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The Influence of Community Context on Social Control: A Multi-Level Examination of the Relationship between Race/Ethnicity, Drug Offending, and Juvenile Court Outcomes

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The Influence of Community Context on Social Control: A Multi-Level Examination of

the Relationship between Race/Ethnicity, Drug Offending, and Juvenile Court Outcomes

by

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Abstract

Studies of the association between race/ethnicity and juvenile court outcomes have found that minority youth often receive disadvantaged outcomes compared to similarly situated Whites, and that community context may condition this relationship. Sampson and Laub's (1993) revised conflict perspective is one theoretical model that can potentially explain the social control of youth throughout juvenile justice proceedings. One of the main propositions of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective is that communities characterized by underclass poverty and racial inequality will impose greater social control on youth referred to the juvenile court, especially Blacks and youth charged with a drug offense because they are perceived as a threatening population to middle-class values and standards.

The current research drew upon Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrolevel theory of inequality and social control to examine the juvenile court outcomes of White, Black, and Hispanic youth from all counties in a Northeast state from 2000-2010. Hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) was employed to examine the relationship between disadvantaged community characteristics (underclass poverty, racial inequality, ethnic inequality) and juvenile court outcomes; especially if race/ethnicity, drug offending, and type of drug offense (possession versus distribution) tempered these relationships. The results indicate that disadvantaged community characteristics did not directly impact the social control of youth, but individual and joint effects of race/ethnicity and drug offending resulted in greater social control for Black and Hispanic youth of various drug offending combinations. In particular, the effect of race/ethnicity

on social control was greater for Hispanic youth compared to Blacks. Depending on the stage examined, the relationship between race/ethnicity, drug offending, and juvenile court outcomes were conditioned by disadvantaged community characteristics.

Based on the findings, empirical and theoretical implications are provided that focus on the applicability of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective to more recent court outcomes, as well as prevention and intervention programs that focus on decreasing the presence of minority youth in the juvenile justice system. Directions for future research are highlighted to provide greater insights into the circumstances surrounding case outcomes and under what situations community context and race/ethnicity matter in the treatment of youth within the juvenile court.

Chapter One:

Introduction

The social control of youth, especially minority youth, has been a significant problem within the juvenile justice system for over thirty years (Bishop, 2005; Engen, Steen, & Bridges, 2002; Krisberg et al., 1987; Leiber & Rodriguez, 2011). Statistics show that from 1985 to 2010, Black youth have been overrepresented in the juvenile justice system compared to their representation in the general youth population. For example, in 1990, White youth represented 80% of youth less than 18 years of age, while Black youth represented 15%. However, Black youth comprised 30% of all cases handled compared to 68% of White youth. In 2010, White youth comprised 76% of all youth in the general population and Blacks comprised 17%, yet Black youth comprised 33% of all youth referred to the juvenile court, while White youth represented 64% (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2013). If only juvenile court cases for drug offenses in 1990 are examined, Black and White youth represented 44% and 54% respectively. In 2010, the disparities are smaller, but Blacks are still overrepresented (20% compared to 76%) (Sickmund et al., 2013).

Reasons that attribute to the social control of minority youth has centered on two explanations: (1) differential offending and (2) differential selection bias/racial bias among juvenile justice decision-makers. The differential offending argument suggests that minority youth are subject to greater social control because they commit more crime and more serious crime compared to Whites (Hindelang, 1978; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997; Pope & Snyder,

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2003). The differential selection bias/racial bias argument suggests that race differences in social control are based on overt and/or covert negative stereotypes that decision-makers hold against minorities (Zatz, 1987; Graham & Lowery, 2004). Tied to these two explanations is the importance of structural context, and how community characteristics may influence the juvenile justice system.

More specifically, criminological literature surrounding the relationship between race/ethnicity and juvenile court outcomes has suggested that the characteristics of communities may have an important influence on the social control of youth, especially minority (i.e. Black, Hispanic) youth (Bishop, 2005; Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Bridges, Conley, Engen, & Price-Spratlen, 1995; Engen et al., 2002; Feld, 1991; Rodriguez, 2010). For example, some perspectives argue that characteristics of urban and rural environments translate into different degrees of bureaucratization and formality, and these differences affect court outcomes (Feld, 1999; Weber, 1969). Additional perspectives state that based on certain structural factors of communities, the social control of minority youth varies based on the size of the minority population and economic features of the minority group (Blalock, 1967; Leiber, Peck, & Rodriguez, forthcoming).

A macrosocial perspective that focuses on the contextual and symbolic aspects of threatening populations may offer an explanation for the differential treatment of minority youth compared to Whites throughout the juvenile justice system (Sampson & Laurtisen, 1997). In particular, Sampson and Laub's (1993) modified conflict theory provides a macrolevel framework that serves as the basis for the current study and can be useful in explaining the court processing of juveniles. Specifically, the objective of the current study is to perform a more nuanced examination of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective to investigate if the juvenile

court outcomes of White, Black, and Hispanic drug offenders vary with community-level indicators of underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality. The study seeks to answer if (1) disadvantaged community characteristics predict the social control of youth within the last decade, (2) minority youth and drug offenders (possession versus distribution) are subjected to greater social control than Whites and other types of offenders, and (3) any observed racial/ethnic and drug offending relationships are tempered by structural disadvantage.

Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective integrates conflict theory, issues surrounding urban poverty, and racial implications from the war on drugs to explain the social control of youth. One of the base assumptions from conflict theory is that criminal law is viewed to protect the power of the majority group (i.e. elites, ruling class) (Quinney, 1970; 1977; Chambliss & Siedman, 1971). Groups that threaten the political, economic, or social power of the majority group are subjected to increased social control in order to diffuse this perceived threat. Minority groups in the form of Blacks, concentrations of poor individuals, and the unemployed, are seen as threatening groups (Liska & Chamlin, 1984; Tittle & Curran, 1988). The modified version of conflict theory argues that individuals who live in poverty and reside in communities characterized by concentrated disadvantage and racial inequality (i.e. "the underclass") (Wilson, 1987; Sampson & Wilson, 1993), are seen as threatening to middle-class standards and values of mainstream America (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Furthermore, Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that threatening populations can be disaggregated into more specific groups based on the symbolic threat hypothesis/thesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) and the historical context of race, specifically the emergence of the war on drugs in the 1980s (Peterson & Hagan, 1984; Mitchell, 2009). To illustrate, in 1980, drug offenders represented 22% of all admissions to federal criminal justice intuitions. By 1989, this proportion

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rose to 39%, and then increased to 42% in 1990. By1992, drug offenders comprised 58% of all federal inmates (Tonry, 1995). In regards to race, by 1989, Blacks were more than five times more likely to arrested for drug offenses compared to Whites (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997), and between the years 1985 and 1995, Black drug offenders who were sentenced to prison increased by 700% (Sheldon & Brown, 2003). The revised conflict theory combines aspects from Tittle and Curran's (1988) symbolic threat hypothesis to argue that the greater social control of drug offenders, especially Black drug offenders, is tied to notions of negative stereotypes that young Black male drug offenders who reside in disadvantaged neighborhoods are seen as a specific threatening population and would be subject to more harsh punishment compared to other types of offenders (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Sampson and Laub (1993) found support for their theoretical model in that certain juvenile court outcomes (i.e. predispositional detention and residential placement) were influenced by the composition of communities. Counties that were characterized by a high concentration of the "underclass" and racial inequality increased the likelihood of severe treatment of Blacks compared to Whites, especially Blacks who were referred to the juvenile court for drug offenses. This overall finding is consistent with the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) in that underclass Black male drug offenders are viewed as threatening to middle-class standards and consequently subject to increased social control.

Limitations of Sampson and Laub's Original Examination

Although the results from Sampson and Laub (1993) provided initial support for a macrosocial conflict explanation of racial inequality and disadvantage on the social control of youth, mainly Black drug offenders, their research is not without limitations. First, Sampson and Laub (1993) tested their theory using court records and U.S. census data from 1985. From this

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initial examination, the researchers acknowledged that their findings are preliminary and future research should expand the results from the initial test of their perspective to examine how structural changes in communities over time may influence case outcomes (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Second, while measures of racial inequality and underclass poverty provided support for their perspective's integration of aspects from the symbolic threat hypothesis in that underclass youth and underclass Black males involved in drug offending were seen as particularly threatening to middle-class value and standards and therefore subject to harsh outcomes, the initial results were generalized to all forms of drug offending (Sampson & Laub, 1993). It may be that the type of drug offense (possession versus distribution) also influences juvenile court outcomes differently depending on certain characteristics of each drug referral (e.g. Steen, Engen, & Gainey, 2005).

Third, the initial test of the integrated theory focused only on the juvenile court outcomes of White and Black youth (Sampson & Laub, 1993). While some research has attempted to test the relationship between structure and social control with Hispanic youth (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007, 2013) it is not known if the social control of Hispanic youth is also contingent upon the composition of communities as proposed by Sampson and Laub (1993). It may be that Hispanics are a minority group in addition to Blacks that are considered threatening. While the war on drugs increased disparities in the treatment of Black and White offenders, research has also found that differential outcomes of Hispanic offenders has increased since the emergence of the drug war (Criminal Justice Statistics Center, 2000, Zatz, 2000). Since the war on drugs has differentially affected Black offenders compared to Whites, it may be that

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Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective can also explain the social control of Hispanic youth as well.

Finally, Sampson and Laub (1993) aggregated individual-level case records to the county-level and provided overall counts of delinquency referrals within each county selected. While this specific methodology was appropriate given the statistical analyses available over twenty years ago, potential relationships between case characteristics and community-level indicators may be masked due to the inability of the initial analyses to disaggregate overall counts compared to individual referrals. In short, based on these limitations, suggestions for future research, and an overall void in the literature that has directly tested this modified conflict perspective, this study attempts to address these specific concerns.

The Present Study

The main objective of the present research is to perform a more nuanced examination of Sampson and Laub's (1993) integrated conflict perspective by investigating if more recent juvenile court outcomes vary with community-level indicators of underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality. Specifically, all delinquent referrals within each county in a Northeast state from 2000-2010 are utilized in combination with community-level characteristics from the 2000 U.S. census to examine the influence of legal and extra-legal individual and structural characteristics on the treatment of youth across numerous juvenile court outcomes. Replication of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective is needed because with a few exceptions (i.e. Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Sutton, 2013) there is a void in the literature that has employed this macrosocial theoretical model, most importantly a direct test of the theory. Furthermore, replication of Sampson and Laub's (1993) model is needed in order to see if the original study's specific findings hold with more recent data. For example, in one prior

study, counties characterized by poverty and racial inequality were more likely to refer youth to further court proceedings at the stage of intake (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995). In another study, racial inequality was predictive of social control of juvenile offenders (Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Both examinations, however, utilized data from 1980-1991.[1] The revised conflict macrosocial model was originally tested with a nationally representative sample from1985 (Sampson & Laub, 1993). It is important to assess if the same macrolevel theoretical concepts (e.g. underclass poverty, racial inequality) influence court outcomes in the 2000s, or if the perspective is historically specific to the 1980s.

The present study also explores if the political or cultural influence of the symbolic threat of the war on drugs is entrenched within the juvenile justice system over 25 years after legislation was implemented. Research has found that since the enactment of the war of drugs, "the annual number of drug arrests in the USA remains near its peak, a finding that strongly suggests that the war wages on and perhaps has become institutionalized" (Mitchell & Caudy, 2013, pg. 3). Variation in racial differences in arrests for drug offenses between juvenile offenders compared to adults has also continued since the emergence of the war on drugs (Mitchell & Caudy, 2013). This suggests that racial disparities in juvenile court outcomes may still occur based on the sustained high rate of drug arrests in the United States. The stereotype and symbolic threat that decision-makers feel about minorities, particularly Black drug offenders, may still continue today. This assumption is supported by more recent literature that connects minorities and drug offending to a dangerous offender stereotype (Beckett, Nyrop, &

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[1] While not specifically testing Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory, data from more recent time periods has found support that disadvantaged or underclass communities influenced the social control of youth. Rodriguez (2010) found that structural disadvantage significantly predicted the likelihood of youth being securely detained, while in another study, Black youth were more likely to be detained in communities identified by interracial socioeconomic inequality (Thomas, Moak, & Walker, 2013). Additional research has also found that Black youth who lived in high-poverty counties were more likely to have their cases petitioned to the juvenile court (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011).

Pfingst, 2006; Provine, 2007; Tonry, 2011). If Black drug offenders still receive harsh outcomes compared to other types of offenders in this study, it can provide justification for the continued influence of stereotypes concerning specific threatening populations in a more current sample.

There is also the possibility that Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective could benefit from certain refinements or modifications. As introduced earlier, the perspective states that drug offenders, primarily Black drug offenders, are treated differently across juvenile court outcomes compared to other types of youth. Generalizing this particular finding, however, may mask potential differences in the treatment of different types of drug offenders. The imagery and stereotype of a "dangerous drug offender" may differ depending on certain legal and extralegal characteristics of an offender (Warren, Chiricos, & Bales, 2012; Zatz, 1987). The social control of a drug offender may be conditioned by aspects such as race/ethnicity and type of drug offense (possession versus distribution).

For example, Steen and colleagues (2005) state that the social control of drug offenders depends on certain offender and offense characteristics. Steen et al. (2005) argue that the stereotype of a dangerous drug offender is typically a Black male drug distributor with a prior record. An offender that *fully* matches these characteristics will be treated in a routine manner across court outcomes, since this specific stereotype is entrenched in the views of decision-makers. However, a White individual who *fully* matches the dangerous drug offender stereotype (i.e. male, drug distributor, prior record) will subsequently receive harsher outcomes compared to a similarly situated Black individual because these characteristics will be seen as "atypical" for a White offender, and perceived as more dangerous. If a Black offender encompasses only *some* of the components of the dangerous drug offender stereotype, they will be subject to disadvantaged outcomes because decision-makers will rely on stereotypes based on the race of the offender. In

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turn, similarly situated Whites will receive leniency and given the benefit of the doubt as not being as dangerous (Steen et al., 2005, pg. 446).

While the main tenants of Steen and colleagues (2005) perspective are not tested in the current study, the assumptions of their theoretical model is important in illustrating the potential for differences in court outcomes based on offender and offense characteristics of drug crimes. In addition, Steen et al.'s (2005) organizational-level perspective focuses on the imagery of the dangerous *adult* drug offender. Due to the heightened amount of discretion involved in juvenile justice decision-making, the influence of dangerous or threatening stereotypes may even be more prominent in the juvenile court compared to the adult criminal justice system. Therefore, there is the possibility that depending on the type of drug offense and race/ethnicity of the offender, different court outcomes may result.

There are also potential implications concerning the treatment of Hispanic youth referred to the juvenile court. As introduced earlier, Hispanic youth as a minority population may also be seen as threatening to middle-class standards and subject to greater social control. Hispanics are currently the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States (Healey, 2006; Feldmeyer & Ulmer, 2011). Based on the increase in population of this specific ethnic group and also the war on drugs (Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000), Hispanics may also be seen as a threatening and dangerous population (Martinez, 2002). What is unknown at the present time is the question if the relationship between race/ethnicity and social control plays out similarly or differently for Blacks compared to Hispanics. Race/ethnic effects may specifically be conditioned by community characteristics, especially the conditions in which Black and Hispanic youth reside. Therefore, it is important to include White, Black, and Hispanic youth in the

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current study. It may be that the Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory can be applied to the social control of Hispanic youth in general and possible interrelationships with drug offending as well.

The literature has also suggested that future research should more fully specify the perspective's theoretical and statistical models (Sampson & Laub, 1993, pg. 307). In light of this suggestion and due to the nature of the theoretical arguments, this study employs more sophisticated statistical analyses compared to the original test of the theory. One statistical procedure that allows for a multilevel examination of juvenile court outcomes is hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). HLM is advantageous over the regression models employed by Sampson and Laub (1993) because HLM permits the simultaneous examination of both individual and community-level factors on juvenile court outcomes (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009). The effects of both offender and offense characteristics, as well as structural indictors of underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality, are able to be considered as potential influences on the social control of youth.

Due to the nature of the statistical analyses, the current study estimates cross-level interactions between different offender (i.e. race/ethnicity) and offense (i.e. drug possession) characteristics with community-level measures that are indicative of underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality. Compared to the traditional regression equations employed in the initial test of Sampson and Laub's (1993), cross-level interactions within multi-level modeling has the ability to examine the how youth with certain offender and offense characteristics are treated within their residential communities. The estimation of cross-level interactions can more fully specify potential relationships between race/ethnicity, drug offending, and juvenile court outcomes across different types of communities (see also Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Rodriguez, 2007, 2013).

In addition, Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial test of their theory only examined two stages of juvenile justice proceedings: detention and judicial disposition. Similarly, the majority of prior macrolevel studies of juvenile justice outcomes have only focused on one or two decision-making stages (e.g. Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Bridges et al., 1995; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009). Only a limited number of studies have examined two or more outcomes (Leiber, 2002; Rodriguez, 2010). In light of this limitation, the current research examines the treatment of juvenile offenders through Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory across the stages of intake, adjudication, and judicial disposition.

This study also includes a number of important measures that have been shown to be important predictors of juvenile court outcomes, yet at times have not been incorporated in prior macrolevel research surrounding this topic. For example, some studies have not taken into consideration legal factors of the youth's prior record, number of current charges, or presence of legal representation (Thomas, Moak, & Walker, 2013; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011). This study takes into consideration and controls for a number of contextual, legal, and extra-legal factors that have been show to influence case outcomes that were not included in some of the past literature.

Finally, the present study attempts to generalize the anticipated findings above and beyond some of the prior macrolevel research on juvenile court outcomes. Some studies have only examined the influence of community characteristics on court outcomes in one jurisdiction (Rodriguez, 2007, 2013) or a handful of counties (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Even though the justification for examining only one jurisdiction was justified in the research by Rodriguez (2007, 2013) to provide a more in-depth examination of juvenile court outcomes where effects may be masked at the state-level, the current research

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assesses both individual-level court referrals nested within sixty-seven counties in a Northeast state. (see also Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Tittle & Curran, 1988).

Summary

Sampson and Laub's (1993) integrated macrosocial conflict theory has the ability to explain the social control of youth, especially minority youth, depending on the characteristics of communities. Consistent with Tittle and Curran's (1988) symbolic threat hypothesis, the perspective argues that counties characterized by high levels of racial inequality and a presence of the underclass significantly affect the treatment of Black youth and in particular Black drug offenders throughout juvenile court outcomes. The current study attempts to replicate and refine the revised conflict perspective. It is possible that differences in court outcomes may vary not only across racial groups, but ethnic groups (i.e. Hispanics), and also may be conditioned by different offense and offender specific characteristics of drug offenders.

More specific, this study attempts to answer three general theoretical and research questions. First, can the community characteristics put forth by Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective predict the social control of youth within the last decade? Second, are Black, Hispanic, and drug offenders more likely to receive severe juvenile court outcomes compared to White youth and other types of offenders? Third, are any observed racial/ethnic and drug offending relationships with court outcomes conditioned by underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality and result in greater social control? It is hypothesized that in general, disadvantaged community characteristics (i.e. underclass poverty, racial inequality, ethnic inequality) will predict greater social control for youth who are referred to the juvenile court. Controlling for community characteristics, the individual effect of being Black, Hispanic, and a drug offender is

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expected to result in more severe court outcomes compared to Whites and other types of offenders. It is also predicted that joint effects of various racial/ethnic combinations with drug offending (e.g. Black drug offender, Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution) will emerge and produce greater social control for youth with these characteristics, net of individual-level and community-level considerations. Finally, it is hypothesized that any discovered racial/ethnic effects with different types of drug offending will be tempered by disadvantaged community characteristics and result in more severe court outcomes.

Overview of Chapters

The current study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter two provides an overview of the theoretical relationship between race/ethnicity and social control, with a macrolevel focus on when and how race/ethnic differences emerge throughout juvenile court outcomes. Sampson and Laub's (1993) revised conflict perspective is first introduced, followed by a review of additional macrolevel perspectives (e.g. Blalock, 1967; Hawkins, 1987; Weber, 1969) that focus on the relationship between community structural and social control. Chapter three describes the literature that has examined the link between structural context and juvenile court processing. More specifically, the chapter discusses in detail the limited number of studies that have tested Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective and the contextual examinations of the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988). The chapter concludes with a focus on studies that have examined the relationship between disadvantaged community characteristics and social control and how juvenile justice outcomes may vary based on different community-level indicators.

Chapter four describes the limitations of previous research, which provides the implications and justifications for the current study. Three general research questions and six specific research hypotheses for the study are defined to conclude the chapter. Chapter five

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introduces the data and methodology. Descriptive information about data collection procedures and sample characteristics are provided. The operationalization of the both the individual and contextual-level independent variables of interest, control variables, and the three dependent variables are also presented. Chapter five concludes with a description of the analytic procedure and the steps followed to test the research hypotheses.

Chapter six provides the results of the current study. Findings from a series of hierarchical generalized linear models (HGLM) across (1) all offenders in the sample and (2) within drug offenders throughout all three dependent variables are presented and interpreted. Chapter seven provides a discussion of the results of the analyses. A summary of the findings that pertain to the three research questions are presented, followed by a discussion of potential theoretical and empirical conclusions that can be made based on the interpretation of the results. Limitations of the study are also described, followed by various suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with a description of implications for policy and programs based on the relationship between community characteristics, race/ethnicity, drug offending, and juvenile court outcomes.

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Chapter Two:

Theoretical Background

There are a number of theoretical approaches that explain the social control of both criminal and juvenile offenders (Dixon, 1995; Engen et al., 2002; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). For the most part, these perspectives focus on the issue of racial and ethnic disparities and how minorities are more likely than Whites to receive differential outcomes (Bishop, Leiber, & Johnson, 2010; Blalock, 1967; Bridges & Steen, 1998; Kalven & Zeisel, 1966; Hawkins, 1987; Tittle & Curran, 1988; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998; Weber, 1969).[2] Criminological research has primarily concentrated on the consensus and conflict viewpoints, which are two ideological frameworks that have been used to explain race differences in social control (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997).

More specifically, traditional perspectives that are used to examine the relationship between race/ethnicity and court outcomes are primarily derived from either the consensus or conflict theoretical model (Hagan, 1989).Within both the consensus and conflict ideologies are various theoretical perspectives that assess when and how race matters in regards to social control. Both approaches believe that minority overrepresentation throughout the justice system

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[2] Although not a theory that primarily explains the relationship between race and social control, Unnever and Gabbidon (2011) put forth a theory of African American offending. The theory assumes that throughout history, the views and beliefs of Black individuals have been shaped differently compared to all other minority groups. The perspective predicts that all Blacks believe that they will encounter and be victims of racial prejudice and discrimination, which results in an "unlevel playing field" across race in terms of overall success (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011, pg. 27). From this, responses to perceived prejudice, discrimination, and injustices increases the likelihood that Blacks will engage in offending behavior, which results in Blacks being overrepresented as offenders throughout the justice system.

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is triggered through different types of processes that occur individually, or in combination at the community, organizational, and individual level.

Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory, in particular, has a structural orientation that integrates juvenile justice decision-making at the organizational level with personal beliefs of certain types of juvenile offenders who are seen as threatening and dangerous in the perceptions of court actors. Underclass populations at the structural level are seen as threatening to middle-class standards (see also Tittle & Curran, 1988). Differences in social control will vary based on individual decision-makers' views of youth who reside in disadvantaged communities and are referred to the juvenile court. However, before fully explaining how structural context and offender/offense characteristics influence juvenile court outcomes according to the revised conflict macrosocial model (Sampson & Laub, 1993), it is important to first describe the consensus and conflict ideological frameworks.

The purpose of introducing both the consensus and conflict viewpoints with a focus on labeling theory within the conflict perspective is to illustrate differences across the two ideological frameworks. Next, the revised conflict theoretical model proposed by Sampson and Laub (1993) will be described. Within the discussion of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1998) will also be introduced. The symbolic threat hypothesis is discussed for the reason that Sampson and Laub (1993) integrate aspects from Tittle and Curran's (1998) theoretical model into their own theory of inequality and social control. Last, since Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory is only one example of a macrolevel perspective that focuses on community characteristics and juvenile court outcomes, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of additional structural/contextual theories. Specifically, the macrolevel perspectives of urbanization and formal rationality (Weber, 1969), minority group

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power threat thesis (Blalock, 1967), and a revised conflict theoretical model (Hawkins, 1987) will be described in detail.

The Consensus and Conflict Approaches

The consensus approach argues that the law, punishment, and treatment of offenders are based on a general consensus of societal ideas and norms (Durkheim, 1964). The social control of offenders is based on the severity of the criminal offense and the minimal amount of discretion awarded to decision-makers who are confined to the law. The consensus tradition believes that the justice system treats all offenders equally, regardless of gender, race, or socioeconomic status (Bridges & Crutchfield, 1988), and that structural characteristics indirectly influence social control by creating disadvantaged environments that are conducive to criminal offending (Blumstein, 1982; Leiber, 2003). Therefore, according to the consensus tradition, racial disparities throughout the justice system are believed to be attributed to the differential involvement of minority groups in illegal behavior compared to Whites (the majority group). Racial bias on behalf of decision-makers that results in minority overrepresentation in the justice system is not apparent to supporters of the consensus framework.

The conflict approach is in opposition to the consensus perspective and argues that the law and punishment are derived in order to protect the power of the majority group at the expense of the minority group. Disparities in social control are produced based on the amount of political and economic inequality throughout society (Bridges & Crutchfield, 1988). As introduced earlier, the implementation of laws and punishment on minority or "powerless" groups permits the majority or "powerful" group to protect their own political, economic, and social interests (Liska, 1994; Lynch & Michalowski, 2006). According to the conflict approach, structural context directly impacts social control since the majority group exerts its power over

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minorities and the poor (Becker, 1963; Chambliss & Seidman, 1971).[3] As a result, the treatment of minorities throughout the justice system is not due to differential offending as the consensus approach assumes, but racial/ethnic differences are due to biases that decision-makers hold against the "powerless" groups (i.e. minorities and the poor) (Leiber, 2003; Turk, 1969).

