gender differential in criminal behavior can be attributed to women's much more significant engagement in the social institution of the family (87). I make the assertion that it is this responsibility, and the *burden* of this responsibility, that catapult the women in this study to the crime of drug selling.

In addition to expanding the research on gender differences and anomie, this study has the potential to impact and redirect policy and programs concerning women in prison and those reentering the community after an incarcerative term. Richie (2001) identifies several material and emotional strains placed on women reentering the community after an incarcerative term, such as, finding a residence, regaining custody of children, securing a job, and seeking treatment for addiction. Most of those conditions *will* be court mandated thereby adding the additional looming possibility of reincarceration. To trace the source of incarcerated women's strain is a step toward

identifying support measures that can be provided in the prevention stage. It may also impact reentry programs that seek to target and soften identified strains to reduce recidivism for these women.

Objectives of each Chapter

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The purpose of the second chapter, the literature review, is to, first, explore the evolution of anomie theory. Anomie Theory's first conceptualization, from Emile Durkhiem, refers to it being a breakdown of social norms, in which individuals disassociate themselves from the collective conscience of the group. He postulates that this normative deregulation in society is the basis for suicide (Durkhiem, 1897). Durkheim argued that because crime is found at all times and in all societies, it is a normal and inevitable phenomenon and that criminals and other deviants are useful in that they serve to identify the limits of acceptable behavior. Therefore, all people are said to aspire to maximize their pleasures, but deficiencies in "natural talent" will thwart some from attaining their goals legitimately (Durkhiem, 1897).

Robert Merton provides the conceptual framework for future anomie/strain theorists viewing crime as a normal response to the conditions that limit the opportunities for some individuals to obtain the economic success for which we are all supposed to strive (Merton, 1938). After undergoing a decline in popularity, along with revisions and extensions, Messner and Rosenfeld emerge with institutional anomie theory; placing the blame for the high crime rate in the United States unequivocally on the doorstep of the much-vaunted American Dream and its capitalist underpinnings (Siegal, 2011). The last

major extension comes from Robert Agnew, who connects strain with stress, coping, and negative emotions.

Second, an overview of research on drug selling in the U.S. and the factors surrounding women's participation in the drug trade is presented. This literature highlights not only the conditions and results of concentrated poverty and its relation to the drug trade, but also the de facto attention given to men's survival mechanisms in those conditions. Sparse attention is given to the impact these circumstances have on women and how they might reconcile or contextualize such surroundings. Finally, attention is given to the previous literature on gender, stress, and women's caretaker roles that has so aptly highlighted the disproportional stress placed on women, Black women in particular, in U.S. society.

The objective of the third chapter, the theoretical framework, is to describe the American Dream and its impact on U.S. society. The approach is twofold: (1) to look at the impact of the ideals of the American Dream on mainstream society, and (2) a look at the marginalized population of young, Black, urban males and females who may have identical ideals or either a "manipulated" version of American Dream ideals. The latter examination looks at the "heightened awareness" of this "competition" for material goods, which may take on a different meaning for this marginalized group.

Chapter four describes the methodological strategies for this project. There were two objectives: (1) describe the motives for entrance to the drug trade, and (2) ascertain whether these motives differ by gender. Attitudes about the American Dream were explored through in-person, semi-structured interviews in the Cook County Department

of Probation. A qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the possible correlation between drug selling and the American Dream.

Chapter five, the results section, examines the hypothesis that motivations for drug selling for Black men and Black women, differ by gender. After the male and female sample is described, the findings are framed according to each of the research questions.

Chapter six, the discussion explores the attitudes, beliefs and opinions of the sample as it relates to drug selling and the American Dream. The familial constraints experienced by the women are explored and explained in the context of it being at least one motivating factor for drug selling. Then the relationship between the men and commodity worship is correlated as a way to explain the material pressures face by this group. A number of issues such as concentrated poverty, violence, familial obligations, limited (perceived or actual) opportunities, suggest that documenting the relationship between anomie and marginalized populations is of major importance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anomie and the American Dream

The complex layers of criminal motivation relating to anomie theory can be traced to the early works of the late 19th century sociologist, Emile Durkheim. In his seminal work, *Suicide*, Durkheim (1897) described anomie as a state of relative “normlessness.” The effect of this normlessness is to introduce alienation, isolation, and desocialization as norms become less binding for individuals (Agnew, 2007). Durkheim (1897) refers to the requisite proportionality between needs and the means to meet them. He describes the goals set by humans as in and of themselves, unattainable. The pursuit of these goals leads to circular reasoning and insatiable desires since the more one has, the more one wants. He reasoned that this inability of man to acquire what he lacks, because the threshold is endlessly modified to a higher standard, has the ability to cause perpetual unhappiness.

The Contribution of Robert Merton

Robert Merton expounds on Durkheim’s work in his essay *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938). He created the conceptual framework for future strain and anomie theorists. His basic premise was that members of a society are naturally socialized to accept culturally defined goals; however Merton argues, the denial of a so-called “even playing field” leads to greater strain on certain individuals and may aid in the formulation of illegitimate activities to circumvent means that are either unavailable or unattainable. Merton’s postulation that individuals are asked to orient their conduct toward achieving mainstream goals, such as money, status, and power, while they are largely denied legitimate opportunities to do so institutionally, encompass large populations of

traditionally and contemporarily disenfranchised communities, especially the population sought out by this study. American success symbols have been clearly defined and transcend class lines. That is, the stratification that exists between the “haves” and the “have nots” have a commonality in what is valued in our culture: wealth, status, and power. Merton develops a powerful dialectic when he concludes that frustration and thwarted aspirations may eventuate in illicit attempts to acquire the dominant values (Merton, 1938). This idea is the underlying premise of this research. The exploration of how the drug dealers under study identify their thwarted aspirations and how that may impact their decision to sell drugs may correlate in ways previously unknown to anomie scholars.

Merton’s (1938) theory of anomie refers to the demoralization of norms that occurs when there is a disjunction between the emphasis on cultural goals and institutional means. There is a specific imbalance where cultural goals are overemphasized at the expense of institutionalized means and anomie will ensue. Second, he describes strain theory as the social manifestation of anomie. He theorized that due to the loosening of norms, people are more likely to pursue illegitimate means to attaining culturally prescribed goals when they are blocked from accessing the institutionalized means to these goals. In formulating a reason for anomie, Merton advances his strain theory (Featherstone and Deflem, 2003).

Merton (1938) identified five categories of adaptation adopted by individuals within the society who are under pressure to acquire the dominant values. *Conformity*, to both culture goals and mean, is the most widely accepted form of adaptation. Among the deviant alternatives is *retreatism*, a rejection of the goals and means of society, and the

least common form of adaptation. Another deviant alternative is *rebellion*, referring to the rejection and active substitution of both the goals and means of society. *Ritualism* occurs when the means to legitimately pursue the cultural goals are adhered to despite the fact that the goals themselves are out of reach. The last mode of adaptation is *innovation*, which refers to the acceptance of goals but the rejection of means.

It is this last mode of adaptation, *innovation*, that is of particular interest to criminologists in the study of crime. Merton (1968) devotes a discussion almost exclusively to this concept: “innovation occurs when the individual has assimilated the cultural emphasis upon the goal without equally internalizing the institutional norms governing ways and means for its attainment (p. 195).” This imbalance between goals and means will unduly affect the lower social classes, as those exposed to poverty will have restricted opportunity to achieve equally held cultural goals. In competition for monetary success, the poor are more likely to engage in antisocial conduct because of their distinct disadvantage. Although Merton has made a significant contribution to anomie, the theory has been considerably expanded and improved by later anomie/strain theorists.

Early Strain Theory Modifications

Albert Cohen (1955) provides perhaps the best illustration of the *rebellion* adaptation in his study of the delinquent subculture. In “Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang,” Cohen addressed the impact mainstream goals have on the delinquent subculture, stating that they (the delinquent subculture) in fact turn mainstream goals “upside down (1955).” Even though the subculture rejects mainstream norms and goals it is important to realize that they develop norms conducive to *their* social environment. This theory can easily be extended to poor inner city African American men and women

engaged in drug dealing, who have to a large extent, rejected mainstream norms in favor of what they deem a status symbol in their own environment. It is common for members of marginalized populations to adapt and substitute those of norms, as Cohen states, “the delinquent’s conduct is right by the standards of his subculture, precisely *because* it is wrong by the norms of the larger culture. Having the subjective goal of being “hood rich” affords this population the opportunity to strive for goals within the realm of possibility for them.

Shaw and Mckay (1931) in their *Social Factors in Juvenile Delinquency* allude to this adaptation, characterizing the standards of these groups (delinquent juveniles) as a complete reversal of the standards and norms of conventional society. Certain conduct which results in personal humiliation and ostracism in a conventional group may enhance the status of a member of the delinquent group. This refers to the active embrace, of these subjective values, by people in their own community.

“Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs,” by Cloward and Ohlin (1960) investigates the norms and rules of conduct among delinquents. In addition to acknowledging that denial of access to conventional means can lead to delinquency, they emphasize that the criminal cannot now just choose an illegitimate activity, as they are not all equally available. Instead, selection of an illegitimate mean is dependent on environment, association, and socialization. Simply stated those wishing to participate in criminal behavior are constrained by the type of crimes in which they can participate. This theory holds special to women, who have unequal access to the criminal landscape largely due to conventional notions of womanhood and masculinity.

As competing theories of crime, such as, differential association and control theory began to emerge and gain increased recognition, anomie theory experienced a decline in popularity. The field of criminology would later see a resurgence of anomie theory credited in large part to the works of Messner & Rosenfeld.

Anomie Theory and the “American Dream”

Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) proposed a theory of anomie that focused on the imbalance between the cultural system and opportunity structures in place for the pursuit of the “American Dream.” James Truslow Adams coined the term “American Dream” in his 1931 book, “The Epic of America.” However, Adams, definition of the phrase had a much broader meaning than it has come to mean today:

“...that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for which they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”

Modernized, the American Dream can be described as a cultural commitment to the goal of economic success, to be pursued by everyone under conditions of open, individual competition (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). Means of achieving monetary success, such as education and employment, are morally and institutionally prescribed (Agnew 1985). Messner and Rosenfeld (1997) see these goals as the pathology of the American Dream, stating: “American culture is characterized by a strong emphasis on the

goal of monetary success and a weak emphasis on the importance of the legitimate means for the pursuit of success. This combination of strong pressures to succeed monetarily and weak restraints on the selection of means is intrinsic to the cultural ethos: the American Dream.”

Messner and Rosenfeld (2007) contend that the criminogenic tendencies of the American Dream derive from its *exaggerated* emphasis on monetary success and its resistance to limits on the means for the pursuit of success. The American Dream promotes and sustains a social institutional structure in which one institution—the economy—assumes dominance over all others. The resulting imbalance in the institutional structure diminishes the capacity of other institutions, such as the family, education, and the political system, to curb crime fostering cultural pressures and to impose controls over and provide support for the members of society (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007).” This research has the difficult task of exploring this institutional/structural phenomenon on an individual level. However, the potential exists for this research to be a foundation or catalyst for further, even quantitative, exploration.

Drug Selling in the United States

In recent years, researchers have devoted considerable scholarly attention to the crime of drug selling. Promulgating the sharp increase in research was the invention of crack cocaine and the lucrative yet highly classed and gendered drug markets surrounding it, the accompanying stiff drug penalties, and the expansion of gang participation and competition in drug markets, among other explanations (Adler, 1994; Fagen, 1994; Hagedorn, 1994).

With the introduction of crack cocaine in the mid-1980s an opening emerged for a more “diversified” drug market. Crack, being both inexpensive and highly addictive, created an increased demand that existing drug networks were unable to handle. Tracing the origin of the crack market, Jacobs and Miller (1998) explain that crack rapidly expanded opportunity structures for street-level drug selling, in turn facilitating access to supplies, offering controlled selling territories, and creating entry-level dealing roles with only minimal training and start-up capital necessary. These conditions along with concurrent changes in social and economic circumstances where drugs are bought and sold: inner-city communities suffering from deindustrialization, poverty, segregation, isolation, and social service declines, led to increased and expanded participation in informal economies, especially the drug economy (Jacobs and Miller, 1998).

Motivations for Drug Selling

After the advent of crack cocaine we see researchers devote a great deal of attention to the drug trade. Most research focused on men’s day to day involvement with only a cursory mention of women. Adler’s (1994) seminal ethnography on dealers and smugglers engaged in the drug trade in the late 70’s and early 80’s, provided a rare glimpse into, until then, the largely unseen drug selling culture. She examined the everyday operations for the dealers, the connections needed for international buying and selling, the hierarchy of operators, the structure of the illicit market, social organization of the community, and the success and failure of the dealers.

Of particular value to this study, Adler describes women as adjuncts who work for men and the male controlled organizations (1994). This conclusion has been supported in almost all developing research surrounding women’s roles in the drug trade. Women are

portrayed as “lesser” dealers who are not able (or allowed) to function very well in an all male domain and are often only allowed to “help” in the running of an all male drug business (Denton, 2001; Maxwell and Maxwell, 2000; Sommers et al., 1996). Women were often employed as smugglers because they were less vulnerable to the suspicions of the police and border agents. Other supporting positions that women held included transporting money or drugs, locally, around the country, or internationally, and operating stash houses (Adler, 1994).

Adler notes that there were a few women who ran their own drug businesses. These women usually entered the business using connections they made while living with a male dealer. Among the men in Adler’s sample, almost all echoed the sentiments of gender bias, characterizing women as weak, paranoid, emotional, and “not up to men’s business.”

Adler (1994) devotes slight attention to motivations for dealing, citing two main reasons: hedonism and materialism. Noting that materialism was more apparent of the two explanations, Adler describes the kind of material possessions these dealers were able to obtain, such as, fine food, clothes, cars, electronic equipment and money. All of these possessions served as symbols of success and power. These motivations tend to align themselves with an anomie explanation for involvement in the drug trade in that the emphasis on material goods overrode the traditional legal means to obtain said goods. Although she does not specifically mention gender differences in motivations for drug selling, she does state “the motivation for these women was to share in the fast life’s drugs, money, glamour, and excitement...” making no mention of familial pressures or concerns. Traditionally, when speaking of motivations for drug dealing, such

perspectives are almost always from a male point of view or give no specific reference as to how these motivations may differ by gender because most research has focused on male dealers.

Adler's research focused on a small subset of well to do mid-level drug dealers in a southwestern community. However, there is a strong body of ethnographic research that has sought to, among other goals, study the conditions that catapult, principally young inhabitants of low income communities into drug selling in the face of economic deprivation, scarce low paying legitimate jobs, little patience for deferred gratification that would lead to high paying occupations, and a showcase of material status indicators publicized in every aspect of every day life.

