

## Violence and the Illicit Drug Market: Before During and After Disasters

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### Abstract

This paper examines violence and underlying contexts and social processes that occurred among drug users/dealers before, during and after major disasters: Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. A Stages paradigm is used to study violence during this time. Daily lives, conduct norms and behavior patterns associated with violence are illustrated. At each stage of the hurricanes, people drew heavily upon what they previously learned about behaving in stressful situations. Study Background: Data for this paper comes from a National Institutes of Health research titled "Stages of Drug Market Disruption and Reformulation in Disaster Cities." Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in September 2008 provided an opportunity to document the impacts of multiple instances of violence stemming from the illicit drug market in Houston, New Orleans, and Galveston.

**Methods:** From 2006-2013 a large scale ethnographic study was conducted in three major cities: New Orleans, Louisiana, Houston and Galveston, Texas. Staff completed in-depth interviews with 132 focal respondents of drug users and sellers. There were 57 focus groups with 243 focus group participants; 350 drug using/selling respondents completed a survey protocol (CAPI), organized around their experiences during the hurricanes. These provided extensive, information for analysis which was performed using Filemaker Pro.

**Results:** Accounts given by respondents before, during, and after the hurricanes gave a picture of types of violence that took place with people frantically displaying and modeling behaviors that they had acquired through their interaction patterns over time. Chaos and pandemonium, last minute decisions to leave while the water was rising and attempts to purchase or sell drugs all took place together. This presented people with a frenzied and disordered situation. Violence was prominent in drug use and sales due mainly to pressures to leave and deciding where to go or where to stay.

**Keywords:** Violence; Disaster; Drug use/sales; Drug market; Hurricanes; Street/drug subculture

### Introduction

This paper looks at violence and the underlying dynamics, contexts and social processes that commonly occur among drug users and dealers before, during and after a major disaster. Houston, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Galveston, Texas are three cities that were heavily impacted by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. The paper builds upon findings emerging from a National Institutes of Health project titled "Stages of Drug Market Disruption and Reformulation in Disaster Cities." Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in September 2008 provided an opportunity to document the impacts of multiple disasters upon the illicit drug market in Houston, New Orleans, and Galveston. A stages paradigm suggests that the loss of employment and critical societal institutions increased involvement in the illicit drug market (use and sales) and drug-related violence [1]. As a result of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, associations among drug traffickers in Houston, New Orleans, and Galveston increased. Many New Orleans and Galveston evacuees who went to Houston have since returned home. Those involved in drug sales are using business relationships with Houston drug traffickers to obtain illicit drugs to distribute in their home cities [2-4]. As such, drug markets have grown and instances of violence have increased.

### Violence in New Orleans, Houston, and Galveston

The type and level of violence depends on the nature of the illicit drug market. Open air, street-based drug markets in New Orleans, Houston, and Galveston tend to be violent [5]. Dealers/sellers compete for customers, territory and reputation. Cycles of violence can draw in additional people, usually the socio-economically disadvantaged who live in the inner cities or areas which consist mostly of open air street markets [6]. Open air street markets are generally found in economically deprived areas (projects and subsidized housing). The

economic pressures create severely distressed inner-city households and devastate the lives of young men and women living in them [7]. Violence is commonly used to communicate with competitors for customers and territory. These neighborhoods present numerous opportunities for young men to engage in criminal activities to enhance their economic opportunities. When people are socially and economically deprived, an underground economic system occurs in which young men seek cash and respect through violence [8].

### New orleans

The history of violence in New Orleans, LA reflects the experiences of violence present in the daily lives of individuals who participate in the illicit drug market, and generally spills over into large neighborhoods. New Orleans was listed as the 3rd of America's 10 deadliest cities in 2013 [9,10]. Murder rates are four to six times higher than the national average. Eighty percent of the victims are black males, mostly in their teens [11]. New Orleans has repeatedly experienced high violent crime rates (786 per 100,000 in 2014), which was exceeded only by Detroit [12]. In 2012, there were 193 murders or 53.3 murders for every 100,000 citizens [13]. Although the murder rate for 2014 dropped to 39.6 per 100,000 inhabitants, there was a spike in other violent crimes,

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including an increase in people who were shot and survived [10]. New Orleans continues to struggle with violence associated with drugs and gang crime as well as use of illegal arms.

## Houston

As with New Orleans, Houston's economically distressed neighborhoods are the main sites for illicit drug use, sales and violence. Evacuees from New Orleans, who moved to these neighborhoods, were the suspects or victims in many crimes tied to gang-related drug dealing [11]. In the first six months of 2006 many evacuees, including juveniles, had been involved in a number of Houston's narcotics arrests, homicides and other crimes [11]. Fear of Houston's stricter sentencing laws and longer jail terms for murder and other violent behavior prompted a number of New Orleans evacuees involved in the drug trade to return to New Orleans and commute between the two cities [11]. The drug trade in New Orleans was increased by the return of evacuees who were involved in drug use and sales (both before and after the hurricanes). This enabled the flourishing of the drug market again after dealer's forged close ties to Mexican and Colombian cartels while in Houston [11,12]. A drug bust in New Orleans resulted in 50 kilograms of cocaine coming from Houston worth five million dollars--five times as large as the drug deliveries before the storm. Due to new connections in Houston, violent distribution gangs were created and spread over larger areas of New Orleans. As drug trade in New Orleans and Houston merged, the murder and violent incidents rates increased in both cities [11].