As with the conflict approach, labeling theory also contends that social structure directly impacts social control. The labeling perspective, however, focuses more on the role of stereotyping (instead of power differentials) and how minority groups (i.e. African Americans) are unable to resist being controlled due to limited political, social, and economic resources (Liska, 1994). In regards to race, the labeling approach contends that minorities are stereotyped based on negative labels and are therefore subject to increased social control compared to Whites. Comparing the conflict approach to labeling theory, conflict theory focuses more on the role of power across social classes and group subordination, while labeling theory centralizes on the role of stereotypes and typecasts of minority groups.

While the consensus, conflict, and labeling approaches have been employed to explain race differences in social control, it is important to note that there are weaknesses with all three frameworks. First, conflict theory has been critiqued because it primarily utilizes race as a proxy for class (Hawkins, 1987) and does not take into consideration the potential role of stereotypes (Bell & Lang, 1985). Second, labeling theory has been criticized for its minimal focus on class and cannot fully explain how the labeling process originates (Melossi, 1985). Limitations of both the conflict and labeling approaches are that the perspectives are unable to account for research

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[3] While the conflict perspective focuses on the relationship between power and social control, critical race theory is an additional perspective that attempted to understand the influence of race and racism in the interplay between power and social control (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). Critical race theory argued that the issue of race surrounding unconscious and conscious racism has been institutionalized in the law and has subsequently influenced decision-making to the disadvantage of minorities (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Tellis, Rodriguez, & Spohn, 2010). Stated differently, social structures and social conditions are racially organized which marginalizes minority groups (Murakawa & Beckett, 2010).

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that has found either equitable or more lenient treatment of minorities compared to Whites throughout court outcomes. Third, critics argue that the consensus approach is unable to conceptualize the intricacies and indirect relationship between an individual's environment and offending behavior that results in race differences in social control.

From these various critiques, subsequent theoretical approaches have attempted to merge the role of structural factors into the explanation of court processing, which has resulted in various macrolevel perspectives of social control. One example is Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory, while another perspective explains differences in decision-making throughout rural and urban courts (Weber, 1969). Two other perspectives also attempt to explain the social control of minority groups based on increases in economic, political, and social power (Blalock, 1967; Hawkins, 1987). All four theoretical models will be discussed in the next section.

Sampson and Laub's Macrolevel Theory of Inequality and Social Control

Up until the 1990s, a macrolevel explanation of social control that specifically focuses on juvenile court outcomes was missing in criminological literature. Sampson and Laub (1993) addressed this theoretical void and constructed a macrolevel theory on inequality and social control that argues that structural indicators in the form of racial inequality and a concentration in of the "underclass" influence case outcomes. The macrolevel inequality perspective specifically focuses on the role of: (1) conflict theory and threatening populations; (2) the symbolic threat of minority drug offenders; and (3) urban poverty and inequality to understand the complexities of court actors' decision-making.

The macrolevel inequality model agrees with some of the base tenants of conflict theory and provides the background for the perspective's theoretical assumptions. Sampson and Laub (1993) agree with the conflict approach in that social control is more likely to occur to groups

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that threaten middle and upper-class standards. Furthermore, minority populations (especially Blacks), the unemployed, and the poor represent these threatening groups (Liska & Chamlin, 1984; Sampson & Laub, 1993; pg. 288). The perspective also integrates aspects from Tittle and Curran's (1988) symbolic threat hypothesis to argue that the majority population views the "poor", the "underclass", and the "rabble class" (Irwin, 1985) as threatening populations to both the elites and "mainstream" America (Sampson & Laub, 1993; pg. 289). "Mainstream" America is represented by the middle-class and working-class who represent the majority of individuals in society; therefore the more that this population feels threatened, intensified social control will result to diffuse the perceived threat (Miller, 1996).

As introduced earlier, Sampson and Laub (1993) integrated aspects of Tittle and Curran's (1988) perspective into their macrosocial theory of inequality and social control. The symbolic threat hypothesis focuses on the interaction between the characteristics of juvenile offenders and feelings, emotions, and overall social-psychological reactions of juvenile court actors (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011). Structural dimensions also influence the perceptions of court actors which results in increases in social control for juvenile offenders. Tittle and Curran (1988) propose that counties characterized by a large proportion of non-White residents will sentence youth, especially Black youth, more severely compared to other counties. Furthermore, juvenile offenders who reside in counties characterized by a large juvenile population will also be seen as threatening to the rest of society.

However, it is argued that Black youth are stereotyped more often than Whites in counties with a large juvenile population, since Black juvenile offenders comprise the greatest amount of threatening qualities to court actors. Adult decision-makers in the juvenile court may decide outcomes of offenders based on negative characteristics of youth that are stereotypically

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associated with minorities (Tittle & Curran, 1988, pg. 54). The hypothesis states that juvenile

justice decision-makers view minority youth as prone to violence, lacking discipline, sexual,

aggressive, and other resentment or fear-provoking qualities (Tittle & Curran, 1988, pg. 52). The

demeanor of offenders brought to the juvenile court is also considered important because the way

that a youth appears to a decision-maker is influential in the youth's outcome. The emotions that

the court officers feel towards minority youth subsequently results in greater social control

because decision-makers feel threatened, uncomfortable, jealous, and are unable to identify with

the youth.

Social control of minority youth results because court actors believe that Black juvenile

offenders pose a greater threat to a community's safety and are unable to abide by middle-class

standards (Thomas et al., 2013). Central to the symbolic threat hypothesis is that the

stereotypical perceptions of court officers are not based on the youth's specific behavior or

offense. Stated differently, the threat is more symbolic than real and threatening feelings that

decision-makers contain result in racial/ethnic differences in social control. In addition, a

symbolic threat can be constructed based on structural context, minority populations, inequality,

and perceptions of gangs (Fagan, 2010). Compared to other perspectives that focus on the

political or economic threat that minority groups pose to the majority group and elites (i.e. the

minority group racial/ethnic threat thesis, the conflict approach), the symbolic threat hypothesis

focuses on the symbolic foundations of what constitutes "threat" and enhances social control of

certain populations (Tittle & Curran, 1988).

Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective goes above and beyond Tittle and Curran's

(1988) theoretical arguments and applies it to the severe treatment of specific populations since

the emergence of the war on drugs in the 1980s. Both Tittle and Curran (1988) and Sampson

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and Laub (1993) agree that theoretical perspectives are needed in order to explain how structural context and racial stereotypes influence the social control of young, Black drug offenders who reside in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The key concept with Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, however, is the role that racial inequality plays in the relationship between race and social control. The intersection of minority youth and drug offending provides a specific threat to the general population, which confirms that the symbolic threat hypothesis is an important component of the macrolevel inequality perspective. This is because it provides an insight to how the war on drugs specifically influences social control. The theory takes into consideration the historical context of race (Peterson & Hagan, 1984) and how the treatment of drug offenders throughout court processes are conditioned by racial stereotypes (Katz, 1993; Myers, 1989; Tonry, 1995).

Sampson and Laub's (1993) revised conflict perspective also argues that the presence of an "underclass" within communities corresponds with an increase in social control of juvenile offenders. Due to the historical consequences of racial segregation, isolation, and poverty, a significant portion of urban areas are characterized by severe economic disadvantage and a concentration of a "truly disadvantaged" population (Massey & Denton, 1987; Wilson, 1987, 1991). The term "the underclass" has recently become associated with negative perceptions associated with dangerous and offensive groups that threaten the social order of a community (Katz, 1993). The negative beliefs about disadvantaged populations result in a symbolic stereotype that can lead to increases in punitive judicial practices within community characterized as having an "underclass" population. The revised conflict perceptive attributes the social control of youth to increasing "underclass" populations throughout the United States.

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To summarize, the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control argues that due to increasing racial inequality and a growing population of the "underclass", threatening attitudes and beliefs emerged from the middle-class and working-class residents of "mainstream" America. Tied to this perceived threat are stereotypical notions about the war on drugs, and in particular, the danger that minority juvenile drug offenders pose to the general population. From these base arguments, the theory argues that the social control of youth referred to the juvenile court is more likely to occur in counties that are representative of racial inequality and an excessive presence of the "underclass" (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Stated differently, counties characterized by a large minority population, impoverished residents, a large number of female-headed families, and individuals' receiving welfare, are more likely to be considered a threatening population and subject to severe juvenile court outcomes compared to counties that do not have these structural features. While the perspective proposes that the social control of all youth is more likely to occur in communities characterized by structural disadvantage, it also stated that the effect of social control will be larger for Black youth compared to Whites, and for juveniles referred to the court for drug offenses compared to other types of delinquent behavior. The race and offense type conditions will be amplified even more when a Black youth is referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense compared to all other race/offense type combinations.

Additional Macrolevel Perspectives of Social Control

In addition to Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective which focuses on the role that community characteristics play in juvenile court outcomes, there are various other macrolevel theories which propose that structural context influences the social control of youth. Whereas the specific macrolevel factors used to measure each theoretical variable of interest may

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differ across perspectives, a commonality among the research by Blalock (1967), Hawkins (1987), Sampson and Laub (1993), and Weber (1969) is the influence that threatening populations and/or stereotypes play to the disadvantage of juvenile offenders. Therefore, even though there are differences in the way that indicators of threat are measured within each theory, the common thread across each perspective is that race/ethnic differences in social control will vary based on the composition of communities.

Theoretical Distinctions between Urban and Rural Courts. One macrolevel perspective that argues for the influence of structural context on justice outcomes is a theory that is characterized by two forms of rationality: formal and substantive (Weber, 1969; Harris, 2007). More specifically, Weber (1969) argues that there are specific interrelationships between the urbanization of counties and bureaucratization. These interrelationships, in turn, influence the social control of offenders. The degree of bureaucratization (either formal of substantive rationality) depends on either the urban or rural characteristics of jurisdictions. According to Weber (1969), courts that reside in urban environments are formal and more likely to engage in formal rationality where the law is applied equally across individuals based on legal factors and universal rules. In a formal rational system, discretion on behalf of decision-makers is limited. In rural courts, informal or substantial rationality is more prominent (instead of formal rationality), where discretion is enhanced, and decisions are based more on extralegal or informal factors (Feld, 1991). In regards to race differentials, the perspective argued that minorities will be subjected to higher rates of social control in rural environments, where the influence of race is more likely to impact court outcomes due to decision-makers use of their own belief system in the form of stereotyping, racism, or other legally irrelevant aspects.

However, it has also been argued that urban courts will demonstrate not only evidence of stereotyping against minority youth (Leiber, 2003), but more likely to foster social control against all youth compared to rural counties (Feld, 1991).[4] In urban courts characterized by formal rationality, decision-makers may not question the law yet rely on legal factors that may be indirectly biased against minorities (i.e. prior record). Decision-makers can be influenced by stereotypes associated with biased legal factors and consequently treat minority offenders more harsh compared to Whites in urban courts. In addition, due to urban courts having a larger number of cases compared to rural courts, court officers may typecast offenders and categorize them into "routine types." "Routine types" are classified based on what decision-makers deem as "normal crimes" or "conforming crimes", compared to exceptional cases (Farrell & Holmes, 1991; Sudnow, 1965). "Normal crimes" are considered offenses whose distinctive features (e.g. typical characteristics of offenders and victims, location of the crime, the manner in which the offense occurs) are known to decision-makers (Sudnow, 1965). Based on these typescripts and perceived stereotypes of the poor and minorities (Gaarder, Rodriguez, & Zatz, 2004), urban courts may evidence more social control compared to rural courts.

Minority/Racial Group Power Threat Thesis. An additional perspective that assumes that race differences in social control are contingent upon community characteristics is Blalock's (1967) minority group power threat thesis. In contrast to the traditional conflict approach, the minority group threat perspective contends that the social control of minorities is based on the

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[4] In regards to juvenile justice court processing, Feld (1991) argues that juvenile court outcomes are characterized by "justice by geography" (Pope, 1976) in that court processing varies significantly across urban, rural, and suburban environments. In urban jurisdictions, communities are identified as diverse and heterogeneous. Urban courts are therefore characterized as more bureaucratized and formal, resulting in increased social control of juvenile offenders through the use of secure detention and harsh sentencing outcomes. In rural jurisdictions, courts are less diverse and more homogenous, which results in more informal juvenile justice practices and lenient sentences compared to those in urban courts. In regards to race, evidence of racial disparities within the "justice by geography" framework has been found within waiver decisions of juvenile offenders to the adult court (Feld, 1994; McNulty, 1996), and the increased likelihood of Black youth being detained in urban courts (Feld, 1995).

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perceived and/or actual threat that minority groups pose to the economic and political power of the majority group (i.e. Whites). As the proportion of the minority group population increases in a community, a greater competition for economic resources develops (i.e. employment, property, prestige), which is perceived as a challenge to the majority group's status (Blalock, 1967). The subsequent increases in wealth and standing by minorities in these communities makes the White population feel threatened. To diffuse this threat, discriminatory practices in the form of social control is employed on the minority group in order for Whites to maintain the status quo.

In general, while a positive relationship is said to occur between the proportion of minority residents in a community and increased social control, Blalock (1967) states that there are potential curvilinear relationships between the economic and political threat and the treatment of minorities. To illustrate, economic threat is theorized to have a curvilinear positive relationship with social control, yet with a decelerating slope in communities where the proportion of minorities is already large (Blalock, 1976; Thomas et al., 2013; Wang & Mears, 2010). Concerning political threat, Blalock (1967) states that as the minority population increases in a jurisdiction, the perceived political threat by Whites results in a positive and accelerating curvilinear relationship. Stated differently, minorities receive disadvantaged outcomes until their representation in a community reaches a "tipping point" to where they accumulate economic and political power, which slows the rate to which they are subject to social control compared to Whites (Blalock, 1967; Leiber et al., forthcoming; Wang & Mears, 2010). Therefore, while traditional conflict theory believes that the smaller the proportion of minorities in a community will result in social control, Blalock (1967) contends that disadvantaged outcomes of minorities are based on the increased presence and resulting economic and political power that serves as a threat to the majority group's status quo.

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A Revised Version of the Conflict Perspective. As introduced earlier, critics of the traditional conflict approach argued that the theory could not explain abnormal findings when minorities were punished equal to or more lenient than Whites (Bernstein, Kelly, & Doyle, 1977; Hawkins, 1987). Hawkins (1987) contends that the traditional conflict approach needs substantial revisions to account for these abnormal findings. First, the revised perspective should address that social control and criminal punishment are contingent on both the race of the offender and race of the victim. Second, revisions to conflict theory should be made to address that differences in social control are also conditioned by the type of criminal offense, especially if there are differences in perceptions of what constitutes a "Black offense" (i.e. rape, drug dealing) compared to a "White offense" (i.e. white collar crimes) (Hawkins, 1987). Third, the modified conflict theory should have a larger focus on the historical context of race (i.e. Black punishment) when discussing differential treatment of offenders (Peterson & Hagan, 1984). Fourth, the relationship between powerful and powerless groups should be reconsidered in terms of threatening and non-threatening populations.

According to Hawkins (1987), the traditional conflict perspective focuses more on the "powerlessness" of a minority group, rather than the threat the minority groups brings to the majority population. In turn, Hawkins (1987) integrates ideas concerning conflict theory, the historical patterns of Black punishment (Adamson, 1983; 1984), and Blalock's (1967) minority group threat thesis to propose a revised conflict perspective. The modified perspective argues that as the minority population increases in a community, it poses a threat to the social and economic hegemony of the White population (Hawkins, 1987). The greater the Black presence and economic equality between the Black and White population will result in harsher punishment for Black offenders.

While Hawkins (1987) states that the revisions made to the traditional conflict approach has the ability to account for prior inconsistent findings, it is important to note that the suggested revisions are in direct opposition to the traditional model. In fact, Hawkins's (1987) theoretical model is more in line with the minority/racial group power threat thesis (Blalock, 1967) than with conflict theory. Minority group members are subject to social control when they have fewer resources than the dominant group according to the traditional approach (Quinney, 1970). As "Black power" decreases in a community, Black offenders receive disadvantaged outcomes. However, Hawkins (1987) proposes that as the political, economic, and social resources of minorities increase, this will result in further social control of minorities by Whites. In other words, increases in "Black power" results in harsher justice system outcomes.[5]

Summary

In short, Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective highlights the complexities of decision-making at the organizational level with the combining influence of stereotypes against minority offenders. Community characteristics to some degree can also foster the use of stereotypes by decision-makers within juvenile justice proceedings (Bridges & Steen, 1998; Tittle & Curran, 1988). The symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) argues that counties characterized by a large non-White and youth population will subject all youth, especially Blacks to greater social control. Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical model incorporates Tittle and Curran's assumptions that certain populations are seen as threatening in the perceptions of decision-makers.

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[5] Hawkins (2011) also argues that the internal colonialism framework (Blauner, 1972) can be useful in understanding the relationship between race and social control, especially since the crime-drop in the 1990s (Zimring, 2006). Internal colonialism refers to the historic discrimination and coercion of minority groups (i.e. American Indians, Blacks, Mexican Americans) who resemble "third world countries in a first world setting" (Hawkins, 2011, pg. 9). Both the offending behavior and social control of minorities is argued by Hawkins (2011) to be attributed to the historical oppression and exploitation of minority groups.

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It is also important to emphasize that there are additional macrolevel perspectives that focus on explaining race differences in social control (Blalock, 1967; Hawkins, 1987; Weber, 1969). Overall, the theories predict that disadvantaged outcomes of minorities compared to Whites are influenced by levels of structural disadvantage and power differentials. However, it has also been argued that racial disparities in court outcomes can be attributed to additional contextual dimensions. The above sections described various perspectives that attempt to explain the social control of offenders, with most of the theories having direct assumptions about why racial differences occur in the social control of individuals who engage in offending behavior (e.g. Blalock, 1967; Hawkins, 1987). An emerging theme from these perspectives is that they have a structural focus and attempt to explain increases in social control based on the threat that minority groups pose to the status quo of majority populations.

Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective integrates conflict theory and the structural orientation to highlight issues surrounding poverty, inequality, stereotyping, and racial implications from the war on drugs to explain the social control of juvenile offenders. Using Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrosocial inequality perspective of variation across juvenile court outcomes, the current study examines the influence of community characteristics in the form of underclass poverty and racial inequality on the social control of youth. Structural indicators of communities have been included less often in prior research than offense and offender characteristics in predicting court outcomes (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011). This is because prior to the last decade, most juvenile justice research focused on the role that race and ethnicity play at the individual-level throughout juvenile justice processing. [6] Even though some research reports that legal factors (i.e. crime severity, prior record) predict court outcomes (Cauffman et al., 2007; Pope & Feyerherm, 1990; Tracy, 2005) [7], a number of comprehensive reviews has shown that

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[6] Microlevel examinations of the liberation hypothesis (Kelvin & Zeisel, 1996) to some degree have found that the effect of legal and extralegal factors influence juvenile case outcomes. Guevara and colleagues (2011) found that race was not directly related to preadjudication detention or judicial disposition outcomes, but race-specific models found statistically significant differences across Non-White and White youth that were not in the expected direction. Both Non-White and White youth misdemeanor offenders were significantly more likely to have charges dismissed at judicial disposition, yet the effect was larger for Non-White youth. In addition, White youth with a prior record or who were previously detained were more likely to receive out-of-home placement than similarly situated Blacks.

[7] As introduced earlier, the differential offending/differential involvement explanation argues that race differences in offending and court processing are due to minorities committing more crime and more serious and/or violent crime compared to Whites. Within juvenile justice proceedings, the differential involvement argument states that minority youth are subjected to increased social control based on a variety of legal factors, such as more serious offenses, extensive prior record and frequent recidivism (Tracy, 2005). Some prior research has supported the

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that legal and extra-legal (i.e. age, gender) factors alone are unable to account for race differences in juvenile justice processing (Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Leiber, 2011; Pope & Feyerherm, 1993; Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002). Race/ethnicity was either directly related to court outcomes throughout the reviews, or interacted with legal and/or extra-legal variables.[8]

Although limited in number, there has been a recent emergence in juvenile justice research that focuses on the effects of race/ethnicity on social control in contextual terms.[9] Macrolevel empirical studies that have examined the link between structure and juvenile court processing have also found that to some degree, community factors influence the use of social control by juvenile court actors (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997; Engen et al., 2002).[10] Certain

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differential offending explanation (Elliott, 1994; Hindelang, 1978; Huizinga, Loeber, & Thornberry, 1994; Kelley, Huizinga, Thornberry, & Loeber, 1997).

[8] In fact, race and ethnicity appears to be a stronger predictor of social control in the juvenile justice system than in the criminal justice system (Pope & Feyerherm, 1993; Bishop, 2005). One explanation for this is the *parens patraie* foundation of the juvenile court, which takes into consideration a wide range of factors to arrive at case outcomes based on youth's personal, social, and treatment needs (Bishop & Leiber, 2011; Feld, 1999, Kempf-Leonard & Sontheimer, 1995).

[9] This is also true for research has that examined macrolevel perspectives and additional forms of social control besides juvenile court outcomes. For example, numerous tests of the racial/ethnic threat/power threat theory in criminological literature, yet support has been mixed (Ousey & Lee, 2008). Depending on the specific outcome of interest, research has found some support for the positive relationship between minority population size and various forms of social control. For example, partial support for the racial threat theory has been found in examinations of police force size (Kent & Jacobs, 2004; Stults & Baumer, 2007); law enforcement agency funding (Jackson, 1989); Black lynchings (Messner, Baller, & Zevenbergen, 2006); police violence (Jacobs & O'Brien, 1998); felon disenfranchisement (Behrens, Uggen, & Manza, 2003); and punitive attitudes (King & Wheelock, 2007). More recent examinations of the minority threat perspective have focused on sentencing outcomes for adult minority offenders. For example, Feldmeyer and Ulmer (2011) examined if federal sentencing decisions between the years 2000-2002 of White, Black, and Hispanic defendants were conditioned by different racial/ethnic populations in federal court districts. Results, however, did not support the racial threat theory in that the proportion of Blacks residing in federal court districts did not influence the sentence length of Black defendants. Hispanic defendants received longer sentence lengths in districts where Hispanics represented the smallest overall population. This finding supports traditional conflict theory (Quinney, 1970), rather than Blalock's (1967) hypotheses. In addition, simultaneous examinations of both the racial and ethnic threat perspectives on jail and prison sentences have also yielded mixed support (Wang & Mears, 2010).

[10] Some research has included county characteristics (e.g. percent unemployed, percent living in poverty, population density, and county crime rate) strictly as control variables when predicting juvenile court outcomes (DeJong & Jackson, 1998; Secret & Johnson, 1997). While certain structural characteristics were predictive of case outcomes, direct race effects were also found that disadvantaged both Blacks and Whites depending on the stage examined (Secret & Johnson, 1997). DeJong and Jackson (1998) found that urban courts (measured by population density) influenced the treatment of Black youth at the stages of intake and judicial disposition. The authors' stated

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community factors may be perceived by decision-makers as inhabiting threatening populations. For instance, indicators of concentrated or structural disadvantage (Rodriguez, 2007, 2010, 2013), female-headed households (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011), or underclass and racial inequality that mirror Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Thomas et al., 2013), may predict the likelihood of racial disparities in court outcomes.

Since prior research has found that structural context matters in juvenile justice processing, this reveals the importance of including both individual and contextual predictors of social control in determining case outcomes (Rodriguez, 2010). The existence of poverty, racial inequality, and crime within communities are meaningful predictors of juvenile justice processing (DeJong & Jackson, 1998; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2010). Even if structural context does not directly impact court outcomes, studies have shown that macrolevel factors may indirectly or condition the effect of social control through offender (i.e. race/ethnicity) and/or offense (i.e. drug referrals) characteristics (Rodriguez, 2007).

The following chapter will review the literature surrounding the relationship between structural context and juvenile court outcomes. From the time that Sampson and Laub (1993) put forth their inequality and social control perspective, only three studies have attempted to assess their theoretical model within juvenile justice proceedings (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Leiber, 2003). The first section of the chapter will focus on these three studies, especially how contextual dimensions of disadvantage, the underclass, and inequality can be

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that a potential reason for this finding is that Black youth are more likely to be referred to urban courts, therefore once population density is controlled; race is no longer a significant predictor of receiving an intake referral. A race effect appeared between Hispanics and Whites at intake with the inclusion of population density, as Hispanic youth were more likely to be referred on at intake once this specific community characteristic is included. At judicial disposition, results indicate that Blacks who were referred to a rural court were more likely to receive residential placement compared to similarly situated Blacks in an urban court (DeJong & Jackson, 1998).

indicative of threatening populations that are increasingly subjected to social control. Second, since the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) is a perspective that was integrated into Sampson and Laub's (1993) inequality and social control theory, three studies that have examined the role that symbolic threat and community characteristics play across court outcomes will be described (Tittle & Curran, 1988; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Thomas et al., 2013). Third, since the overarching theme of the present study is the influence of community context on social control, a discussion of contextual studies that assess the influence of structural and concentrated disadvantage on the treatment of minority youth within juvenile justice proceedings will conclude the chapter (i.e. Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Bridges et al., 1995; Rodriguez, 2007, 2013).

Empirical Examinations of Sampson and Laub's Perspective

As stated earlier, only a handful of studies have examined the applicability of Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical framework on juvenile court outcomes. More specific, besides the initial test of the macrolevel inequality and social control perspective, only three studies in particular have provided direct investigations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) revised conflict perspective at the juvenile level (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Therefore, it is important to discuss each of the three examinations in detail to be able to later provide justification for the current study. Although not the focus of this study, it should also be mentioned that minority overrepresentation in adult criminal justice outcomes (i.e. pretrial decisions, guilty pleas, and sentence severity)[11] and adult habitual offender sentences[12]

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[11] The relationship between structural characteristics and social control are also evident in United States' criminal court processing (Dixon, 1995; Hagan, 1989). Sutton (2013) hypothesized that Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective could also be applied to pretrial detention outcomes, guilty pleas, and sentence severity of adult felony defendants throughout 40 counties in the year 2000. In sum, no support was found for the inequality and social control perspective. First, racial income inequality and poverty concentration did not influence the social control of minority defendants across all three outcome measures. Second, income inequality did not predict the use of pretrial detention or sentence severity. While income inequality was related to both Black and Latino guilty pleas,

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have used Sampson and Laub's (1993) model. Therefore, even though the inequality and social control theory was initially constructed to understand how juvenile justice processing is influenced by certain characteristics of communities (e.g. underclass poverty, racial inequality), the perspective has also been used as a theoretical model for other outcomes measures besides juvenile court decisions.