Philippe Bourgois' "In Search of Respect Selling Crack in El Barrio" (2003) is an ethnographic study of Puerto Rican crack dealers in the East Harlem section of New York City in the late 80's and early 90's. Bourgois spent hundreds of nights on the street and in crackhouses observing dealers and addicts. He views street level drug dealers as walking contradictions in the face of social marginalization and structural oppression, having a negative long term relationship with mainstream society while conversely using its standards as a measuring stick for their success. Although the dealers in his study engaged in conspicuous consumption of material goods and services, most actually averaged slightly less than double the legal minimum wage. They viewed their resistance to legitimate employment as a refusal to be exploited in the legal labor market that offered bad working conditions, being overworked and underpaid, in a nutshell: "slave labor and slave wages." Working in the underground economy was viewed as an assertion of free will.

Although the focus of Bourgois' study was male dealers, he did briefly talk about women dealers (one in particular) as they related to the male dealers under study but they were never studied as a separate entity. He devotes a chapter to gender with the purpose of explaining how women reconciled their extremely marginalized position in El Barrio. It did not focus on their exploits (if any) in the underground economy (save for Candy), but instead provided a voyeuristic view into the lives of women struggling against institutionalized sexism and racism, neighborhood decay that put them at especial risk due to their gender, and navigating the constant hardships of single parenthood to maintain even the most minimal level of subsistence.

Another poignant look at survival in low income, crime ridden neighborhoods is Jay MacLeod's (2009) "Ain't No Makin' It, Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood." MacLeod sees social immobility unevenly distributed across U.S. society making sharp distinctions in race, culture, class, and gender. He challenges the notion of even distribution of aspirations and achievement, recognizing that individuals starting off at a disadvantage will have a difficult time legitimately catching up in the "material race." He follows a group of inner city boys bereft of any hope of future success. MacLeod finds the boy's outlook and prospects very much marked by social reproduction theory as they went about the business of illegitimate activity, including drug selling.

In "Getting Paid: Youth, Crime, and Work in the Inner City," Sullivan (1989) chronicles the struggles of white, Black, and Latino men as they go about the business of trying to reconcile their disadvantaged status relative to American society at large, especially during the "time of excess" in the 80's. Born into an environment of

discouragement, the youths in this group had little motivation to repeatedly seek out employment after disparaging attempts at legal employment. The youths under study were primarily involved in crime for money. The author compares the three groups and analyses their criminal career within the context of their schooling and the legitimate job market. One important conclusion Sullivan makes is that the decision to undertake crime for money is similar to other economic decisions in that they involve a cost benefit calculation. He recognizes that, even within his three groups, all individuals do not have the same access to the same set of choices, as social and economic structures limit the range of choices for a given individual (1989).

In “Pusher Myths: Re-Situating the Drug Dealer” Coomber (2006) characterizes the drug dealer as a victim of marginalization rather than viewing them as “bad” individuals. Without explicitly using an anomie framework, Coomber (2006) views drug sales as a resistance tactic of low income individuals, used to provide the material means to obtain aspects of a lifestyle otherwise out of reach. His general categorization of “low income individuals” would seem to refer to women as well as men, making aspirations for that lifestyle the motivation for both sexes. Coomber acknowledges that street culture is simultaneously resistant to mainstream values but also embraces certain aspects of that mainstream materialist culture that determines measures of success. In addition, Coomber reinforces Adler’s (1994) finding that women dealers are often portrayed as weaker variants of their male counterparts and that their status of “lesser” makes them unable to function in an all male domain. Women are not portrayed as genuine entrepreneurs as male sellers are, but instead they have entered the drug market on the “coat-tails” of their boyfriends. As it relates to the drug market, women in a sense suffer

a “double-whammy;” marginalization at the hands of society and further marginalization in the drug trade due to common gender stereotypes.

Hagedorn (1994), expanding on his prior work with Milwaukee gang members, applies anomie theory to his popular typologies of gang roles, thus providing a foundation for greater exploration of drug selling motivators. He describes “legits” as those that go legit and escape their poverty conditions; “dope fiends” blame themselves for failure and abuse alcohol or drugs; “new jacks” live out exaggerated fantasies of success; and “homeboys” go in and out of drug selling, alternating between legitimate and illegitimate jobs. Hagedorn points out that “new jacks” are the clearest illustration of anomie in their quest to attain mainstream cultural goals of success by any means necessary (1994). He postulates that drug dealing is the innovative response of young minority males to blocked legitimate opportunity resulting from economic disenfranchisement, noticeably leaving out the response to blocked legitimate opportunity by women.¹

On a structural level, Wilson (2008) provides supplemental support for the inequitable economic plight of inner city Black males when he gives evidence of the disparity in income and achievement between white, Black, and Latino males. The unemployment, underemployment, and lack of educational attainment for Black males have significant social and economic consequences. Wilson gives several reasons for the deterioration in employment prospects of low-skilled Black males, including: declining demand for low-skilled labor with the globalization of the economy,² a significant

¹ In his “notes” section, Hagedorn acknowledges that female response to blocked opportunity may differ significantly. Women’s strain will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

² Low skilled workers in the U.S. are pitted against their counterparts around the world, including laborers in China, India, and Mexico.

decrease in the number of manufacturing jobs which has traditionally been a secure source of employment for the Black community, the switch to a more regional labor market that those without an automobile may have a hard time accessing, especially via a public transportation system, a number of Black males reentering society with a criminal record, and the existence of a “counter-culture” that may promote counterproductive models of behavior (2008). When these explanations are combined with the anecdotal evidence reported in the above ethnographies, it would seem to strengthen the argument that anomious conditions do, to some degree, impact one’s decision to sell drugs.

To date, one of the most direct measures of motivation is the Dembo, Hughes, Jackson, and Mieczkowski (1993) pilot study of 34 adolescent crack dealers that specifically examined motivations for drug selling. Their findings serve to reinforce the existing literature. The dealer’s primary reason for involvement in the drug trade was economic gain. They reported selling crack to “earn lots of money” and because “legal jobs pay too little.” The researchers offer the idea that the system of crack distribution may be seen as a path to economic survival, or even success in the face of competing in the legitimate job market on the basis of formal education and job skills, which would undoubtedly result in minimum wage earnings. Respondents were less likely to indicate the unavailability of legal jobs as an important reason for dealing. Given the relatively dated nature of this study, it would be interesting to see if there would be significant changes in this response given the current economic climate.

As mentioned previously, one of the hypotheses of this research suggests that not only will men and women differ in motivations for entrance to the drug trade, but that women will be motivated by familial and dependent needs while men’s primary

motivator will be to obtain material status indicators. Consistent with this hypothesis, the results of the Dembo et al. study was that most of the participants (all male) reported that they did not contribute substantial portions of their crack cocaine incomes to their families. The dealers reported that most of their incomes were spent on personal luxury items such as jewelry, cars, and clothing and on business expenses such as guns and protection. One revealing finding in this study worth noting is that the most frequently cited risk of crack dealing was the notion of falling into a “material trap.” This term refers to getting used to earning large amounts of money, which makes it even more difficult to accept the standard of living derived from conventional jobs.

All of the above works leave much to be explored as to how *women* are affected by deteriorating inner city conditions and *their* motivations for drug selling.

Women and Caretaker Role Stress

In the criminology literature, much is left to be explored in the area of gender differences and criminal motivation. Women’s involvement in the business of drug selling is marked by familial pressures, substance abuse, prostitution, and “discriminatory practices” in dealing. Drug research specifically has rarely depicted women as independent economic agents actively involved in the purchase, sale, and consumption of illicit substances (Maher, Dunlap, and Johnson, 1996). Instead the literature has focused primarily on the relationship between illicit drug use and prostitution. Maher, Dunlap, and Johnson (1996) explain that young Black women are more likely to be recruited to “street life” and criminal activity via the interface between Black domestic networks comprised of kin, non-kin, pseudo kin, and deviant street networks:

“the very system that may be responsible for household survival then,
may promote the initiation of young adults into a generally disapproved

way of life...A very striking example of this has to do with the cultural pattern of 'child keeping,' on the one hand, this pattern clearly promotes the care and nurturing of children in an environment of scarce and natural resources...on the other hand, this pattern may maximize exposure to deviant networks (Miller, 1986)"

Gilfus (1992) conducted life history interviews with a sample of 20 incarcerated women in an attempt to understand their progression from victim to survivor to offender. A central theme in the ways the women presented themselves was as caretakers. Sometimes the women cited caretaking as a reason for initial entry into illegal work, other times illegal work was perceived as an integral component of a caretaking role. A central feature of this study is that men and women will differ by motivation for entering the drug trade and that women, in fact, have the undue pressure of familial concerns guiding *their* decision.

Ferraro and Moe (2003) also provide support for the correlation between female crime and caretaker roles, stating: "Studies on incarceration and mothering report that many women commit minor property crimes to provide for their children, although there is no systematic data on the prevalence of this influence on women's crimes.

Green and Rodgers (2001) work emphasizes the importance of social support structure for low income African American women with children, in helping them deal with inordinate amounts of stress. A key contribution of this research would be the possibility of determining how large of a role this stress plays on illegitimate behavior. In addition, there has been no comprehensive study to exam the impact the American Dream may have (as well as stress) on crime choice.

Broidy and Agnew (1997) postulate that several types of strain may lead to female crime under the proper circumstances. These circumstances, heavily compatible with the feminist literature on crime, fall under various types of oppression and strain that women experience. Oppressed individuals may turn to crime to reduce their strain or manage the negative emotions associated with their strain. They conclude that differences in types of strain and the reaction to strain may help understand the gap in criminal behavior.

Steffensmeier and Broidy (2001) attempt to explain key similarities and differences between female and male patterns of offending. They explain that the considerable stability in the gender gap for criminal offending can be explained in part by the historical durability of the organization of gender and by underlying physical/sexual differences, whether actual or perceived. The authors go on to suggest that future efforts to develop explanations of female offending and the gender gap must take into account how the organization of gender deters or shapes delinquency by females but encourages it by males, gender differences in type and frequency and the context of offending, and how programmatic approaches to female offending should address several key ways in which women's routes to crime may differ from those of men.

Matud (2004) examined gender differences in stress and coping in a sample of 2816 people (1566 women and 1250 men) between 18 and 65 years old, with different sociodemographic characteristics. The results indicated that the women scored significantly higher than the men in chronic stress and minor daily stressors. Although there was no difference in the number of life events experienced in the previous two years, the women rated their life events as more negative and less controllable than the

men. Furthermore, they found gender differences in 14 of the 31 items listed, with the women listing family and health-related events more frequently than the men, whereas the men listed relationship, finance and work-related events. This study suggests that women suffer more stress than men.

What literature there is available on gender differences in stress, and on strain and crime, serves to reinforce the notion that women are *more* strained in the family context and men in the achievement context. Women are not uniformly less amenable to risk (and may be more at risk), but rather that their risk-taking is less violative of the law and more protective of relationships and emotional commitments (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996).

Although there have been a burst of compelling ethnographies in the last 10 years chronicling the effect of marginalization of Black men in American society, none explicitly look at drug sales through a gendered, classed lens. Those that do are equally compelling reads but are not authored by scholars. The voluminous literature available fails to look at the consequences of the effect of social isolation and concentrated poverty and its role as a motivator in the decision to sell drugs. This study aims to fill that void.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are few belief systems as pervasive and universal as the American Dream. It in some way seeps into all facets of American society, be it by class, political ideology, race, gender, religion, and even criminal preference. Take for example, for nearly a decade beginning in 2000, the wave of arrests and convictions of private and public chief operating officers (CEO's), bank executives, hedge fund managers, and Wall Street higher-ups for an array of financial crimes ranging from defrauding investors to ponzi schemes to insider trading. The dark side of the American dream was revealed quite publicly and the anomaly ultimately expressed: that the sets of beliefs associated with the American dream transcends socioeconomic status and that not only is it still a goal of those that would eventually acquire every conceivable material and social status indicator associated with it, but that it would be done by any means necessary. This holds true even for those that have the least probability of achievement of those goals; low income, undereducated, urban Black women and men. It is this population that continues to face the most barriers to economic success.

The racist roots of the American dream, even before recognized, started with the forced importation of Black Africans to the Americas for the purpose of building a country in which the hopes and dreams of whites were achieved by any means necessary. The denial of one group's fundamental right to liberty was used to build a nation that would allow the potential prosperity of even its lowest class citizens, so long as those with African ancestry were excluded. The quintessential nature of the system allows for the probabilistic occurrence of one of the central tenets of the American dream: "if you work hard and play by the rules you should be given a chance to go as far as your God

given ability will take you (President Bill Clinton, speech to Democratic Leadership Council, 1993) (Hochschild, 1995).” Africans forcibly moved to America have been forced to come to terms with a dream that was not originally theirs.

Fast forward to the eventual assimilation of American dream ideology through the evolution of capitalism. Capitalism as a system emerged before other institutions so it did not have to bend to the demands of other institutions, which have all been relegated to a supporting role. The supporting role of other institutions serves to further and strengthen the goals and commitment to the capitalist system. “Because the economy dominates American institutional structure it (1) devalues other institutions, (2) Forces accommodations from other institutions, and (3) Penetrates other institutions (Rosenfeld, live lecture).”

With respect to the dichotomous chasm that exists between white and Black beliefs about the American dream, Hochschild (1995) notes that “for African Americans to believe with the hustler that everyone, even they, can participate in the search for success, they must believe that the barriers for race, class, and (for half the population) gender have all been knocked down low enough for people like themselves to climb over them.” This statement effectively characterizes one component of this research in trying to figure out how Black men and women perceive the American dream and its relevancy to them.

This study seeks to explore the universality of the American dream, as it is often voiced that most members of U.S. society are affected by it equally. It is this concept of universalism that is at the heart of the implication of the link between economic inequality and criminal behavior. “The motivation to endure the competitive struggle is

not maintained easily if the monetary difference between winning and losing is inconsequential (Messner and Rosenfeld).” In other words, there must be huge leap between “having” and “not having” in order to invoke incentive to keep striving. Germane to the purpose of this study are those individuals who maintain the motivation but have available very few options to “win.” This exaggerated emphasis on material achievement without equal emphasis on the ways goals are attained within legal parameters helps create and sustain social structures incapable of restraining criminogenic cultural pressures (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). However this logical conclusion seems only to apply to those who are most socially disadvantaged.

Another crucial task of this study is discerning what components of the American dream *Black* people believe signify success. The basic tenets of the American dream may be standard and universal however, different populations interpret the ideology and make it relevant to their neighborhood/community experience. Could the absorption of American Dream ideology by the U.S. population be so strong that there is standardization in its interpretation? In their seminal work, “Crime and the American Dream,” Messner and Rosenfeld (2007) advance the idea of “commodity worship,” (a major theme to be explored in this study) inherent in American culture, stating: “...the emphasis on material success by any means necessary-have inflamed the consumption desires of inner-city children and adolescents, creating 'commodity worship' that even the strongest institutions would have difficulty keeping under control.”

The heightened awareness of this “competition” is a logical consequence of the American Dream at the micro level. One premise of this gendered study is that women and men’s motives for entrance to the drug trade will differ significantly. Not only will

their individual motivations differ, but also their ability (and desire) to meet the needs of dependent others will differ.