The distribution of drugs, especially crack, cocaine and methamphetamine, is associated with violence and various types of crime in Houston; from 2005 to 2006 violent crimes increased [3]. Assaults, drive-by shootings, home invasions, robberies and firearm violations were generally committed by crack distributors and gangs.

## Galveston

An island community similar to New Orleans, Galveston has also lost a large number of its population due to hurricanes, high crime, poverty, violence, and poorly performing public schools [14]. Gangs are prevalent and the crime rate is relatively high for its size. Since Hurricane Ike in 2008, Galveston, like New Orleans and Houston, experienced a significant problem related to drug use, sales and violence. While some offenders, including youths, are involved in typical gang activities, others participate in more violent acts including aggravated assault, rape and murder.

Drug market participation and violence are major problems in Galveston, especially among youths. As in New Orleans and Houston, the youths involved in crimes come from economically challenged neighborhoods where school dropout rates are high and few economic opportunities are available. Approximately 1/3 of those who enter high school does not complete it, and often fall prey to criminal activities. Indeed, 75% of state prison inmates and 59% of federal inmates are high-school dropouts [15]. Unfortunately, the illicit drug market is seen by many as the only avenue for obtaining "employment" and acquiring money [16].

Galveston County is a gateway to the Houston metropolitan area for drug trafficking. The county's proximity to Houston ensures that the drug trade and associated crimes will continue to be a major problem. Cocaine, crack, methamphetamines, heroin, marijuana, prescription drugs and designer drugs are readily available in the county, large sections of which remain rural. This provides seclusion for the harvesting of marijuana and the production of methamphetamines [17].

The Interstate 45 corridor between Houston and Galveston is frequently the scene of extensive violence; victims have often been dumped in wooded areas not far from the highway, and a number of suspected kidnap victims have never been found. While such violence usually involves gangs and drug cartels, many innocent people are also caught in this web of violence [15].

## Method

A research project, "Stages of Drug market Disruption and Reformulation in Disaster Cities", was conducted in three major sites: Galveston, Houston, and New Orleans, forms the basis of this report. The research was primarily large scale ethnographic and included in-depth interviews with carefully selected drug users and sellers as well as focus groups with both men and women aged 17 to 68. Over the three-year period, in-depth interviews were completed with 132 focal respondents who were drug users and/or sellers. Of the 132 respondents, 48% were male (97% Black, 3% white); and 52% were female (96% Black, 3% white, 1% biracial). Fifty-four focus groups were held with 243 participants. Of the 243 participants, 54% were male (86% Black, 1.5% White, 11% Hispanic, 1.5% Native American), and 46% were female (91% Black, 2% white, 5% Hispanic, 2% Multi-racial). In addition, 350 drug using/selling respondents completed a survey protocol (CAPI), organized around their experiences during and following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Four forms of data were available for analysis: field notes, transcripts of qualitative interviews, transcripts of focus groups and the CAPI Survey. The recorded data were transcribed and made available to the ethnographer and other staff who reviewed them for accuracy. The transcripts of each focus group and interview were handled as separate documents and stored for future analysis. Each narrative was entered into a major data base program (Filemaker Pro) for electronic storage, coding, and data analysis [18]. These interviews, observations, focus group transcripts, along with the CAPI survey, provided extensive, useful information for analysis. Analysis was performed using Filemaker Pro, in the following manner: For each question, the response of all respondents was put into one document, which was then read and coded for analysis. Questions which focused on violence both in the respondents' personal lives and in their experiences using and selling drugs were examined for this analysis.

## Theories and Paradigms

### Stages paradigm

After an examination of the hurricanes Katrina, Gustav, and Ike, the investigators developed an understanding of the social processes by which disasters, especially a severe one like the flooding of New Orleans and Galveston, impacts illegal drug markets and active, illicit drug users and sellers. A Stages Paradigm was formulated from this understanding [1]. This paper uses the Stages Paradigm as a guiding framework from which to examine violence in its environment at each stage of a disaster. While the paradigm is built around the concept of Stages, the concept is used differently than other "stage paradigms" (like stages of change in recovery or stages of adolescent development). Following are the stages by which illicit markets may be shifted or altered during and following a disaster: Stage 0 (Before Disaster) represents a baseline for understanding how the markets function during its normal state--about a month before the disaster. Stage 1 (During Disaster) describes what happens in the illicit drug markets during and immediately after the hurricane. Stage 2 (Month Post Disaster) consists of 2a and 2b which are sub stages but mainly stage

2 looks at market activity among users and sellers during that month. Stage 3, (Reformulation Stage) consists of various sub stages. These sub stages includes periods in which market (supply and demand) activity resumes in the initial community, about a month following the disaster. In these stages evacuees and users/dealers either return to their rebuilt home communities or move to a new community. Stage 4 (Reformulated Drug Markets), the period that usually emerges half a year or more after the disaster as the reconstituting market begins to evolve and stabilize.