To directly test their theoretical model at the stages of petition, detention, and judicial disposition, Sampson and Laub (1993) aggregated individual-level court records for the year 1985 from over 200 counties throughout the United States. Counts of property, person, drug, public order offenses and offender characteristics (i.e. age, gender, and race) of each case were aggregated to the county-level were merged with county-level measures from the 1980 U.S. census and 1983 County and City Data Book. A measure of underclass poverty was constructed based on the county-level measures of residents receiving public assistance, percent Black residents, percent of female-headed families with children, percent individuals in poverty,

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results were not in the expected direction. Black defendants had higher rates of guilty pleas in counties where Blacks were impoverished compared to Whites, but plead at lower rates in counties where poor Blacks resided in concentrated areas. Latinos were less likely overall to plead guilty compared to Black defendants, but when they did, it was in counties characterized by severe structural disadvantage. Sutton (2013), however, stated that there was only modest confidence in the results that a true effect was occurring between community characteristics and the likelihood of defendants pleading guilty. Third, the individual-level effects between race and sentence severity were not conditioned by structural context. Finally, overall race differences in social control were not influenced by concentrations of minority poverty.

[12] Crawford, Chiricos, and Kleck (1998) argued that Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective focused on a specific form of crime-specific racial threat that corresponds to greater social control of minority drug offenders. Community-level measures of racial threat (e.g. violent crime rates, drug arrest rates, Black population, and racial income inequality) were hypothesized to influence the social control of adult offenders. Crawford and colleagues (1998) examined felony offenders in the state of Florida who were admitted to prison from 1992-1993. All offenders were eligible for habitual offender sentencing (already had at least two prior felony convictions or one prior violent felony conviction) and the purpose of the study was to see what structural characteristics influenced if prisoners were actually sentenced to prison as a habitual offender. Results indicated that at the individual-level, Black drug offenders and property offenders were more likely to be sentenced as a habitual offender; however the influence of context did not coincide with Sampson and Laub's (1993) claims. Black drug offenders were treated harsher in counties characterized by low racial income inequality and a small Black population. Therefore, while decision-makers may be influenced by individual offenders who represent a threatening population (i.e. Black drug offender), these decisions were not conditioned by perceived threatening community populations.

percent families with less than $5,000 income, percent nonmarried households, and percent female-headed families in poverty. A racial inequality measure was constructed based on a ratio of Black to White individuals in poverty and the percent of Black families in poverty.

Numerous county characteristics were also included in all statistical models that were said to influence juvenile justice outcomes (Feld, 1991; Hasenfeld & Chung, 1985; Liska, Lawrence, & Benson, 1981). Wealth was measured by the percent of families in each county that had more than a $50,000 yearly income and the median per capita income. Residential mobility was comprised of an index that included the percentage of residents that moved within the last five years, the county population change from 1980-1984, and the net county migration. The degree of urbanism in counties was measured by the percentage of a county that residents in an urbanized area, the population size, and the population size per square mile. A measure of youth was constructed by the percentage of individual who are between the ages of 15-18 and the ratio of juveniles to adults in each county. An indicator of criminal justice resources included the per capita of county revenues, per capita spending on police, and per capital spending on state and local corrections.

At the stage of petition, racial inequality was positively related to formal petition for personal, property, and public order offenses.[13] Underclass poverty did not significantly predict formal petition for any of the four types of offenses. Support for the theoretical assumption that drug offenders are seen as a symbolic threat in the views of decision-makers was found at the stage of secure detention, as underclass poverty was a significant predictor of secure detention in petitioned drug referrals. Racial inequality was also positively related to secure detention for

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[13] Measures of inequality within city blocks were also predictive of social control in the form of arrest rates in the research by Liska and Chamlin (1984). In accordance with conflict theory, the effect was larger for nonwhite arrest rates compared to White arrest rates, which provided support that inequality indicators influenced the social control of the minorities by the majority group.

petitioned personal and public order offenses. Underclass poverty was also significantly and positively related to secure detention for nonpetitioned cases across all four offense types. Racial inequality was an important predictor of detention decisions for nonpetitioned personal and property cases. At the stage of judicial disposition, underclass poverty was positively associated with out-of-home placement for drug and personal offenses, while racial inequality did not predict severe treatment of youth at this specific stage. Therefore, preliminary support was found for the macrolevel perspective of inequality and social control even before taking into consideration the influence of race in the relationship between community characteristics and juvenile court outcomes. This is particularly true for the emerging link between underclass poverty and the treatment of juvenile drug offenders across court outcomes.

Results from race-specific regression models indicated that race did matter in the social control of juvenile offenders. Counties characterized by underclass poverty were unrelated to the detention of White youth, but were more likely to detain nonpetitioned Black youth who were referred to the juvenile court for personal, property, and public order offenses. Counties with high levels of racial inequality were more likely to detain Black nonpetitioned drug and property offenders compared to Whites. At judicial disposition, county characteristics were also found to disadvantage Black youth compared to Whites. Underclass poverty was positively related to rates of out-of-home placement for Black personal and drug offenders, but negatively related to White property offenders. More specific, the effect of underclass poverty on out-of-home placement rates for Black drug offenders was seven times larger than for Whites.

These overall effects supported Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective. In terms of the relationship between structural context and juvenile case outcomes, county characteristics of underclass poverty and racial inequality were related to case outcomes.

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Furthermore, counties characterized by a large underclass presence and racial inequality were more likely to subject Black youth, especially Black drug offenders, to increased social control at the stages of detention and judicial disposition. Based on these results, it could be argued that racial disparities in juvenile court outcomes can be attributed to the notion that disadvantaged Blacks pose a threat to middle class values and standards (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Tittle & Curran, 1988; Thomas et al., 2013).

Throughout the literature that has focused on the individual-level threat that Black drug offenders pose to court actors, it has been argued that decision-makers may believe that drug offenses committed by Black youth are considered more dangerous and/or serious compared to other types of offenders. For example, DeJong and Jackson (1998) found that Blacks who were referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense received the more disadvantaged outcome at judicial disposition (residential placement) compared to Blacks charged with a violent, property, or other offense. However, there was no relationship between offense type and judicial disposition for White youth. Additional research has also found that Black drug offenders were more likely to be held in secure detention and less likely to be released at intake (Leiber & Fox, 2005).

In light of Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial findings that supported their theoretical perspective, Leiber and Jamieson (1995) used the macrolevel theory of inequality and juvenile court processing to examine four urban counties with the largest non-White populations in the state of Iowa. A sample of White and Black delinquent referrals from 1980-1991 and five structural indicators of communities and the beliefs of juvenile court decision-makers were constructed from the 1980 and 1990 U.S. census and court actors' survey responses. Indicators of county-level poverty (percentage of persons below the poverty level), racial inequality (ratio

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of Black to white families below the poverty level), and the juvenile arrest rate (arrests of youth under the age of 19 for index offenses) were the community-levels predicted to influence race differences in court outcomes. Two measures of attitudinal beliefs were also constructed in order to examine decision-makers' attitudes towards the importance of punishing juvenile offenders for their crimes, and attitudes towards racial differences in the behavior and attitudes of juveniles. The latter measure specifically relates to the potential applicability of the symbolic threat thesis (Tittle & Curran, 1998) within Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, in that the social control of minority youth may stem from court actors' beliefs that minorities evoke fear and threatening feelings in decision-makers.[14]

The relationship between structural context and juvenile court outcomes was examined at the stages of intake, petition, initial appearance, adjudication, and judicial disposition. At the stage of intake, youth were more likely to be referred for further court proceedings in counties characterized by high levels of poverty, racial inequality, and juvenile arrests. Court actors' decision to refer a youth for further processing was not influenced by race, drug offending, or any interactions of race with contextual measures. For youth who were not referred on to the next stage of court proceedings, two options were possible: diversion (i.e. informal adjustment) or release back into the community. Black youth in general were less likely than Whites to receive diversion, yet Black youth who resided in communities where court actors' believed that racial differences in the behavior and attitudes of youth to be important were more likely to receive diversion than release compared to Whites. Therefore, at intake, decision-makers' beliefs

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[14] Individual-level measures of age, gender, school status, offense type, crime severity, number of current charges, number of prior referrals, most recent judicial disposition (not adjudicated versus adjudicated/waived to adult court), and detention (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995).

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condition the relationship between race and social control, resulting in increased severity in the treatment of Black youth.

At the petition stage, counties that were comprised of high level of poverty and racial inequality[15] were less likely to petition all youth, and Blacks received leniency at this stage compared to Whites. Youth referred to the court for a drug offense and decision-makers' attitudinal context does not impact the likelihood of petition outcomes. At the next stage of initial appearance, the poverty measure ($p < .10$) and juvenile arrest rate were positively related to harsh outcomes. Punishment attitudes of court actors were positive related to initial appearance, while beliefs about racial differences were inversely related to this stage. While being Black had an inverse effect on initial appearance, Black youth who resided in counties comprised of high levels of racial inequality were more likely to be processed to the adjudication stage. Lenient treatment of drug offenders was also evident at this stage, where drug offenders who make it to the initial appearance hearing were more likely to be diverted from the system than sent on to further stages.

At the adjudication stage, indicators of community disadvantage, race, and drug referrals did not impact the decision to adjudicate youth, but decision-makers who felt that punishment is important in the juvenile court were less likely to adjudicate youth. At the final stage of judicial disposition, community context in the form of poverty, racial inequality, and juvenile arrests were not significant predictors, but court actors who believed in racial differences in the behavior and attitudes were more likely to sentence youth to residential placement compared to community supervision. Black youth were also more likely to receive harsh treatment at judicial

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[15] The effects of poverty and racial inequality are significant at $p < .10$. While the authors consider this a statistically significant effect, it is important to note that critiques may not see these coefficients as statistically significant, and therefore do not influence the likelihood of petition outcomes.

disposition, yet similar to adjudication, no significant interactions emerged between race, structural context, and attitudinal beliefs.

In short, while racial disparities between Black and White youth were evident across some stages, minorities were not always subject to increased social control as predicted by the inequality and social control perspective. The interplay between structural characteristics, attitudinal beliefs of decision-makers', and offender and offense characteristics is complex. [16] Depending on the stage examined, community characteristics predicted harsh outcomes, leniency (in one stage), or was not significantly related to the dependent variables. The same conclusion can be made for the link between decision-makers' attitudes on court outcomes, and how race influenced these relationships. However, the research by Leiber and Jamieson (1995) was a direct test of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, and provided some support that structural characteristics of underclass populations, inequality, and stereotyping by decision-makers can influence court outcomes.

The second direct test of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective was conducted by Leiber and Stairs (1999) using three jurisdictions with the largest minority youth population in Iowa and a similar sampling procedure based on Leiber and Jamieson (1995) of White and Black delinquent referrals. Leiber and Stairs (1999) conducted an in-depth analysis of the intake stage, with three possible outcomes: release, diversion (i.e. informal adjustment), and recommendation

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[16] Bishop and colleagues (2010) attempted to address the complex nature of juvenile court processing and tested an integration of organizational theory and the focal concerns perspective (a hybrid approach) and its applicability to case outcomes. Results indicated overall support for the perspective in that depending on the nature of the decision-making stage (either "loosely coupled" or "tightly coupled") race impacted court outcomes. Black youth were more likely to receive an intake referral compared to Whites (a "loosely coupled" stage). At the "tightly coupled" stage of petition, race interacted crime severity to result in disadvantaged outcomes for Black felons, which was anticipated to occur by the authors. At adjudication, race was expected to not influence decision-making, yet interacted with prior referrals and crime severity. It was argued that judges' may perceive Black youth with these characteristics as dangerous and therefore the combination of race and legal factors increased the likelihood of adjudication. At judicial disposition, race was significantly associated with this "loosely coupled" stage, but in an unexpected direction. White youth had an increased likelihood of receiving a change of placement or transfer to adult court compared to community sanctions.

for further court proceedings. Within the diversion outcome, there are also three subsequent outcomes: probation (following the rules of parents, school, and court services), probation with additional conditions (services required by the juvenile court), and no probation but conditions (e.g. community service, restitution, substance use program, etc.). In line with Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, it was hypothesized that jurisdictions characterized by an underclass population and racial inequality (Jurisdiction 1 being the most disadvantaged, followed by Jurisdiction 2, the Jurisdiction 3)[17] would subject youth to increased social control and race differences at the stage of intake and within each diversionary outcome.

Using 1980 and 1990 U.S. census data, an index of underclass concentration (Wilson, 1991) was constructed based on county-level information of the percentage of persons below the poverty level, unemployment rates, and percentage of persons who graduated high school. Racial inequality (ratio of Black to White families living in poverty and the percentage of minorities living in poverty) and a morality/sexual promiscuity (percentage of babies in a county born out of wedlock to teenage mothers) were also created. Measures of decision-makers' beliefs and attitudes about different racial groups, and a punitive orientation towards juvenile court outcomes were also included as potential predictors. Additional contextual measures were also included as controls. Jurisdictional-level measures of urbanism (total population), youth density (percentage of youth under the age of 18), crime rate (reported Index 1 crimes), and criminal justice resources (police expenditures per person).[18]

Results from a series of additive and interaction logistic regression models indicated that in Jurisdiction 1 and 3, Black youth were more likely to be referred on for further court

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[17] In Jurisdiction 3, no race differences were predicted to emerge within each diversionary outcome (Leiber & Stairs, 1999).

[18] Offender and offense variables included age, gender, family status, school status, number of prior referrals, court authority, number of current charges, crime severity, and offense type (Leiber & Stairs, 1999).

proceedings compared to Whites. In Jurisdiction 2, drug offenders were at an increased likelihood of receiving an intake referral compared to being released or receiving diversion. This effect was conditioned by race, yet the effect was in an unexpected direction. White youth referred to the juvenile court in Jurisdiction 2 were more likely to be referred for further court proceedings, while no effect existed for Black drug offenders. In Jurisdiction 1 (characterized as having the most inequality and underclass populations) and Jurisdiction 2 (more of a disadvantaged community compared to Jurisdiction 3, but less of a disadvantaged community compared to Jurisdiction 1), drug offenders were more likely to receive the diversionary outcome of conditions. In Jurisdiction 3, drug offenders received the lenient outcome of no probation versus probation. Race did not impact diversionary outcomes in Jurisdiction 1 or 3, but was subject to less social control compared to Whites across all three potential diversionary outcomes in Jurisdiction 2.

As with the conclusions reached by Leiber and Jamieson (1995), partial support was found for Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, yet decision-making (even within one stage) is contingent upon numerous factors (Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Disaggregating three jurisdictions based on characteristics of structural disadvantage and attitudinal measures of decision-makers, the social control of juvenile offenders was most evident in a community with greater disadvantage, racial inequality, and race differences and punitive beliefs on behalf of decision-makers (Jurisdiction 1). In this same county, minority youth were more likely to receive harsh intake outcomes compared to Whites, which is also consistent with the theory of inequality and social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Not consistent with Sampson and Laub's theory, race differences in social control, where Blacks received harsh outcomes at intake, were also found in

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a community characterized by the least amount of disadvantage and racial inequality (Jurisdiction 3).

When focusing solely on diversionary outcomes, support was not found for Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical arguments because Black youth received leniency in one community (Jurisdiction 2), and race was not predictive of diversionary outcomes in the other two communities (Jurisdiction 1 and 3). Drug offenders who received an informal adjustment were subject to both harsh and lenient outcomes. Contrary to Sampson and Laub (1993), race did not interact with drug offending to influence court outcomes to disadvantage minority drug offenders.

Leiber (2003) quantitatively and qualitatively examined four counties in Iowa (Bond, Jackson, King, and Parks) with a random sample of White and a disproportionate random sample of Black court referrals to assess the applicability of Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrosocial perspective in a more racially homogeneous location. Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial examination was able to maximize the amount of variation across community characteristics by using a nationally representative sample of U.S. counties. Leiber (2003) provided a more strict empirical examination of the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control by testing the perspective with four jurisdictions that were more homogenous in regards to racial composition. Leiber (2003) utilized different weighting procedures for each proportion of referrals (White, Black, and Native American) to resemble to racial composition of each county. County-level indicators of the underclass (percent persons in poverty, unemployment rate, percent of employed persons who are over 16 years old), racial inequality (ratio of Black to White persons in poverty, percent minorities in poverty), minority/sexual promiscuity (percent of babies born out-of-wedlock to teenage mothers), wealth (per capita personal income, average family

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income), and juvenile crime (percentage of juvenile arrests, criminal justice resources) were included as potential influences of juvenile court outcomes.[19] The stages of intake, petition, initial appearance, adjudication, and judicial disposition were investigated to assess if the relationship between race and each juvenile court outcome is conditioned by community context.

In short, the macrosocial theory of inequality and social control was unable to account for race differences across the four counties in Iowa (Leiber, 2003). At times, certain community characteristics predicted the treatment of youth in certain counties, but results were not in the expected direction. Consistent with Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, Bond and Jackson counties subjected youth to increased social control compared to the counties of King and Parks. The former two counties were characterized by higher levels of inequality and a larger minority population. Contrary to expectations, race differences in court outcomes were found across all counties, regardless of community characteristics. While Black youth were subjected to increased social control in Bond County characterized by poverty, racial inequality, a large Black population, and high crime rates, the effect of structural disadvantage and racial inequality did not influence the relationship between race and social control within the other three jurisdictions.

Qualitative analyses of decision-makers throughout the four counties confirmed the quantitative findings in that race effects were found across all jurisdictions. The role of race in court outcomes played out differently throughout each county. For example, depending on the jurisdiction, decision-makers perceived that Black youth compared to Whites who were referred to the juvenile court were more delinquent, did not abide by middle-class standards, did not respect authority, and had dysfunctional families (Leiber, 2003).

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[19] Offender and referral characteristics of each case included gender, age, family status, school status, number of prior referrals, court authority, number of charges, crime severity, and crime type (Leiber, 2003).

At the individual-level, Leiber (2003) found that there was no relationship between being a minority youth, drug offending, and social control. Across the four counties, drug offending was either not predictive of court outcomes, or youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense received lenient outcomes compared to other types of offenses. While unexpected, this result is consistent with prior research. For example, Rodriguez (2010) found that drug offenders had an increased likelihood of being informally processed (i.e. diversion) and were less likely to have a petition filed against them alleging delinquency. Referrals for drug offenses were not significantly related to detention, adjudication, and disposition outcomes.

Results from race-specific models mirrored the additive models, in that race did not condition the relationship between drug offending and juvenile justice processing, or White drug offenders were less likely to receive disadvantaged outcomes, but no effect was found for Black or Native American drug offenders (Leiber, 2003). There was one exception to this overall finding in Parks County at the stage of intake. In the additive logistic regression model, drug offenders had an increased likelihood of receiving an intake referral. This effect was conditioned by race in that White drug offenders received the more severe outcome at intake in Park County, while no effect was found for Black drug offenders.

Leiber (2003) concluded that the relationship between race and social control is multifaceted and court outcomes are based on a mixture of community influences, the historical context of race, organizational context of courts, legal criteria, and extra-legal factors. Each of these aspects may impact the treatment of youth and in particular, minority youth, in different ways depending on each decision-making stage. Support for the macrolevel theory of inequality seems to fluctuate depending on the amount of variation in the community characteristics measured within each county. Since Leiber (2003) examined four counties in one state that were

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more homogeneous in composition than different, this could account for the limited support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective.

Contextual Applications of the Symbolic Threat Hypothesis

As introduced earlier, the symbolic threat hypothesis is an important component to Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrolevel theory of inequality and social control. The symbolic threat hypothesis proposed that different groups (e.g. youth, minorities) will be subjected to intensified social control when they symbolize to decision-makers as threats to middle class standards and values (Tittle & Curran, 1988). Tittle and Curran (1988) formulated the symbolic threat hypothesis based on results from an examination of juvenile court processing in thirty-one counties in the state of Florida.[20] A random sample of 200 cases within each of the thirty-one counties that were referred to the juvenile court in 1979 comprised the final sample. Based on the different research hypotheses, counties were disaggregated (i.e. low, medium, high) by the proportion of each county characterized as urban, median household incomes (wealth), economic inequality, minority presence, and youth presence based on data from the 1980 U.S. census.[21]

Six research hypotheses were tested based on prior research surrounding racial disparities in juvenile justice processing. The "general" hypothesis was taken from the conflict approach and labeling theory and predicted that youth from the lower class, are of racial/ethnicity minority, and who reside in non-intact homes will receive harsher dispositional outcomes. The

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[20] Individual-level studies have also utilized the symbolic threat thesis to examine the relationship between race/ethnicity and juvenile court outcomes (Leiber & Johnson, 2008; Leiber, Johnson, Fox, & Lacks, 2007; Leiber & Mack, 2002). For example, Leiber and Fox (2005) examined six decision-points (initial detention, intake, petition, initial appearance, adjudication, and judicial disposition) to see if race directly, indirectly, and in combination with other factors influenced juvenile court outcomes. Support for the symbolic threat thesis was found in that race was directly related to detention outcomes in that Black youth were more likely to be held in secure detention compared to Whites. This specific result corresponded to an indirect effect of race on later court proceedings through the use of detention.

[21] Race (White, Black, and Other), gender, age, offense type, number of charges, prior record, family socioeconomic status, family structure, and social integration (if the youth was enrolled in school or employed), were included as key independent and control variables (Tittle & Curran, 1988).

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"penetration" hypothesis predicted that class, race, and family situations will influence dispositions more so for offenders with a history of severe and prior referrals compared to youth who are referred to the court for the first time. The "rational organizational" hypothesis predicted that disparities in dispositions across class, race/ethnicity, and family structure will be greater in rural courts with a smaller caseload compared to courts that reside in urban locations with a larger caseload.

The "value dominance" hypothesis proposed that differences in social control across class, race/ethnicity, and family situation are contingent upon the wealth of the jurisdiction of where the court resides. The "type-of-offense" hypothesis predicted that class, racial/ethnic, and family composition disparities in dispositional severity will be most likely to occur when youth are referred to the court for a less serious offense and/or a "moralistic" offense, which is considered threatening by elites in the population. The final hypothesis was the "group threat" hypothesis which was more in line with conflict theory (Quinney, 1970; that power threat theory (Blalock, 1967; Hawkins, 1987). The hypothesis predicted that class and racial/ethnic disparities will occur in court dispositions will vary depending on the level of threat that elites feel towards minority groups and the poor.

Overall results were supportive the group threat hypothesis, which was refined by Tittle and Curran (1988) into the symbolic threat hypothesis. Race differences in the severity of judicial disposition were evident in counties characterized by a large proportion of non-White residents and young individuals. There was also a positive relationship between being a Black drug offender and sentence severity, regardless of community context. Therefore, the type of offense also seems to matter in the treatment of non-White youth within juvenile justice processing. Explanations for racial disparities in sentence severity were said to be based on the

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feelings, thoughts, and beliefs that decision-makers may have against juvenile offenders, especially minority youth (Tittle & Curran, 1988). Social psychological perceptions and stereotypes of youth that court actors embody reflect more of a symbolic rather than an actual threat.

Freiburger and Jordan (2011) measured county-levels of urbanism (population density), the percentage of Black residents, the percentage of residents living in poverty, and percentage of households with only a single-mother present derived from the 2000 U.S. census to use as indicators of threatening populations. Utilizing the symbolic threat hypothesis at the macrolevel and acknowledging that the hypothesis was integrated into the theory of inequality and social control, the purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between race (White and Black youth) and social control based on decisions by court actors to petition a case to the juvenile court. All misdemeanor and felony youth in 2005 in the state of West Virginia were included in the final sample.[22]

Freiburger and Jordan (2011) found that at the individual level, race did not directly impact petition decisions, and youth referred to the court for a drug offense were less likely to receive a petition for further court proceedings. At the macrolevel, counties characterized by high levels of poverty and female-headed households significantly influenced the mean rate of petition, but results were unexpected. There was an inverse effect between the underclass characteristics of poverty and female-headed households with youth receiving a petition. A potential reason for this unexpected finding is that decision-makers at the petition stage may be "correcting" for overzealous arrest practices of minority youth on behalf of greater police

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[22] Freiburger and Jordan (2011) also included measures of gender, age, school performance (mainstream education versus non-mainstream education), family status, crime severity, offense type, prior adjudicated offenses, prior arrests, type of referral (law enforcement versus non-law enforcement), and detention.

presence in underclass communities (Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Rodriguez, 2007).

Results also found that Black youth who reside in counties characterized by high levels of poverty were 14% more likely to be petitioned to the juvenile court compared to Whites who reside in similarly situated communities. This specific result is consistent with the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) and the inequality and social control perspective (Sampson & Laub, 1993) in that minorities from disadvantaged and threatening communities are subject to increased social control because of the threat that they pose to decision-makers and middle class standards. In sum, the research by Freiburger and Jordan (2011) adds to the complexity of when and how community context matters in its relationship with race and social control.