For men, “commodity worship” in the context of relative poverty increases risk for street level drug sales. Culturally driven strains and stressors make men more likely to have entered the drug trade for materialistic purposes, centered on achievement and posturing for peers. Pressure to provide familial support will be a peripheral factor in terms of motivation. Their *basic* needs may be met, but proximate social norms relative to their environment compel them toward commodity worship. However, their ideals of social status and material goods are not necessarily driven by traditional or mainstream notions of material success.

A key concept that frames this study is a term I defined; “Hood Rich.” “Hood rich” refers to the accumulation of certain material luxuries exalted in a specific community while retaining a lower class status due to the rejection of traditional middle class values. It involves the maintenance of certain components of the “American Dream” and the disregard of others that are not important to the notion of posturing. For example, spending money on items that have no appreciative value but that enhance ones status through appearance, such as, expensive new sneakers, clothes, and cars with add-ons. Items with long term investment and return value are either not known of or viewed as unattainable or unimportant.

Of greater importance is the symbolism of what this population sees as “successful.” It is true, they are bombarded with media images competing for their monetary attention but perhaps the greatest influence is what they view in their everyday environment: images of urban blight, high unemployment, struggle, and violence. “Hood

Rich” is just one way to frame this population’s interpretation of the American Dream. However, this interpretation should not be understood as rudimentary or derogatory but instead as an elucidation of the everyday space they inhabit. It is natural for one to project notions of success on the different levels of categorizations developed for one’s neighborhood. Just as being “middle class” is equated with opportunity, home ownership, and higher education, this lens is formed through interaction with the neighborhood and environment.

Commodity worship will be used to explain male involvement in the drug trade, in direct contrast to women’s involvement. Poverty for participants in this study is crucial to understanding their motivations for their drug selling activity. When defining relative poverty, people are in poverty when they fall below, by more than a certain distance, from the average income and lifestyle enjoyed by the rest of the society in which one lives (Lindsey, 2008). Relative poverty recognizes the material and status desires of the lower class. It is this definition of relative poverty that the researcher believes will be a prime motivating factor in participants, specifically men’s, decision to sell drugs. While this group may not necessarily be living a “hand-to-mouth” existence, there is certainly the self *perception* that they have, to some degree, fallen behind the type of lifestyle enjoyed by the rest of society (proximate to their social environment).

Women will be attracted to this form of illicit income chiefly due to absolute poverty and the associated family strains and burdens (i.e. being single parents, caring for dependent others). Absolute poverty can be defined as the measure of the number of people living below a certain income threshold or the number of households unable to

afford certain basic goods and services (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

Accurately classifying poverty lines contributes to the long debate about whether income or consumption poverty lines should be defined in absolute or relative terms. The United States defines the poverty line in an absolute way as the level of income necessary for people to buy the goods necessary for their survival. A growing number of analysts prefer defining the poverty line in relative terms as some proportion of the mean or the median income in the country under analysis (Bourgignon, 1999). Identifying this population's strain (stress/pressure) has great implications in the area of programming.

There have been a number of studies done on juveniles to assess the extent of differences if any, between boys and girls in their delinquent offending, using a strain theory model. Generally, those studies have concluded that there is little difference between male and female delinquency (Mazerolle, 1998; Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero, 1998; Cauffman, et. al., 2004;). Approaches that embrace gendered pathways into crime as put forth by feminist scholars and gender specific application of GST, serve to counter this trend of little or no gender differences in delinquency (Piquero and Sealock, 2004; Hay, 2003; Deschenes and Esbensen, 1999; Broidy and Agnew, 1997). Belknap and Holsinger (2006) surveyed 444 incarcerated juveniles to better understand the risk associated specifically with girl's delinquency, concluding that although GST and life course theory are valuable in explaining girl's delinquency, feminist pathways may offer better understanding of girl's offending and treatment and intervention strategies.

While this study is an attempt to discern gender differences in drug selling in the social structure tradition, it is different in several ways. First, this is not a theory testing dissertation. While this study is conducted using anomie theory as a potential lens with which to view this particular crime, it does not seek to test the theory using a focused sample. Second, as an exploratory study, this research is used to explore this phenomenon in an effort to see if it can be organized and explained in the anomie tradition. This approach is appropriate because little, if any, previous research has attempted a gendered exploration in drug selling. The research questions I have developed are intended to explore different aspects of the problem of drug selling and how it fits with American dream framework. Lastly, this study employs a sample of adults, who arguably are substantially more constrained than juveniles and who are also expected to shoulder the burden of not only their responsibilities, but others around them. Juveniles tend to have very little worldly responsibilities which may account for studies that have traditionally and routinely found little difference between boy's and girl's delinquency. However, as people grow older they are constrained in almost every sector of their life, work, home, social, etc. This study has the intention to help formulate questions surrounding the difference between men and women's involvement in the drug economy as a result of the pressure of American dream standards.

IV. METHODS

Although there have been a burst of compelling ethnographies in the last 10 years chronicling the effect of marginalization of Black men in American society, none explicitly look at drug sales through a gendered, classed lens. Those that do are equally compelling reads but are not authored by scholars. The voluminous literature available fails to look at the consequences of the effect of social isolation and concentrated poverty and its role as a motivator in the decision to sell drugs. Hence, the objective of this project was to increase our understanding of the individual lived experiences of Black women and men surrounding their decision to get involved in drug selling and, on a micro level, explore the impact that the American Dream may have had on this decision. Adult Black women and men's experiences were gathered using semi structured interviews.

Sample Overview

The sample consisted of Black women (n=20) and Black men (n=20) currently on probation in Cook County that have been convicted of delivery/manufacture of a controlled substance. This specific charge was chosen because those arrested for this offense was in possession of an amount that would "qualify" them as a seller, whereas, a possession charge and its related offenses typically signify personal use. Participants were gathered through the use of a convenience sample, a form of nonprobability sampling in which participants are chosen because they are readily available (Doane and Seward, 2008).

Qualitative Interviews

Data was collected using intensive semi structured interviews. Intensive interviewing is appropriate when the interviewer seeks in-depth information on the interviewee's feelings, experiences, and perceptions (Bachman and Shutt, 2007). The advantage of this method is that it allows participants to express experiences that are not easily categorized, predetermined or quantifiable (Ferraro and Moe, 2003), while giving the researcher a comprehensive picture of participants background, attitudes, and actions, in their own terms (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Although the use of preset interview questions was employed, participants were encouraged to deviate when they felt it was appropriate to do so. Said flexibility allowed for a rich, descriptive, and detailed narrative.

Probation Locations

Two locations were used to recruit participants: 1644 West Walnut Street and 2650 South California Avenue. The Walnut Street location was a building dedicated solely to the probation department and featured a specialized women's substance abuse caseload designed to cater to and meet the needs of women with a history of substance abuse. Walnut also had a special co-ed caseload of offenders on intensive probation. Flyers were hung at the Walnut location and participants called in response to the flyer. Meetings took place in a quiet private back office on the second floor of the probation building. I was allowed to use my taper recorder at this location.

The California Avenue location had the probation offices housed in the basement of the Cook County court building with the rest of the structure housing the Cook County courts. This location also has the Cook County jail on the premises although it is in a

separate set of buildings. Tape recording devices were not allowed in the building and no exceptions were made to that rule. The Deputy Chief Probation Officer at this location generated a list of probationers who had been convicted of delivery/manufacture of a controlled substance. He then gave the list to the direct supervisor who contacted probation officers who had clients on that list. When those targeted probationers came to report face to face they were given the flyer. They were asked by the probation officer if they would like to participate, and if so, whether they wanted to interview on the spot or during their next reporting time. For probationers that did not report as frequently, for instance, monthly reporters, the probation officer called them and told them about the study and asked them if they wanted to participate during their next visit. I was granted my own temporary cubicle space (with a door) in the probation department to conduct the interviews.

The vast majority of the participants came from the California avenue location (n=35), with just five participants coming from the Walnut location, two of them women. One primary reason why I did not aggressively recruit women from the Walnut location was because they tended to have a history of substance abuse, whereas the women at the California Avenue location did not. The rationale was that woman with a history of “hard” substance abuse would most likely have been selling simply to get money to buy more drugs, thus their motives were non-germane to this study. All participants with the exception of one³ were paid \$25 at the conclusion of the interview.

³ One male participant refused compensation, telling me to “keep my lil money.” I expressed to him that as part of the study I was supposed to pay all who participated in an interview the sum of \$25. He again refused and said “I’m good.”

Demographics

This study sought out “typical” representation of the low level street dealer, by default, making it a racialized study. A characteristic profile of participants in this study is: African American, low income, undereducated, under or unemployed, and disproportionately from high crime urban areas (Figure 1). These characteristics are representative of those most often arrested, convicted, and incarcerated for this crime category. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2006, 57% of all state felony defendants in Cook County, IL were charged with drug offenses, compared to 17% for property offenses, 16% for public offenses, and 9% for violent offenses. Overwhelmingly, men accounted for the largest percent of defendants, 83%, while women made up 17% of those charged with drug offenses. Black non-Hispanics accounted for 67% of all state felony defendants in Cook County, regardless of type of felony. Probation was the most heavily utilized type of sanction at 46% for state felony offenders with incarceration as a close second at 45% (Cohen and Kyckelhahn, 2010).

Self Reflexivity

Being a relatively young African American woman may have impacted the lens in which I frame the study results. The researcher’s own participation in the conception of the research, the choice of methodologies, analysis and documentation are open to scrutiny as recognition that bias cannot be completely avoided (D’Cruz et al., 2007). However, my point of view may also be regarded as unique and valuable in the understanding of this phenomenon. There is also recognition that being a Black woman may have also impacted the answers of the participants.

When asked the specific question about what success looks like or how you could tell one was successful, it was common for participants, both male and female, to cite me as an example of what a successful person would “look” like, as I commonly wore suits during the interviews.

Figure 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Male	Female
Race		
Black	20	20
Age		
19 – 24	5	5
25 – 30	9	9
31 – 36	2	3
37 – 42	4	1
43 – 48	-	1
49 – 54	-	1
Education		
Less than High School	8	4
High School Graduate or GED	7	13
Some College	5	3
Number of Children		
1 – 3	12	16
4 – 6	7	3
7 – 9	1	1
Employment Status		
Employed	5	4
Unemployed	15	16
Drugs Sold		
Cocaine	2	6
Marijuana	5	1
Heroin	1	3
Crack Cocaine	4	6
Ecstasy	0	1 ⁴
Prescription Pills	1 ⁵	0
Mixture ⁶	8	4

⁴ One woman sold Ecstasy in addition to another drug.

⁵ One man sold prescription pills in addition to another drug

⁶ Indicates interviewee sold more than one type of drug

Also, in three separate instances, male participants (who obtained my phone number from the flyer) called after the interview to “amend” their answers or asked me out socially. I do not know what affect this seemingly superficial interest had on these particular participant’s answers.

Still other participants seemed reluctant to fully discuss their drug selling activity, giving one word answers or trailing off in their answers. For those participants, I do not believe they were able to completely divorce my research from the probation facility, even though I made them aware that not only were their answers anonymous, but also that their answers would not be shared with their probation officers. I can only conclude that to some degree, the environment in which the interviews took place (the probation department) may have impacted how candidly participants answered. Overall, I felt a positive rapport with both the women and men in the study.

Research Question 1: Motivations for Entrance to the Drug Trade

The goal of this research question was to assess motivations for initial or subsequent entrance to the drug trade. Initial entrance in recognition of the fact that for some of the participants it was, in fact, their first time selling. I use subsequent entrance to denote individuals who had left the drug trade at some point, either due to incarceration, legitimate employment, or some other reason, and returned to drug selling. The primary research question was:

- ❖ Why did participants choose drug selling as a form of illegitimate income?

Rationale for Research Question

Working to support oneself and one's lifestyle is instilled in us at an early age. The vast majority of society can be categorized as what Merton calls conformists. That is, they accept the success goals of American society and the prescribed means for attaining them. Conversely, drug sellers can be described as innovators, as they, accept the validity of cultural goals but reject the legitimate means of attaining them (Merton, 1968). Background questions regarding employment history and education were necessary to aid in my understanding of participant's social circumstances leading up to the time and surrounding their arrest. Interview items that informed this research question were: "Why did you start selling drugs?" "What made you choose drug selling?" "How is drug selling looked upon in your neighborhood?" "How hard was it to get started in the drug trade?" Participants were encouraged to give as much detail as possible.

Research Question 2: Gender Differences in Motivations for Selling

The heart of this research is to explore how men and women might differ in their motivations for drug selling. The principal research question guiding this inquiry is:

- ❖ Do men and women differ in their reasons/motivations for selling drugs and if so, in what ways do they differ?
- ❖ What role does the accumulation of material goods play in the choice to make money illegitimately, specifically through the crime of drug selling?

Rationale for Research Question

Men are more oriented to the goals and values consistent with the American Dream and women's values and goals are more consistent with economic concern in their

familial roles. Women are less likely to exhibit support for material acquisition and more likely to cite the pressures and constraints in caring for dependent others. I extrapolate this theme of gender difference from Messner and Rosenfeld (2007) to explain the divergence in male and female offending concerning drug selling, although they use it in the context of supporting women's lesser involvement in crime. Participants were asked questions such as: "Did the money you made from drug selling give you just enough money to survive (get by) or enough money to live comfortably?" "With the profit you made, what type of things did you spend your money on/buy?" "Do you feel pressure to provide for your family?" "Who is financially responsible for your household?" These questions were thought to most likely elicit a "gendered" response.

Research Question 3: The Impact of the American Dream

The purpose of this question was to explore participant's views on the American Dream, as well as its relevancy to them. The primary research question was:

- ❖ How do participants define material goods and what are tangible standards of success to this population?
- ❖ What are respondent's perceptions of the American Dream?

Very little research has been devoted to exploring the perceptions of poor young Black folk about the American Dream. Most of the scholarly literature has focused on those thought to be most effected by the American Dream: middle class white Americans (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007; Wright and Younts, 2009; Cernkovich, Giordano, and Rudolph, 2000; Agnew and Broidy, 1997)). This lack of attention is in large part due to the structural nature of anomie theory. The theory is designed to explain how the high crime rate in the United States can be traced to structural inadequacies in American social

structure and its capitalist underpinnings. Research questions used for to get at this perception included: “Have you heard of the term “The American Dream” and if so can you describe it?” “Would you consider yourself materialistic?” “With the profit you made, what type of things did you buy?” “Do you think society had provided you with what you need to be successful?”⁷ Again, this study is exploratory in nature and proceeds deductively to see if further research could provide a foundation for analysis of the theory at the individual level.

Analytic Technique

Notes and recordings of the probationers were usually transcribed one to two weeks following the interviews, sometimes even the same day. Since not all interviews were tape recorded, there was a tremendous amount of handwritten notes to be organized and typed. In addition, everyday interactions and observations involving the participants and the surroundings were noted, contributing to the voluminous amount of handwritten notes. After combing through every transcription- demographics, salient themes, and categories were coded. Focused coding was used to elaborate analytically interesting themes and to delineate subthemes and subtopics that distinguish differences and variations within the broader topic (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995).