### Social Learning Theory (SLT)

This paper also draws upon Social Learning Theory as a theoretical framework to examine violence within the contexts in which it occurred, social conduct norms, and behavior patterns that took place among drug users and sellers in New Orleans, Houston, and Galveston. A critical element of this theory is the roles of subculture conduct norms and behavior patterns, and how they shape behavior during crisis. For example, aggressive behavior can be learned by modeling -- observing and imitating the aggressive behavior of other people. Modeling explains how people can rapidly learn specific acts of aggression and incorporates them into their behavior; it also refers to vicarious learning. People can learn behavior in an indirect manner; they can learn aggression without being directly reinforced for their own aggressive behavior. When a person observes aggression in others (i.e. dealer beats up user if not given correct amount of money) and the outcome is seen as rewarded (user returns with correct amount of money), then the observer sees that the dealer is rewarded for aggressive behavior. There are four basic processes of social learning: attention, retention, motivation, and reproduction. Attention refers to who is modeling the behavior; retention is remembering the behavior of the model; motivation is having a reason for copying the behavior; and reproduction is copying the behavior.

The observer must have the confidence that s/he can imitate the behavior, which is referred to as self-efficacy; this important aspect of SLT relates to whether a person believes that s/he is capable of carrying out the observed behavior (aggression) and is likely to achieve the desired results. If so, the aggressive act is more likely to be imitated. The model (person acting aggressively) is an important factor in SLT; the greater the status and power of the model, the greater the influence [19]. Thoughts, beliefs, morals, and feedback all help to motivate people [19]. Drug dealers and users are powerful role models in street/drug subcultures; in areas with strong illicit drug markets, dealers are master role models. Their behavior, which is generally aggressive, sets the tone for the dealing agenda [6]. Both the Stages Paradigm and SLT are used to examine violence in the period in which the disasters took place, and why people use violence as a common form of interaction during times of stress.

### Violence

Violence can be viewed as the most radical form of force. It has a number of forms and varies according to the contexts and circumstances. In the street/drug subculture, a subculture of force and violence is mainly used as street justice. Violence may be expressed sub culturally by both drug dealer and drug user. In both instances a degree of violence will take place, justice has to be served [6].

Conduct norms are the specific rules people internalize that allow them to function [20]. Conduct norms of the street/drug subculture are organized around particular behaviors that require what people must and must not do, and have defined sanctions for infractions

[21,22]. Such conduct norms and behavior patterns are independent of individuals; although participants can stop their personal involvement, the subculture will continue.

Sub cultural conduct norms-expressed violence is most often actualized by the dealer/seller against the user. Since participants in the illicit drug market have no recourse to legal methods for avoiding and settling disputes, they often engage in violence to protect reputation, revenue, territory and profits [23]. High profits provide drug dealer's incentives to take risks that mostly involve violent behavior [24], which explains the link between drug markets and violence found in a large number of studies. For example, cities with large markets for crack cocaine tend to have higher rates of homicide than other cities [25]. Much research has shown that the rise of illegal drug markets -- most notably for crack cocaine -- was a critical factor in the increase in violence especially among young inner city African Americans [26-28].

### Findings

Findings from this study center on the various ways in which violence was modeled and expressed in the lives of drug users and sellers in New Orleans (NO), Houston, and Galveston before, during and after a major disaster (Gustav and Ike). Street/drug sub cultural conduct norms, behavior patterns, and how people cognitively viewed their world and their environment set the processes by which violence took place. The various ways violence was depicted along with the mode people acquired the skills necessary to function in the street/drug subculture unveiled the process of socialization through modeling, observations of violence, and participation in various forms of violence.

Our findings also revealed the ways in which respondents interact with and interpret their world, as well as their social experiences in their neighborhoods. Social activities, use of drugs by friends, availability, family activities, and neighborhoods are significant factors related to their behavior patterns and conduct norms [21]. Findings strongly indicate through exposure to and excess contact with violence, individuals learn and accept violence-related values and attitudes as a model of interaction. The excerpts below examine behavior patterns, settings, and stages to help understand the mechanisms that connect socialization, illicit drug market and violence. Each respondent is described with a pseudonym, gender (M or F), age and residence (New Orleans, Houston, or Galveston). Both current residents and returnees are included.