As described earlier, both the racial threat thesis (Blalock, 1967) and symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1993) offer different explanations for when and how context and race matter in the social control of offenders.[23] Thomas and colleagues (2013) put forth a theoretical competition between both perspectives to determine what contextual influences, individually and in combination with race, would affect preadjudication

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[23] Only a few studies have examined the relationship between Hawkins' (1987) or Blalock's (1967) versions of the power threat thesis and juvenile court outcomes, either individually or in competition with other perspectives (Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Thomas et al., 2013). For example, Frazier and colleagues (1992) tested Hawkins' (1987) revised version of the conflict perspective (which is a power-threat argument) with all delinquent referrals in 32 Florida counties from 1979-1981. Results indicated support for the traditional conflict perspective rather than Hawkins' (1987) revised conflict model because counties characterized by a large White population corresponded to harsher court outcomes for Black juvenile offenders. Stated differently, an increase in the proportion of Whites in a county resulted in a widening of the racial gap where Black youth received disadvantaged outcomes at the stages of intake, petition, and judicial disposition. The research by Dannefer and Schutt (1982) found some support for Blalock's (1967) hypothesis that the size of the minority population corresponded to harsh juvenile court outcomes for minority offenders. Results indicated that Black youth were more likely than Hispanic and White youth to be brought to the juvenile court by police in a county (River County, New Jersey) that represented a large proportion of minorities. Hispanics were also less likely than Whites to be released by the police in this specific county. This effect was not found at judicial disposition, as Blacks and Hispanics in River County were more likely to have their charges dismissed, while White youth received the most disadvantaged outcome of residential placement.

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detention decisions. All delinquent referrals[24] between 2000 and 2008 within 34 counties in a Southeastern state were merged with 2000 U.S. census data to predict the likelihood of detention. Three contextual indicators of racial threat[25] and symbolic threat served as proxies for each theoretical perspective. Symbolic threat was measured by an index of racial socioeconomic inequality. Racial socioeconomic inequality was constructed based on ratios of Black to White poverty, residents over 25 years of age who did not graduate high school, and female-headed households with children. Various structural measures that have been found to influence detention outcomes were also included as control variables (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). The population size of each county, index crime rates, and concentrated disadvantage (an index of county-level poverty, unemployment, and female-headed households) were all taken into consideration within each statistical model.

Results from two-level HGLM additive models showed that all of the structural factors failed to directly impact the mean rate of detention between counties.[26] While Black youth had a greater probability of being detained compared to Whites, in that Blacks were 1.17 times more likely than Whites to be detained prior to the adjudication hearing, drug offenders were inversely

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[24] Age, gender, crime severity, and offense type (drug offense versus all other types of offenses) were included as potential level-1 predictors of preadjudication detention (Thomas et al., 2013).

[25] Racial composition was captured by the percentage of Black residents within each county, as well as a squared term of this specific measure to test for potential curvilinear effects. Economic threat was measured by the ratio of White to Black unemployment rates.

[26] Failure to find support specifically for the racial/minority threat perspective throughout juvenile justice processing is not uncommon. For example, Leiber and colleagues (forthcoming) did not find support for Blalock's (1967) power threat/minority threat perspective on intake, adjudication, and judicial disposition outcomes. Increases in Black and Hispanic populations did not influence the social control of youth, and measures of economic threat (in the form of White-to-Black and White-to-Hispanic unemployment ratios) did not predict harsh juvenile court outcomes for minority youth in the expected direction. For example, at the stage of intake, as the White-to-Black unemployment ratio increased, the probability that a youth received an intake referral decreased. This was regardless of the race/ethnicity of the juvenile offender. Blalock's (1967) perspective argued that this relationship should result in severity then leniency (i.e. an inverted "U" shape), instead of an overall inverse effect. Concerning the effect of the White-to-Hispanic unemployment ratio on intake decisions, the results contradicted Blalock's (1967) propositions because this measure of Hispanic economic threat resulted in a higher probability of intake referrals for all youth (instead of more severe followed by lenient outcomes).

related to detention outcomes. Support, however, was found for the symbolic threat hypothesis instead of the racial threat thesis based on the results from cross-level interactions. Racial inequality was found to condition the effect between race and the decision to detain youth. Stated differently, Black youth who resided in communities characterized by racial socioeconomic inequality were more likely to be detained compared to White youth who resided in disadvantaged counties. This finding supports both the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) and Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective that structural characteristics of racial inequality can lead to disadvantaged outcomes for minority youth. Overall, Thomas and colleagues (2013) attributed the findings to the likelihood that racial inequality promotes the influence of stereotypes in determining increased social control. In particular, the notion that Black youth pose to decision-makers as threats to middle class values, standards and beliefs (Tittle & Curran, 1988).

With a focus strictly on the influence of social structure and its relationship with race, drug offending, and social control (i.e. the decision to withhold adjudication), Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith (2009) hypothesized that counties characterized by threatening populations will subject Black drug offenders to increased social control compared to White and Other drug offenders. [27] The analyses included numerous county-level measures (level-2) of concentrated disadvantage (percent female-headed households, percent persons living in poverty, percent

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[27] Parker and Maggard (2005) examined race-specific drug arrests as a form of social control based on structural measures of urban disadvantage (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987), social disorganization (Krivo & Peterson, 2000; Sampson, 1987), and racial threat (Blalock, 1967; Brown & Warner, 1992). Indicators of urban disadvantage and racial threat were negatively related to total Black drug arrests, and at times Black possession drug arrests. While these results were unexpected, it may be that the effects of urban disadvantage and a large proportion of minorities on Black drug arrests eventually levels off in communities persistently characterized by concentrated disadvantage. In other words, variation in already high levels of urban disadvantage may result in a slight decrease in Black drug arrests (Parker & Maggard, 2005; Krivo & Peterson, 2000). However, increases in city-level racial inequality between Whites and Blacks significantly increased both total Black drug arrests and Black possession drug arrests.

female-headed households in poverty, percent families receiving public assistance, percent families below $10,000 income, and percent nonmarried households), racial inequality (ratio of Black to White unemployment rates), index crime rates, large minority populations (percent Black residents) and individual-level variables (level-1) in HGLM models.[28]

Withholding adjudication is considered a less severe outcome after adjudication has been decided. The juvenile court determines that a youth committed a delinquent act, but having adjudication withheld allows the offender to have certain records expunged and rights reinstated (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009). Results from additive and interaction HGLM models indicated that Black drug offenders were less likely to have adjudication withheld compared to Whites, yet all county-level indicators failed to impact the mean rate of the adjudication withheld decision. Consistent with literature that legal variables influence juvenile court outcomes (Caudill, Morris, Sayed, Yun, & DeLisi, 2013; Cauffman et al., 2007; Tracy, 2005), youth who were charged with a misdemeanor drug offense were more likely to have adjudication withheld compared to youth charged with a felony drug offense (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009). There was also no evidence of cross-level interactions between race and structural measures of disadvantage, racial inequality, minority populations, and the crime rate. In other words, structural characteristics did not condition the relationship between Black drug offenders and increased social control at the stage of adjudication. In sum, at the individual-level, decision-makers may view Black drug offenders as a threatening population and subject them to increased social control (DeJong & Jackson, 19985; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Leiber & Fox, 2005; Tittle & Curran, 1988). However, the failure to find contextual influences in the decision to withhold adjudication from Black drug offenders points to the possibility that this type of

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[28] Individual-level variables include age, gender, offense type (misdemeanor drug offense versus felony drug offense), and prior record (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009).

offender is seen as threatening and problematic regardless of disadvantaged community characteristics.[29]

Structural/Concentrated Disadvantage and Court Outcomes

Paralleling the community characteristics in studies of Sampson and Laub's (1993) and Tittle and Curran's (1988) perspectives, numerous contextual factors in the form of structural and concentrated disadvantage have been used as indicators of communities that inhabit threatening populations (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). The nature of these contextual indicators, however, differs throughout criminological literature. Some structural indicators mirror the theory of inequality and social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993), while other variables resemble different types of indicators of disadvantaged communities. For example, some research that has focused on the relationship between community characteristics and juvenile court outcomes has measured threatening populations based on single (individual) indicators. For instance, some studies include measures of racial economic inequality and urbanization (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007).

Other studies have employed indexes of structural or concentrated disadvantage (Rodriguez, 2010, 2013) that include various indicators of poverty and female-headed households, among others. Depending on the nature of the research questions within each study, specific hypotheses differed in proposing how structural context influences juvenile justice processing. While some studies were exploratory in nature in regards to what structural characteristics may influence the treatment of youth (i.e. Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005;

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[29] Community characteristics have also influenced how prosecutors would hypothetically sentence different types of drug and alcohol juvenile offenders at judicial disposition. For example, Terry-McElrath and colleagues (2005) found that more affluent White communities were more likely to sentence youth to community-based corrections (e.g. court-ordered probation with treatment service or home detention) instead of minimal reaction (e.g. victim-offender mediation, community service, or fines). Community context in terms of racial composition and income levels did not impact judicial disposition outcomes between receiving community corrections and out-of-home placement.

Rodriguez, 2010), other investigations predicted either severe or lenient treatment of minorities compared to Whites depending on the community characteristics of where youth reside (Rodriguez, 2007, 2013).

Armstrong and Rodriguez (2005) examined four county-level measures of urbanization, racial composition (ethnic heterogeneity), racial economic inequality, and crime rate to assess the influence of both contextual and individual-level predictors of preadjudication detention of youth who were referred to the juvenile court. [30] Utilizing 1990 U.S. census data and all delinquent referrals in 1990 from 65 counties in a northeastern state, Armstrong and Rodriquez (2005) attempted to: (1) identify which individual characteristics of juvenile offenders (e.g. offense type (violent versus non-violent), prior referrals, race, ethnicity, gender, age, living arrangement, and family income level) predict the likelihood of preadjudication detention; and (2) what county-level characteristics predict the use of detention, net of the individual-level measures. Results from two-level hierarchical generalized linear models (HGLM) indicated that at the individual-level (level-1), numerous legal and extra-legal variables were significantly related to an increased likelihood of placing youth in secure detention. Black youth were 1.48 times more likely than Whites to be detained, Hispanic juvenile delinquents were over two and half times more likely to be detained compared to Whites, and Other youth had a 2.03 increase in likelihood in receiving detention prior to their adjudication hearing compared to Whites.

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[30] While Armstrong and Rodriguez predicted urbanization to influence detention decisions, Taylor and colleagues (2012) also considered the role that geographical context plays in race differences in juvenile case outcomes. Based on the liberation hypothesis, it was predicted that in an urban county, legal factors would predict harsh outcomes for juvenile offenders and these results would not be conditioned by race, while the influence of race and other extra-legal and legal criteria would matter more in a suburban county (Taylor et al., 2012). Contrary to expectations, the influence of legal and extra-legal characteristics across White and Non-White youth was more prominent in an urban county versus a suburban county. Kempf-Leonard and Sontheimer (1995) examined racial disparities across urban, suburban, and rural courts in Pennsylvania. Black and White youth were more likely to be detained in suburban courts compared to rural courts, and race did not affect detention decisions in urban courts.

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Results from the inclusion of community-level indicators (level-2) in the HLGM model confirm that structural context, in some ways, influenced the possibility of youth being detained throughout juvenile justice proceedings. The addition of the structural measures with the level-1 variables resulted in an increase in overall model fit, adding significantly to the explained variance. The findings, however, found only one contextual measure (racial composition) significantly influenced the likelihood of detention. Counties characterized by a higher percentage of non-White residents were more likely to detain juvenile offenders. Cross-level interactions were not estimated, therefore the research by Armstrong and Rodriguez (2005) was unable to identify if certain racial/ethnic groups (instead of all youth in general) were more likely to be detained in counties with higher levels of racial heterogeneity. Even though only one county-level measure was predictive of preadjudication detention, Armstrong and Rodriguez (2005) concluded that community context matters and both individual and contextual characteristics influence the decision to detain youth.

Rodriguez (2007) extended the research of Armstrong and Rodriguez (2005) and investigated the direct and interactive effects of race/ethnicity and community-level indicators on detention decisions. All delinquent physical referrals[31] from 2000-2002 in Maricopa County, Arizona, were used to assess if detention outcomes are influenced by the race and ethnicity of juveniles (White, Black, Latino/a, and American Indian), and/or the economic and crime conditions of youths' communities. Using attribution theory[32] as a theoretical background,

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[31] A physical referral is a case that begins with a police officer referring a youth to the juvenile court. Following the referral, a youth is screened for detention, and a detention hearing is conducted within 24 hours of the initial referral. For the purpose of the Rodriguez's (2007) study, only physical referrals were included in the sample.

[32] The role of attributions and juvenile court outcomes has been primarily explored at the individual-level. Bridges and Steen (1998) found support for an attribution framework concerning juvenile case outcomes because negative internal attributions were more likely assigned to Black juvenile offenders, and negative external attributions were assigned to White youth. Both sets of attributions influenced court actors' perceptions of future recidivism by the offender and sentence recommendations. Court actors believed that Black youth compared to

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Rodriguez (2007) hypothesized that detention outcomes would vary depending on the race and ethnicity of juvenile offenders, yet minority youth would be subject to detention more often than Whites. Economic and crime conditions of youths' communities would also influence detention decisions in that juveniles who reside in highly disadvantaged communities would be less likely to receive detention compared to more prosperous counties.

The justification for the above hypothesis centered on the role that external attributions (e.g. negative community conditions) play in decreasing the culpability of juvenile offenders. This latter hypothesis also had direct race/ethnic implications, proposing that depending on the racial/ethnicity of the juvenile offender, some minority groups who live in impoverished and high-crime communities will be less likely to receive detention than White youth who also reside in disadvantaged communities. Stated differently, the residential indicators of where a youth lives may mediate the relationship between race/ethnicity and the decision to detain. Based on the location of the study and the large proportion of Latino/a residents, differential outcomes for Latinos/as versus Blacks may be evident in detention decisions.

Whites were more dangerous, culpable, and less amenable to treatment based on negative internal attributions that are considerably linked to static personality traits (Bridges & Steen, 1998). Attributions that court officers have of juvenile offenders have also been argued to be more complex than Bridges and Steen (1998) proposed. Graham and Lowery (2004) critiqued Bridges and Steen's (1998) conclusions and state that attributions are more complex in nature, and should take into consideration the role of controllability (if an offender engaged in deviant behavior on their own volition) and stability (e.g. mental illness) (Harris, 2009). Steen, Bond, Bridges, and Kubrin (2005) further explored the role of attributions in decisions made by probation officers and found that court actors were more likely to construct attributions of a youth's character only when assessing Black and White moderate- or high-risk offenders. Attributions of youth were not found to be related in decisions for low-risk offenders across race. Probation officers were more likely to assign internal attributions to Black moderate-risk offenders and external attributions for White moderate-risk youth. Race differences in attributions for high-risk offenders did not follow the predictions originally argued by Bridges and Steen (1998). Attributions of Black high-risk offenders focused more on Black youth making poor lifestyle choices to reinforce a continued criminal lifestyle, while attributions of White high-risk offenders focused on lifestyle choices to deter future offending behavior.

In order to estimate the influence of community characteristics on likelihood of detention, Rodriguez (2007) linked 2000 U.S. census data to each juvenile offender's residential zip-code.[33] The structural-level measures used as indicators of disadvantaged and crime-prone communities include the unemployment rate, poverty level, and an aggregated measure of all delinquency referrals within each zip code. Non-linear terms of each community indicator were also constructed to test for potential curvilinear relationships between structure and detention. Due to issues with multicollinearity, separate HGLM regression equations were estimated for each community-level measure.

Results indicated that while the main effects of unemployment, poverty, and delinquency did not directly impact the mean rate of detention, and referrals for a drug offense were not predictive of detention, other individual-level and cross-level interaction effects were found to influence detention decisions. In the unemployment and poverty models, Black youth were .59 and .56 times less likely than Whites to be detained, respectively. No differences were found between Latinos/as, American Indians, and Whites across both models. Furthermore, the relationship between race/ethnicity and detention at the individual-level was mediated by characteristics of disadvantage.

Results from cross-level interactions found a curvilinear relationship between being Latino/a and residing in a disadvantaged community on the detention outcome. The probability that Latinos/as were detained compared to Whites depended on the level of unemployment and poverty within each zip code. Specifically, as unemployment increased in a community, the

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[33] In addition to measures of race and ethnicity, Rodriguez (2007) included numerous individual-level potential predictors of detention. For example, gender, age, school status (attending versus not attending), offense at referral (felony person, felony property, misdemeanor person, misdemeanor property, drugs, public peace), court status (e.g. under court authority), priors (prior felonies, misdemeanors, status offenses, detention stays), and the youth's detention screening score (below 12 versus above or equal to 12) were included in all statistical models.

probability that a Latino/a was detained decreased to a point (8 percent), then after this point, increasing levels of unemployment resulted in an increase in the probability of being detained (Rodriguez, 2007; pg. 645). For Whites, higher rates of unemployment resulted in severe outcomes in detention up to a point (9 percent), then after this point resulted in a decreasing probability of detention. Therefore, in communities characterized by low unemployment, Latino/a youth had a higher probability of detention compared to Whites, yet the probability that Latino/a and White youth was detained was more equal as unemployment increased after a specific point. No significant cross-level interactions were found between unemployment rates and the mean rate of detention for Black and American Indian juvenile offenders.

The effect of poverty within a community produced a similar effect for Latino/a and White youth, but there were larger disparities between both groups and unemployment compared to poverty. Once again, in communities characterized by low poverty, Latinos/as were more likely to be detained compared to Whites, yet at poverty continues to increase, similar results were found for both Whites and Latinos/as. Concerning the delinquency model, Black youth overall were .49 times less likely than Whites to be detained, yet no main effects for Latinos/as and American Indians were found. However, the results from cross-level interactions found that Latino/a youth who resided in high crime communities were less likely to be detained than Whites who resided in similarly situated disadvantaged neighborhoods. No cross-level interactions were found for Black youth or American Indians, therefore community characteristics in the form of high crime rates did not influence the relationship between race and detention for Black youth.

Results from this specific study show support that the relationship between macrolevel context and detention may be indirect (in combination with race and ethnicity), rather than

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structure directly contributing to juvenile court outcomes. Both the lenient and harsh treatment of Latinos/as compared to Whites in conjunction with varying community characteristics may be seen by decision-makers as an emerging threatening population[34] and in need of social control. This conclusion can also attribute to why Black youth were not influenced by disadvantaged community characteristics and detention outcomes, since Latinos/as comprises the largest minority group in Maricopa County (Rodriguez, 2007). As with the research by Armstrong and Rodriguez (2005), conclusions from Rodriguez (2007) confirm that structural context in the form of disadvantaged communities matter in juvenile justice processing.[35]

Rodriguez (2013) utilized an index of concentrated disadvantage to examine the applicability of attribution theory in regards to racial disparities at the juvenile court outcome of judicial disposition. Attribution theory was interpreted in a different manner than in Rodriguez (2007) and it was hypothesized that youth who reside in disadvantaged communities will be more likely than those who live in affluent areas to have higher rates of correctional confinement (versus community supervision). [36]

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[34] The recent changing political climate in Arizona could make decision-makers wary of illegal immigration and border security (Rodriguez, 2007, pg. 649), deeming Latino/a juvenile offenders as a threatening population to the rest of society.

[35] An index of structural disadvantage was included in the research by Rodriguez (2010) which assessed the cumulative effects of race and ethnicity on five juvenile court outcomes in a random sample of delinquent and status offenders throughout Arizona in 2000. Although the influence of community characteristics on case outcomes was not the primary focus of the study, results confirmed prior research (Armstrong and Rodriguez, 2005) that context matters in the decision to detain youth. Zip codes characterized by high levels of structural disadvantage (an index of the percentage of residents who were living in poverty, had female-headed households with children under 18, less than a high school education, receiving public assistance, and unemployed) significantly and positively impacted the mean rate of detention. While structural disadvantage did not directly affect the other dependent variables of diversion, petition, adjudication, or judicial disposition, youth who resided in underclass communities received more disadvantaged outcomes at these stages through the effect that detention predicted harsh treatment at each stage after detention.

[36] Attribution theory has also been integrated with the focal concerns perspective to provide an additional understanding of how offender and offense information is interpreted and subsequently influences juvenile court outcomes. Harris (2009) found that court actor's focal concerns about an offender's blameworthiness, protection of the community, and practical court implications influenced attributions about juvenile offenders. Tied to these attributions were perceived notions of a youth's level of dangerousness, intent, sophistication, and planning. Support

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Race/ethnic specific predictions were made in that minority youth who reside in underclass communities will receive the more disadvantaged outcome than Whites who reside in similar communities. Instead of external attributions being predictive of lenient treatment of some minority groups as reported previously by the earlier research of Rodriguez (2007), she argued that in another study, residing in a disadvantage community limits a youth's opportunities for a prosocial life (Rodriguez, 2013). Decision-makers may perceive youth in these communities as needing correctional confinement because they are vulnerable to such adverse conditions (negative role models, criminal opportunities, etc.) within their community (Rodriguez, 2013, pg. 7).

All delinquent physical referrals that reached the judicial disposition stage from January 2000 to December 2002 in Phoenix, Arizona were included in the final sample of Black, White, and Latino/a youth. Structural context was measured by a concentrated disadvantage index that was constructed based on data from the 2000 U.S. census of zip codes that included measures of poverty, public assistance, unemployment, residents who had less than a high school education, and female-headed households who had children under the age of 18.[37]

Rodriguez (2013) found that concentrated disadvantage positively affected the mean rate of correctional confinement, in that youth who resided in zip codes characterized by concentrated disadvantage had a higher probability of receiving a sentence of confinement at judicial disposition. In regards to race, while Black youth were 84% more likely, and Latinos/as were over two times more likely to be confined compared to Whites, concentrated disadvantage did

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was found for the integrated focal concerns/attributions approach in that "court actors, guided by their focal concerns, use causal attributions to arrive at sentencing decisions" (Harris, 2009, pg. 246; see also Harris, 2008).

[37] Individual-level variables included gender, age, school status, family public assistance (no versus yes), offense type, court status, detention (detained versus not detained), and priors (felonies, misdemeanors, status offenses)).

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not mediate the relationship between race/ethnicity and disposition decisions. At the individual-level, drug, felony person, and public peace offenses were not predictive of judicial disposition, while misdemeanor property and person offenses were inversely related to correctional confinement compared to felony property cases (Rodriguez, 2013). Juveniles who were referred to the court from disadvantaged communities were at a risk for harsh court outcomes, regardless of race and ethnicity. In short, the conclusions from Rodriguez (2013) mirrored prior research that has focused on the role that structural disadvantage, concentrated disadvantage, and underclass characteristics play in the complexities of decision-making (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010).

Focusing on different macrolevel dimensions of deprivation, Bridges and colleagues (1995) examined the relationship between county-level measures and race-specific (White versus minority) rates of juvenile confinement of all counties in the state of Washington in 1990. U.S. census data from 1990 provided contextual measures of minority concentration (percent non-White), urbanization, and economic deprivation/inequality (ratio of minorities versus Whites receiving public assistance). Additional county-level variables were also included as potential influences of juvenile confinement. County violent crime rates from the 1990 Uniform Crime Reports, White and minority youth referral rates, and county court workload (ratio of annual juvenile referrals to the number of juvenile court judges) were also included in all statistical models (Bridges et al., 1995).

Results indicated that racial disparities in confinement rates can be contributed to variations in violent crime rates across counties.[38] Non-White youth were more likely than White

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[38] The impact of minority concentration, urban concentration (urbanization), and economic inequality/disadvantage on confinement rates is complex. For example, minority concentration did not directly influence race differences in confinement rates, yet counties characterized by a high level of non-Whites was positively related to the minority juvenile referral rate, but was not a significant predictor for the White referral rate.

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juvenile offenders to be sentenced to confinement in counties characterized by high violent crime rates (Bridges et al., 1995). Bridges and colleagues (1995) offer one potential explanation for this finding that involves the correlation between being a minority offender and having a prior record. If non-White juvenile offenders are more likely to have prior referrals than a White youth, which results in higher rates of confinement, then counties characterized by violent crime rates are due to a concentration of minorities who are repeat or habitual offenders. Bridges and colleagues (1995) also acknowledged that non-White youth who reside in high crime areas are perceived by decision-makers as a threatening or fearful population and therefore social control is intensified for minority youth in these specific communities.[39] This conclusion provided support that the symbolic threat minorities pose to communities can be based on stereotypes and/or a fear of crime by minority youth (Tittle & Curran, 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1993).[40]

Economic inequality/disadvantage did not directly affect White or Non-White confinement rates, but at times were indirectly related to confinement rates through race-specific juvenile referral rates. Urban concentration was inversely related to White confinement rates, but was not a significant predictor of the confinement of minority youth.

[39] Bridges and colleagues (1995) also included qualitative data to support their findings. In addition to their conclusion that some court actors may be threatened by minority youth who reside in high-crime communities, other court decision-makers stressed that racial disparities in social control occurred because court actors have a vested interest in "child saving" youth who live in disadvantaged communities (Bridges et al., 1995, pg. 151). Non-White youth were more likely to be confined because court actors felt that youths' needs were not met by their community. Social control on behalf of the court was to protect these youth from returning back to neglected communities.

[40] Wu and colleagues (1997) tested what they considered a "general conflict model", yet seemed more of a power-threat argument based on Hawkins' (1987) and Blalock's (1967) theoretical assumptions. Utilizing delinquent and "unruly" juvenile court cases from seventeen counties in Ohio in 1989, Wu et al. (1997) found that based on race-specific models, the influence of community characteristics on juvenile court outcomes was more supportive of the symbolic threat thesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) than the power threat perspective (Blalock, 1967; Hawkins, 1987). Counties that had a large population of White residents and a large minority youth population resulted in disadvantaged outcomes for minority juvenile offenders. Decision-makers may view minority juvenile offenders are particularly dangerous or unruly when they reside in a county that has a large percentage of minority youth in the general population. Furthermore, "underclass" minority youth who lived in counties characterized by affluence also had an increased likelihood to be confined at judicial disposition.

Summary

The previously described studies illustrated that the relationship between structural context, race/ethnicity, and social control in the form of juvenile court outcomes is complex in nature (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Focusing strictly on examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective, the initial test of the theory found that youth, especially Black drug offenders, were subjected to increased social control at the stages of detention and judicial disposition. Subsequent investigations of the inequality and social control perspective have found that community characteristics of underclass poverty and racial inequality influenced the decisions of court actors to the disadvantage of minority youth (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Thomas et al., 2013). The applicability of the perspective, however, may depend on what stage of the juvenile justice system is examined and the amount of variation in structural characteristics across jurisdictions.