Next, analytic memos were written to interpret the findings. Memos are necessary to explore relationships between coded field notes and to provide a more sustained examination of a theme or issue (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). For instance, a theme began to emerge amongst the men that sold marijuana versus the men that sold “hard” substances.⁸ Men that sold only marijuana tended to be employed at the

⁷ All interview questions are available in Appendix A

⁸ Crack Cocaine, Cocaine, Heroine, and Methamphetamines

time of their instant offense, with one even stating “I tried selling cocaine, but it wasn’t for me. Cocaine a different charge, it’s a whole different ball league.” This would indicate the need for an income supplement versus income replacement. Those men who sold “hard” substances may have needed greater income because they were unemployed thus, engaging in the sale of illicit drugs that, on average, netted greater prison time but also give greater monetary reward.

For a theme to be considered valid, at least 50% of the sample had to display some evidence of the finding. For example, 80% of the sample considered the drug trade “very easy” to get involved in. Because the main focus of this study is examining the phenomena for gender differences, numerous comparisons were made between the two groups of interest. After a theme was discovered, within group and between group comparisons were made to develop a better understanding of differences (if any for a given theme) between gender.

V. RESULTS

The sheer number of Black men and women using drug selling as a vehicle to supplement or replace their income speaks volumes to the real or perceived opportunities for legitimate income opportunities available to them. The objective of this project was to expand criminological research by studying what the American Dream means to this population and how it may impact their decision to sell drugs. Fundamental principles associated with the American Dream: a car, house, education for the children, a secure retirement- has long been associated with opportunities for the middle class (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). However, this study may illustrate that Black people from lower socioeconomic classes may share some of the same goals (if not all) and seeks to answer the central research question: how do Black men and women differ in their motivations for drug selling and do they have the same interpretation of the American Dream?

The research questions that guided this qualitative inquiry were:

- ❖ Why did participants choose drug selling as a form of illegitimate income?
- ❖ Do men and women differ in their reasons/motivations for selling drugs and if so, in what ways do they differ?
- ❖ What role does the accumulation of material goods play in the choice to make money illegitimately, specifically through the crime of drug selling?
- ❖ How do participants define material goods and what are tangible standards of success to this population?
- ❖ What are respondent's perceptions of the American Dream?

The results section is organized as follows: (1) a description of the male and

female samples, (2) an overview of entrance to the drug trade, (3) motivations for drug selling, (4) pressures and constraints and, (5) goals of success for the sample and the impact of the American Dream.

Summary of the Male Sample

The male participants were all African Americans currently on probation in Cook County stemming from a conviction of delivery and manufacture of a controlled substance. Most of the men seemed eager to participate and get their point across about why they engaged in their drug selling activity. However, the researcher also got the sense that the men were careful to limit some of their answers, particularly as it pertained to predicting whether or not they would ever sell drugs again if their monetary situation got desperate enough. There *were* a few men who were very candid about their entire drug selling activity and were quite vocal about selling drugs again if the circumstances warranted. All of the men shared quite similar backgrounds.

Of the 20 participants, 13 (65%) were from the south side of Chicago and of that 13, eight were from the Englewood neighborhood. The Englewood section of Chicago consistently has one of the highest crime rates in the Chicagoland area and at times one of the highest crime rates in the nation. Although it is just 3.07 square miles, this community had 1,091 incidents of violent crime from July 2010- July 2011 and 63 homicides of Black men in their teens to early 20's from January 2008 to June 2011 (Chicagopolice.org). Like other areas in Chicago, Englewood has suffered from "Black Flight" where middle class Black residents left the community for the suburbs. (U.S. Census, 2010). Other south side neighborhoods home to the men were Back of the Yards, Bronzeville, and Hyde Park. Another five participants were from the northwest

neighborhoods of Austin and North Lawndale. These two neighborhoods are also high crime areas with centers of concentrated poverty and most residents living below the poverty level. Austin had the most incidents of violent crime in the Chicagoland area (Chicagopolive.org). The remaining two participants were from Calumet City and Joliet.

The average age for the men was 29.4 years. More than half of the men had not completed high school, $n=13$. Five of the men obtained their General Education Diploma (GED), a high school equivalency diploma for individuals who have not completed high school. The highest grade completed was two years of college. One participant was actively enrolled in college at the time of the interview.

The majority of men, $n=15$ were not employed at the time of the interview. Three had been laid off; either because they were in construction or had a holiday/seasonal job. All of the men cited their felony offense as a barrier to finding gainful employment. Of the five men who were employed at the time of the interview their employment type ranged from self employment (carpentry and rehab work) to working for a temporary services agency to working in the kitchen of a major downtown hotel.

All of the men in the sample had children. The average number was 3.1 children. Only $n=2$ men stated that they were the primary caregiver for one or more children under the age of 18. The rest of the men, $n=18$, stated that their dependent children under the age of 18 lived with the mother of those children. Surprisingly, none of the men were court ordered to pay child support, however, all of the men said they voluntarily sent money to the mother of their children for support of the kids.

Summary of the Female Sample

The female participants were all African Americans currently on probation in Cook County stemming from a conviction of delivery and manufacture of a controlled substance. As with the men, it seemed that the women were also careful to limit some of their answers, however, it was in response to questions like “how did you get started in the drug trade?” The women were careful not to implicate or give specific names or relationships about their connections. Overall the women were very guarded in their answers and seemed mistrustful. I noticed ways to reduce the barrier between myself and the women participants. On the days I wore suits, the women I interviewed seemed much more distant and offered little in the way of explanation to the questions I posed. On the days I dressed more casual, wearing jeans and a sweater- the women seemed to be more open and although guarded, seemed more willing to share and provide explanation with some of their answers.

The average age of the women in the sample was 29.45. Of the 20 women, n=16 had graduated high school or obtained a GED. The highest level of education attained in the sample was 2 years of college. No one in the sample had completed any post-high school education.

In terms of neighborhoods, the sample was almost evenly split with n=9 (45%) of the women coming from the south side of Chicago. Seven of the 9 were from Englewood, one was from Bronzville and the other did not specify which neighborhood in the south side she was from. The other 55% (or 11 women) were from the northwest side. One woman stated she was from the Rockwell Projects, four were from the Austin area, one from Garfield Park, four from North Lawndale, and one from Logan Square.

Most of the women $n=16$, were not employed at the time of the interview. Five of the women had no previous work history at all. The women that did work, worked in the retail sector. One woman worked at Sam's club, another at Fair Share supermarket, another at Ultra food market and one was a delivery driver for a "chicken shack" as she called it. Some of the women stated that they got by because of a spouse or significant other.

Not only did all of the women in the sample have kids, all, but one, were the primary caregivers of their children, and in some cases, their grandchildren. The average number of children amongst the women was 2.9 kids.

Entrance to the Drug Trade

Not surprisingly, there was little variation in participant's reasons for entering the drug trade. Of the entire sample, only one male individual stated a different reason for entering the drug trade, saying:

"It was exciting to me, I don't know, it was just something I always wanted to do. Growing up I saw the homies into it and it was exciting to me. It wasn't really about the money, it was about the lifestyle."

All of the other participants, both male and female, plainly stated "money" as their reason for entering the drug trade. However, there was considerable variation by gender when participants were asked how they entered the drug trade. Entering the drug economy on the coattails of the men in their lives was a theme amongst most of the females, and has been well documented in the existing literature (Alarid and Cromwell, 2006).

"How I entered? Well I entered by a boyfriend I used to hang with. He sold drugs then I started helping him and then we both started using and then most of my drug selling was used to supply my addiction." (Female, 42 years old)

“The streets- I was in school and peers were buying drugs and spending money on it- and being in the wrong crowd. I didn’t really know that was the wrong crowd at the time and all it took was for me to hook up with the wrong man who was motivated enough to want the money. His motivation motivated me. The money he made, the things he accomplished and not really seeing the consequences, I was like ‘put me on’ and he did.” (Female, 54 years old)

“Well this dude I was with. I wasn’t about to hoe for no money so this was kinda the next best thing. I wasn’t degrading myself but at the same time I was getting money. And it helped me so much, it was just a big come up because before I was doing it I was scrimping and scraping and I couldn’t get nothing. After, I was, you know...able to breath.” (Female, 30 years old)

“This guy I was seeing.” (Female, 23 years old)

“Following a man.” (Female, 25 years old).

“Holding stuff I ain’t have no business holding. But when you see stacks of money all around you that makes you want it even more. That is one way of doing things and it’s a quick way. But probably if I wasn’t holding stuff for him I would not have even done it” (Female, 22 years old)

“My boyfriend at the time...he was putting work in.” (Female, 19 years old)

There were some women, $n = 6$, who reported entering the drug trade independent of men. They tended to be a little older and had prior arrests for drug related crimes. Their independent start or subsequent re-involvement in the drug economy may be a reflection of the desperation they felt, or perhaps a manifestation of their lack of opportunity leaving little other options for making money.

“...I’m saying man, I know people, I just know people...its like this, I always knew people so my girl was like ‘make moves, call em up.’ So I called people I knew and got some weight. But it ain’t the type of thing where you could just move in- I mean I had to plead my case cause everybody want you to work *for* them- especially being a woman- but I wanted my own.” (Female, 30 years old).

“Now the first time, I was seeing other people making money so I started selling myself, but you see this is my second arrest for drug selling to I already had contacts and knew how to get in and out of the game.” (Female, 44 years old)

“It was really off my brother business but he didn’t directly help me because I think he felt guilty towards my mom if he woulda done that. But basically I took

over his calls because he was doing other things, then he went away and it was all on me.” (Female 27 years old)

“Well it was like a family business you know. But what I sold separated me from everybody else [What did you sell?] I sold heroine and ain’t nobody wanna touch that, I was out there by myself but there was a market for it and no sooner I start making more money than everybody else.” (Female, 25 years old)

A significant portion of the men, n=17, reported starting out selling drugs at a very young age, usually having watched the older male figures on their street and on their block sell drugs. They report viewing these men as role models because of their material possessions and the money they had. Seven of the men reported being encouraged to stay in school and get an education by these men or male family members whom they looked up to.

“I started out petty, like refer. I always stuck with refer cause I knew it was petty and I knew I wasn’t gonna get a lot of time doing it. Me and my friends used up our lunch money to buy weed, so then I thought we could take our money to get our own to sell, so that’s how we started. I was the first to cut my own. More recently, I could get in and get out- I knew how far I could go with it.” (Male, 28 years old)

“When I was young, I always paid attention. I had cousins, I never ran my mouth. I asked questions. By me being family, they said ‘look.’ They always told me I shouldn’t do this, but at the same time you gotta be the example. Yea education is important but I’m looking at them like ‘why you doing it?’ I already knew what to do. The kids I grew up around, we put our heads together to figure out how we were gonna make it happen. I was young, smart, intelligent, and they looked at how I carried myself.” (Male, 28 years old)

“I guess in the beginning I was more of a...kinda like a bad little kid and when I start noticing the guys that was selling, they didn’t allow me to because uh...they were saying that the heat I would bring, the person I was so...[Okay, let me ask you this: how did you know this though? You said when you noticed guys-] I noticed them by they uh...clothes. You know, the women, the cars, the jewelry, the money, you know...like that.” (Male, 40 years old)

“Well it was kinda like my brother introduced me to it and I took off from there. I was kinda raised into it...seeing people outside hollering, seeing people outside waiting for other people, that’s what I saw and that’s what I wanted to do. I mean, I been arrested 6 or 7 times as a juvenile.” (Male, 29 years old)

“Well ever since I was young, that shit seemed exciting to me and I always wanted to know about it, you know. And my cousins and shit tried to keep me away from it- cause I’m a only child so they really was like ‘don’t break your mother’s heart.’ And that kept me from it for a little bit, but not for long.”

None of the men cited getting involved in the drug economy through a woman or by virtue of their association with a girlfriend or significant other. Therefore, entrance to the drug trade, for the purpose of selling has a gendered aspect to it. When women are relegated to support roles, as they often are in the drug economy, it is often *because* of their association with boyfriends. Assuming that since being a seller means occupying a different position in the drug economy; it should follow that women who sell gain entrance in a different way from women who hold or transport. However, their answers seem to indicate that there is one main way in and that is through a man.

There was clear consensus with regard to two topics. First, virtually all of the participants, male and female, stated that it was not, at all, difficult to get started in the drug trade. “Getting started” refers to the initial buying of the drugs to distribute on the streets as well as etching out space, or as some called “territory,” to sell. Both men and women stated that as long as you had the initial start up money to buy your own drugs, it was not difficult to put it out on the street. None of the participants reported being confronted with violence regarding selling space or territory.

[How hard was it to get started in the drug trade?] “I knew someone, it wasn’t hard, it was like walking out the front door...simple as baking a cake.” (Female, 44 years old).

“Well the way I started selling, relatively easy, you just had to have the money to buy it.” (Female, 54 years old)

“Not hard, if you have any type of sense and know how to manage, it’s like any business. (Male, 31 years old)

“Its not hard if you have the money to buy it- you can get the product from anywhere.” (Male, 28 years old)

“It ain’t hard at all. You can’t be scared and you can’t be timid. You have to sacrifice yourself for that lifestyle. I never sold drugs for nobody else. Whenever I am selling I purchase my own weight so I don’t have to report back to no one else.” (Male, 28 years old)

“Well growing up in the neighborhood that I grew up in, you just about new everybody that was out there hustling. Now I’m not gon say you could just go up to them and ask them for what you want. So it just depend on the reputation of you or your family for if they knew whether or not to trust you. So I guess for some it’s easier than others but it was easy for me. (Female, 25 years old)

“Well if you know what you doing, it ain’t hard.” (Female, 22 years old)

“Man, nah! It might be hard in the sense that every body wanna do it and there just ain’t enough room for everybody but you gotta think about it. These people you know, sometimes you grew up with. You see them just about everyday if you live there. So it ain’t nothing to ask them a question. And even if you can’t do it that way, 9 times out of 10 you know somebody that know somebody. That’s how you get in the game...”(Male, 32 years old)

The mere fact that these women and men were able to effortless drift into the drug economy speaks volumes to the social environment from which they come. One of Cloward and Ohlin’s most important findings was that all opportunities for success, both illegal and conventional, were not equally available to all, including those readily motivated to criminal activity. However, because they perceived equal access, it was easy for them to drift into that type of activity.

Second, all participants, except one, stated that there was no stigma attached to drug selling in their neighborhood. Drug selling was a part of the everyday fabric of the neighborhood and had become a normalized and routine occurrence for these individuals. In time, this normalization became a barometer to judge possible financial opportunities when the need became strong enough. This lack of stigma, in some ways, served to demystify the hustling lifestyle.