### Meaning of violence

The first factor examined was how respondents who participate in drug use and sales view violence. Drawing upon respondents' experiences with Gustav and Ike, we wanted to know how they viewed violence in their everyday lives. Respondents were asked: "Talk about violence and what it means to you." Out of 130 respondents, 122 responded: 67% mentioned fighting, physical altercations due to drug use or sales, physical harm and/or physical confrontations, while 41% said shooting, killing and/or the use of guns. In defining violence, they gave a glimpse of their world and the ever presence of violence in the illicit drug market. Respondents talked about violence on many different levels: fear of violence and its impact on children, people injured for owing money for drugs, violence in everyday activities which included entertainment, violence as death and retaliation, and violence being ever present everywhere as Lips (M, 21, NO returnee) explained: "It wasn't like bad or nothing unless you owed somebody some money and they needed it and they come looking for you. That was like a every week thing."



The excerpts below demonstrated the processes by which inner city people living in drug-use and sales neighborhoods experienced violence. The ways in which aggressive and violent behavior was modeled and replicated by children and youth was conveyed by Missy (F, 39, NO returnee): "It's a lot of violence down here; it's basically peer pressure, trying to fit in a lot. I see a lot of students being peer pressured into doing different things." This implies the process by which violence became a part of children's life in their early years. Others mentioned instances of how children were exposed to various forms of violence in recreational areas. Going to the playground presented ways in which young children saw and learned violent behavior thus learning through peer pressure as well as during recreational instances. The observations of aggression in the early lives of inner city children served as the model by which they learned various types of violent behavior.

Roxy and Hot Cheeks were examples of models for children and youth who observed their violent behavior, evaluated the outcomes, and decided whether to imitate the behavior. For Roxy (F, 40, NO returnee), violence was the release of pent up frustration and anger: "I have a nervous (condition) so I know violence... You angry... You're upset... You get your frustration off... Like fighting... a lot of aggravated assault charges I had. [Q: Who were you fighting?...] anybody and everybody."

Hot Cheeks (F, 39, Galveston) also talked about actively participating in violence. "What does violence mean to me? Somebody getting their ass whooped or I'm whooping somebody ass." Her participation also implied self-efficacy and confidence. She believed that she was capable of carrying out the behavior of violence and would likely achieve the desired result. Violence was frequent and occurred in a variety of ways and on different occasions. Children and youths learned to respond to and perpetuate different forms of violence in diverse situations. The following examples suggest respondents were acting out what they had seen in their environment.

Aggressive behavior was a natural response for Slim (M, 38, NO resident). Internal pressures (being angry, upset or frustrated) may encourage a person to draw upon known responses thereby pushing him/her to commit a violent act. As Slim explained, "Violence means if you angry enough to want to hurt somebody or hit somebody or angry enough to want to kill them... and that's how I look at it. Like basically, if a person makes you that mad, you will want to hurt you know, do some bodily harm to them."

Elmo (M, 47, Houston) picked up on the theme of anger and talked about being a violent person who "goes off" on anyone. He saw himself as very violent and as such carried a number of weapons:

"... well I am a violent person too... and I go off. And it doesn't matter if it's a man, woman, dog or cat. I know I can't fight men, but I'll go to another level on them. I'm very violent, I pack knives, I pack guns, I pack Tasers. I got like 4 or 5 knives... I'm not out there looking for violence, I don't go to rob nobody, I don't steal, I don't do stuff like that. But if you cross my path, say something wrong to me, I really don't like it, there it is."

These responses suggested various ways in which violence was the basis of and rationale for committing brutal acts.

Roy and Pacific each portrayed the prevalence of violence in their neighborhoods and the daily activities of residents. Such incidences served as examples of indirect modeling of violence. For Roy (M, 38, NO resident), violence was a frequent phenomenon: "You see people shooting, killing, stabbing people, killing them, beating them

up." Pacific (F, 29, Galveston) indicated prevalence in practically all situations: "I just had a friend who died in a club. She was fighting and a knife got pulled and she got stabbed." These excerpts shed light on the ways in which violence was present in everyday life even social activities.

Responses of Dice and Shug demonstrated malevolent behavior and how it could stem from past situations. For Dice (M, 46, NO Returnee), violence was not specifically an expression of a present situation, but of some past incident: "It's an expression of anger. It doesn't have to derive from the situation that you in but the other situations that occurred in your life." Encounters could rapidly turn aggressive as Shug (M, 47, NO returnee) described: "When they be fussin' and when you look again they done grab guns... And they think guns is the solution to everything."

In discussing violence, Paul, Blue and Rated R each summed up what they experienced. For Paul (M, 37, NO returnee): "... violence, well it's a part of life. That's what I can basically say. I've been around violence all my life... I mean like, you know, coming, growing up where I grew up and being in the streets, it's a everyday occurrence." For Rated R (M, 33, Galveston), it was what he frequently saw growing up in the projects (public housing): "... when I hear the word violence I think of, robbing, shooting, you know things that happened, that I've seen happen coming up in the projects, that's what I know as violence." Indeed, violence was so common that it became a natural part of life. Blue (M, 24, NO returnee) expanded on the widespread occurrence of violence: "I don't see violence as something that's okay. But, you know, it's common down here in New Orleans, so I mean I just got used to it." Most respondents did not see it as something to be glorified rather it was something that was seen every day.