In more general terms, some prior research confirms that counties characterized by threatening populations are directly related to increased social control of youth (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2010, 2013; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Other studies, however, have found that context is either not predictive (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2013; Rodriguez, 2007; Thomas et al., 2013) or is inversely related to court proceedings (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011).

When community characteristics of disadvantage, inequality, or poverty fail to directly influence the treatment of youth throughout juvenile justice proceedings, it may be that the social control of youth is dependent on the offender's race/ethnicity and negative features of their environment. Black youth have been subjected to harsh court outcomes in counties characterized by a large youth and non-White population (Tittle & Curran, 1988), violent crime (Bridges et al.,

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1995), underclass poverty (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Sampson & Laub, 1993), and racial socioeconomic inequality (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Thomas et al., 2013). In regards to the social control of Hispanic youth, the relationship between ethnicity and court outcomes has also been conditioned by structural context. Levels of poverty and unemployment in counties have determined both lenient and harsh treatment of Latinos/as, and high crime communities have been inversely related to social control for Latino/a youth (Rodriguez, 2007).

Even though the literature has suggested that race/ethnicity can interact with contextual aspects of communities, macrolevel studies of juvenile justice processing still find effects of race and ethnicity on court outcomes at the individual-level (Leiber, 2003). These results also illustrate the complexities of decision-making in that minority youth are subjected to both harsh and lenient treatment throughout juvenile court outcomes. Even with taking into consideration community context, research has shown that Black and Latino youth are still recipients of disadvantaged outcomes (Bray, Sample, & Kempf-Leonard, 2005; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013), yet racial disparities that disadvantage White youth have also been found (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2007).

The effects of offender and offense characteristics in regards to race and drug offending have also been found at the individual-level and in conjunction with community context. Drug offenders have received both harsh (DeJong & Jackson, 1998) and lenient treatment (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2010; Thomas et al., 2013) through numerous stages of the juvenile justice system, though some studies have found no relationship between drug offending and court outcomes (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010). While research has not yielded consistent support that drug

offenders are increasingly subjected to social control, Black juvenile drug offenders compared to White youth are often the recipients of punitive outcomes (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Leiber & Fox, 2005; Tittle & Curran, 1988). This is especially true for Black drug offenders who reside in disadvantaged communities characterized by underclass poverty and racial inequality (Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

In sum, while various empirical examinations have investigated under what conditions community context plays in the relationship between race/ethnicity and juvenile court outcomes, only a limited number of studies have tested the macrolevel perspective of inequality and social control (i.e. Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Of those studies, support has been mixed in finding that Sampson and Laub's perspective can explain the social control of youth. Furthermore, these specific studies, along with other multi-level examinations of juvenile justice processing, are not without limitations. The next chapter will present both the limitations and suggestions for future research based on prior research in this area. The limitations and suggestions from past studies emphasize the justification for why the current study is needed.

Chapter Four:

Implications for the Present Study

Recall that the three general research questions that frame the present study attempt to answer if (1) the community characteristics put forth by Sampson and Laub (1993) predict the social control of youth within the last decade, (2) minority youth (Black and Hispanic) and drug offenders (possession versus distribution) are subjected to greater social control compared to their similarly situated counterparts, and (3) any observed racial/ethnic and drug offending relationships with social control are conditioned by underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality and result in greater social control. Prior research has found that community characteristics either individually or in combination with race/ethnicity and drug offending influences juvenile court outcomes (Bridges et al., 1995; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2010; Tittle & Curran, 1988). Early examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrosocial inequality perspective in particular have found some support that communities characterized by racial inequality and underclass poverty were more likely to subject youth to increased social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). The previously described studies along with the overall research that has assessed the influence of context and juvenile court outcomes provides justification for the importance to examine the effects of race/ethnicity across different types of communities. This prior research, however, is not without limitations, and serves as the impetus for the current study.

The following chapter will describe the limitations of prior research, discuss the implications for the present study and introduce the research hypotheses. Justification for this study centers on: (1) the need for a more recent test of Sampson and Laub's perspective; (2) the opportunity to investigate the continued influence of the war on drugs on juvenile court outcomes; (3) the need to disaggregate the drug offender into more finite subgroups; (4) the inclusion of various racial and ethnic groups; (5) the ability to utilize more advanced statistical techniques to simultaneously assess the influence of community and individual-level characteristics across juvenile court outcomes; and (6) the need for various methodological advancements in the study of community characteristics and juvenile court outcomes.

Specifically, the current study investigates each research question by examining the applicability of Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrosocial theory of inequality and social control with more recent data from 2000-2010. While the treatment of drug offenders in general will be assessed compared to other types of offenders (property, person, and other), drug offenders will also be disaggregated between youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug possession or drug distribution. The sample comprises all White, Black, and Hispanic youth referred to the juvenile court in all counties of a Northeast state during the selected time frame. Hierarchical linear models simultaneously assess the influence of both individual and community-level characteristics on juvenile court outcomes and include various methodological advancements. For example, the current study estimates cross-level interactions, examines multiple juvenile court decision-stages, takes into consideration important predictors of juvenile court outcomes, and measures individual-level data within multiple counties. These overall methodological improvements contribute to the body of literature surrounding macrolevel research of case

outcomes as a form of social control. Each of the justifications for the current research are discussed in greater detail throughout the chapter.

The Need for More Recent Data

Support for the initial test of the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control was established based on the findings that counties characterized by a presence of the underclass and racial inequality were more likely to subject youth to greater social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993). The effect of these specific community characteristics on juvenile court outcomes was more prominent for Black youth, especially Black drug offenders. While the overall findings corresponded with the theoretical model proposed by Sampson and Laub (1993), the data used to examine the theoretical assumptions were from 1980 U.S. census and juvenile case records from a nationally representative sample of 322 counties in 1985. Utilizing a nationally representative sample of counties is a noticeable strength of the initial test of the perspective, however Sampson and Laub (1993, pg. 307) acknowledged that their findings are preliminary and future research should examine if the same community characteristics can influence juvenile court outcomes over time.

The three subsequent examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective also used individual and contextual-level data from the 1980s through the early 1990s (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). The time frame of the original study provides an opportunity for future research to examine if the theoretical model proposed by Sampson and Laub (1993) has relevance with more recent data, or only historically specific to the 1980s.[41] While the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control argues that underclass Blacks,

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[41] Additional macrolevel examinations of juvenile court outcomes have utilized data from the late 1970s through early 2000s (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Bridges et al., 1995; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010; 2013; Tittle & Curran, 1988), which confirms an overall need in the literature to examine community-level influences of juvenile court outcomes with more recent data.

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individually and in combination with drug offending will be subjected to social control, this argument may still be applicable today.

For example, an additional and important conclusion from Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial test is that Black youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense in underclass communities were more likely to be sentenced to out-of-home placement at judicial disposition. This effect was not found for White drug offenders (Sampson & Laub, 1993). While this finding is important in arguing that Black juvenile drug offenders are seen as threatening to middle class values and standards and are therefore subject to increased social control, this study examines if Black drug offenders receive more severe juvenile court outcomes with data from 2000-2010. It has been argued that the symbolism of an "underclass" threat based on the war on drugs has influenced, and continues to affect juvenile court outcomes (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997).

More current research has suggested that Blacks are still stereotyped today as dangerous and threatening, which results in perceptions that "associate Blacks with drug use and drug use with Blacks" (Welch, 2007, pg. 280). Recent examinations of drug offenders within the adult criminal justice system have found unwarranted racial disparities in terms of arrests, convictions, and sentences (Brennan & Spohn, 2008; Curry & Corral-Camacho, 2008; Tonry, 2011). For example, before the launch of the war on drugs in the 1980s, the adult arrest rate for Black drug offenders in 1978 was twice as large as Whites. In the mid-1980s, the drug arrest rate for Blacks was three times larger than Whites. By the late 1980s, Black drug offenders were arrested at a rate six times larger than Whites. Since the late 1980s until 2011, racial disparities in arrest rates continue to occur as Black drug offenders are arrested at a rate between three and four times higher than White drug offenders (Snyder & Mulako-Wangota, 2013; Tonry, 2011). Supporters of the differential offending argument would state that the reason that Blacks are overrepresented

in drug arrests is because they are more likely to possess or distribute drugs compared to Whites. Some research, however, has found that Blacks do not use or sell drugs at higher rates than Whites (Johnson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2012; Mitchell, 2005; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006; Tonry, 2011), which supports the selection bias argument.

If the current study finds that Black juvenile drug offenders are subjected to increased social control, then it could be assumed that the historical (see also Peterson & Hagan, 1984), political, and cultural influence of the war on drugs still continues to the present day. As argued by Crawford and colleagues (1998), "… it may be that the crack panic of the late 1980s so racially typified the drug problem that even as the war effort subsided, the racial threat of drugs has endured…" (pg. 505). Therefore, while punitive drug policies were implemented in the 1970s under the Nixon administration, and the 1980s brought about President Reagan's official launch of the war on drugs, it is possible that Black drug offenders continue to be stereotyped as a threatening population to decision-makers at the present time (Bobo & Thompson, 2006; Provine, 2007; Tonry, 1995, 2011).

Disaggregating by the Type of Drug Offender

This study also examines if Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective could benefit from various refinements or modifications of the drug offender and the impact of social control. More specifically, Sampson and Laub (1993) generalized their initial findings to all forms of drug offending. In addition, some prior macrolevel research has also aggregated different types of drug referrals into a uniform drug offense category (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Rodriguez, 2007; Thomas et al., 2013; Tittle & Curran, 1988), or has compared violent and non-violent offenses with drug offending categorized as a nonviolent offense (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005). Although the relationship between drug offending and juvenile court outcomes was not

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the primary focus of the above mentioned studies, potential masking effects may be occurring since different types of drug referrals can result in differentials in juvenile case outcomes (Steen et al., 2005; Spohn & Sample, 2013). As introduced earlier, it may be that the type of drug offense influences the relationship between drug offending and social control. These effects may also play out differently across race and ethnicity (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009), and community disadvantage.

For instance, Steen and colleagues (2005) put forth a theoretical perspective that focused on the role of attributions (Albonetti, 1991; Bridges & Steen, 1998) linked with racial stereotyping and the case processing approach (Emerson, 1983; Sudnow, 1965) to determine when race matters in interaction with offender and offense characteristics across court outcomes. Steen et al. (2005) propose that decision-makers rely on typescripts based on offenders' attributions of dangerous and culpability, as well as offender characteristics that are tied to different crimes that are brought to the court. Court actors' decisions are then influenced by how they group together offender and offense information, especially how an offender "fits" into certain categories. Unwarranted racial disparities across court outcomes will emerge based on the typescripts formulated by court actors. Race differences in court processing; however, is argued by Steen and colleagues (2005) to not always disadvantage Blacks compared to Whites. In other words, depending on different offender and offense characteristics, White offenders may be subject to more severe social control depending on how they "fit" the typescripts of a dangerous offender.

In regards to drug offending, Steen and colleagues (2005) propose that court actors feel the most threatened by typescripts that comprised a "dangerous" drug offender. Being a male, having a prior record, and being convicted of a drug delivery (i.e. distribution) offense were the

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factors most likely to influence court actors' assessments of cases (Steen, Engen, & Gainey, 1999). It was hypothesized that the stereotype of a dangerous drug offender will depend not only on the race of the offender but also how other offender and offense characteristics match the typescripts or stereotypical crimes. For example, court actors will assess White drug offenders who fully match the dangerous drug offender stereotype (male, having a prior record, and convicted of a drug delivery) as being atypical for White offenders. Decision-makers will therefore impose more severe social control on the White offender compared to the Black offender who *fully* matches the dangerous drug offender stereotype, since these specific offender and offense characteristics are stereotyped as being "typical" to Blacks by the perceptions of court actors. However, in cases that match some, but not the entire dangerous drug offender stereotype, will be subjected to increased social control compared to cases that do not have any of the stereotypical characteristics. In these specific cases, Black drug offenders will receive disadvantaged court outcomes compared to Whites because court actors will perceive Black drug offenders who partially match the dangerous drug offender stereotype as more threatening than a White offender who has some or none of the dangerous characteristics.

Steen and colleagues (2005) concluded that they found general support for the hypothesized relationships between offender and offense characteristics and case outcomes. Drug offenders who fully matched the dangerous stereotype were more likely to be incarcerated and receive a longer sentence length compared to those did not match the stereotype, and to some degree, the effect was larger for White drug offenders than Blacks when comparing other offense and offender combinations. Results also indicated that court actors may view Black drug offenders in general as threatening regardless of the number of threatening characteristics. A Black drug offender who has some of the dangerous offender characteristics (a prior record or

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convicted of drug selling) was problematic enough in the perceptions of decision-makers to be subjected to social control.

Additional research has also found that the stereotype of a dangerous drug offender may influence federal sentencing decisions (Spohn & Sample, 2013). Spohn and Sample (2013) argue that some of Steen et al.'s (2005) theoretical assumptions could be used to explain racial and ethnic differences in the sentence lengths of convicted federal drug offenders. Results indicated that a male drug trafficker with a prior trafficking conviction who used a weapon when committing the current offense (the stereotype of a dangerous federal drug offender) affect the social control of Black offenders but similarly situated Whites or Hispanics. When offenders were disaggregated by the type of drug involved in the drug trafficking conviction, the results were restricted only to Black drug offenders who matched the dangerous stereotype for crack cocaine offense, not Black drug offenders in general. These results along with the conclusions generated from Steen and colleagues (2005) add to the complexities of the treatment of different types of drug offenders across court outcomes.

While Steen et al.'s (2005) and Spohn and Sample's (2013) theoretical predictions are not tested in this study; it provides an additional perspective that examines if and when race matters in the social control of drug offenders. It is important to note that the research by Steen et al. (2005) examined White and Black adult drug offenders in the state of Washington from 1995-1998 and Spohn and Sample (2013) investigated White, Black, and Hispanic adult drug traffickers who were sentenced in three U.S. district courts from 1998-2000. The court outcomes of juvenile drug offenders in a different geographical location and combination of years could look similar or different to the results from Steen et al. (2005) and Spohn and Sample (2013).

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The complexities of juvenile court processing for different types of drug offenders has yet to be examined in the current study's subset of years and/or geographic location.

Furthermore, race differences in arrests for drug distributions have been attributed to the nature of drug selling across White, Black, and Hispanic populations (Beckett, Nyrop, Pfingst, & Bowen, 2005; Tonry, 2011). For example, arrests for drug distributions in Black and Hispanic urban drug markets within disadvantaged neighborhoods primarily occur in public spaces (Tonry, 1995; Zatz, 2000). Drug sales within White populations are typically more hidden and occur in private locations (Beckett et al., 2006). Differences in where drug sales transpire results in racial disparities in the arrests of drug distributors (Beckett et al., 2005; Tonry, 1995). This is because it is easier for law enforcement to arrest individuals who distribute drugs in public locations, which primarily affects minorities, especially Black and Hispanics (Goode, 2002; Hagedorn, 1998; Tonry, 2011). While this study is unable to disentangle the nature of racial and ethnic differences in drug arrests for distribution versus possession, the study examines if unwarranted racial disparities continue to occur throughout different stages after the initial arrest. A similar investigation occurs in the present study concerning various court outcomes of juvenile drug offenders. In general, Black adult drug offenders who are arrested are subsequently more likely than similarly situated Whites to be convicted and sentenced to prison (Tonry, 2011). This study assesses if race/ethnic differences in the court outcomes of juvenile drug offenders is similar to results found in the adult drug offending literature by examining if Black and Hispanic youth who are charged with a drug possession or drug distribution subsequently receive more severe treatment than similar situated White drug offenders.

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The Inclusion of White, Black, and Hispanic Youth

The macrolevel theory of inequality and social control was also originally tested with Black and White youth who were referred to the juvenile court (Sampson & Laub, 1995). While much community-level research on juvenile court outcomes has focused primarily on the social control of both Black and White juveniles (Bridges et al., 1995, Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Thomas et al., 2012) and some studies have included other racial/ethnic groups like Latinos/as (Hispanics) (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010, 2013), Native Americans (Leiber, 2003; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010), and "other" groups (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Tittle & Curran, 1988), Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective has yet to be tested with the inclusion of Hispanic juvenile offenders. It is not presently known if Hispanic youth are also seen as a threatening population within the context of the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control. Prior research has suggested that in general, Hispanics may pose a threat and be considered a type of "social dynamite" (Spitzer, 1975) that can be viewed as dangerous and in need of social control (Martinez, 2002).[42] The present study addresses this limitation by examining White, Black, and Hispanic delinquent referrals to the juvenile court.

Methodological Advancements

While the objectives of the current research have more of a theoretical focus, there are also methodological limitations of past research that provides further justification for the current research. Sampson and Laub (1993) suggested that future research should fully specify the

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[42] Microlevel studies of the relationship between Hispanic youth and juvenile justice processing have found that with some exceptions (see Horwitz & Wasserman, 1980; Leiber, 1995), Hispanic juvenile offenders received disadvantaged outcomes (Bell & Lang, 1985; Bond-Maupin & Maupin, 1998; Charish, Davis, & Damphousse, 2004; Fisher & Doyle-Martin, 1981; Freiburger & Burke, 2011). Some of the ethnic effects tended to mirror racial disparities that affect Black youth referred to the juvenile court compared to Whites (Arnold, 1971; Wordes, Bynum, & Corley, 1994).

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theoretical and statistical models of the macrolevel inequality perspective. Both Sampson and Laub (1993) and Bridges and colleagues (1995) aggregated individual-level case data to county-level counts of juvenile court referrals. While this method of aggregating case-level data was important in discussing variations in juvenile court processing at the community-level, more advanced statistical analyses can be employed with individual-level case data without having to aggregate cases to the county-level.

Advanced Statistical Analyses. Prior research that has examined the symbolic threat hypothesis (Tittle & Curran, 1988) and Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective estimated traditional regression equations with the inclusion of both individual and community-level measures (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). This study employs a more sophisticated statistical procedure in the form of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2000) to be able to assess the influence of individual-level offender and offense characteristics with contextual measures of underclass poverty and inequality on the social control of youth. More recent research that has examined the role that context plays throughout juvenile justice processing has employed variations of HLM to predict juvenile court outcomes (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013). This study benefits from employing the same statistical techniques to better estimate the effect of community and individual-level factors on case outcomes.

Estimation of Cross-Level Interactions. This study also estimates potential cross-level interaction effects between certain offender (i.e. race/ethnicity) and offense (drug referrals) characteristics with community-level measures of underclass poverty and inequality. The

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purpose of cross-level interactions is to examine if different types of offenders are treated differently within certain communities. For example, Armstrong and Rodriguez (2005) found that counties characterized by a large non-White population were more likely to detain all youth, yet cross-level interactions were not performed to determine if youth from different racial/ethnic groups were treated differently in counties with a large proportion of non-White residents (see also Rodriguez, 2010). Prior studies that have estimated cross-level interactions are able to more fully specify under what community conditions different types of offenders are subjected to social control (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Rodriguez, 2007, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013). This study addresses Armstrong and Rodriguez's (2005) call for future research to estimate cross-level interactions between contextual variables and additional legal variables (i.e. drug referrals) that have not been primarily examined in prior research.

Multiple Juvenile Court Stages. An additional weakness in prior macrolevel research of juvenile court outcomes are the limited number of stages examined within each study. Only a handful of studies have examined more than one stage of juvenile justice proceedings (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2010; Sampson & Laub, 1993). The majority of research as focused solely on the stage of intake (Leiber & Stairs, 1999), petition (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011), detention outcomes (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007; Thomas et al., 2013), withholding adjudication (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009), or judicial disposition (Bridges et al., 1995; Rodriguez, 2013; Tittle & Curran, 1988). The current study tests Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective at the stages of intake, adjudication, and judicial disposition.[43]

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[43] Unfortunately, data providers from the Northeast state did not feel comfortable with the stability of the data pertaining to detention status throughout the requested years. Due to this limitation, the stage of detention is not included as a dependent variable or as a predictor of later juvenile court stages.

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The Inclusion of Important Juvenile Court Determinants. In addition to the weaknesses pertaining to the number of outcome measures included within each study, some prior research only included a limited number of measures within each statistical model (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009), and/or failed to measure important indicators that have been found to influence court outcomes (Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Leiber, 2011). For example, due to data limitations, some studies have not been able to include legal factors such as prior record (Thomas et al., 2013) or number of charges (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013). The current study includes numerous contextual, legal, and extra-legal factors in predicting court outcomes, which includes some of the measures that have been missing in earlier research (i.e. number of prior referrals, number of current charges, legal counsel, etc.). The inclusion of a large number of predictors in the current research that were absent in prior research is important to help decrease (although not completely eliminate) the potential issue of omitted variable bias within model specification (Paternoster & Brame, 2008). Omitting important predictors is problematic because the statistical models could produce results that either over or underestimate the strength of certain relationships, especially race (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990) or ethnic effects.

An Assessment of Multiple Counties. Prior research has also been limited in the generalizability of its findings. For example, some studies have only examined data from one jurisdiction (Rodriguez, 2007, 2013) or a small number of counties (Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). While the objective of the research that examined only one jurisdiction is justified because the goal was to assess potential race and ethnic effects that could be found at the jurisdictional level that may be masked at the state-level, the results could not be generalized beyond the sole jurisdiction (Rodriguez, 2007, 2013). This study includes

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both individual-level court referrals and county-level contextual measures for all counties in a Northeast state. The use of juvenile court referrals within counties provides justification for subsequent HLM analyses, and also parallels prior research that has examined counties within a single state (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Rodriguez, 2010; Thomas et al., 2013; Tittle & Curran, 1988).

Summary

In short, the current study addresses various limitations of prior research that has tested Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective, as well as the literature in general surrounding the relationship between structural indicators of disadvantaged communities and racial differences in social control. First, this study seeks to understand if the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control can be applicable to the social control of youth who were referred to the juvenile court within the last ten years. Second, this study examines the possibility that the treatment of drug offenders throughout juvenile justice processes can be attributed to continued stereotypes grounded by the war on drugs and the perceptions that certain types of offenders are seen as dangerous and threatening to decision-makers.

Third, the current study addresses potential differences in juvenile court outcomes of drug offenders based on the race/ethnicity of the youth and if the youth was referred to the juvenile court for either a drug possession or drug distribution. Fourth, the inclusion of Hispanic youth is able to advance prior examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory and macrolevel research of juvenile court outcomes that with some exceptions (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Leiber, 2003; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010, 2013), has primarily only included Black and White juvenile offenders. Finally, this study employs methodological advancements that were unavailable at the time of Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial test of the macrolevel theory

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of inequality and social control and/or were not included in past research. In particular, individual-level data nested within numerous counties are examined across multiple juvenile court outcomes that include various predictors of juvenile case outcomes within multi-level additive and interactive HLM statistical models.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical assumptions of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective and the overall literature surrounding community context, race/ethnicity, and juvenile court outcomes, three general research questions inform the current study. First, can the community characteristics put forth by Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective predict the social control of youth within the last decade? Second, do minority youth (Black and Hispanic) and drug offenders (possession versus distribution) receive more severe juvenile court outcomes compared to Whites and other types of offenders? Third, are any observed racial/ethnic and drug offending relationships with court outcomes conditioned by underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality and result in greater social control?

The general research questions will be tested through the below six research hypotheses.

Hypotheses one through three relate specifically to the theoretical predictions of the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Leiber, 2003; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999) and prior research of the relationship between race/ethnicity and juvenile court outcomes. Hypotheses four, five, and six focus on the potential refinement of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective concerning the possible conditioning effects of race/ethnicity, type of drug offense, and community characteristics on the social control of juvenile drug offenders.

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The first hypothesis guiding the research is:

H₁: Youth who reside in counties with underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality will have higher rates of social control (i.e. intake referrals, adjudicated guilty, and sentenced to out-of-home placement) than youth who reside in counties of low underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality.

Justification for the first hypothesis (H_1) is based on the results from the initial test of Sampson and Laub's (1993) revised conflict perspective. Results indicated that counties characterized by high underclass poverty and racial inequality were significantly related to increased social control of youth referred to the juvenile court. Sampson and Laub (1993) attributed these findings to the belief that juvenile court decision-makers youth who reside in communities with these characteristics as a specific population that is threatening, offensive, and in need of social control. Furthermore, it is also predicted that not only will underclass poverty and racial inequality be positively associated with severe juvenile court outcomes, but that ethnic inequality will exert a significant and positive effect as well. Therefore, the justification for H_1 is grounded on one of the key hypotheses and results from Sampson and Laub's (1993) original examination but also expands to include an additional community-level predictor (i.e. ethnic inequality) of juvenile justice processing.

Based on prior research that has examined the relationship between race/ethnicity and juvenile justice processing along with mirroring the initial results from Sampson and Laub (1993), the second hypothesis guiding the research states:

H₂: Youth who are Black, Hispanic, a drug offender, a Black drug offender, or Hispanic drug offender will receive more severe court outcomes than Whites and White drug offenders.

Prior research has found that controlling for both legal and extra-legal factors; minorities compared to Whites have been subjected to increased social control in the form of juvenile court outcomes (Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Leiber, 2011; Pope et al., 2002). Race was also predictive of

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severe juvenile court outcomes in the initial test of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective. That is, depending on the type of offense, Black juvenile offenders were more likely to be detained and sentenced to out-of-home placement compared to Whites. Therefore, it is predicted that net of all legal, extra-legal, and community-level factors, race/ethnicity will be positively related to harsh juvenile court outcomes for Black and Hispanic youth.