“[How is drug selling looked upon in your neighborhood?] Well in my neighborhood its drug dealing everywhere. I live in Englewood so on every corners its drug selling.” (Male, 28 years old)

“Well basically that’s a strong hustle in my neighborhood. Im not gon say that’s a way to get by but its definitely a way to come up. You need a come up selling is quick and easy if you don’t have a problem. Its when you have problems is when it gets hard. [What do you mean by ‘problem?’] A drug problem.” (Female, 25 years old)

“I say its no big deal. Can’t say everybody in the hood do it but for the few that do it, its cause they want to- I did it cause I chose to.” (Male, 28 years old)

“Listen, nobody judge the next man for doing what he gotta do. If all your options is gone or this could be the easy way, then you gon take it, no if ands or buts about it. I don’t even think people care about what the next man is doing.” (Male, 32 years old)

“Well its pretty hard to point fingers when everybody involved.” (Female, 19 years old)

“Nah- its no biggie, people more worried about the police then what people around them think.” (Male, 32 years old)

It was important to understand the day to day process of being involved in the drug economy. It is through these descriptions that the reader is given a glimpse of the planning, danger, routine, and emotions accompanied by this activity. It also allows for an understanding of the drift between parenthood, legitimate employment, and drug selling.

“[Explain what the day to day process of drug selling was. So from the time you woke up till the time you went to bed, what did you do? Some days I didn’t even go to sleep. Good days were the days people get checks, government checks. I always tried to keep people who got government checks and regular job checks. I get up at 5am, sell marijuana, wake up the kids, get them ready and get them to school. At about 10am more customers come. I try not to do transactions outside, so I work off my phone. I pick my daughter up at 12 cause she only go to school for a half day. I got another two and a half window till the other kids get out. I make sure I make time for the kids. After school they get out and I help them with their homework. From there it’s straight selling. I usually wrap things up at

midnight, after that ain't no one outside but addicts, prostitutes, and the police.” (Male, 28 years old)

“Just like walk around cause I had my own customers and I'd just walk around and sell, then I go in and check on my kids and then go back out. So I didn't really have much time for my kids.” (Female, 44 years old)

“Well I was a late riser cause I was usually up late the night before. So my girl gets the kids ready for school. I always started with getting what I needed to put out, so I usually pick that up around 11 am- then I'm out from there. When I got hit, I go respond and that's basically it. By the time nightfall, I'm getting ready to go to the spot. [What's the spot?] The corner bar. [You went there socially or you sold there?] A little of both. I mean people knew I was holding if they wanted it- but that was my spot- you know how many times the police raided and shut that spot down (laughing)?” (Female, 30 years old)

“A lot of people say selling drugs is easy, it ain't easy- when you got a 9 to 5, you don't have to look over your shoulder. Wit selling drugs, if you don't make money you don't eat. It's really a strain selling drugs. I mean once you do it for a while and really get to know it- then it comes naturally to you, but it's never easy. My son stays with me now, so I can't put him in danger. But I did put all my time and effort into it, there is a lot of regret. My father wasn't in my life and my mother was on drugs when I was young. It's been hard. [You just said a moment ago that you put all of your time and effort into it, explain to me how you did that, for instance, what your daily routine was...] Well usually I was holding on to big amounts of weight cause somehow I always got stuck with it. So everyday I was just tryna move everything I had. I mean having nothing leftover! I was grinding more than most other people out there. I was always the one out later than everybody else.” (Male, 24 years old)

“Day to day? Every time you just look. First you think about the count, how much you made, the overhead. Then you count out what you were supposed to have. Calculate what you taken out, how much you gon make, what your overhead is, and what you have to give those working for you. Transportation, food while you out, and what it takes to maintain people who are with you and basically they were users.” (Female, 54 years old)

“Well when I stopped working at Denny's I ain't have to go to bed early- so I was more of a night worker. I stayed out till 3 or 4 in the morning and my sister came in and kept the kids when she was done. I would just mainly chill at my homeboys house till I get a call and go. I was always in my club clothes when I was delivering to make it look like I just left the bar. I know they [the police] be looking for D- wait, what's it called? DUI? Then I just go deliver cause I don't drink.” (Female, 23 years old)

“I worked off my phone, so someone would call me then I would go to them and do the transactions. [And about what time did that start?] Probably about eight o’clock in the morning- see it went on all day really. So no day was really typical. [Ok, so what time did it end?] It never ended, I just stopped answering my phone. Probably like two in the morning I wouldn’t answer anymore” (Female, 42 years old)

“Wake up, wash up, go to school, then back to the block.” (Male, 21 years old)

“You really wanna know this? I’ll just say there was a lot of overseeing I did. So when I got up I called everybody for the count. I would take care of any personal business I had. I would collect money, cause you can’t leave no one with money too long, pick my kids up from the bus. Depending on the day of the week, I might have a couple of meetings or drop offs. I’ll just leave it at that” (Male, 42 years old)

“Get up in the morning, wash up, crack me a blunt, smoke it, go outside, post up on the block I was at. If the block was hot, you just tell people to call your phone. But basically I would stand outside and sell. I used to go in early, about 7 or 8pm, cause that’s when the drama would start.” (Male, 28 years old)

“Uh, the day to day business...it was like...funny cause it was different ways to go about it for different things you sell, like for heroine, you have to get out early...it’s mandatory that you get out early. You have to get rid of it in a certain amount of time, or it falls off and then that is a well...that’s a drug that they need. It’s no joking, its no playing with that. You gots to be serious with it, cause them people...if they don’t get what they need its serious and if you fuck with them they might not come back to you. Whereas cocaine, that’s like, you don’t need to. Its not a need, it’s a want and once they get it, its like what it make them feel like. It makes them crave for it instantly so its not quite like you have to get out early. The best thing about cocaine, you could be out late and do it because it’s a up and marijuana, you have to constantly be out, be around, be known for that. That’s what I mean, its different so you couldn’t catch someone mainly selling heroine-selling coke too. You can’t do it, you can’t balance it. He might be up late and then can’t get up early morning to do the heroine, so he gon focus on one thing. [And up early for the heroine because they start ‘jonesing’ early?] Yea, yea.” (Male, 40 years old)

“Get up at 8am, got to be to work by 10am. I call my crew, make sure they’re good. When I get off, check back in with the crew. So day to day, I’d just make sure everyone was ok.” (Male, 26 years old)

“Well my day went pretty normal till the evening. I did regular mother things that every mother does, then in the evening I did what I had to do.” (Female, 27 years old)

“Ok- so I would get up, of course take care of my kids, feed them breakfast, move everything along. The only interruption would be if anyone called me first. But usually I oldest would go to school, my son go to daycare, and if I had to leave the baby would stay with my mother. So I would go back and forth depending on what I was doing that day. Some days I was just paid to drop weed off. [So to transport it?] Um Hmm, yes. Or some days I would just wait and get calls or go out and see who out there. [So would you say you worked mostly off of your phone or worked outside?] It depends, you get more customers when you work outside cause you can sometimes snag whoever is out there. If it’s hot out, I’ll work outside more- but winter here? I work in the indoors (laughing).” (Female, 25 years old)

“Huh? [What would happen on a typical day?] Wasn’t no typical day, everyday was different.” (Female, 19 years old)

“Depending on what time I wake up depending on what time I get started. I usually wake up late, if I decided I need money that day I was motivated. [So you didn’t sell every day?] Nope, only when I needed to.” (Male, 20 years old)

“Um well I would be told from my peoples where to go. [Wait- so you sold in different locations?] No I was in the same area, I mean about what I was gon get. I was in everything, what I sold, so hot days I sold light, easy days I sold heavy.” (Female, 25 years old)

More than half of respondents, 67.5% (27) indicated that they primarily sold drugs “off the phone.” This meant people seeking to buy drugs would call the seller’s cell phone. The seller would then arrange to meet the buyer and at this meeting there would be an exchange of drugs for money. Ten percent of the respondents indicated that they primarily sold drugs “on the street,” meaning an individual interested in buying drugs would approach the seller to see if he/she had any for sale. Even though the men and women talked about their primary methods, it is worth noting that at different points they mixed selling methods. There were 3 (1 woman) respondents that said they did neither, citing that they had individuals working for them. By this they meant they did not conduct any hand to hand transactions. Instead they gave drugs to “workers” to sell and the “workers” sold the drugs in exchange for a cut of the profits.

There was a clear consensus regarding the probationer's perceptions of police surveillance of their activity, with no difference between gender. The majority of participants felt that generally, the police were unaware of their activity, that they were not watched closely by the police, and that it was not easy to get caught. Just, n=1 man and n=3 women, felt they were under close watch of the police. This speaks to the overall perception of selling drugs as a quick, relatively low risk way to make money. This perception was enhanced if, after sellers got involved in the drug economy, it took awhile for their criminal activity to be detected.

With so many interviewees saying how off the "police radar" they were, they were then asked to reflect on how they got caught.⁹ A clear pattern emerges. Most participants attributed their arrest to either the police getting lucky or they themselves doing something out of the ordinary, something that was not a part of their normal routine.

"[How did you get caught?] How I got caught is, I was on probation in July and I sold to a undercover." (Male, 21 years old)

"It wasn't really never easy for me to get caught. I say they just got lucky. When I was young I was learning the game, but it was always something I wanted to do so as I got older I got slick." (Male, 29 years old)

"I actually got caught by a client "D" referred to me that was a cop...and all I was doing then was taking the product that he had already got the money for so to me technically I wasn't selling." (Female, 23 years old)

"I got caught because of someone else not knowing what to do. The one thing you have to know is what comes with the territory and if its against the law, they got a job to do and you got a job to do. Snitching comes with that territory. I wasn't selling, I had someone selling for me. You asked me did I think they were watching me- now I'm going to say yea, but they could never catch me. I told the police I don't sell drugs. I didn't sell to the officer in this particular case. I had stopped selling because I got what I needed. I wanted to keep from losing my

⁹ Only the respondents who initially said it was not easy to get caught, had their answers included in this section.

apartment and a place to stay so I decided to go back to old behaviors. I was 3 months behind in rent. I stood as long as I could. I never sold, I would just give them a certain amount to distribute. I still had an ounce to sell so soon as I got the \$1000 the night before, after paying all the bills, I went to the county to see my peoples that got locked up with my stuff. He asked would I stop by and give his girl something. I went to do that and that's when I got arrested. Yup, she met me on Clark and Division...that was my area." (Female, 54 years old)

"Dumb decisions- if you not thinking, taking care of business, or under the influence, that's when people get caught. Being under the influence and rushing. It's all about patience." (Male, 24 years old)

"I went at it for a while before I got arrested, so a big part of the police catching up with me was luck. [So how exactly did you get caught?] Raid. [Of your house?] No, a bunch of people on the block got picked up. [I'm sorry, I'm just trying to understand, so you guys were all out together?] Yea, basically...it's a long complicated story. [Do you feel like explaining it?] Not really." (Female, 30 years old)

"See, where I got caught at wasn't even where I was selling at. Matter of fact, I had to go way back over 30 minutes to my stash then come back and they was there waiting for me, but I'm glad it happened though. I don't have to look over my shoulder or worry about the house getting raided." (Female, 44 years old)

"Somebody I don't even fuck with like that basically ran me over to get a deal. I can't even talk about it cause I get so upset." (Male, 26 years old)

"Being stupid! Where I got locked up at is not even where I live at. I was just going over there to drink and chill- shit, when police in my area catch us they just give the weed back if its small and send us on or take it from you. But anyway, an old friend wanted some and I wasn't even selling the two bags. A person pulled up and wanted 8 bags. I went and grabbed 6 bags from my man. I gave him the weed and he gave me the money. The money he gave me was marked money cause he was a undercover. I went on about my business and I keep seeing a detective car. Finally they came up on the stoop and I knew exactly what it was about and I got locked up." (Male, 28 years old)

"Talking to somebody known was how I got caught." (Male, 31 years old)

"A stupid little warrant. A traffic warrant at that. If I woulda just took care of that none of this woulda happen. [Can you tell me a little about that?] I was in the car wit my homeboy and we was just cruising. I was stopping to get a "Black and Mild" and police came in right behind us- asking all these questions. And I don't even know why, my mind was racing and I gave them my real government [name]. Soon as he pulled that up they search the car and found it. (Male, 23 years old)

“Looked somebody dead in the face that I ain’t know, but being greedy, sold to him anyway and it was a undercover. And I was pregnant too, that was the worst night of my life. [The pregnancy made it worst?] Yea cause I was good and pregnant to and the county don’t care nothing about that. They was hard on me like they was on everybody else. So the times when I was sick they ain’t care. That infirmery is disgusting.” (Female, 23 years old)

“I was out too late.” (Female, 36 years old)

Motivations for Selling

There was little gender difference in both the males and females explanations for selling. Most of the interviewees cited experiencing some type of financial constraint just prior to making the decision to sell or re-enter the drug trade after a period of absence. There was no clear gender difference in the type of constraints experienced, which varied from the birth of another child, to the loss of a job, to being evicted. One woman stated:

“Even thinking about being on the streets, for real I cannot let that happened, but it happened. The kids had to walk to school from my mothers house and it was a long way cause we ain’t have no place else to go. [Were you able to get them on a school bus?] Eventually I was but the bus company took their sweet time to make that happen. But after that is when I started hustling, but the foul thing is the more I hustled I wasn’t able to get up outta there because everybody was askin me for money. So I was just in a deeper hole and the crazy thing was how I got out my mother’s house was due to getting housing not my hustle money. But yeah, that’s what I would say really got me involved in hustling.” (Female, 25 years old).

“When I was 17, the reason, well before I first started selling drugs it was the fascination, with everything that came along with it. When I was young I saw that a lot; the money, the cars, etc. My mother saw this and she tried to keep me from it, but that’s the more I wanted to do it. Then at 17 my baby mama was pregnant. I was kicked out of school and I ain’t have no money, couldn’t get no job cause I ain’t have no education and I had a baby on the way so I had to do something.” (Male 28 years old)

In making the decision to return to drug selling after being incarcerated, the same individual states:

“Yea- there was a break when I didn’t sell. I got locked up in the county from, lets see...2003-2004, then IDOC (Illinois Department of Corrections) from 2004-2006. I didn’t sell any drugs while I was on parole the whole 2 years. And the whole 2 years I was on parole, I was on house arrest. My baby momma played a role in me not going back to that lifestyle. Really, I didn’t want anyone around me to fall victim. I did the 2 years and did it clean. After I did the 2 years, Feb 2008, I stayed clean for about 4 or 5 months. Then I was broke again and I felt like I had to have a side hustle to make money. I started selling pizza and I looked at it like this: at least I don’t have to sell drugs. But then again I went back to it. It was the best way I knew to make real money in a short amount of time and get those bills paid.” (Male 28 years old)

“[Right, but you were working at the time?] Yeah- I mean I always worked but I mean Denny’s wasn’t paying nothing so I had to make ends meet somehow. Having a baby at 16 wasn’t easy but I wasn’t even doing it then. Its just like the more kids I had- I just had to do what I had to do...” (Female, 23 years old)

A much more noticeable distinction occurred when interviewees were asked how they spent their profit from selling drugs. It was far more common for the women (n=17) to have spent some, a majority, or all of their profits on their children or things that would contribute to the stability of themselves and their children. They reported spending the money they earned on things like clothes for their children, rent, contribution to the household expenses if they were living with someone else, transportation to get to work, paying outstanding bills and utilities, household items and toiletries.