Through asking respondents to define violence, each participant described a situation that depicted how modeling of violence took place in inner city communities and how it was a part of their everyday lives. They demonstrated the learning processes, not just through modeling, but also through participation. Various violence-related techniques, motives, rationalizations and attitudes were displayed. Respondents portrayed conduct norms, definitions, frequency, duration, and intensity related to violent behaviors in defining violence.

## Stage 0: Violence before the disaster

In looking at the various ways in which violence occurred before Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, this section uses the Stages Paradigm. Respondents were asked, "Talk about the type of violence that occurred during drug use and sales before the hurricane."

Generally, responses demonstrated what the illicit market looked like and types of violence that took place as a part of standard market interaction patterns. The following excerpts allude to typical occurrences in the illicit drug market, and interaction patterns of market participants (both users and sellers). Ice and Brownie depicted the role of violence in the drug market that set the stage for behaviors that occurred during the disaster. Dealers had a prominent role in perpetration of violence and the distrust that was ever present. As Ice (F, 35, NO Returnee) explained, "... we live in New Orleans, so, basically we, what, the #1 in the murder rate. Basically it's just drug sellers that's getting murdered... Selling drugs... you might be selling on different turfs, people's turfs. One drug dealer might be mad, because one drug dealer is making more money. It's really dog eat dog world, out here... I'm getting nervous. I need to go smoke now."

According to Brownie (F, 23 NO): "...nobody can trust the other

man, so even best friends done kill, turn on each other and killed and then got murdered. They say the victim always knew his assailant. Drug deal gone bad. That's what's been happening in New Orleans now... Oh yea. The victim always know his assailant. Drug deal gone bad... distrust set in there."

Butterscotch (M, 41, NO Resident) also described violent occurrences in housing projects: "...you drive in the projects, it's somebody cussin' you don't know if they're mad or if they're just joking. That's why I just go get my stuff and leave."

Frequent random acts of violence were common, as Tiffany (F, 40, NO resident) explained: "Before Gustav it be arguments, shooting, fights, sometimes they just throwing things not even talking just throwing... Rocks, anything they can find amongst each other to throw at each other." These respondents depicted forms of ordinary violence that was a part of drug use and sales. Drug users, who did not live in drug dealing communities and only went there to purchase their drug of choice, often ran into everyday aggression. Although in and out of these drug dealing areas, these users were well aware of the dangers such places presented.

Ashley, a female dealer, gave a picture of how violence occurred while buying and selling drugs as well as the mindset of the user and the seller. When asked to talk about the type of violence that occurred during drug use and sales before Gustav, Ashley (F, 18, NO Returnee), replied: "If you didn't have the money on time, if you ain't have enough money to buy the drugs, you'll probably get shot or something... I got beat because... I took the man money but I didn't transfer him his drugs... Because I wanted the money... \$50 ... He punched me all in my face and I had a black eye." Ashley ended up "making it right" by giving the dealer the money she owed him. However, he still beat her. She explained that she gave him back the money she owed him because she wanted him to stop beating her each time he saw her. Although she was dealing and trying to "play the game" of the streets, her description indicated the differential treatment women got as opposed to men. Generally, when dealers gave drugs to a seller and did not receive payment from the sales, the seller would get shot or stabbed. Perhaps women were seen as more vulnerable and less violent than men and therefore beating them may be seen as less violent punishment than shooting or stabbing them. Although this may imply differential treatment toward women than men in the distribution arena, it's still a form of violence.

Drug shortages were also a major problem. When dealers ran out of a particular drug the buyer wanted, the dealers sold them anything that resembled that drug, and this became an impetus for violence against the dealer. Van (F, 58, Houston) described how violence was often the direct result of drug shortages: "...You know, it was shortage and people were selling. Sometimes they just treated the users really bad selling them anything, you know, that wasn't even drugs. And then they want to fight with 'em and then the user come back and then it be a big fight or shooting and all of this here, because they been like messed out of the drugs. But they was doing that a lot because they say-uh-it was a shortage. So they still wanted to make the money so they were selling people anything and trash. You know, whatever you made the stuff out of, they'll make it up of wax. It definitely was not no drug in it. People was getting mad and then they would be fighting and shootings and just drove by in cars and stuff like that."

Here Van illustrates how "drive by shootings" and other acts of violence were carried out because of users' attempts to acquire their drug of choice, and dealers' efforts to make as much money as possible

by cheating the user. Violence in various cases is known as "street justice" due to the inability of the drug user to go to the police for help. The street/drug subculture based on illicit drug market operations clearly revealed violence as an intricate part of conduct norms and behavior patterns before the Hurricanes.