Sampson and Laub (1993) also predicted and subsequently found that that the threatening perceptions of drug offenders during the height of the war on drugs contributed to the punitive treatment of youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense. Research surrounding the relationship between drug offending and juvenile court outcomes indicated that juvenile drug offenders have been the recipients of harsh juvenile court outcomes throughout different stages of juvenile justice proceedings (DeJong & Jackson, 1998; Leiber & Stairs, 1999). Therefore, net of all controls, it is also predicted that drug offending will exert a significant and positive effect on juvenile court outcomes. It may be that youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense is still considered a threatening type of offender even after the height of the war on drugs.

Furthermore, the second hypothesis also predicts that race/ethnicity will interact with drug offending to produce greater social control throughout juvenile justice proceedings. This justification stems from prior research that minority drug offenders have been subjected to increased social control across juvenile court outcomes. For example, Black drug offenders have had a higher likelihood of receiving an intake referral, (Leiber & Fox, 2005), receiving more severe sentences (Leiber & Fox, 2005; Tittle & Curran, 1988) and being less likely to have adjudication withheld (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009).

In regards to the third hypothesis, Sampson and Laub (1993) argued that while all youth who reside in counties characterized by underclass poverty and racial inequality will be

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stereotyped by decision-makers as threatening and therefore subjected to increased social control, it was also stated that this effect would be larger for Black youth compared to Whites. The third hypothesis reflects Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial predictions and later findings to posit:

> *H₃: Youth who are Black, Hispanic, a drug offender, a Black drug offender, or Hispanic drug offender who reside in counties with underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality will receive more severe juvenile court outcomes than youth who reside in similar counties.*

The first justification for the third hypothesis rests on the theoretical prediction that the effect of underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality will be larger for Black and Hispanic youth compared to Whites (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Specifically, Black and Hispanic youth who reside in what decision-makers perceive as "threatening communities" will be discriminated against, seen as more problematic, and receive greater social control compared to Whites who also reside in disadvantaged communities (see also Bridges et al., 1995; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Tittle & Curran, 1988).

Sampson and Laub (1993) also contend that drug offenders are seen as threatening and subject to harsh juvenile court outcomes in counties high in underclass poverty and racial inequality. This prediction is based on two factors. First, Sampson and Laub (1993) found that drug offending was positively associated with out-of-home placement at judicial disposition, especially juvenile drug offenders who resided in counties high in underclass poverty. Second, Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that the war on drugs influenced decision-makers' perceptions, in that drug offenders who live in communities with poverty and racial inequality are considered more threatening than other types of offenders who also reside in such places. Therefore, the second justification for the third hypothesis is based on Sampson and Laub's (1993) finding that

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the effect of underclass poverty on out-of-home placement rates for Black drug offenders was seven times larger than for White drug offenders (pg. 305).

The final three hypotheses stem from the potential refinement or modification of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective. Refinements may be warranted based on the social control of drug offenders, especially if juvenile court outcomes are conditioned by the type of drug offense, race/ethnicity of the offender, and disadvantaged community characteristics. The fourth hypothesis predicts:

> H_4: Youth who are charged with a drug distribution, Black youth who are charged with a drug distribution, and Hispanics who are charged with a drug distribution will receive more severe juvenile court outcomes compared to a drug possession.

Consistent with prior research, it may be that the imagery and stereotype of what constitutes a "dangerous drug offender" varies based on certain offender and offense characteristics (Steen et al., 2005; Spohn & Sample, 2013; Zatz, 1987). Youth charged with drug possession may be seen as a dangerous offender and consequently receives harsh outcomes, compared to a youth charged with a drug possession who is perceived as a victim by decision-makers and receives leniency. In regards to race/ethnicity, a Black youth who was referred to the juvenile court for a drug distribution may be seen as more threatening to juvenile justice decision-makers compared to a Hispanic drug possessor, Black drug possessor, or White drug distributor (see also Steen et al., 2005).

The fifth hypothesis contends that the relationship between race/ethnicity, type of drug offending, and social control will be conditioned by the characteristics of communities. The fifth hypothesis predicts:

> H_5: Black and Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution and reside in counties with underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality will receive more severe juvenile court outcomes than youth who reside in similar counties.

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In particular, drug offenders with characteristics that are seen as threatening (i.e. racial/ethnic minority and/or charged with a drug distribution) who also reside in communities characterized by underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality will be subjected to severe juvenile court outcomes. Disadvantaged community characteristics may also exacerbate the effect between youth who are stereotyped as a "dangerous drug offender" and juvenile court outcomes. This is because decision-makers may perceive youth with these individual and contextual characteristics as more threatening and problematic than "dangerous juvenile drug offenders" who reside in counties low in underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality.

The final hypothesis that frames the current study predicts that while both Black and Hispanic drug offenders will be perceived as threatening and in need of social control, the threat will be larger for Black youth compared to Hispanics. Stated differently, the effect of being Black on juvenile court outcomes will be larger for Blacks than Hispanics. The sixth hypothesis predicts:

> *H_6: The effect of race and ethnicity on juvenile court outcomes will be greater for Black youth compared to Hispanics.*

Justification for the sixth hypothesis is based on the body of literature that has found differential effects of social control for Black and Hispanic offenders compared to Whites (Dixon, 2006; Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000; Wang & Mears, 2010). While prior research has shown that Blacks and Hispanics are often the recipients of severe court outcomes, the effect was more pronounced for Blacks compared to Hispanics (Bontrager, Bales, & Chiricos, 2005; Rodriguez, 2010; Wang & Mears, 2010). For example, Bontrager and colleagues (2005) found that controlling for community characteristics, Black and Hispanic defendants were less likely to have adjudication withheld compared to Whites. This effect was larger for Blacks and drug offenders.

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Furthermore, the perceptions of decision-makers based on impoverished community characteristics may work to the disadvantage of Black youth more so than Hispanics. Peterson, Krivo, and Browning (2006) argue that communities where White, Black, and Hispanics reside vary widely over differing degrees of structural conditions (see also Krivo & Peterson, 1996, 2000; Peterson & Krivo, 1999). Indicators of poverty, residential instability, and joblessness are central components to corresponding levels of social control across race and ethnicity (Peterson et al., 2006), especially since these measures may correspond to how decision-makers perceive and respond to offenders. Prior research indicates that Blacks are overrepresented as residents in severely disadvantaged communities, while Hispanics are more likely to live in areas with less segregation and disadvantage compared to Blacks but more so than Whites (Massey & Denton, 1993; Jargowsky, 1997; Logan, Stults, & Farley, 2004; Peterson & Krivo, 2005). Based on the historical ramifications of racism and disadvantage, some scholars have argued that Hispanic communities are structurally different and perceived as less threatening compared to Black communities (Martinez, 2002). Therefore, while both Black and Hispanic youth are predicted to be the recipients of disadvantaged court outcomes in the current study, the relationships will translate to a larger effect of social control on the former group than the latter.

Chapter Five:

Methodology

The following chapter describes the methodology and analytic procedure for the current study. To begin, the data and sample will be introduced. Next, the conceptualization and operationalization of all variables will be described. Both the individual and contextual-level independent variables will be discussed. This includes an explanation of the independent variables of interest, all individual and county-level control variables, and three dependent variables. Last, the analytic procedure used test the six research hypotheses will be described in detail.

Data and Sample

The data for the present research includes all delinquent referrals from all counties in a Northeast state from January 2000 through December 2010 for a final sample size of 302,531 referrals.[44] Case-level data was provided from the state's central repository of juvenile court information that includes demographic, legal, and extra-legal information about each youth referred to the juvenile court. Since the individual-level unit of analysis comprises all delinquent referrals, it is possible that the same youth was referred to the juvenile court numerous times during the eleven-year period for multiple charges.[45] This specific individual-level unit of

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[44] The data for the current research is part of a larger study that was supported by Award No. 2012-IJ-CX-0051, "*Race/Ethnicity, Juvenile Court Processing and Case Outcomes: Fluctuation or Stability?*" awarded to Michael J. Leiber, PhD, by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Data was provided by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) which houses the National Juvenile Court Data Archive (NJCDA).

[45] 187,669 youth comprised a total of 302,531 referrals.

analysis is common in studies of juvenile court outcomes (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Guevara, Boyd, Taylor, & Brown, 2011; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Rodriguez, 2007).

In 2000 and 2010, the northeast state was ranked sixth in terms of state population, and had a 3.4% increase in population from 2000-2010 (U.S. census, 2012). Table 1 presents U.S. census characteristics of the United States and the northeast state for the year 2000 to provide additional context on the selected state.

Table 1. 2000 U.S. Census Characteristics of the United States and Northeast State

Characteristic	United States %	Northeast State %
White Residents	75.1	85.4
Black Residents	12.3	10.0
Hispanic Residents	12.5	3.2
Female Headed Households	12.2	11.6
Unemployed	3.7	3.5
Families Below Poverty Level	9.2	7.8
Individuals Below Poverty Level	12.4	11.0
Median Household Income	$41,994	$40,106

Note: Numbers shown are percentages unless noted otherwise

Compared to the United States, the Northeast state has a larger percentage of White residents. The northeast state is underrepresented in Black residents, Hispanic residents, female headed households, families and individuals living below the poverty line, and the median household income. In general, the percentage of individuals unemployed is similar to the overall U.S. population. In terms of health and more specific characteristics of youths' well-being, the northeast state ranks 7th in high school dropouts, 9th in children living in single-parent households, 12th in child deaths and youth not attending school and not working, 13th in teen deaths, 14th in families with children where parents do not have fulltime and year round employment, and 16th in children living in poverty and teen births (Annie E. Casey Foundation,

2003). Overall, with the exception of the proportion of White and Hispanics residents, the composition of the Northeast state based on the above census characteristics is similar to the United States as whole.

In addition, it is important to include some additional context of how the juvenile justice system in the Northeast state operates. While certain policies may differ across counties (Feierman, Keller, Glickman, & Stanton, 2011); the overall juvenile justice process is similar throughout the Northeast state. Upon an initial arrest or referral to the juvenile court, a youth will either be released to a guardian prior to the intake stage, or be held in secure detention until the detention hearing. For those youth at the intake stage, the referral can be: (1) dismissed, (2) a youth can receive an informal adjustment (and be released), or (3) have a petitioned filed. For youth who are held in secure detention, at the detention hearing a youth can also have a petition filed. For those cases in where a petition was filed, three potential outcomes can occur: (1) an adjudicatory hearing, (2) a youth can receive a consent decree and be removed from the system, or (3) a youth is transferred to adult court based on a transfer hearing. At the adjudicatory hearing, a youth can either be adjudicated delinquent or the referral can be dismissed. If a youth is adjudicated delinquent, the case is processed at a disposition hearing with four possible outcomes: (1) adjudication can be deferred, (2) a youth is sentenced to fines, restitution, and/or community service, (3) a youth is sentenced to probation, or (4) a youth is sentenced to placement. Upon placement, a youth can receive review hearings and subsequently be released or placed in an aftercare program (Feierman et al., 2011).[46]

In the current study, the justification for the inclusion of numerous years (2000-2010) of delinquent court referrals is two-fold and centers around the need for sufficient statistical power throughout all regression models. The first aim is to ensure that there are enough individual-level

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[46] A youth may be eligible for diversion at the stages of arrest/referral, intake, and petition.

cases within a large number of counties to perform multi-level analyses. The second intention is to have a sufficient number of cases to be able to make comparisons across different types of offender and offender characteristics (e.g. a Black youth charged with a drug distribution versus a White youth charged with a drug possession). Acknowledging that there may be differences in court outcomes depending on the year that youth are referred to the juvenile court, referral year will be included as a control variable in each statistical mode.

Operationalization of Variables

The coding schemes and distributions of variables are presented in Table 2. The inclusion and operationalization of both the individual and county-level variables of interest are based on the theoretical background and prior research (e.g. Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber, 2003; Rodriguez, 2007; Sampson & Laub, 1993). To assess the research hypotheses, a combination of individual-level juvenile court referral data and county-level contextual data was examined. First, the individual and community-level independent variables of interest are described, followed by a discussion of the dependent variables.

Independent Variables. All individual-level (Level-1) variables are represented by numerous legal and extra-legal measures. These measures are based on prior literature and are considered important predictors of juvenile case outcomes (Bishop & Frazier, 1996; Bishop et al., 2010; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber, 1995; Rodriguez, 2007; Secret & Johnson, 1997).

Individual-Level Variables of Interest. Race and *ethnicity* were coded based on the racial and ethnic background of the youth referred to the juvenile court.[47]

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[47] Race and ethnicity were self-reported by youth. If a youth categorized themselves as Hispanic, they were coded as "Hispanic" even if they also reported a separate racial category. White (non-Hispanic), Black (non-Hispanic), and Hispanic youth comprised the final sample. Youth who reported themselves as Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Multi-race, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, "Unknown", or did not report their race/ethnicity were not included in the final sample.

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Table 2. Description of Variables

Variable	Value	N	%
Independent			
Individual-Level			
Race/Ethnicity[a]	1 – White	158641	52
	1 – Black	116249	39
	1 – Hispanic	27641	9
Drugs[b]	0 – No	247214	82
	1 – Yes	55317	18
Drug Type	0 – Possession	37860	68
	1 – Distribution	17457	32
Race/Ethnicity/Drug Offender[c]			
White drug offender	1 – White drug	29205	53
Black drug offender	1 – Black drug	20858	38
Hispanic drug offender	1 – Hispanic drug	5254	9
Race/Ethnicity/Drug Type[d]			
White possession	1 – White possession	23827	43
Black possession	1 – Black possession	10971	19
Hispanic possession	1 – Hispanic possession	3062	6
White distribution	1 – White distribution	5378	10
Black distribution	1 – Black distribution	9887	18
Hispanic distribution	1 – Hispanic distribution	2192	4
Controls			
Individual-Level			
Gender	0 – Male	242861	80
	1 – Female	59670	20
Age	Years	M = 15.21	
		SD = 1.67	
		Range = 10 – 17	
Crime Severity	0 – Misdemeanor	190021	63
	1 – Felony	112510	37
Prior Referrals	Number	M = 0.95	
		SD = 1.58	
		Range = 0 – 10	
Charges	Number	M = 3.32	
		SD = 2.50	
		Range = 1 – 10	
Attorney	0 – No	86894	29
	1 – Yes	215637	71

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Table 2 (continued). Description of Variables

Property[b]	0 – No	204079	68
	1 – Yes	98452	32
Person[b]	0 – No	186870	62
	1 – Yes	115661	38
Year	0 – 2000 – 2005	153433	51
	1 – 2006 – 2010	149098	49

Independent
  Community-Level

Underclass poverty

$M = 0.00$
$SD = 5.41$
$Range = - 9.15 - 31.91$

Racial inequality

$M = 0.00$
$SD = 1.00$
$Range = - 1.06 - 2.94$

Ethnic inequality

$M = 0.00$
$SD = 1.00$
$Range = - 1.40 - 2.13$

Controls
  Community-Level

Wealth

$M = 0.00$
$SD = 1.74$
$Range = - 1.80 - 8.29$

Residential mobility

$M = 33.98$
$SD = 4.21$
$Range = 25.30 - 49.50$

Urbanism

$M = 183296.63$
$SD = 265444.64$
$Range = 4946 - 1517550$

Youth

$M = 0.00$
$SD = 1.00$
$Range = - 0.89 - 6.53$

Crime rate

$M = 2220.89$
$SD = 769.35$
$Range = 945 - 6263$

Dependent

Intake	0 – Release/diversion	75936	25
	1 – Referral	226595	75

Table 2 (continued). Description of Variables

Adjudication	0 – No	113231	50
	1 – Yes	113364	50
Judicial Disposition	0 – Community supervision	61670	54
	1 – Residential placement	51694	46

Note: Level – 1, N = 302,531; Level – 2, N = 67
a: Reference category is White
b: Reference category is Other offense (e.g. weapon possession, trespassing, disorderly conduct)
c: Reference category is White drug offender
d: Reference category is White distribution

Dummy variables were constructed for Black and Hispanic youth, while White youth constituted

the reference category. Fifty-two percent of the sample was White, 39% were Black, and 9%

were Hispanic. Since one of the objectives in this study is to understand the intersection of

race/ethnicity, drug offending, and juvenile court outcomes across communities, a *drug* offense

variable (1 = yes, 0 = no) was constructed. Drug offenses represented 18% of all offenses. To

differentiate amongst the *type of drug offense*, youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug

offense was categorized between a drug possession (coded as 0) versus a drug distribution

(coded as 1). Thirty-two percent of youth charged with a drug offense were charged with drug

distribution, compared to 68% charged with drug possession.

To estimate cross-level interactions between Level-1 and Level-2 measures, racial/ethnic

interactions with drug offending and drug type were constructed into different subgroups of

dummy variables. These subgroups were later included in a multiplicative interaction term with

the community-level variables of underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality. Race/ethnicity

interactions with drug offending consisted of two dummy variables: Black drug offenders and

Hispanic drug offenders with White drug offenders as the reference group. Fifty-three percent of

all drug offenders were White, 38% were Black, and 9% were Hispanic. Race/ethnicity

interactions with drug type were represented by five dummy variables: Black drug possession

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(19%), Hispanic drug possession (6%), White drug distribution (10%), Black drug distribution (18%), and Hispanic drug distribution (4%). White drug possession was the reference category (43%).

Individual-Level Control Variables. The remaining individual-level independent variables were treated as controls. The gender and age of the youth were included as two demographic variables. *Gender* was differentiated by male (coded as 0) and female (coded as 1). Eighty percent of the sample was male. *Age* was measured as a continuous variable (10-18 years old). The average referral was 15 years old. Six individual-level legal variables were also treated as controls. *Crime severity* was differentiated by misdemeanors (coded as 0) and felonies (coded as 1). The number of *prior referrals* to the juvenile court was coded as a continuous measure (0-10)[48], while the number of *current charges* within each juvenile referral was measured on a scale from one to ten. On average, a delinquent referral was a misdemeanor offense, 0.95 prior referrals, and 3.32 current charges. Referrals were also differentiated based on if an *attorney* was present at any time throughout the court proceedings (0 = no, 1 = yes). Seventy-one percent of youth had some form of legal representation (e.g. public defender, private attorney). Offense type was measured by three dummy variables: *Drug* (already described), *person* (38%), and *property* (32%) offenses. O*ther* (18%) offenses constituted the reference category (e.g. trespassing).[49] In addition, due to the inclusion of eleven years of data, a variable of *referral year*

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[48] Due to data limitations, prior referrals can only be determined beginning in the year 2000.

[49] This study does not examine the relationship between type of drug (e.g. marijuana, crack cocaine, powder cocaine, methamphetamine, etc.) and juvenile court outcomes. The main reason for this decisions is based on not having enough power in each statistical model once the drug offender is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, type of drug offense (possession versus distribution), then type of drug. A task for future research is to examine if the relationship between disadvantaged community characteristics, race/ethnicity, and juvenile court outcomes are also conditioned by drug type through Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical perspective.

(0 = 2000 – 2005, 1 = 2006 – 2010) was constructed.[50] Fifty-one percent of all referrals occurred between the years 2000-2005.

Community-Level Variables of Interest. To examine the influence of community-level factors on juvenile court outcomes, numerous county-level measures (Level-2) were included in the analyses (see also DeJong & Jackson, 1998; Leiber et al., forthcoming; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Following the measures included in Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial test of the macrosocial theory of inequality and social control, county-level measures were analyzed based on information provided from the 2000 U.S. census.[51]

Based on Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical assumptions about the relationship between underclass poverty, racial inequality, and social control, various multi-item indexes were created.[52] An index of *underclass poverty* was constructed based on eight interrelated county-level measures: percent households receiving public assistance income, percent Black residents, percent Hispanic residents, percent of female-headed households with children under 18 years old, percent individuals living in poverty, percent of household incomes less than $10,000, percent of nonfamily households, and percent of female-headed households living in poverty. Higher values on the underclass poverty index correspond to increased levels of underclass poverty within each county.

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[50] Ten dummy variables were also initially constructed to represent referral year to assess for potential year differences across court outcomes. Referrals in 2000 constituted the reference group. Results from regression analyses revealed similar results with the inclusion of multiple variables measuring referral year compared to the single variable (e.g. 0 = 2000-2005, 1 = 2006-2010). To increase parsimony in each statistical model, only the regression equations with the one variable that represented referral year is presented in the results section.

[51] Presently, the United States Census has not released the specific county-level measures from the 2010 U.S. census needed to perform statistical analyses with both 2000 and 2010 census data.

[52] All indexes were standardized and constructed from Z-scores.

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The proportion of Hispanic residents within each county was not included in Sampson and Laub's (1993) measure of underclass poverty. However, due to the inclusion of Hispanic youth in the current research and on the basis that the initial underclass poverty measure included the proportion of Black residents within each county, the percentage of both Black and Hispanic residents within each county was included in the underclass poverty index. Results from a principle component analysis (PCA)[53] initially revealed a 2-factor solution where the first component extracted an Eigenvalue of 4.05 and accounted for 51% of the variance, and the second component extract an Eigenvalue of 2.06 and accounted for 26% of the variance. In the first component, all indicators for the exception of the percent of Hispanic residents had values larger than .600. Due to the theoretical importance of including both Hispanic and Black residents in the underclass poverty measure, it was decided to force the index into a one-factor solution (α = .83).

Mirroring Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial measure of racial inequality and adding an additional measure to take into consideration the inclusion of Hispanics, two separate measures of racial/ethnic inequality were constructed. *Racial inequality* was measured by the ratio of Black to White individuals living in poverty summed with the percent of Black families living in poverty. *Ethnic inequality* was measured by the ratio of Hispanic to White individuals living in poverty summed with the percent of Hispanic families living in poverty. Higher values on both the racial and ethnic inequality measures correspond to increased inequality of Blacks and Hispanics compared to Whites.

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[53] PCA was conducted for the purpose of data reduction to reduce the number of correlated observed variables into a smaller number of composite variables. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is appropriate when inquiring or hypothesizing if variables are tapping into the same latent construct.

Community-Level Control Variables. The rest of the county-level measures were treated as controls. A *wealth* measure was created based on the percent of household incomes more than $200,000 summed with the median household income per county. *Residential mobility* was captured by the percentage of residents who moved within the past five years. The county population was also included as a control as a proxy for *urbanism*. Following Sampson and Laub (1993), a control for the county *density of youth* was constructed based on the percentage of individuals between 15 and 18 years old summed with the ratio of juveniles to adults. Higher values within the density of youth measure corresponded to a larger number of juveniles compared to adults within each county. This control was included in the initial test of the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control because it was argued that the proportion of youth within a county may influence case outcomes (Sampson & Laub, 1993). The final control variable was the county *crime rate*, which was constructed based on the average of the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR's) Part 1 Index crime rate per 100,000 individuals for each county for the years 2000-2010.

Dependent Variables. Decision-making was examined at three processing junctures. The outcome at each stage of intake, adjudication, and judicial disposition constituted the dependent variable. Each dependent variable had a binary outcome. The stage of *intake* was differentiated by youth who were released or diverted from the juvenile justice system (coded as 0) or if they received a court referral and continued on to the next stage of the proceedings (coded as 1). Seventy-five percent of youth referred to the juvenile court received an intake referral. At the *adjudicatory* stage, outcomes were coded depending on if the case was dismissed (coded as 0) or adjudicated delinquent (coded as 1). Fifty percent of youth who made it to the adjudication stage were subsequently adjudicated guilty. *Judicial disposition* was coded to

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differentiate between youth who were sentenced to community supervision (coded as 0), and those who were committed to out-of-home (residential) placement (coded as 1). Fifty-four percent of youth at judicial disposition received the less severe outcome of community sanctions or probation, compared to 46% of youth who received residential placement and were placed outside of the home.

Analysis Plan and Procedures

The analysis plan was guided by the six research hypotheses. Due to the nested nature of the data of juveniles within counties, a two-level hierarchical linear structure was used to analyze the data. A two-level HLM is favorable over earlier analytic strategies that utilized traditional regression equations (i.e. binary logistic regression) to predict juvenile court outcomes. HLM allows for the partitioning of variance within and between counties, which permits the examination of the amount of variation that exists at both the first and second levels of analyses (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004, pg. 152). Instead of traditional regression equations that test for statistical significance of community-level variables based on the Level-1 sample size, HLM adjusts the degrees of freedom to correctly account for the number of Level-2 cases (i.e. counties) (Ulmer & Johnson, 2004).

HLM also has the ability to take into account the effect that certain Level-1 variables may exert a different effect on each Level-2 county. For example, the effect of being a Black or Hispanic youth on juvenile court outcomes may vary across counties, so HLM allows for this variation to be modeled by simultaneously estimating a separate set of regression coefficients for each county (Ulmer & Johnson, 2004, pg. 152). The degree of variation that exists among each racial and ethnic group within each county can then be estimated before the inclusion of the Level-2 predictors. Therefore, HLM is able to concurrently "model separate but interrelated units

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of analysis" (i.e. the Level-1 offender and offense characteristics and Level-2 county variables) (Ulmer & Johnson, 2004, pg. 152).

Whereas each of the dependent variables are dichotomous, hierarchical generalized linear models (HGLM; Bernoulli models) were used to assess the effect of individual (Level-1) and community level (Level-2) data on each court outcome (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). HGLM models are similar to binary logistic regression in that the coefficients produced are the log odds of receiving the more severe juvenile court outcome (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005). To ease in the interpretation of the regression coefficients, log odds are converted into odds ratios when discussing the results.

Since the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control argues that both contextual (e.g. underclass poverty, racial/ethnic inequality) and individual-level effects (i.e. race/ethnicity, drug offending) influence court outcomes, both the Level-1 and Level-2 predictors were grand mean-centered. Grand mean-centering is consistent with some of the prior macrolevel research of juvenile court outcomes that have utilized HGLM regression techniques (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Leiber et al., forthcoming; Rodriguez, 2013).[54] In particular, this specific centering technique is able to assess the effect of community characteristics (Level-2) while controlling for offender and offense characteristics (Level-1) (Luke, 2004).[55]

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[54] Grand mean-centering is not without limitations. Grand mean-centering may introduce estimation bias in the Level-l effects because it takes into consideration of between and within county effects. Group mean-centering produces an unbiased individual-level estimator (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Britt, 2000; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004).