“[With the profit you made, what type of things did you buy or spend your money on?] I spent my money on me and my kids. [Like what? What kinds of things did you buy?] Like clothes, shoes for the, cause I always kept my kids clean. Bills, my phone service, things like that. [Did you pay rent?] No, “Section 8” paid that cause I wasn’t working but I didn’t have a way to pay all of my other bills. It really wasn’t that much I was getting, like people think.” (Female, 27 years old)

“Clothes for me and my kids- stuff for the house and paid bills. But the house I lived in was owned already- so mostly stuff for my kids.” (Female, 44 years old)

“I paid my bills.” (Female, 19 years old)

“Well I used most of my money to take care of my kids. [How did you do this?] Well buying they food and clothes, keeping a roof over our head. Its unfortunate but I have to do all the work cause their father isn’t here. We got along well with the money from my job but when I moved out of my mother house it wasn’t enough. They cut my hours like almost as soon as I moved out and she had gave me a deadline so I couldn’t go back. (Female, 22 years old)

“Taking care of everything! More like what wasn’t I taking care of. Of course my kids came first and everything I did for them from clothes to transporting to everything.” (Female, 30 years old)

“At the point that I am, its just all about my kids and grand kids. I been trying to find another way but when you my age with no work history, um this is what you go back to. Its quick money and I can pay the bills that I need to. I big part of everything is taking care of my daughter and her two cause man it’s hard. So I spend a lot on her and when any of my kids need something they come to me and I find a way to get it. I had to give money toward bailing my son out in Indiana. When the kids have little trips and stuff for school. Buying everybody clothes and stuff. I still buy my grown sons clothes. I am the go to person.” (Female, 44 years old)

“I spoiled myself and my kids. I felt we deserved it. That sounds bad right? I did pay some bills to with it. But honestly, I spent it on us (Laughing).” (Female, 25 years old)

For most of the women, their first and almost automatic response to any money motivated questions in the interview had to do with the care of their children. They maintained that the struggle, at some point, got to be too much for them and that they were desperate to find a way to make ends meet. Being on the brink of homelessness and not having any job prospects necessitated their drug selling activity. One woman, who was sanctioned by the Illinois Department of Health & Human Services, for failing to report income from a job she held one year previous for 3 weeks, said the following:

“Well I was a runner. [What’s that?] I just mainly moved the drugs from one place to another. [So you never sold drugs?] No, I did, but my main thing was to move work back and forth. I was selling at times but running was safer because you didn’t always have nothing on you but when I was selling it was either because I needed last minute money or cause I was doing a favor to someone else. But to answer your question, I was paying bills with my money. I was worser off

because I didn't have no type of income. [Some of the other people talked about getting state aid, did you get that?] I was getting it but I got cut off because I aint tell them I was working- and it was at a 'White Hen' for 3 weeks! So I was like 'Yo!' they for real. The kids got the medical but we couldn't get nothing else so all my money was going for that. [Did you have your own place?] Yes and no- it was my brother's apartment but he's away in the army. So I had to pay all of those bills. [Did he ever help you any?] Nope- he got his own child support to pay. He just said make sure I was on time with the rent and don't tear his house up."

Three of the women reported spending the majority of their profits on activities in which they were the primary beneficiary, such as, going out to nightclubs, shopping for clothes for themselves, and other miscellaneous social items. Two of the three women were teen mothers. It is quite possible that having children at such an early age interfered and deferred to a later time, the typical fun associated with being a teenager, as witnessed in their carefree approach and detached sense of parental responsibilities. They did not seem strained by their single parenthood. Although the third woman was not a teen parent, she spoke of having to care for 8 siblings and the strain it placed on her and her older sister after her parents died.

"That was a long time ago. Back then when I first started I had nothing to do with my money but spoil myself. My man at the time took good care of me with the money cars and houses, so it was up to me what I wanted to do. My sister had my kids and so even though it's sad to say I know she was taking good care of them. That's the evolution that God brought me through cause I was selfish back then. But if you look at the time period, I was the second oldest of 8 siblings. So it was always about taking care of them. I got sick of it and eventually just left my sister to do it all. [Ok, what about this recent arrest, what did you do with the profits you made from when you were selling drugs most recently?] Paying my roommate. I had to pay for my room and my cell phone bill. I don't really have too many other bills" (Female, 54 years old)

"Just normal everyday keeping myself up [What things did you do to keep yourself up?] Got my hair and nails done, shopping. [Anything else?] I went out clubbing, driving all over, paying my car note and insurance." (Female, 25 years old)

“I was using my money to have fun. And a lot of it, now that I look back, I just wasted. Just giving money to people - \$30 or \$50 here or there, eating out...we had this thing when we would just go buy cell phones, the nice ones and hold on to ‘em because we was always losing them. [did any of your money go to the kids or for like household bills?] Yeah, I was supporting my kids, and half of my girlfriends kids. We lived with my mother and she was taking care of the other stuff.” (Female, 23 years old)

Giving credence to the hypothesis, men were much more likely to say that they spent the majority of profits on themselves, material possessions, and activities they thought of as fun. These activities included, buying clothes, sneakers, jewelry, cars, alcohol, and marijuana, as well as going to “strip clubs” and nightclubs.

[With the profit you made, what did you spend your money on?] Half of it I jagged off. [Like what?] Liquor, partying, strip clubs, trips outta town, vehicles that got impounded...” (Male, 28 years old)

“Shoes, jewelry...basically a lot of shoes and jewelry. I bought liquor, the finest weed, a bunch of material stuff, women clothes...(Male, 28 years old)

“Clothes and crap. Going out every weekend, gambling, hittin the after hours spot for gambling, dice, card, dominos. Eatin, wasn’t nobody cookin for me and uh I was out most of the time. Uh, that’s about it. (Male, 29 years old)

“Mostly reinvestment, cause really I knew the more I put in, the more I was gonna get out. Nice car...lets see, what else? Helping out my foot soldiers to make them loyal, but we was all together, getting the money and spending it together. Matching custom made diamond chains- we got a lot of custom made stuff...” (Male, 26 years old)

“What I spent it on? Not nothing I can show for it today. Clothes, bills, lacing the house. You gotta realize that its all about seeing what you can get. So you not gon hold on to all the money- you spend it so you can have something to show for it.” (Male, 41 years old)

“I’d pay the bills first, you know rent...then like material stuff- clothes, jewelry, shoes, and spend the rest on girls I guess.” (Male, 29 years old)

“Car, clothes- sometimes I paid bills.” (Male, 21 years old)

“Shit, on me. [What sort of stuff did you buy for yourself?] Nice things I wasn’t able to get before. [Such as?] Clothes, sneakers, nice car...I laid it out. [What do

you mean?] My whip had trim, rims, grill, all that...[Is that all?] Well shit, you know, we was making it rain in the strip spot.” (Male, 32 years old)

“Bought cars, I always bought cars. I had my own homes, clothes, flat screens, 2-3 cars. I always helped my momma and ” (Male, 24 years old.)

It is worth noting that once it became apparent to some male participants that the way they spent their profits might have “looked bad,” some amended or supplemented their answer to include a portion of the money going to the care of their children but it was always after they gave their answer to the question.

Five of the men said they spent their profit on taking care of their children and/or trying to avoid homelessness. These men reported being the primary source of income for their household which typically included their girlfriend or mother of their children, as well as the children.

“Paid bills, normal necessities, car, shoes, and clothes for the kids and car insurance.” (Male, 31 years old).

“First and foremost I paid my bills and I had a lot of them! I was spending a lot on my lady and my kids, you know they school stuff and wit not. There wasn’t a lot left after that.” (Male, 26 years old)

“Money, money, money, money, money (interviewee singing)- that’s what it takes to support your family right? I’m not like most guys, my whole family was living with me, so all my money was going to the family thang. My children live with me, so without my money we all be homeless, you feel me? [So you were paying all the typical household bills with the money you made] Yeah, wasn’t no time for that fancy stuff, I’m to old to be stuntin, I was paying all the bare bones. I mean, cause all that flashy stuff, I already had it, I’m at a different point in my life.” (Male, 28 years old)

“Took care of my financial obligations. I been in school the last two years, so all the expenses for that. I pay child support and get my boy. I don’t mind that. I helped my momma out, she don’t get around as well as she used to, she need one of those ramps so I helped her out with that. A car, to get back and forth to school. And all my house bills, I live alone so everything is on me.” (Male, 40 years old)

One interviewee in particular was adamant that contrary to common misconceptions regarding women and single parenthood, it is not only women who provide the majority of support for the children. He emphasized his dedication to his children by pointing out that even though he was dying of stage 4 lung cancer, he still was out in the streets selling to be able to support them. He seemed to take his role as a father very serious, saying:

“Uh, mostly supporting my kids, I’m saying, that’s why I was doing it anyway. The kids were coming and I had to find away. [So the profit you made mostly went to the care of your children?] Well what you think? And I got 9 kids! I was supporting them and they mommas. I always hustled to pay for my kids and if there wasn’t nothing out there for me to do legally, then I had to do what I had to do. But people think “oh, he got all those kids” like that automatically make someone a dead beat, but that wasn’t my case cause I took care of mine. See people only giving credit to the mothers, but I take good care of my kids. I got them in private school and all of that, they don’t never want for nothing. Im a star dad and it even get to a point where my baby moms- her *and* her boyfriend living up off of me! It don’t bother me cause I’m a provider. [Has that changed as a result of your illness?] Of course it has, but we not talking about that. I still support my family and anyway ALL my baby mommas is doing something with theyself.” (Male, 42 years old)

I used a very direct question to get at the participants motivations for selling drugs: “would you say that you sold drugs more for your survival or to live well/comfortably, for instance to be able to buy the material goods you desire?” While recognizing that this decision can be made up of a very complex set of circumstances and motivations, this study takes the approach that this decision is principally guided by financial need/desires. Recall the earlier interview question “why did you start selling drugs?” to which 97.5% of the sample gave a financially driven answer. A logical follow up question would contain a probe that asks the participation about the extent to which their financial need drove them to this form of criminal coping, i.e. was selling drugs

necessary for survival or to get you the things you desired. All of the women and 17 of the men, 92.5% of the sample named survival as the catalyst to selling drugs.

Pressures, Constraints, and Caregiver Responsibilities

This study sets out, not to make a cause and effect statement concerning why Black men and Black women ultimately make the decision to sell drugs, instead the focus is on the conditions that exist in their environments to increase the likelihood of this form of criminal coping. Durkheim tells us that if a division occurs between what the economic and productive forces of society can realistically deliver and what the population expects, the resulting crisis can manifest itself in anomie. When a society becomes anomic, it can no longer effectively control the population's wants and desires. This disjunction gives way to increased strains and pressures for those least able to achieve these wants and desires. One very predictable source of strain that may impede one's ability to have access to wants and desires is children. Ninety five percent of the female sample, $n=19$, were the primary caregiver for their children or grandchildren. The participants were asked to answer several questions about financial and familial strain. When asked who was financially responsible for the household, all of the women, $n=20$, stated that they were, even if they were currently residing with someone else. None of the women reported paying child support for any child because all of their children were in their physical custody.

Despite 100% of the women being under the federal poverty guideline of \$18,310 for a family of three (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011), only 6 of the 20 considered and labeled themselves as "poor."

[Do you consider yourself poor?] “Most definitely- as far as not owning nothing and having these (probation) fees over my head.” (Female, 30 years old)

“For now, yeah.” (Female, 23 years old)

“According to the government I am because I get services. So yeah.” (Female, 19 years old)

“(Laughing) yeah- whenever you can’t pay your bills. It’s hard out there. But I will say I’m poor because I have children and my grands, cause I always worked all my life. [So without them you think you would be in a better space financially?] Oh yeah, definitely” (Female, 42 years old)

The rest of the women, n=14, did not identify themselves as poor. As long as they were able to adequately provide for their children. The fact that they were receiving some form of public assistance did not impact how they viewed their financial position.

[Do you consider yourself poor?] “No because, I see it as, as long as I am able to provide for my children, we alright. I’m not saying that I couldn’t use more, we all could, but we makin it.” (Female, 36 years old)

“In some ways yes and in some ways no. I need to make money but at the same time we are surviving.” (Female, 27 years old)

“There are two sides to that question. It depends where you’re looking from- today I consider myself extremely rich whereas someone else might consider me poor. [So you personally consider yourself rich?] Yes, when all of the material things are shed.” (Female, 54 years old)

“No cause I take care of my kids.” (Female, 21 years old)

“There might be times where I need or want something or my family need or want something that I can’t get my hands on right away but I don’t think that makes us poor. Take for instance, if you look at other people that have two parents in the home say, I’m sure they have to prioritize their bills in terms of what is importance and what isn’t. So it might be ‘well I can’t get u the X-Box right now’ or I have to be a month late on the phone bill but in the end it all gets paid. So we ain’t poor, we like the rest of the country; you know what I’m saying?” (Female, 42 years old)

“I always had nice things, and till this day I have nice things. Even though some of my daughters grown, I still make sure they have nice stuff. My little daughters have nice stuff but if you wanna technically measure me, I don’t know where we fall [in formal poverty guidelines].” (Female, 44 years old)

“What type of question is that? That’s a stupid question because I can’t even tell you what it means. What does that mean? [Well, it is meant to be a subjective question, what does the word mean to you?] To me it means you can’t take care of yourself. A homeless person is poor, they can’t get or pay for a house. I can get the things I need.” (Female, 23 years old)

Admittance of being poor, as subjective as the term is, was equated with somehow not being a good parent. In 2009, 10.5% of U.S. families were living under the federal poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Most of the sample of women, n=17, said they did not receive financial support from the fathers of their children. The 3 women that did report receiving some money from the fathers were actually residing with them. The two women who were caring for their grandchildren both said that the fathers of those children were not contributing to their financial support. This means that these women were responsible for providing for all of the children’s immediate needs as well as all of the money required to maintain a household. Add to this the “domestic” duties placed solely on them: educational responsibilities for the children, maintaining employment, and housekeeping. These sorts of pressures seemed to escape the men in the study.

It was actually much more common for men to identify themselves as poor. Reasons for this are explored further in the discussion section. Thirteen of the men plainly stated that they felt they were poor. One man talked in detail about classifying oneself as poor.

“Am I poor? Yup. Anytime you don’t have a property or a business you poor. You gotta have something for collateral or you worthless. I always stacked up, so if I needed bail, it was a phone call away. Now unless you know something I don’t know, I can’t call my girl and say bring all my sneakers and boots down here for bail (laughs). You know what I’m saying? I can’t say bae, bring me my stack of jeans to put down for my bail. So I always had to have something. Now if I had a building it would have been way easier. That’s why, all these people

want the latest shit and you can't do nothing with the shit. What you think? You agree with me?" (Male, 40 years old)

The other men, not going into much depth, did not think they were poor:

[Do you consider yourself poor?] Yes...wait, I take that back, I'm middle class. Sittin at home I get \$500 a week (referring to his unemployment benefits)" (Male, 31 years old)

"No, but I ain't rich." (Male, 28 years old)

"Well nah, not right now, but growing up, yeah." (Male, 29 years old)

"No, I keep paper in my pocket." (Male, 21 years old)

The men did not seem to have as many financial concerns and worries as the women. Very few of them were responsible for maintaining their own household or independently taking care of their children, but instead lived with someone else who was primarily responsible for the household bills. This was usually their mother or a girlfriend. Besides the two men that reported being the primary caregiver of their children, the rest said that their children lived with the mom. Although the two men that had physical custody of their children did not discuss the circumstances surrounding that arrangement, they did seem to embrace being the primary custodian and described having some of the same parental worries and burdens as the women in the study.