### Stage 1: Violence during the hurricane

**Dealers:** Stage 1 covers the time shortly before and actually during the hurricane. The following excerpts gave a glimpse of dealers' thinking during this stage. The actions they took their view of violence and under what circumstances it occurred. Alpha (supplier), acquired large quantities of drugs to sell to dealers to be sold on the street drug market; Tina (street dealer), sold an array of drugs. These distributors demonstrated the type of violence that occurred at this stage. In talking about drug sales, Alpha gave a picture of the drug market and activities that took place at Stage 1. Alpha:(M, 59, Galveston) "...Well I deal in quantity and so what I would do is...I help supply and this is another reason why I couldn't leave...because of the quantity that I had... what I was doing was getting it out of my hands and putting it into other people's hands...making preparations for the situation... Any time a situation or catastrophe occurs ...the sales are going to go up because people have time to move and people is not going to travel without their drug of choice so your business sort of elevates and booms."

Alpha revealed the frantic nature of the market during disasters; the illicit drug market was well prepared to deal with the emergency that the hurricane presented. Alpha felt that he could not leave; he needed to supply sellers with drugs to sell. He also felt that he had to quickly get the drugs out of his hands in order to leave. He authenticated how prolific the market was by showing that the drugs people used were available. Because there was not an absence of drugs, people prepared themselves by stocking up on their drug of choice. Alpha was also asked about violence at this stage of the disaster. He replied: "...it was normal... Well normal is every day you see people beating one another, you see people shooting and lots of things is going on... nothing out the ordinary."

Next, Tina illustrated selling an array of drugs. She alluded to violence associated with the drug market while unveiling the attitude and mindset of dealers. Their main goal was to make money. Tina: (F, 23, Galveston): "Well I just made my money and I made sure I put enough money to the side to keep on re-upping and to make sure that I had everything that I needed to do what I needed to do ... I just needed to sell all my drugs so I can keep money and keep me enough so wherever I go I can always keep having drugs to sell and I can make my money and live off of it." When asked about harmful instances that occurred, Tina related: ".... It was a woman.... She was Hispanic, actually she overdosed on smoking crack .... I sold it to her ... I found out the next day actually. She kept coming to buy from me and I kept supplying it." Alpha and Tina (supplier and dealer) underlie the resilience of the illicit drug market. Their focus was on making money. Violence however intertwined with making money in a number of ways. In fact, it was seen as a normal phenomenon in street life.

**Users:** Users provided data depicting the difficulty in finding sites to acquire drugs during this stage. Users had to go several blocks out of their area to find their drugs of choice. Coupled to this, the price of drugs increased. There were also reports of long lines of people trying to purchase drugs. At some sites, users reported they had to be careful because after buying their drug, there was the possibility of being robbed of their drug and/or being the victim of some form of violence. Mainly females gave stories of males positioning themselves

near coping sites to watch who bought drugs. These females were well versed in street/drug subculture and thus fought back to keep their drug. Pacific gave an example of fighting over drugs that involved her brother who got into a fight with her boyfriend, a dealer. The brother wanted his drugs for free or he wanted Pacific to share her drugs with him. (F, 29, Galveston): "...During Ike it was like a few like my brother had a fight with my boyfriend because of a drank issue.... I didn't have to buy drank because my boyfriend sells drank... so he gave me my drank, 4 ounces. My brother had to buy it [4 oz cost \$200] and my brother wanted some too but my boyfriend said he already gave me drank for free. He was not giving my brother none for free so they had a little fight behind the drank."

Elmo (M, 47, Houston) described two incidences typical of the kind of violence that occurred: "...During the storm, I witnessed a couple of violence... Somebody was trying to take something from somebody and they ended up whooping his ass... [take his drugs?] I don't really know.... I just know he was trying to rob him and they ended up whooping his ass.... The other violence is when they were trying to break into somebody's house. And it actually ended up people was in the house. And they was breaking into one of the bedroom windows. And that was like next door to us...He got shot in the leg."

Like Elmo, Prince (M, 28, Galveston): also reported that there were numerous incidents of violent acts, especially when users were unable to obtain their drugs: "...Everybody got angry...Yeah! Much violence at that time. ... we couldn't get our drugs, we couldn't find none, or, it was just like, when you go through detox like that, you're so used to doing the drugs, when you go through detox it's like nerves, and then you think somebody's attacking you, you're getting ready to fight, all that. There was fighting going on in the shelter. People got kicked out of the shelter too, for fighting. Behind the drugs."

Further, Blade (M, 47, NO Returnee), as well reported there were numerous instances of robbing, stabbing, and killing for drugs: "...It was real violent, due to the time and the situation that the peoples was put into, cause everybody was in a rush to get things. And a lot of time, it wasn't money. It was a lot of robbing, stabbing killing for the drugs." And Smokey (F, 41, Galveston) showed the extent to which users were willing to go in order to acquire their drug of choice: "... I witnessed one crack head that got his ass beat down.... Because he was fending for more crack and he ran out of money so he told the guy he would suck his dick and he beat the shit out of him." Lastly, Tex (M, 56, Galveston) talked about high water levels and violence: "Yeah I saw a few people – it was chaos and people were fighting and – everybody was just trying to get out of the city, seemed like and high water was everywhere – yes, it was a lot of violence going on."