[55] Prior research argues that group mean-centering does not allow for the estimation of community characteristics while controlling for Level-1 characteristics (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009), and can be problematic because it "may artificially constrain" the community-level (Level-2) variables (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009, pg. 174; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004, pg. 153). This may result in an inaccurate assessment of the variation in juvenile court outcomes across counties. In addition, as with other macrolevel research that has employed HGLM regression techniques (e.g. Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Hofmann & Gavin, 1998; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010) all statistical models were also estimated with group mean-centered Level-1 variables. With one exception, no

Due to the nature of the research hypotheses, the analyses procedure included several steps. Each of these steps was repeated for the three dependent variables. Analyses were first conducted using the entire sample, and then supplemental analyses were performed within only drug offenses. This procedure was able to compare the effects of community characteristics, race/ethnicity, and drug offending against all other types of offenses, and then was able to estimate the models within only drug offenses.

First, an intercept-only, unconditional model was estimated to determine if the mean rate of the dependent variable varies across counties (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Rodriguez, 2007). Evidence of significant variation across counties provided justification for the use of a multi-level model. Second, the community-level variables (Level-2) were included in a model to examine the mean differences in court outcome across counties based on the contextual predictors. Third, the individual-level measures (Level-1) were added to the model to estimate the effects of individual-level characteristics controlling for community characteristics on the court outcome. Forth, Level-1 interactions of race/ethnicity with drug offending and type of drug offense were estimated (i.e. Black x drugs, Hispanic x possession), net of all individual and community-level controls. Fifth, cross-level interactions between the race and ethnicity of the offender, drug offending, type of drug offense, and community-level variables of interest (Black x drugs x underclass poverty, Hispanic x distribution x ethnic inequality) were estimated. The purpose of these specific cross-level interactions was to examine if community characteristics

statistical differences were found regardless if the Level-1 variables were grand or group mean-centered. The only exception appeared with one variable in the analyses within drug offenders at the stage of disposition. With the inclusion of the group mean-centered Level-1 predictors, racial inequality did not significantly predict the mean rate of intake. Racial inequality exerted a significant and inverse effect on disposition when the Level-1 predictors were grand mean-centered. This one exception did not justify the use of group mean-centering over grand mean-centering.

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impact juvenile court outcomes for youth of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, not simply all youth in general.

With some minor differences, this procedure was then repeated with only cases that included youth referred to the juvenile court for a drug offense. The first three steps of the analytic procedure were performed, followed by a model that compared Hispanic and Black drug offenders to White drug offenders. Next, a model was estimated that included juvenile court referrals for a drug distribution compared to a drug possession to assess if drug offenders were treated differently based on the type of drug offense. Next, subgroup dummy variables (Black drug distribution, White drug distribution, Hispanic drug possession, etc.) were included in a model that examined race/ethnic differences with type of drug offense. Last, cross-level interactions were estimated between race/ethnicity type of drug offense with the community-level measures of interest (e.g. Black distribution x underclass poverty, Hispanic possession x ethnic inequality, etc.) to assess if the treatment of different types of drug offenders are influenced by race/ethnicity and disadvantaged community characteristics.

It is important to note that some prior research of juvenile court outcomes has utilized Heckman's (1974; 1976) two-stage estimator to adjust for potential selection bias by creating a hazard rate as an additional predictor in the equations at judicial disposition (Berk, 1983; Peterson & Hagan, 1984; Stolzenberg & Relles, 1990; Winship & Mare, 1992). However, some researchers have argued that this approach has been used inappropriately or in an incomplete manner (Baumer, 2013). For example, Bushway and colleagues (2007) argued that there are problems with the Heckman (1976) procedure because it has the potential to introduce multicollinearity between the correction term and other predictors in regression models which then can seriously inflate standard errors. This further becomes a problem if exclusion

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restrictions are absent from the model.[56] It has also been argued that the hazard rate should not be used when predicting any model other than an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in the second stage (see also Stolzenberg & Relles, 1990).[57] Based on these limitations, the results presented in the current study do not include a hazard rate at the stage of judicial disposition.[58]

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[56] According to Bushway and colleagues (2007), exclusion restrictions reduce the probability of multicollinearity between the correction factor and other predictors, but more importantly are measures that "affect the selection process but not the substantive equation of interest" (pp. 153). Statistics models with exclusion restrictions can better address the issue of selection bias. However, the Heckman (1976) procedure does not require exclusion restrictions in model estimation, and as argued by Bushway et al. (2007) it is rare in criminology for researchers to make sufficient theoretical justifications for the inclusion of important variables at one stage (i.e. adjudication), but are not considered important predictors are the next stage (i.e. judicial disposition). Some prior research in criminology (e.g. Albonetti, 1991; Worrall, 2002; Wright & Cullen, 2000) has included exclusion restrictions, yet a detailed justification for the inclusion and exclusion of measures at different stages was absent.

[57] For example, in the adult sentencing literature, judges normally decide whether to incarcerate an individual (first stage) then decide the length of a sentence (second stage) (Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2001; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004; Wheeler, Weisburd, & Bode, 1982). Theoretically, if the incarceration outcome and sentence length outcome are independent of each other, then there will be no correlation between the errors terms and selection bias will not be an issue (Bushway et al., 2007). However, there may be some unobservable differences that influence both incarceration and sentence length, therefore the error terms will be correlated and selection bias exists. The Heckman procedure (in theory) corrects for selection bias by including the correction term in regression models that predict sentence length, yet then there is the potential problem of multicollinearity between the correction term and additional predictors of sentence length that are included in the model. Overall, the present stance in the field argues that there are potentially more problems with the utilization of the Heckman (1976) hazard rate than its benefits of adjusting for selection bias.

[58] Supplementary analyses were performed at judicial disposition with the hazard rate included as an additional predictor. Overall, the results did not change with the inclusion of the hazard rate when analyses were performed across all offenders and within drug offenders. Racial inequality was the only independent variable of interest that changed (with rounding, the variable became not significant) as a result of including the hazard rate. Concerning the control variables, the effect of referral year changed with the addition of the hazard rate (it became a statistically significant predictor of judicial disposition).

Individual Effects of Community and Referral Characteristics on Intake Outcomes

Table 3 presents the HGLM regression models predicting the main additive effects of community characteristics, race/ethnicity, and drug offending at the stage of intake. In order to determine if the mean rate of intake varied across counties, an intercept-only model[59] was first estimated. The significant random effects component for the intercept (not shown) indicated that the rate of intake varied significantly across counties ($p < .001$), justifying the use of a multi-level model.

The intraclass correlation (ρ) was then calculated to examine the degree of variation in the intake outcome occurs between counties. The issue of calculating the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) is more complicated in HGLM compared to HLM. HLM models are traditionally employed for multi-level modeling with a continuous outcome. Single-level logistic regression equations violate the homoscedasticity of errors assumption for OLS regression (Allison, 1999). This is also true in HGLM models since the level-1error variance is heteroscedastic. The ICC formula utilized in HLM models cannot be used in HGLM models.

One alternative is to assume that the level-1 error variance is $\pi^2/3$ (Fulllerton et al., 2010). Following the research by Raudenbush and Byrk (2002), the ICC was calculated with the formula: $\text{ICC}_{\text{logit}} = \rho = \tau_{00}/(\tau_{00} + \pi^2/3)$. The ICC results for intake indicated that only 0.92% ($\rho =$

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[59] The intercept-only model is also known as the one-way ANOVA model with random effects (Garson, 2012; Fullerton, Wallace, & Stern, 2010).

.0304/(.0304 + 3.287)) of the variance in the intake outcome was between counties, leaving approximately 99% of the variance to be explained at the referral (level-1) level.

Specifically, Table 3 shows three separate models predicting the intake stage across all offenders, which includes (1) county characteristics only (model 1), (2) a full model of county characteristics, race/ethnicity, drug offending, and control variables (model 2), and full model of county characteristics, race/ethnicity, drug possession and drug distribution measures, and control variables (model 3).

Results from model 1 indicate that all three community-level variables of interest (underclass poverty, racial inequality, ethnic inequality) failed to significantly affect the mean rate of intake. Also unexpected, the mean rate of intake was not influenced by being Black, Hispanic, or referred to the court for a drug offense (model 2). Although unexpected, this finding is parallel to prior research (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995). These findings were again confirmed in model 3 where intake decisions were not influenced by if a youth was referred to juvenile court for a drug possession or drug distribution.

It is important to note, that two community-level control variables, urbanism and density of youth, did predict intake outcomes. Counties characterized by a large population positively affected the likelihood of receiving an intake referral (see Feld, 1991), while the density of youth was inversely related to intake outcomes. In sum, concerning the stage of intake, no support is found for the first, second, fourth, and sixth hypotheses. Disadvantaged community characteristics, race/ethnicity, drug offending, and type of drug offending were also not predictive of the more severe outcome at intake.

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Table 3. HGLM Estimates on Intake Decision-Making across all Offenders

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Fixed Effects			
Intercept	-.82[c] (1.35)	-.79 (1.35)	-.79 (1.35)
Community-Level			
Underclass Poverty	.04 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.03 (.05)
Racial Inequality	.08 (.08)	.02 (.07)	.02 (.07)
Ethnic Inequality	-.05 (.10)	-.13 (.10)	-.13 (.10)
Controls			
Wealth	-.30 (.20)	-.31 (.26)	-.31 (.26)
Residential Mobility	.03 (.04)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)
Urbanism	**.01 (.01)***	**.01 (.01)***	**.01 (.01)***
Youth	**-.31 (.11)****	**-.32 (.12)****	**-.32 (.12)****
Crime Rate	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Individual-Level			
Black[a]		-.03 (.03)	-.04 (.03)
Hispanic[a]		-.06 (.06)	-.06 (.06)
Drugs[b]		.05 (.06)	
Possession[b]			.03 (.06)
Distribution[b]			.13 (.07)
Controls			
Female		-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Age		**-.01 (.04)****	**-.01 (.01)****
Felony		**.11 (.02)****	**.10 (.02)****
Prior Referrals		**-.06 (.02)****	**-.06 (.02)****
Charges		.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Attorney		-.09 (.11)	-.09 (.11)
Property[b]		.10 (.06)	.10 (.06)
Person[b]		.10 (.07)	.11 (.07)
Year		**-3.51 (.24)****	**-3.51 (.24)****
x^2	35589.66	27165.78	27172.90
df	58	58	58

Note: Level-1, N = 302,531; Level-2, N = 67
Note: ICC (ρ) = 0.0092 (0.92% of variance in intake outcome was between counties)
a: White is the reference group
b: Reference category is Other offense
c: regression coefficient, S.E. ( )
* p < .05, ** p < .01

Individual Effects of Community and Referral Characteristics on Adjudication Outcomes

Table 4 mirrors the analyses conducted in table 3, but predicts court outcomes at adjudication across all offenders.[60] The significant random effects component for the intercept (not shown) indicated that the rate of adjudication varied significantly across counties ($p < .001$), and the ICC results for adjudication indicated that only 0.95% ($\rho = .0315/(.0315 + 3.287)$) of the variance in the adjudication outcome was between counties, leaving approximately 99% of the variance to be explained at the referral (level-1) level.

Results from model 1 indicate that underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality once again fail to affect the mean rate of adjudication. The absence of disadvantaged community effects is once again unexpected by consistent with some prior macrolevel research of juvenile court outcomes (Leiber, 2003). Model 2 shows that the mean rate of adjudication was influenced by ethnicity. The odds of being adjudicated delinquent for Hispanic youth were 16% greater than Whites (exp [0.15]). Being Black or a drug offender was not predictive of the adjudication outcome. Similar findings were found in the research by Leiber and Jamieson (1995) and Leiber (2003). When results were disaggregated across type of drug offense, model 3 shows that net of all controls, youth who were charged with a drug distribution had a positive effect on the mean rate of adjudication ($1.44 = \exp [0.36]$). In addition, urbanism and youth density were the only two community-level measures that influenced the adjudication stage, yet the direction of each of these relationships have changed from the intake stage. More urban

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[60] Upon further examination, two counties did not refer any youth on for further court proceedings after the intake stage, which removed both counties from the analyses at adjudication and disposition. This issue would account for the drop in the degrees of freedom for the adjudication and later disposition models. Conceptually, it is highly unlikely that one county (which had 70 referrals over 10 years) and another county (which had 5138 referrals over 10 years) did not refer any youth on at intake throughout the selected time period. It may be that the data provided to NCJJ was incorrect or missing for these two specific counties. Future examinations of this state should consider the removal of these two counties from all analyses.

Table 4. HGLM Estimates on Adjudication Decision-Making across all Offenders

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Fixed Effects			
Intercept	-.05[c] (1.23)	.59 (1.53)	.58 (1.53)
Community-Level			
Underclass Poverty	.04 (.04)	.04 (.05)	.04 (.05)
Racial Inequality	-.13 (.08)	-.09 (.10)	-.09 (.10)
Ethnic Inequality	-.01 (.10)	.02 (.11)	.02 (.11)
Controls			
Wealth	.32 (.17)	.38 (.23)	.38 (.23)
Residential Mobility	-.02 (.03)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.04)
Urbanism	-.01 (.01)	**-.01 (.01)***	**-.01 (.01)***
Youth	**.16 (.08)***	**.21 (.10)***	**.21 (.10)***
Crime Rate	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Individual-Level			
Black[a]		.08 (.04)	.07 (.04)
Hispanic[a]		**.15 (.04)****	**.14 (.04)****
Drugs[b]		.21 (.14)	
Possession[b]			.13 (.14)
Distribution[b]			**.36 (.18)***
Controls			
Female		**-.25 (.08)****	**-.25 (.08)****
Age		.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Felony		**.28 (.06)****	**.24 (.06)****
Prior Referrals		**.23 (.03)****	**.23 (.03)****
Charges		**.05 (.01)****	**.05 (.01)****
Attorney		**2.31 (.28)****	**2.31 (.28)****
Property[b]		.10 (.12)	.11 (.12)
Person[b]		.07 (.16)	.08 (.16)
Year		**-.48 (.10)****	**-.48 (.10)**
x^2	17693.58	21942.02	21939.74
df	56	56	56

Note: Level-1, N = 226,595; Level-2, N = 65
Note: ICC (ρ) = 0.0095 (0.95% of variance in adjudication outcome was between counties)
a: White is the reference group
b: Reference category is Other offense
c: regression coefficient, S.E. (   )
* p < .05, ** p < .01

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counties have a lower log odds of adjudicating youth delinquent, while youth density is positively associated with adjudication outcomes.

At this stage of the proceedings, partial support is found for the second and fourth hypotheses. This is based on the findings that Hispanics and youth charged with a drug possession were subjected to increased social control at adjudication. However, disadvantaged community characteristics did not predict the adjudication outcome (no support for the first hypothesis), and the effect of race and ethnicity on adjudication was larger for Hispanic youth compared to Blacks since being Black did not affect the dependent variable (nonsupport for the sixth hypothesis).

Individual Effects of Community and Referral Characteristics on Judicial Disposition Outcomes

Table 5 presents the HGLM estimates for court outcomes at judicial disposition. The significant random effects component for the intercept (not shown) indicated that the rate of disposition varied significantly across counties ($p < .001$), and the ICC results for disposition indicated that only 0.56% ($\rho = .0186/(.0186 + 3.287)$) of the variance in the disposition outcome was between counties, leaving approximately 99% of the variance to be explained at the referral (level-1) level.

As with the results from each model 1 when predicting intake and adjudication, model 1 of table 5 shows that underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality fail to significant affect the mean rate of judicial disposition. Once the individual-level variables are included in the model (model 2), and although unexpected, results indicate that youth who reside in counties characterized by racial inequality had a 0.82 lower probability (exp [-0.20]) of receiving the more severe outcome of residential placement at judicial disposition. Leniency at court outcomes

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Table 5. HGLM Estimates on Judicial Disposition Decision-Making across all Offenders

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Fixed Effects			
Intercept	-2.86[c] (1.28)*	-3.11 (1.27)*	-3.11 (1.27)*
Community-Level			
Underclass Poverty	.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)
Racial Inequality	-.16 (.10)	-.20 (.10)*	-.20 (.10)*
Ethnic Inequality	-.06 (.10)	-.08 (.11)	-.08 (.11)
Controls			
Wealth	-.15 (.20)	-.13 (.19)	-.13 (.19)
Residential Mobility	.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Urbanism	.01 (.01)*	.01 (.01)*	.01 (.01)*
Youth	-.39 (.10)**	-.38 (.10)**	-.36 (.10)**
Crime Rate	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Individual-Level			
Black[a]		.21 (.06)**	.21 (.06)**
Hispanic[a]		.22 (.05)**	.22 (.05)**
Drugs[b]		.11 (.05)*	
Possession[b]			.13 (.05)**
Distribution[b]			.06 (.06)
Controls			
Female		-.26 (.03)**	-.26 (.03)**
Age		-.04 (.02)*	-.04 (.02)*
Felony		.34 (.05)**	.35 (.04)**
Prior Referrals		.31 (.03)**	.31 (.03)**
Charges		.09 (.02)*	.09 (.02)*
Attorney		.92 (.15)**	.92 (.17)**
Property[b]		-.03 (.07)	.04 (.07)
Person[b]		-.02 (.05)	-.02 (.05)
Year		.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)
x^2	16103.07	16711.67	16725.68
df	56	56	56

Note: Level-1, N = 113,364; Level-2, N = 65
Note: ICC (ρ) = 0.0056 (0.56% of variance in disposition outcome was between counties)
a: White is the reference group
b: Reference category is Other offense
c: regression coefficient, S.E. ( )
* p < .05, ** p < .01

based on disadvantaged community characteristics and indicators of threatening populations have also been found in prior research (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995).

Controlling for community characteristics, model 2 also shows that being Black, Hispanic, and a drug offender were predictive of residential placement in the expected direction. Specifically, Black and Hispanic youth had a 1.23 greater probability (exp [0.21]) and 1.25 greater probability (exp [0.22]) of receiving out-of-home placement compared to Whites, respectively. Drug offenders were associated with lower log odds of receiving residential placement (1.11 = exp [.011]). When drug offending was disaggregated by type of drug offense (model 3), racial inequality still had a significant inverse effect on the mean rate of judicial disposition, and Black and Hispanic youth still received severe treatment in the form of residential placement. While youth who were charged with a drug possession had a 1.14 greater probability (exp [0.13]) of receiving out-of-home placement, youth who were charged with a drug distribution was not predictive of judicial disposition. Once again, urbanism and youth density influenced outcomes at judicial disposition, but the direction of the effects mirrored the intake stage rather than adjudication. Specifically, urban counties had greater log odds of sentencing youth to out-of-home placement than community sanctions, while counties with a larger density of youth were more lenient with dispositional decisions.

Overall, at this specific stage, no support has been found for the expected relationship that the community-characteristics of underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality would predict the more severe outcome at judicial disposition (H_1). Support was discovered for the expected relationships that Blacks, Hispanics, and drug offenders would receive the more disadvantaged court outcome (H_2). No support was found for the fourth and six hypotheses because youth who were charged with a drug distribution did not affect disposition outcomes,

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and the effect (although small) of race and ethnicity on court outcomes was greater for Hispanic youth compared to Blacks.

Joint Effects of Race/Ethnicity and Drug Offending on Court Outcomes

In order to examine the joint relationships of race/ethnicity with drug offending and type of drug offense on court outcomes, net of community characteristics, individual-level interaction terms were estimated and included as an additional predictor within each full model that included both community-level characteristics and individual-level offender and offense information. For the sake of parsimony, only the regression coefficient of each interaction term is presented in the below table. Each coefficient represents a separate HGLM model. The results are presented in table 6.

Table 6. HGLM Estimates of Race/Ethnicity by Drug Interactions on Decision-Making across all Offenders

	Intake (1)[a]	Adjudication (2)[b]	Disposition (3)[c]
Black x Drugs	**.15 (.06)[d]***	.14 (.12)	.20 (.04)
Hispanic x Drugs	.09 (.05)	**.19 (.05)****	**.29 (.13)***
Black x Possession	.06 (.06)	.14 (.10)	**.16 (.07)***
Hispanic x Possession	.01 (.06)	.04 (.09)	.20 (.11)
Black x Distribution	**.21 (.07)****	-.03 (.11)	**.26 (.07)****
Hispanic x Distribution	**.24 (.11)***	.26 (.17)	**.37 (.18)***

Note: Control variables included in all models
Note: Each regression coefficient represents a separate HGLM model. Each interaction term was entered separately into each model while controlling for all Level-1 and Level-2 measures.
a: Level-1, N = 302,531; Level-2, N = 67
b: Level-1, N = 226,595; Level-2, N = 65
c: Level-1, N = 113,364; Level-2, N = 65
d: regression coefficient, S.E. (   )
* p < .05, ** p < .01

As can be seen in model 1, three joint relationships exist between the race/ethnicity of the youth, drug offending in general, and being charged with a drug distribution. Specifically, Black

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drug offenders had a 16% greater likelihood (exp [0.15]) of receiving an intake referral. A more nuanced effect between race and type of drug offense also emerged, in that Black youth who were charged with a drug distribution had a 24% increased odds (exp [0.21]) of being referred on for further court proceedings. An effect was also found for Hispanic youth charged with a drug possession, as they had a 1.27 greater probability (exp [0.24]) of receiving an intake referral

Model 2 presents the estimated interaction effects between race/ethnicity, drug offending, and type of drug offense at the stage of adjudication. Out of six potential interaction effects, only one emerged as statistically significant. Specifically, being a Hispanic drug offender had a positive effect on the mean rate of adjudication (1.21 = exp [0.19]). At judicial disposition (model 3), four significant interactions emerged. Hispanic drug offenders had a positive effect on judicial disposition (1.33 = exp [0.29]). The other three significant interactions consisted of joint relationships between race/ethnicity and type of drug offense. Black youth charged with a drug possession increased the odds of residential placement by 17% (exp [0.16]). The odds for Black and Hispanic youth receiving residential placement were 1.30 times (exp [0.26]) and 1.44 times (exp [0.37]) greater when charged with a drug distribution.

Based on the results of the joint individual-level interaction terms, some support has been found for the second and fourth hypotheses concerning the anticipated effects of race, drug offending, and charges of drug distribution. The degree of support, however, depends on the stage examined. More support was found at the stages of intake and judicial disposition compared to adjudication. Black drug offenders were subjected to increased social control at intake, while Hispanic drug offenders received disadvantaged court outcomes at adjudication and disposition (H_2). Both Black and Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution had a positive effect on social control at intake and disposition, but not adjudication (H_4). Significant joint

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race/ethnicity and drug offending relationships with court outcomes paralleled findings in prior research (DeJong & Jackson, 1998; Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Leiber & Fox, 2005; Tittle & Curran, 1998). In particular, Black youth charged with a drug distribution or drug possession resulted in greater social control at disposition. This finding mirrors Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial results that Black drug offenders had a greater probability of receiving out-of-home placement compared to other types of offenders.

Conditioning Effects of Community Characteristics on Race/Ethnicity and Drug Offending Relationships

Recall that two hypotheses specifically predicted that disadvantaged community characteristics will condition the individual and joint relationships of race/ethnicity, drug offending, and charges of drug distribution on juvenile court outcomes (H_3, H_7). In order to disentangle the effect of community characteristics on social control for various racial/ethnic and drug offending groups, table 7 presents the HGLM estimates of cross-level interactions on intake, adjudication, and judicial disposition outcomes.

As shown in model 1, nine out of the nineteen potential cross-level interactions produced significant effects at the stage of intake. Significant effects that emerged at intake from the inclusion of extra-legal county-level characteristics parallels prior research (Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Pope & Feyerherm, 1993). Specifically, it has been argued that relationships based on extra-legal criteria emerge at the front-end of the juvenile justice system due to the heightened level of discretion awarded to decision-makers (Bell & Lang, 1985; Bishop et al., 2010; Leiber, Bishop, & Chamlin, 2011).

In regards to the specific results from models 1, drug offenders who lived in counties with high levels of underclass poverty ($1.01 = \exp[0.01]$) and ethnic inequality

Table 7. HGLM Estimates of Cross-Level Interactions on Decision-Making across all Offenders

	Intake (1)[a]	Adjudication (2)[b]	Disposition (3)[c]
Cross-Level Interactions			
Black x Underclass Poverty	-.01[d] (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Black x Racial Inequality	-.05 (.05)	-.04 (.07)	.09 (.09)
Hispanic x Underclass Poverty	-.02 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Hispanic x Ethnic Inequality	.12 (.10)	-.01 (.05)	.01 (.06)
Drugs x Underclass Poverty	**.01 (.01)****	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Drugs x Racial Inequality	.08 (.05)	.10 (.08)	-.05 (.07)
Drugs x Ethnic Inequality	**.10 (.03)****	.01 (.04)	.12 (.07)
Black x Drugs x Underclass Poverty	**.01 (.01)***	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Black x Drugs x Racial Inequality	.12 (.07)	-.18 (.14)	.04 (.17)
Hispanic x Drugs x Underclass Poverty	**.04 (.01)****	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Hispanic x Drugs x Ethnic Inequality	**.48 (.11)****	.14 (.10)	.18 (.19)
Black x Possession x Underclass Poverty	**.01 (.01)***	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Black x Possession x Racial Inequality	.08 (.08)	-.06 (.13)	-.12 (.16)
Hispanic x Possession x Underclass Poverty	**.03 (.01)***	.01 (.01)	.01 (.03)
Hispanic x Possession x Ethnic Inequality	**.28 (.11)***	.17 (.13)	.19 (.20)
Black x Distribution x Underclass Poverty	.01 (.01)	**-.01 (.01)***	.01 (.01)
Black x Distribution x Racial Inequality	.12 (.06)	.36 (.31)	.08 (.23)
Hispanic x Distribution x Underclass Poverty	.02 (.01)	**-.02 (.01)***	**.06 (.03)***
Hispanic x Distribution x Ethnic Inequality	**.51 (.14)****	-.58 (.50)	.18 (.29)

Note: Control variables included in all models

Note: Each regression coefficient represents a separate HGLM model. Each interaction term was entered separately into each model while controlling for all Level-1 and Level-2 measures.

a: Level-1, N = 302,531; Level-2, N = 67

b: Level-1, N = 226,595; Level-2, N = 65

c: Level-1, N = 113,364; Level-2, N = 65

d: regression coefficient, S.E. ( )

* p < .05, ** p < .01

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had a higher log odds of receiving an intake referral than similarly situated offenders charged with other offense types.