"[Do you feel pressure to provide for your family?] It's hard on me working and taking care of my kids and my ladies kids. I'm the one that gets them up and ready for school in the morning cause she already be at work. So as far as getting them together and getting them to school, that's my job. But I don't mind it, its gotta get done, but it ain't easy. [Does your lady help out a lot with your children?] Oh yea, she treat them like they her kids...we both do. Cause listen, if I wanna be here for the kids I gotta stop the life and to do that we gotta work together and combine our incomes. Wit caring for 5 kids you gotta have your money right. I say 5 cause I treat hers like they mines." (Male, 28 years old)

"What's always on my mind is being home for my son cause he don't got nobody else. So I follow everything they tell me to do down here cause I need to be there for him. [When you got arrested for this offense, where did he go?] He had been

at a cousins house, on his mother side. But see, he didn't know the difference cause it was a weekend thing and I made bail. [Is it difficult for you being a single parent?] Yea, I worry about little man a lot. I just have to get a job- until then, its gon be a struggle. (Male, 26 years old).

When it came to paying child support, all of the men said they provided financial support for their children, whether court ordered or not and despite the fact that 75% of the male sample was unemployed. Surprisingly, only 3 men said they were under court ordered child support. No details were given as to if they were current in their orders or in arrears.

One question expected to tease out a gender difference was "Do you feel pressure to look, act, possess certain things considered or associated with success?" Instead no clear pattern emerged and both the men's and women's answers were quite scattered.

"No, cause it really don't matter cause my family is straight. When I was younger it was pressure...mad pressure." (Male, 24 years old)

"Nope" (Male, 28 years old)

"Yes- when you hustling you wanna possess a lot of stuff. Your attitude changes, they get real possessive and that makes them do stupid stuff." (Male, 28 years old)

"No, I do what I can." (Male, 31 years old)

"But no, I don't feel pressure today because of the practice of the 12 steps and the spiritual principles that I now have. I had a spiritual awakening." (Female, 54 years old)

"Well I definitely don't want my kids to be bummy so as far as they go, they have the best." (Female, 23 years old)

"No, more for my kids. I want them to have all of the things I never had. So I make sure its all about them first and me second, but their doing well." (Female, 30 years old)

Overall, the men reported not feeling pressured to provide for the family. Most of the men, n=14, said they did not feel pressure to provide for their family versus, 19 of the

women who said they *did* feel pressure to provide. For the men, this could be attributed to wanting to convey the overall feeling that they had their financial responsibilities under control. It could also be the result of the actuality that the men had less pressure to provide for the family because the majority of them were not responsible for the day to day care of their children. Whereas, the women were faced with life altering decisions and duties, that ranged from avoiding eviction to figuring out where they were going to get money from next, it all rested on their shoulders. Next, is a look at how these sobering realities sometimes conflicted with ultimate life goal or resulted in the renegotiation of their American dream.

Success Goals/Impact of the American Dream

One aim of this research is to explore how interviewees in the sample define success and how their standards may differ from mainstream notions of success. Historically and contemporarily, criminologists have studied how subcultures originate, perceive, and maintain ideas relative to the subculture (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Johnstone, 1978; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993). Surprisingly, there was little support for the hypothesis that drug sellers have their own formulated version of the American Dream. Typical status success indicators associated with the middle class were common to the women and men in the sample. The men in the sample did not have “hood rich” material goals. The term “hood rich” was used to describe material goals that were somehow relative to the participant’s proximate environment and would encompass status indicators that people in the environment saw fit. It is an acknowledgement that the exposure in their direct environment would hold tremendous influence. However,

this was not the case, as there was a discrepancy between what the men admitted spending their drug profit on and their ultimate material goals.

The males in the study overwhelmingly reported spending their drug profits on material items that held no appreciative value (with maybe the exception of the jewelry). They engaged in activity that lead to them losing their money as quickly as they earned it, for example, gambling, drinking and splurge shopping, rather than activity that could potentially enhance net worth or further earning potential.

For example, 90% of the male sample indicated that owning a home, property, or having one's own business was a material success indicator. Moreover, a significant portion indicated that owning property or a business could lead to their exiting the drug economy and pursuing legitimate business opportunities. Yet, none of the sample reported using their profit money for this purpose.¹⁰

[What are some material status indicators of success?¹¹] "I don't know...like a house, a nice car..." (Male, 29 years old)

"Happiness- your own house, anything you own...property." (Male, 28 years old)

"Things that matter; property, business, buildings." (Male 24 years old)

"Any type of thing where you're generating income from what your doing like being a landlord." (Male, 32 years old)

"Having your own business, not having to work for somebody else." (Male, 23 years old)

"House, nice car, good job, things like that." (Male, 30 years old)

"Being in a house you own without having to report broken shit to a landlord that won't fix it." (Male, 26 years old)

"Mercedes, live in a nice area, a house...but it cost to live there. (Male, 31 years old)

¹⁰ Please see pages 57-58 for an in depth description of what men in the sample spent their drug profits on.

¹¹ Participants were given a brief explanation of the question.

There were two respondents that did not mention real estate or ownership.

“Well you wouldn’t know just by looking but if I had to say...I guess a corporate person wearing a suit and tie everyday and you don’t see too many of them in the hood.” (Male, 21 years old)

“Shoes, clothes, name brads- just constantly thinking how you can keep up with the latest stuff.” (Male, 28 years old)

When asked how important it was to have some of these things, all but one male said it was important, stating:

[How important is it to you to have some of those things?] “I would like to- I’m not gonna kill myself to get it. Selling drugs wasn’t to get this stuff. I was just tryna get by month by month.” (Male, 31 years old)

Therein lies probably the most common misconception about street level dealers- the notion that these individuals are pocketing enormous profits due to selling drugs, when in reality the profit is akin to wages earned from a minimum wage job (MacCoun and Reuter, 1992). Even though the profits made by the male sample were often spent on grandiose leisure activities and purchases, it belies the fact that these men were unable to achieve the traditional American dream, either because it was not on their radar or because they rejected it.

The women in the sample had varied responses to the material indicators of success question. Eight of the women, or 40%, had very specific responses that centered on the outward appearance of a person.

[What are some material indicators of success?] “I can’t say...I could say by the way they dress but that ain’t it. By the way they talk I guess.” (Female, 44 years old)

“Probably how they look and where they live, you just know.” (Female, 23 years old)

“Well people that have things play the part so you don’t really catch them looking raggedy. If you have nice things you’ll look like it.” (Female, 22 years old)

“Basically taking care of yourself, showing pride in your appearance, keeping your kids up.” (Female, 27 years old)

Other women cited the typical indicators:

“Well the things I said before, nice house, good neighborhood, nice car, nice clothes...”

“See, my way of thinking...the lenses have changed. They would have a good marriage, a good relationship with self, nice roof over their head, nice car, good job, a business, nice bank account and security.” (Female, 54 years old)

“They have they own mostly. I mean, that’s the main way you can tell. They don’t have to ask nobody for nothing. They look nice, they dress nice- such as yourself, they have they own house, cars, all that.”

Although, the participant’s views were aligned according to traditional middle class measuring rods, their expectations for a “good life” were very much about survival. Most of the interviewees said that a “good life” to them simply meant being able to meet their most basic needs without the tremendous obstacles they face everyday. Extravagances such as, homes, vacations, and cars were mentioned very little. The answers focused on easing the struggle. This is especially telling since this question was designed to evoke indulgences that this population ordinarily does not have excess to, but might hope to have to one day.

[What do you consider a “good life?”] “For me? Man, just coming up. I seen a lot of people around me die young, so being able to breathe, for me is a good life.” (Male, 41 years old)

“Just being able to take care of things without us having to want for nothing.” (Female, 30 years old)

“Having everything you need: air, food, water, clothing, housing- all of the things you need in today’s society- nice clothes, phone, money in the bank.” (Female, 54 years old)

“Man, being able to be home with my family. Staying out of jail so that I can get everybody the things they need. That’s why I gotta keep it together!” (Male, 28 years old)

“Having zero balance on your bills, a couple of hundred to go on Michigan Avenue when you want, a nice house.” (Male, 31 years old)

“Drug dealing is not a good life. When you work hard to get the money and put it up. When you hustling you gon spend it as you get it. A good life is when you work hard and get it the legit way.” (Male, 28 years old)

“If I could move into a nice house in a good neighborhood and not have to struggle.” (Female, 27 years old)

“The stuff we talked about earlier, like when you asked me about how I spend my money, that’s a good life and we was doing that like every night.” (Male, 21 years old)

“Then you get to the stage that I am, you start reflecting a lot. And I have actually given this some thought. Not the exact question you asked but you know...thinking, what is it all for? Um, see cause it’s the predicament I’m in now. Now if it was 15, 20 years ago I would say ‘oh man, having this money, this type of car, doing this and that.’ But I’m not young anymore. With this cancer, a good life would be getting this disease out of my body. Now I can see that that stuff don’t mean nothing anymore. I still got gets to take care of so that means if they come to me ‘daddy, daddy, I want this, I want that,’ then I can get it for ‘em.” (Male, 42 years old).

“I don’t know, if could mean different things to different people. [But what does it mean to you?] I guess not having to ask nobody for shit. Including my mother. I can’t wait for the day when nobody got nothing to throw in my face.” (Female, 30 years old)

“A full time pay check.” (Female, 36 years old)

“Just bein able to maintain.” (Male, 23 years old)

VI. DISCUSSION

The objective of this dissertation was to expand the research on anomie theory, the American dream, and gender studies, by explaining the experiences of Black women and men adults with drug convictions. The war on drugs has had a devastating impact on the Black community. This community has suffered disproportionately for a number of reasons. Street level dealers, who are often young Black males, are routinely targeted for selective enforcement and subject to over policing through the use of “hot spot” police saturation. They suffer the brunt of punitive drug laws and zero tolerance policies such as, school zone laws, which make them eligible for enhanced penalties. As substance abusers, their drug habits are met with a criminal justice response, whereas in more affluent communities a public health response is more greatly utilized. Those reasons have contributed greatly to the skyrocketing numbers of Black women and men arrested for drug crimes. This study provides exploration of the experiences of these women and men and what they view as motivations for their drug selling.

Because American society encourages a highly material driven culture, gender divided differences may further illustrate the burdens of women, especially Black women, in American society and the strains they encounter to support children and other dependent persons. They may be a casualty of the material arms race as primary responsibility for the private sphere historically and currently, has fallen on their shoulders. For men, this material emphasis takes the form of “commodity worship” (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). The material desires of inner city Black males is influenced and prioritized by those around them. It is organized according to superficial characteristics that are ordered according to the community. The desire to accumulate

wealth and material goods pervades all aspects of American life, including those living in poverty. This unevenness, this gap between people who are at the bottom rung of achievement and the top rung consisting of a privileged few, explains why crime rates are so high in American culture. I propose that this gap is also largely responsible for individuals that use drug selling as a means to cope criminally. It is precisely because no one is excluded from the American Dream, that most pursue it's tenets by any means necessary. High crime rates are a natural function of the marriage between this exclusion and economic dominance.

Gender Differences in Reasons for Drug Selling

Consistent with prior research (Alarid and Cromwell, 2006), the pathway into crime for women is different than for men. The primary pathway for Black women into deviant networks is through relatives and domestic networks. The primary deviant activity for women is drugs. This puts them directly in the war path of politicians and policy makers who still see fit to declare a "war on drugs."

Because of the "get tough" law and order political philosophy that surrounds drug offense, Black men have suffered the brunt of punishment for this crime category, as witnessed through their very high incarceration rate. Black women have been forced to shoulder a great deal of responsibility of the Black family (Wilson, 2009). One way this added stress is reflected is through the utilization of criminal coping, especially in crimes with a financial end, such as theft, credit card/check fraud, in an attempt to bring at least some financial stability to the family.

This phenomenon is even more apparent when we look at drug selling. While there were a number of desperate situations that catapulted both men and women to this

crime, women more often had to shoulder the direct burden of dependent others, i.e. children and family, as they almost exclusively had custody of the children. Women were far more constrained than the men and were more concerned with meeting the needs of dependent other. The men were more self-concerned and more often impacted by those around them, which tended to be other men they viewed as role models and neighborhood peers.

The women were more often forced to deal with instant catastrophes like avoiding eviction, homelessness, and providing necessary and basic needs to their children. Even though, there were a few men who also expressed these same emergency circumstances, it did not nearly approach the number of women that had to deal with these issues on a daily basis.

Insufficient financial support was a staple in these women's lives and they were faced with the harrowing decision of succumbing to the distress or finding a way to make ends meet. Giving in to circumstance (no financial resources and few legitimate options to make money) might have resulted in homelessness and in some cases, hunger. It is clear that the illegitimate options available to them, specifically drug selling, were most plausible. Selling drugs is usually not regarded as an impulse crime, but looked upon as a crime in which very deliberate actions are taken to engage in this economy. However, for these women a rational choice decision it was not, instead it was utilized to avoid familial financial catastrophe. Whether they were reamed into the business slowly by a boyfriend or made a quick decision to get fast money, one thing is clear: the women were more concerned with providing for their children than obtaining high end material status indicators. That is apparent in both their stated reasons for selling and the way

they spent their profits. This is not to say that the women were impervious to material pressures, but that they prioritized their needs, putting their “absolute” strain first as opposed to succumbing to relative deprivation. The same cannot be said for the men in the sample.

There was a strong commitment to material success indicators for men. This was indicated in the response that the men gave about how they spent their profits. They more often chose to spend their profits on material goods such as cars, clothes, and jewelry. Even though both men and women overwhelmingly stated that their motivation for selling was mainly survival, this did not translate in how the men spent their money. The number one benefactors of their profits were themselves, not the people around them, such as their children and family. This is not meant to cast a negative depiction on these men but instead it is meant to show how internalized and perpetuated gender roles make women responsible for the family and men responsible for outward signs of achievement and success, even if it is in a criminal context. It also lends support to the universal commitment to the material goals of American society.

Impact of the American Dream

Often referred to as the “macro level strain theory,” (Siegal, 2011) institutional anomie theory attributes antisocial behavior to the juxtaposition of cultural and institutional influences (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). The American dream can be viewed as both a goal and a process. As a process it involves being socialized to pursue material success (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). And although this concept seems fairly ambitious and selective, poor Black males have neither been insulated nor excluded from

this process (socialization). Through various mediums of propaganda, media, formal institutions of social control, and peer groups, inner city youth and adults have been affected by the race to accumulate material goods. “People are willing to do anything to get ahead...those who cannot succeed become willing to risk everything, including a prison sentence (Siegal and Walsh, 2011).”