Stage 1 revealed the desperation and intense situations people experienced during the hurricane. In all three areas, New Orleans, Galveston and Houston, drug-market behavior patterns revealed the high level of violence. Both availability and shortage of drugs presented numerous instances of violence. Although some respondents reported drugs were hard to find, they were nevertheless able to acquire their drug of choice. In general, people were put into situations that were stressful and uncertain, and with this increase in uncertainty came considerable emotional turmoil and behavior. Much of the behavior depicted was a part of the general behavior patterns and conduct norms typical of illicit drug users and sellers.

During Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the illicit drug market continued to operate. A number of dealers stayed behind to acquire as much money as possible. Both dealers and users who remained and

those who were trying to get out, strained to make sure they had an adequate supply of drugs to last them throughout the disaster at home or hold them over until they reached their destination [12].

**Stages 2 and 3: Violence after the storm:** Stage 2, the "Immediate Post-Disaster" phase, is the one in which the market is observed for a few days to weeks after the disaster. Stage 3 generally occurs after the home community has begun rebuilding following a disaster, or evacuees begin routine living in a new community. Here we looked at what took place with respect to violence, drug use, and sales after Hurricanes Ike and Gustav. After the storm, when people first began returning home, the drug market continued to operate with the usual forms of violence that was a part of street/drug subculture before the storm. Ice (F, 35, NO Returnee) explained, "...More violence is still happening. I mean, it's just a violent city...To be honest with you, at first, it slowed down, but not during Gustav, I guess because we weren't gone as long. So basically, we just came back to the same old stuff, same violence, and getting worse."

Respondents described violence they experienced before, during, and after Hurricane, Gustav and Ike. A picture of uncertainty and distress was related by respondents as they returned to their communities. First, returnees related not too much had changed with respect to violence. As time progressed and more people returned, violence took on the same form as before the disaster. Along with familiar dealers, those who had remained behind, new dealers appeared. Drugs on the market were plentiful. Upon first returning, users found that dealers were generous in amount of drugs given for specific prices. This occurred as new dealers attempted to acquire customers. Also, in the first few months after the storm, few people returned. This left dealers with an abundance of drugs but fewer drug users to purchase their drug. As such, users were given incentives to purchase their drug with certain dealers. Market behavior however remained constant.

**Stage 4: Reformulated drug markets:** This period, which usually emerges half a year or more after the disaster as the reconstituting markets begin to evolve and stabilize, may differ in various ways from Stage 0. At stage 0, drug dealing generally took place in specific communities or wards. In both New Orleans and Galveston, public housing projects remained closed and low-cost rental housing was rarely available. Public policies for redevelopment favored property owners and business interests. Generally, the demands of the poorest to restore low cost housing (and related subsidies) were ignored. Among the drug using population, selling drugs was one of the few economic activities that become available when many businesses were closed and legal jobs were few. Sizable proportions of displaced persons evacuated to the Houston metro area. But Houston was also seriously impacted by Ike, which inflicted multiple disasters upon an already displaced population of Katrina and Galveston evacuees.

Since Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the illicit drug trade increased in all three cities. Dealers who evacuated to Houston were able to forge close ties to major suppliers. Since then, they brought back drugs to New Orleans and Galveston in much larger shipments than before. Fights over turfs for distributing drugs were thought to be the main reason for an increase in killings. Although the population of New Orleans was less than half of what it was before the storm, drug distribution trade continued to flourish [29].

**Market location:** Field notes from this study showed that the arrangement of housing and the establishment of drug markets in different areas of the city were important factors in the reformulation of the drug market, both in New Orleans and in Galveston. Although



rearrangement of housing took place, violence simply shifted to other areas where drug sales and use moved. For example, markets for outdoor sales that were located in one ward were relocated to another section of New Orleans. This resulted in a parallel movement of violent acts and instances where previously no visible outdoor drug sales had taken place. Since the hurricane, areas where there had never been market activities involving outdoor sales began to see drug dealers on street corners.

In New Orleans there are also changes in the areas where major housing projects were previously located. Housing projects were a major area in which violence and drug use and sales were prominent. A noticeable change is the type of housing in which people currently live. Before the hurricanes there were sections of low income housing, identified as projects (multiple apartments), in a small area. Since the hurricanes, cottages, townhouses, and single-family homes have replaced some of the projects style of housing. Such housing arrangements make it difficult to continue drug market activities and accompanying violence. These areas are no longer being called "projects" but rather housing communities with names that suggest greater affluence. Before Hurricane Ike, residents of these projects were not required to have income to obtain housing. Since then, new residents must prove they have some type of income, whether public assistance, social security, disability or a job. Unlike before, these communities are secured by private security companies that patrol the area.

In addition to onsite security, strict rules are enforced to ensure the safety of residents. For example, tenants must list on the application everyone who plans to stay in the home. Any major issue involving police can have the renter automatically removed from the property. As a result, a significant finding is the increase in people going outside their new neighborhood to score drugs, rather than scoring and selling within restricted areas where market activity previously occurred. A major shift in market activity is drug sales have moved from these new, more secure housing communities into nearby housing projects, where drugs and violence continue to take place. (Field notes New Orleans).

Since Hurricane Ike, only one housing project remains in Galveston, there were previously five. Similar to those in New Orleans, Galveston housing projects were known for their heavy drug activity. The one remaining project has become the main hub for drug activity. Respondents reported most drugs are available except for 'drank' and 'lean'. Since the hurricane, the city has imposed curfews due to the high level of drug activity and violence. Residents can no longer gather or socialize outside of their homes after 10 p.m. The Galveston police patrol the project on foot after 10 p.m. to prevent loitering and drug activity. Nonresidents that are found on the property after the curfew are escorted off by the police. Despite these obstacles, the dealers still find ways to sell drugs not only to residents but also to people who live in other areas of Galveston. As such the illicit market is still active and thriving and violence continues to occur. (Galveston field notes).

## Summary/Discussion

A portrait of numerous and daily violent incidences has been shown to have occurred at all Stages of the Hurricanes. Chaos and pandemonium, last minute decisions to leave while the water was rising and attempts to purchase or sell drugs all took place together. This presented people with a frenzied and disordered situation. Observations and accounts given by respondents before, during, and after the hurricanes gave a picture of types of violence that took place

with people frantically displaying and modeling behaviors that they had acquired through their interaction patterns over time.

Respondents described in detail various forms of violence that occurred, especially when people realized the severity of their situations and had to make last minute decisions to leave. Violence was prominent in drug use and sales due mainly to pressures to leave and deciding where to go or where to stay. Users who remained purchased enough drugs to last through the duration of the hurricane. Those who were leaving felt compelled to purchase drugs before heading out. Dealers sold as much as possible before leaving.

Research on drugs and violence is common in literature [23,30,31]. Most findings do not cover the drug market and related violence during disasters. Findings from our research demonstrate knowledge gained from studying major disasters, specifically Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. A comprehensive understanding of the causes and consequences of drug-related activity and violence is important for implementing effective public policies for control and prevention of violence. Previous research has found a strong association between illicit drug use/ sales and violence [32-34]. Goldstein's framework delineated three critical ways in which drugs and violence are connected: Psychopharmacology, in which people may engage in irrational or violent actions as a result of the short-term or long-term effects of using specific drugs; economic compulsion, in which some drug users pursue economically oriented violent crime; and systemic violence where violent patterns of interaction involve the system of illicit drug sales [33]. This paper reveals how these three critical ways drugs and violence are connected and function under emergencies such as major disasters.

This paper illustrates the daily lives, conduct norms and behavior patterns associated with the four stages of disaster combined with violence-related subculture conduct norms and behavior patterns. Such norms are learned through observation, modeling and practice in every day events and lives of those who live in drug abusing and dealing areas. Our research shows that at each stage of Gustav and Ike, people drew upon – and acted upon -- what they previously learned about behaving in stressful situations.

Literature has further shown that drugs such as crack and methamphetamine are highly associated with violent and bizarre behavior [35]. With the rise in the popularity of these and other drugs, there has been an increase in aggressive behavior among both intoxicated users and drug dealers. Indeed, as found in this study and also found in other studies: verbal arguments, physical threats and fights, death threats, and theft were significantly higher among crack users than other drug users [15].

As expected, we found a strong connection between the illicit drug market and violence; a relationship that continues to have research and policy implications. We used our ethnographic findings to describe social environments and behavior patterns related to violence. Ethnography is often successfully employed to describe populations and social environments that are hidden from normal observation. Through an ethnographic investigation focusing on violence, answers to critical questions gave a picture of the role of violence in inner city respondents' daily activities. Social activities, drug use by friends, neighborhood activities and household activities played an important role in the socialization process of drug use and sales. This socialization process through role modeling provides insights into the wide spread use and experiences of violence. The accounts presented here demonstrate not only the stability of the drug market but also the presence of violence during the four stages of drug market disruption

and reformulation during and after a disaster. The excerpts clearly elucidate the social environment of drug use and sales, especially with regards to violence.

In our study, the illicit drug market is uncovered as a social arena where a wide variety of violence is played out. Basic processes of social learning -- attention, retention, motivation, and reproduction -- can clearly be extrapolated from the excerpts presented. With the reformulation of the market after the hurricanes, drug dealers returned home with an assortment of new drugs and suppliers.

In both New Orleans and Galveston, rebuilding of housing has impacted on the mode of distribution. Outdoor distribution sites have shifted to other areas; sales and distribution have shifted towards different methods of drug delivery in the reformulated illicit drug market. Involvement in both verbal and physical fights continues to occur related to the use and sale of drugs in multiple drug dealing locations. In the past, public housing was a major place in which an array of drug use and sales could be found, as well as where considerable violence took place. With new housing styles, an adjustment in the illicit drug distribution mechanisms has occurred. However, violence is still closely related to use and sales and is still present in the post-disaster market.

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