The women and men in the study expressed awareness of the mainstream American dream. Most had the same or similar hopes and dreams as middle class folk, indicating the influence is cross cultural. Previously in this paper, the term “hood rich” is defined and discussed. The term aims to identify those that retain a lower class status (economically), but accumulate luxuries distinguished and valued by those in the community in which they live. There is a rejection of traditional middle class values, better classified as the *retreatist* mode of adaptation according to Merton. Retreatists reject both the goals and means of society.

However, the vast majority of those in the study actually embraced middle class goals as indicators of the American dream and what they ultimately wanted to have as material possessions. Therefore, I more accurately classify them as innovators, that is they accept the goals of society but reject, or are incapable of attaining them through legitimate means. Turning attention to the response of participants when asked to classify material success indicators- they knew what material possessions made one successful. The fact that most could not or did not correlate it to the American dream does not negate their awareness of middle class success indicators. Dreaming of owning a house, a car, getting a quality education for their children, and a career that provides

one with enough income to support one's family, is apparently **not** a uniquely middle class phenomenon.

Conversely, the gap between aspirations and success achievement is much wider for poor Black folk. This is true even when they are aiming for the most modest of success goals. The social inequity faced by this group cannot be reiterated enough. Mass incarceration has nearly obliterated the Black political economy. The combination of poverty, unemployment, family disruption, and racial isolation is all, directly or indirectly, a function of mass incarceration, especially in the city of Chicago.

Limitations

The greatest limitation of this study lies in the inability to generalize the results. It cannot be concluded with any degree of significance that my findings are representative of non violent street level drug sellers. To illustrate this point, while the number of women engaged in street drug selling is unknown, the number of women arrested for an offense indicative of selling is very few. In fact, one could argue that this sample of women is an anomaly in that most women in contact with the criminal legal system are arrested from larceny, drug possession, or an ancillary drug offense (that provides the necessary support to the primary activities of the operation of the drug business). It may be relatively rare to find women running their own independent drug operation or being independent sellers.

One parameter for inclusion in the study was no violent offense at the time of instant arrest. This limitation was included as a way to weed out men and women involved in gang activity. Chicago has a long and rich gang history, with various gangs having a virtual stranglehold on the drug economy. People that have a dual role of gang

involvement and drug selling would most likely have completely different motivations and views on the American dream than non members. Allowing these individuals to be included in the study would add very little to existing literature as their motivations have been studied and met the point of saturation in the field of criminology. However, besides what the department of probation had documented, I have no way of ensuring that the participants did not, in fact, belong to a gang.

Social desirability was of great concern. It is entirely possible that due to the personal nature of some of the questions asked, concerning illegal behaviors and socioeconomic status, some respondents may have answered questions in a way they deem socially acceptable. Fear of incriminating oneself may have also been a factor given that the interviews took place in a criminal justice agency.

Lastly, there will be a great many who will criticize my attempt to understand anomie at an individual level as the theory is a macro level theory designed to explain the impact of social structure in the United States on crime. It is generally accepted that strain theory is best utilized to understand micro level behavior and crime.

Policy Implications

The issues at the heart of this study have been debated since the installation of the harsh and overly punitive drug laws that have had a devastating effect on the Black community. The mass incarceration of largely non-violent drug offenders, the ripple effect of incarceration on families, Black men and women grappling with living in communities plagued by violence, concentrated poverty, and rampant single parenthood all culminate in the social and financial restraint that this population has long suffered

from. As these women struggle to survive outside of legitimate enterprises, they come into contact with the law by virtue of their life on the social and economic margins (Stuart Van Wormer and Bartollas, 2011).

This research echoes the previous sentiments and recommendations of many researchers in calling for fundamental social structure change that serves to subjugate women and ethnic minorities (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007; Wilson, 2009). It calls for complete social reorganization that deemphasizes the “material arms race.” On a structural level, this material arms race, has contributed to the financial meltdown experienced in this country, manifested in the recession and enormous debt.

Messner and Rosenfeld (2007), point to the need for new social change, not just new social policy. The current economic crisis is a textbook case of economic dominance and anomie. The question is how do we reprogram a society in which money is more important than anything else? One approach involves the total abandonment of reforms and policies that serve to strengthen existing material driven institutions and American dream ideals. This may necessitate the need for abolishment of formalized class structure while instead embracing impoverished communities with the express goal of reducing crime and improving community structure in high crime, inner city areas. It is time to increase the importance of other institutions, family and community, so long held on the back burner and decrease the stranglehold of economic dominance in this country.

Research focusing on women specifically has long called for the development of gender specific programs that focus on problems unique to women (Turner, Norman, and Zunz, 1999; Bloom, Owen, Piper Deschenes, Rosenbaum, 2002; Bloom and Covington,

1998, Chesney-Lind, 2001). This study serves to reinforce the need to address the constraints, primarily in the private sphere, faced uniquely by Black women, especially mothers. Additional support for women with weak support systems is imperative to diversion/interruption of the major criminal pathway for women. Relieving constraints may be the most critical step. How do we increase access to basic needs for these women? One way is to provide child care and support for continuing education. Being a young mother does not need to completely disintegrate one's career and life ambitions. With proper access to education, these women open up opportunities and income streams that they would not otherwise be exposed to. Instead, when looking to trim city, county, state, and federal budgets, these programs are often the first to be cut and in this harsh economic climate, are becoming increasingly scarce.

The vast majority of women in the sample had dropped out of high school and was undereducated. The added task of parenthood made education fall in priority behind monetary and basic needs. In addressing the dwindling support for these types of programs, Wilson (1999) contends that because affluent whites fear corporate downsizing, they are unwilling to vote for governmental assistance to the poor. The fear being that it could lead to more taxes and lower corporate profits which threatens *their* jobs. With the bursting of the housing bubble in 2008 and its accompanying recession, the middle class is consumed with fears of its own survival. Helping the disadvantaged is no longer a concern. It has been replaced with preserving the disappearing middle class and the quest for economic stability and prosperity similar to that experienced pre-2008.

However, it is now more than ever before we need to have a reemergence of social programs. There is a need to go beyond programs that are "hand-outs" to

programs that population specific. The research of Bloom, Owen and Covington 2003, have been an important catalyst in the movement to enhance gender-responsive theory and programming for women offenders.

Conclusion

Concerning the American Dream, insufficient attention is given to its affects at the micro level. If we concede that all classes are affected equally by the American Dream, then we acknowledge that those who are the furthest from its attainment have an increased propensity toward crime as a way to achieve material goals without having traditional resources available to them. Furthermore, we must also recognize the impact of the American dream on men and women separately and Black people as a whole. With differential access opportunity, and constraints, women are inherently socialized differently to the American dream. Women's social networks are commonly associated with family and intimate relationships. The results here suggest that the private sphere in women's lives exert considerable pressure in their decision to engage in the crime of drug selling. The commonalities of all the women in the sample, undereducated, unemployed or underemployed, poor, the primary caregiver of at least one child under the age of 18- highlight areas where support is most needed. This is not to say that these factors are predictive but rather they enhance the chances of criminal coping.

Just as Black women are casualties of American social structure, so are Black men. The accomplishment of the American dream for men tends to be a reflection of their masculinity. The need to measure up or exceed those around them becomes stronger than ever. The goal is to refocus this energy so that there is an equal sharing of

the burden in the Black community. This posturing for men is centered around a subculture that allows the familial burden to be shifted to Black women with Black men as a supplement. This is simply not enough. The key to social stability is an equal sharing of the responsibility.

Appendix A (Interview Schedule)

Part I: Demographic Questions:

1. Tell me a little about yourself –
 - a. Where did you grow up?
 - b. How young/ old are you?
 - c. What is the highest level of school you completed?
2. Tell me a little bit about your family-
 - a. Are you married?
 - b. Do you have any children?
 - i. What age range?
3. Are you employed right now?
 - a. How long have you been there?
 - b. Were you employed at the time of your most recent arrest? About how many jobs have you had since you were able to work?

Part II: Drug selling:

4. Why did you start selling drugs? How is drug selling looked upon in your neighborhood?
5. How did you enter the drug trade (or go back)? How hard was it to get started in the drug trade?
6. Explain what the day-to-day process of drug selling was. Were you watched closely by police? Was it easy to get caught? How did you get caught?
7. Have you had family members who sold drugs?

8. Was drug selling “easy” income? Did drug selling give you enough money to survive or enough money to live comfortably?

Part III: Thoughts on the American Dream:

9. What do you consider a “good life?”
10. Do you think it is hard to find a job? Have you had to look hard to find a job?
11. Do you feel comfortable with your present income? If not, why? What is an acceptable income for you to live on?
12. Do you think society has provided you with all you need to be successful?
13. What are some material indicators of success? How important is it to you to have some of those things? Would you consider yourself materialistic?
14. What is your definition of the American Dream?

Part IV: Pressure/Strain:

15. Who is financially responsible for your household?
16. Do you consider yourself poor?
17. Are you the primary caregiver for your children? Do you pay child support for the children who do not live with you?
18. Do you feel pressure to provide for your family?
19. How do you feel when others around you have nice things?
20. Do you feel pressure to look, act, possess certain things to be considered successful?
21. Whose responsibility is it to pay the household bills?

Wrap up question:

1. So how was it (the interview)? How do you feel now that it is over? Were there any questions that surprised you? Or questions you thought I was going to ask and I didn't?

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Wilson, W. J. 2008. *The Economic Plight of Inner-City Black Males*. Pp. 55-70 in *Against the Wall, Poor, Young, Black and Male*. Edited by Elijah Anderson. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Free Press.

Wilson, W. J. 2009. *More than just race: being black and poor in the inner city*. New York: Norton.

VITA

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EDUCATION	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO, Chicago, IL <i>Doctoral Student: Criminology, Law, and Justice</i> <i>Concentration: Organization and Administration</i> May 2011
	NIAGARA UNIVERSITY, Niagara University, New York <i>Master of Science in Criminal Justice Administration</i> December 2000
	NIAGARA UNIVERSITY, Niagara University, New York <i>Bachelor of Arts in Psychology</i> December 1999
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO- Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice- Chicago, IL (01/08 – 5/08) <u>Research Assistant- Global Positioning Satellite Technologies</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Locate and log pre-trial services departments for a list of nationwide jurisdictions ▪ Identify and make contact with individual directors to fulfill survey requirements ▪ Help in the assessment upon receipt of said surveys
TEACHING Law, EXPERIENCE	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO- Department of Criminology, and Justice- Chicago, IL (06/08 – Present)
	<u>Instructor</u> Responsible for teaching Criminal Justice Organizations. Other duties include providing services to the department, office hours, and participation in department and university initiatives.
	NIAGARA UNIVERSITY- Department of Criminal Justice- Lewiston, NY <u>Adjunct Lecturer</u> (09/07 – present)
	Responsible for teaching the online course load for the department. The present course offering is Corrections.
	NIAGARA UNIVERSITY- Department of Criminal Justice- Lewiston, NY <u>Full-Time Lecturer</u> (08/06 – 07/07) Courses taught include Principles of Justice, Juvenile Justice Systems, Drugs and the Criminal Justice System, and Women and the Criminal Justice System. Other duties include providing services to the department, advisement, office hours, and participation in department and university initiatives.

NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**Department of Criminal Justice- Sanborn, NY**Part-Time Lecturer

(09/06 –

05/07)

Course: Corrections

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO COLLEGE**Department of Criminal Justice – Buffalo, NY**Full-Time Lecturer

(08/05 –

08/06)

Courses taught include Criminal Justice Ethics, Juvenile Justice Systems, and Gender and

The Administration of Justice. Other duties include providing services to the department, advisement, office hours, and participation in department and university initiatives.

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY- Department of Criminal Justice- Lewiston, NYTeaching Assistant- Race, Gender, and Class in Criminal Justice

- Help students in understanding the core concepts of the course
- Lecture class and proctor tests when the professor is absent
- Grade objective parts of tests and quizzes

Guest Lecturer – Law Enforcement, Introduction to Criminal Justice, Research Methods

- Deliver full course lectures during faculty conference commitments
- Proctor tests when the professor is absent
- Grade objective parts of tests and quizzes

**PROFESSIONAL
EXPERIENCE****COMMUNITY MISSIONS, INC., MIDWAY MANOR- Niagara Falls, NY**Case Coordinator/Program Manager

(10/04 –

06/05)

- Responsible for the coordination, delivery, and supervision of all mental health and non-mental health services for children who are freed for adoption, residing at the Midway Manor Adoption Transition Program
- Review all referrals for intake and admission process, including pre-placement, interviews, presentation to Intake Committee, and appropriate assessments
- Development of individual services plans and treatment goals in cooperation with community resources such as schools, local DSS, mental health agencies, etc.
- Responsible for the clinical supervision of the Program Specialist, Educational Instructor, Team Leaders, and Youth Care Workers

WOMEN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY, INC - Buffalo, NYMental Health Counselor

(01/03 –

07/04)

- Provide individual and family psychotherapy and develop a comprehensive treatment plan according to the needs of the client
- Coordinate all phases of the counseling program including educational and vocational counseling utilizing community resources
- Assists in the final evaluation of resident's transition to the community: adjudication, housing, status of reclamation of children, training, employment, and financial stability

COMMUNITY MISSIONS, INC.- Niagara Falls, NY

Senior Residence Counselor

(03/01 –

01/03)

- Oversee the cases of a team of Apartment Program Residents including benefit procurement and maintenance, health management, restorative service planning and delivery, records maintenance, and monitoring of functioning level
- Collect and submit resident fees for service
- Maintain and submit documentation for Medicaid billing for service

OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED- Niagara Falls, NYResidential Aide

(01/99 –

03/01)

- Assist developmentally and mentally disabled individuals in daily living activities
- Encourage and support individuality, independence, and productivity

PRESENTATIONS

Isom, Y. November 2009. *A Critical Examination of Gender Differences in Strain for the Non-Violent Street Level Drug Dealer*. The American Society of Criminology: Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Isom, Y. June 2008. *Reform of the Reforms: An Exploratory Analysis of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines Surrounding Cocaine Based Sentencing*. John Jay College of Criminal Justice International Conference: Justice and Policing in Diverse Societies, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Isom, Y. April 2008. *Explaining the Low/Street-Level, Non-Violent Drug Dealer from a Strain Theory Perspective*. Western Social Science Association, Annual Conference: Blazing New Trails, Denver, Colorado

FELLOWSHIPS

Recipient: The American Society of Criminology Minority Fellowship, November 2009

Recipient: Al and Betty Brauner and Scott Brauner Fellowship, September 2009 & 2010

**ADVANCED
GRADUATE
COURSES**

Advanced Statistical Applications in Criminology, Law, and Justice I & II
Research Methodology and Program Evaluation
Advanced Methods in Criminology, Law, and Justice
Race, Gender, and Class in the Criminal Justice System
Dissertation Research

**ANALYTICAL &
PRESENTATION
SKILLS**

Advanced Statistical Analysis (SPSS)
Microsoft Excel
Blackboard

Microsoft PowerPoint
Microsoft Word

REFERENCES

Dr. Beth Richie, Director, The Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy
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