Black drug offenders who resided in counties characterized by underclass poverty were positively related (1.01 = exp [0.01]) to severe intake outcomes compared to similarly situated White youth. Although consistent with expectations, this specific finding is in opposition to Leiber and Stairs' (1999) test of Sampson and Laub's perspective that focused solely on the intake stage. While Leiber and Stairs (1999) found that drug offenders who lived in a county that was ranked second in terms of disadvantaged had an increased likelihood of receiving an intake referral, this effect was found only for White drug offenders. Therefore, the results are supportive of Sampson and Laub' (1993) theoretical model, but dissimilar to Leiber and Stairs (1999).

Furthermore, Hispanic drug offenders who resided in counties with high levels of underclass poverty also received disadvantaged intake outcomes (1.04 = exp [0.04]). While only a marginal effect was found for Hispanic drug offenders in underclass poverty communities, a larger effect was found to the disadvantage of Hispanic drug offenders when they lived in counties characterized by ethnic inequality. Specifically, being a Hispanic drug offender was associated with higher log odds (1.61 = (exp [0.48]) of receiving an intake referral.

When cross-level interactions including type of drug offense were estimated, additional effects were also discovered. Specifically, in counties characterized by underclass poverty, both Black (1.01 = exp [0.01]) and Hispanic youth (1.03 = exp [0.03]) charged with a drug possession had a significant but marginal increased likelihood of receiving a court referral compared to Whites. However, Hispanic youth who were charged with a drug possession (1.33 = exp [0.28]) and Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution (1.66 = (exp [0.51]) who lived in counties

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characterized by ethnic inequality were also subjected to greater social control at intake. In sum, out of the nine significant relationships that were discovered at intake, three cross-level interactions produced the largest effects that specifically resulted in disadvantaged court outcomes for various types of Hispanic drug offenders who reside in counties with ethnic inequality (e.g. Hispanic x drugs x ethnic inequality at intake; Hispanic x possession x ethnic inequality at intake; Hispanic x distribution x ethnic inequality at intake).

Model 2 presents the results of cross-level interactions at the adjudication stage. Only two significant cross-level interactions were discovered, and the effects were small and in the unexpected direction. Specifically, Black youth charged with a drug distribution ($0.99 = \exp$ [-0.01]) and Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution ($0.98 = \exp$ [-0.02]) who resided in communities with underclass poverty were associated with lower log odds of being adjudicated delinquent compared to similarly situated Whites. At judicial disposition (model 3), only one significant cross-level interaction effect was emerged, where Hispanic youth who were charged with a drug distribution and resided in counties with underclass poverty had a higher log odds ($1.06 = \exp$ [0.06]) of receiving residential placement at disposition.

Overall, from examining the cross-level effects of community characteristics, race/ethnicity, drug offending, and type of drug offense across all offenders some support is found for the expected relationship that Blacks, Hispanics, drug offenders, and Black and Hispanic drug offenders who reside in disadvantaged communities would receive severe court outcomes (H_3, H_5). However, the degree of support is sporadic across the three court outcomes. While it could be argued that minimal support was found concerning the conditioning effect of disadvantaged community characteristics on race/ethnic and drug offending relationships as predicted by Sampson and Laub (1993), it must be noted that this is based on the inclusion of

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multiple court outcomes. For example, if the current study only tested Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory at intake outcomes, then it could be concluded that modest support was found for the theoretical model. However, if adjudication and/or disposition were the dependent variables in the current study, minimal support would be found for Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective. This issue makes it difficult to find consistent support for any theory when multiple outcomes (i.e. dependent variables) are examined in a single study.

Individual Effects of Community and Referral Characteristics on Court Outcomes within Drug Offenders

While the preceding analyses focused on comparisons of race/ethnicity and drug offending to all other referrals in the sample, it was also important to examine if there are any potential differences within drug offenders in regards to community characteristics, race/ethnicity and type of drug offense with social control. Table 8 presents (1) a full model with the additive effects of community characteristics, race, ethnicity, drug offending (drug distribution versus drug possession), and controls; and (2) a full model that disaggregates the drug offender across race/ethnicity and type of drug offense (e.g. Black youth charged with a drug distribution compared to a White youth charged with a drug possession). These two models are estimated for all three court outcomes. For the purpose of parsimony, the intercept-only model and model that only included the intercept and community characteristics are not shown in table 8.

Similar to the results discovered in table 3 that examined all delinquent referrals, model 1 shows that underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality do not significantly affect the mean rate of intake. Being Black, Hispanic, and charged with a drug distribution is not predictive of intake.

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Table 8. HGLM Estimates on Decision-Making within Drug Offenders

	Intake		Adjudication		Disposition	
	$(1)^a$	$(2)^a$	$(3)^b$	$(4)^b$	$(5)^c$	$(6)^c$
Fixed Effects						
Intercept	-1.50^g (1.24)	-1.50 (1.24)	2.11 (1.51)	2.11 (1.50)	**-3.50 (1.27)****	**-3.48 (1.29)****
Community-Level						
Underclass Poverty	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.03 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Racial Inequality	-.03 (.07)	-.03 (.07)	-.14 (.12)	-.14 (.12)	**-.23 (.11)***	**-.23 (.11)***
Ethnic Inequality	.09 (.09)	-.09 (.09)	.01 (.14)	.01 (.14)	-.12 (.12)	-.12 (.11)
Controls						
Wealth	-.44 (.23)	-.44 (.23)	**.50 (.18)****	**.50 (.18)****	-.26 (.17)	-.26 (.18)
Residential Mobility	.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)	-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	.04 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Urbanism	**.01 (.01)****	**.01 (.01)****	**-.01 (.01)****	**-.01 (.01)****	**.01 (.01)****	**.01 (.01)****
Youth	**-.38 (.15)***	**-.38 (.15)***	**.23 (.09)****	**.24 (.09)****	**-.47 (.09)****	**-.47 (.09)****
Crime Rate	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Individual-Level						
Black[d]	.08 (.04)		**.21 (.04)****		**.46 (.07)****	
Hispanic[d]	-.07 (.07)		**.37 (.04)****		**.51 (.11)**	
Drug Distribution[e]	.09 (.11)		-.07 (.12)		-.19 (.16)	
Black Possession[f]		.01 (.05)		**.24 (.05)****		**.39 (.09)****
Hispanic Possession[f]		**-.15 (.08)***		**.28 (.11)***		**.39 (.10)****
White Distribution[f]		.02 (.12)		-.07 (.12)		-.31 (.18)
Black Distribution[f]		.26 (.10)		.11 (.14)		.26 (.15)
Hispanic Distribution[f]		.20 (.15)		.39 (.22)		**.45 (.10)****
Controls						
Female	-.01 (.04)	.01 (.04)	**-.22 (.08)****	**-.22 (.08)****	**-.28 (.06)****	**-.28 (.06)****
Age	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.08 (.05)	-.08 (.05)	**-.14 (.04)****	**-.15 (.04)****
Felony	.13 (.10)	.09 (.10)	**.39 (.13)****	**.41 (.13)****	**.44 (.21)***	**.44 (.22)***
Prior Referrals	**-.05 (.01)****	**-.05 (.01)****	**.23 (.02)****	**.24 (.02)****	**.34 (.03)****	**.34 (.03)****
Charges	**-.04 (.02)***	**-.05 (.02)***	**.14 (.03)****	**.14 (.03)****	**.12 (.05)***	**.12 (.05)***
Attorney	-.06 (.08)	-.05 (.08)	**2.48 (.31)****	**2.48 (.31)****	**.91 (.17)****	**.91 (.17)****
Year	**-3.43 (.39)****	**-3.43 (.39)****	**-.39 (.11)****	**-.39 (.11)****	-.06 (.08)	.06 (.08)
x^2	5023.01	5001.91	3481.88	3470.93	2046.02	2036.58
df	58	58	56	56	56	56

a: Level-1, N = 55,317; Level-2, N = 67
b: Level-1, N = 41,535; Level-2, N = 65
c: Level-1, N = 21,095; Level-2, N = 65
d: White is the reference group
e: Reference category is Drug Possession
f: Reference category is White Possession
g: regression coefficient, S.E. ( )
* p < .05, ** p < .01

However, once the joint measures of race/ethnicity and type of drug offense are included into the

HGLM regression equation, the odds of Hispanic youth who were charged with a drug

possession were 0.14 times lower (exp [-0.15]) of receiving an intake referral compared to a

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White youth charged with a drug possession. No other race/ethnic and type of drug offense combination influenced the mean rate of intake.

Court outcomes at adjudication are presented in models 3 and 4. According to model 3, while the community-level variables of interest were once again not predictive of adjudication (which mirrors the findings in table 4), both Black and Hispanic youth were subjected to increased social control at adjudication. The odds of Black youth were 1.23 times higher (exp [0.21]) and odds of Hispanic youth were 1.45 times higher (exp [0.37]) to be adjudicated delinquent compared to Whites. While being charged with a drug distribution was not predictive of adjudication compared to a drug possession, model 4 shows some racial/ethnic and drug combinations were predictive of the more severe court outcome. Specifically, Black youth charged with a drug possession had a 1.27 higher probability (exp [0.24]) of being adjudicated guilty, and Hispanic youth charged with a drug possession had a 1.32 higher probability (exp [0.28]) of being adjudicated guilty compared to a similarly situated White youth. Racial/ethnic combinations with drug distribution did not affect adjudication outcomes.

Similar to the results in table 5, when comparisons were made within drug offenders, racial inequality had a significant effect with judicial disposition in an unexpected direction (model 5; model 6). Counties characterized by racial inequality were associated with lower log odds (0.79 = (exp [-0.23]) of sentencing youth to residential placement. As shown in model 5, being Black and Hispanic increased the odds of receiving residential placement compared to Whites by 1.59 (exp [0.46]) and 1.68 (exp [0.51], respectively). While drug distribution was not predictive of disposition compared to a drug possession in model 5, model 6 shows that the odds for of being sentencing to out-of-home placement for Black and Hispanic youth charged with a drug possession were 1.48 times higher (exp [0.39]) than the odds for Whites charged with a

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drug possession. Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution were also treated more harsh compared to Whites charged with a drug possession (1.57 = exp [0.45]).

Based on the results from table 8, there was no support for the expected relationship that the community characteristics proposed by Sampson and Laub (1993) would predict increased social control of youth (H_1). Modest support was found for the second hypothesis since Black and Hispanic youth were the recipients of severe court outcomes at adjudication and disposition, however minimal support was found for the prediction that youth charged with a drug distribution individually and in combination with race/ethnicity would receive severe treatment (H_4). Last, no support was found for the expectation that the effect of race and ethnicity on social control would be larger for Blacks compared to Hispanics. This is based on multiple findings where race/ethnicity individually and in combination with type of drug offending affected Hispanic youth to a larger degree than Blacks (H_6).

Conditioning Effects of Community Characteristics on Race/Ethnicity and Drug Offending Relationships within Drug Offenders

The final step in the analyses was to estimate cross-level interactions within drug offenders across the three court outcomes. Table 9 presents the HGLM estimates of the fifteen potential cross-level interactions for intake, adjudication, and judicial disposition.

As shown in model 1, only three significant cross-level interactions emerged as predictors of intake outcomes. Out of the three significant effects, only one could be considered modest in strength. Results indicated that Black drug offenders who lived in counties high in underclass poverty were associated with higher odds (1.01 = exp [0.01]) of receiving an intake referral compared to similarly situated White drug offenders.

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Table 9. HGLM Estimates of Cross-Level Interactions on Decision-Making within Drug Offenders

	Intake (1)[a]	Adjudication (2)[b]	Disposition (3)[c]
Cross-Level Interactions			
Black Drug Offender x Underclass Poverty	.01[d] (.01)*	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Black Drug Offender x Racial Inequality	-.01 (.08)	-.08 (.17)	.02 (.11)
Hispanic Drug Offender x Underclass Poverty	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.03 (.02)
Hispanic Drug Offender x Ethnic Inequality	.21 (.14)	.16 (.10)	.27 (.18)
Black Possession x Underclass Poverty	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	**-.02 (.01)***
Black Possession x Racial Inequality	-.01 (.08)	-.14 (.13)	-.13 (.11)
Hispanic Possession x Underclass Poverty	.01 (.01)	**.01 (.01)***	.01 (.02)
Hispanic Possession x Ethnic Inequality	.15 (.14)	**.33 (.11)****	.19 (.14)
White Distribution x Underclass Poverty	.01 (.01)	**.01 (.01)****	-.01 (.01)
White Distribution x Racial Inequality	-.01 (.06)	-.02 (.11)	.06 (.06)
White Distribution x Ethnic Inequality	-.01 (.06)	**.12 (.06)***	-.03 (.07)
Black Distribution x Underclass Poverty	**.01 (.01)***	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Black Distribution x Racial Inequality	.08 (.05)	.04 (.20)	.14 (.12)
Hispanic Distribution x Underclass Poverty	.01 (.01)	**-.02 (.01)****	.06 (.05)
Hispanic Distribution x Ethnic Inequality	**.34 (.16)***	-.43 (.35)	.39 (.36)

Note: Control variables included in all models

Note: Each regression coefficient represents a separate HGLM model. Each interaction term was entered separately into each model while controlling for all Level-1 and Level-2 measures.

a: Level-1, N = 55,317; Level-2, N = 67

b: Level-1, N = 41,535; Level-2, N = 65

c: Level-1, N = 21,095; Level-2, N = 65

d: regression coefficient, S.E. ( )

* p < .05, ** p < .01

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Furthermore, a similar effect was found for Black youth charged with a drug distribution in counties characterized by underclass poverty compared to White youth charged with a drug possession in similar disadvantaged communities (1.01 = exp [0.01]).

At the adjudication stage, the presence of five significant cross-level interaction emerged, and with one exception, all were in the expected direction (model 2). The magnitude of the effects, however, varied depending on each interaction term. Specifically, Hispanic youth who were charged with a drug possession and lived in counties with underclass poverty (1.01 = exp [0.01]) and ethnic inequality (1.39 = exp [0.33]) had an increased odds of being adjudicated. White youth charged with a drug distribution also received more severe outcomes at adjudication when they lived in counties with underclass poverty (1.01 = exp [0.01]) and ethnic inequality (1.13 = exp [0.12]). Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution and resided in counties with underclass poverty were associated with lower odds (0.98 = exp [0.02]) of being adjudicated delinquent.

Court outcomes at judicial disposition are presented in model 3. Only one significant cross-level interaction emerged, and results were in the unexpected direction. Specifically, Black youth who were charged with a drug possession and lived in counties with underclass poverty were granted leniency (0.98 = exp [0.02]) at disposition compared to similarly situated White youth who were charged with a drug possession. Therefore, based on the findings of the cross-level interactions within drug offenders across intake, adjudication, and disposition, some support is found for the third and fifth hypotheses. To some degree, disadvantaged community characteristics conditioned the relationship between race/ethnicity, drug offending, and type of drug offense on social control, but support varied based on the stage examined. Three cross-level effects emerged at intake (all in expected direction), five effects were discovered at adjudication

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(four were in the expected direction), and one effect was found at disposition that was not in the predicted direction. However, it is important to note that with two exceptions (Hispanic distribution x ethnic inequality at intake; Hispanic possession x ethnic inequality at adjudication) that the majority of the effects were small in magnitude.

The presence of statistically significant effects versus the magnitude of each effect is another issue that needs to be taken into consideration when concluding the degree of support in the research hypotheses. Some scholars may argue that the presence of a statistically significant effect is proof that there are meaningful relationships within each court outcome, while other researchers may argue that it is the magnitude of each effect that is more important in determining support for the research hypotheses. This debate adds to the complication when determining the degree of support for the discovered relationships.

Chapter Seven:

Discussion and Conclusion

The social control of youth, and in particular the overrepresentation of minority youth throughout the juvenile justice system has been well documented in prior research (Bishop, 2005; Engen et al., 2002; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Thomas et al., 2013). Literature has suggested that the composition of communities may have an important influence on juvenile court outcomes, and this may especially true for minorities (Blalock, 1967; Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Tittle & Curran, 1988). Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrolevel theory of inequality and social control is one theoretical perspective that argues for differences in court outcomes based on community characteristics that are indicative of threatening populations. The present study utilized Sampson and Laub's theoretical perspective to examine the juvenile court outcomes of White, Black, and Hispanic youth who were referred to the juvenile court from 2000-2010 in a Northeast state. Based on the lack of studies that examined Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical model and limitations of prior macrolevel research of juvenile court outcomes, this study attempted to address if the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control was applicable to more recent juvenile court outcomes, and if race/ethnicity and drug offending differences emerged as predicted by Sampson and Laub (1993).

The final chapter of the current research includes a discussion of the results of the analyses. First, a summary of the results that were presented in chapter six will be described, followed by a discussion of theoretical and empirical conclusions that should be considered in

light of the findings. Next, the study's limitations and suggestions for future research will be introduced. The chapter will conclude with implications and recommendations for policy.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the present study was to perform a more nuanced examination of Sampson and Laub's (1993) integrated conflict perspective by investigating if more recent juvenile court outcomes vary with community-level indicators of underclass poverty, racial inequality, and ethnic inequality. Specifically, this study examined if minority youth (Black and Hispanic) and drug offenders (i.e. possession versus distribution) were subjected to greater social control compared to Whites and other types of offenders and if these relationships were conditioned by disadvantaged community characteristics. A series of HGLM analyses guided the three general research questions and six hypotheses.

Overall, minimal support was found for Sampson and Laub's (1993) macrosocial theory. On their own, underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality did not affect the court outcomes of youth referred to the juvenile court. However, when controlling for numerous county-level and case-level variables, Black and Hispanic youth individually and in combination with drug offending did at times receive disadvantaged court outcomes compared to Whites and other types of offenders. While community characteristics to some degree resulted in more severe outcomes for minority youth, drug offenders, and for different racial/ethnic and drug offending combinations, the majority of the cross-level effects were sporadic depending on the stage examined. A discussion of the results that pertain to each research question is provided below.

Influence of Underclass Poverty and Racial/Ethnic Inequality on the Social Control of Youth. The first research question in this study asked if the community characteristics put forth by Sampson and Laub (1993) (i.e. underclass poverty, racial/ethnic inequality) predicted

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the social control of youth within the last decade. Controlling for offender and offense characteristics, underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality did not affect intake, adjudication, and disposition outcomes in the expected direction. In fact, the only significant finding with the three independent community-level variables of interest resulted in less social control for counties characterized by racial inequality at disposition.

Although unexpected, the absence of direct effects (Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Leiber, 2003, Rodriguez, 2007) or presence of inverse effects (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber & Jamieson, 1995) of disadvantaged community characteristics on juvenile court outcomes parallels prior tests of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective, and earlier macrolevel research on juvenile court outcomes. For example, Leiber and Jamieson (1995) found that community disadvantage resulted in greater social control at intake, counties with high levels of poverty and racial inequality treated youth with leniency at petition, and community context was not predictive of social control at adjudication or judicial disposition. Null findings were also reported for main effects of unemployment and poverty on detention outcomes (Rodriguez, 2007) and structural disadvantage on diversion, petition, adjudication, and disposition outcomes (Rodriguez, 2010).

One explanation for this finding is based on the explanatory power of the community-level variables prior to the inclusion of any individual-level measures. Even though every intercept-only model indicated that the rate of each court outcome varied across counties, the ICC represented only a very small degree of clustering (variation) between counties. Overall, only 1% of the variance in intake, adjudication, and court outcomes was over counties, the rest was represented at the referral level. When community-level measures were added to the intercept-only model, underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality did not influence the court outcomes. Therefore, Sampson and Laub' (1993) measures of interest did not add any influence

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to the explanatory power of social control. On the one hand, one interpretation could be that decision-makers do not take into consideration community context when deciding the court outcomes of youth in general. On the other hand, an alternative interpretation could be that community characteristics influence the perceptions of decision-makers only in conjunction with other offender and offense considerations. At this point in time, it may be too early to dismiss that community context does not overall play a role in the outcomes of youth. It is also important to note that racial inequality only exerted an effect on judicial disposition once individual-level measures were added to the model. This result may be attributable to the driving force of one of the individual-level variables on racial inequality.

Out of the eight community-level measures, only two variables consistently predicted each court outcome and they were included as controls. Counties characterized by a larger proportion of youth subjected all offenders (regardless of race/ethnicity, drug offending, etc.) to lenient court outcomes at intake and disposition, and harshness at adjudication. Youth density was a control variable included in Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial examination, yet did not produce as consistent effects as in the current study. For example, youth density did not predict the likelihood of petition or detention across all youth, but was related to greater social control at detention for nonpetitioned Black drug offenders.

In regards to urbanism, county population predicted harsh intake and disposition outcomes, but leniency at adjudication. The finding that urbanism and youth density impact juvenile court outcomes illustrates important differences with respect to how decision-makers take certain structural characteristics into consideration but not others. Furthermore, these results suggest that there may be specific urban, suburban, and rural distinctions across counties that influence court outcomes.

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The "justice by geography" concept put forth by Pope (1976) and Feld (1991) recognizes that there may be important differences in urban versus rural courts that result in diverse case outcomes. Even though statutes, rules, and proceedings are universally applicable across each state, juvenile justice administration varies across urban, suburban, and rural settings (Feld & Schaefer, 2010). Large courts in more urban locations are considered more "due process" oriented and process cases more formally, severely, and expedite them at a quicker pace compared to small courts in suburban/rural locations that are considered "traditional" and process cases more informally (Bray et al., 2005; Burruss & Kempf-Leonard, 2002; Tepperman, 1973).[61] Therefore, the finding that urbanism was predictive of court outcomes in the current study highlights that county population is an indicator of differences in social control. The organizational context of the court and decision-makers' perceptions resulted in both severe and lenient court outcomes depending on where youth live. Based on the differences across urban and rural courts in regards to formal and informal systems, some scholars argue that race differences emerge in court outcomes based on the "justice by geography" concept. For example, racial disparities in decisions to transfer youth to the adult criminal justice system (Feld, 1994; McNulty, 1996) and detention outcomes (Feld, 1995) were found across urban and rural locations to the disadvantage of Blacks.

Influence of Race/Ethnicity, and Drug Offending on Juvenile Court Outcomes. The second research question asked if Blacks, Hispanic, and youth charged with a drug possession or drug distribution were subjected to greater social control compared to similarly situated counterparts (i.e. Whites and other types of offenders). Controlling for community-level factors

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[61] There may also be differences in case outcomes in urban courts where more heinous crimes are seen on a routine basis and decision-makers become desensitized to the seriousness of these types of offenses compared to rural courts which see a smaller number of serious offenses (Emerson, 1983).

and depending on the stage examined, varying degrees of support were found for the expectation that minority youth and different types of drug offenders would receive greater social control. Across all types of offenders, race/ethnicity and drug offending were not predictive of intake outcomes (see also Leiber & Jamieson, 1995), yet Hispanics and youth charged with a drug distribution received greater social control at adjudication. At judicial disposition, Blacks, Hispanics and youth charged with a drug possession received the more severe court outcome. Race/ethnicity and drug offending interactions produced greater social control at intake for Black drug offenders, but in particular for Black and Hispanic youth charged with a drug distribution. At adjudication, Hispanic drug offenders received the more severe outcome. At disposition, Hispanic drug offenders, Black youth charged with a possession or distribution, and Hispanics charged with a distribution were subjected to greater social control.

Within drug offenders, race/ethnicity and drug offending once again did not predict intake outcomes, but Hispanic youth charged with a drug possession were released or diverted from the system compared to Whites charged with a drug possession. At adjudication, Black and Hispanic youth received greater social control, especially Blacks and Hispanics charged with a drug possession. At disposition, race and ethnicity was directly related to greater social control, while Hispanics who were charged with either a drug possession or distribution and Blacks charged with a drug possession were the recipients of disadvantaged outcomes compared to Whites charged with a drug possession.

Even though the findings were not consistent across three court outcomes, controlling for structural context, the presence of significant effects of race/ethnicity, individually and in combination and drug offending are consistent with extant research (DeJong & Jackson, 1998; Rodriguez, 2013; Sampson & Laub, 1993). For example, Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith (2009)

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found that Black youth were less likely to have adjudication withheld, while both Black and Latino youth were sentenced to correctional confinement compared to community supervision at disposition in the research by Rodriguez (2013). Concomitantly, drug offenders also received disadvantaged outcomes, and at times the effects were dependent on if the youth was charged with a drug possession or distribution. These findings confirm some prior studies (e.g. DeJong & Jackson, 1998) but are in opposition to those that have found inverse effects of drug offending on court outcomes (Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Leiber, 2003; Rodriguez, 2010; Thomas et al., 2013). The observed joint race/ethnicity and drug offending relationships in the current study also mirror prior findings of greater social control for racial/ethnic minorities (Hayes-Smith & Hayes-Smith, 2009; Leiber & Fox, 2005; Tittle & Curran, 1998).

In regards to the individual-level findings, even though race/ethnicity did not always influence court outcomes throughout each HGLM model, the instances where race and ethnicity predicted social control to the disadvantage of Black and Hispanic youth is still problematic. After controlling for numerous community and offense/offense characteristics, the presence of racial/ethnic effects with severe juvenile court outcomes suggests that decision-makers may be influenced by negative perceptions, stereotypes, and potential bias. Whereas these perceptions may not be blatantly overt, there may be covert or subtle biases that play a role in court actors' decisions of juvenile offenders (Bridges & Steen, 1998; Graham & Lowery. 2004; Zatz, 1987). Although speculative since the current study was not able to measure the perceptions and attitudes of decision-makers, the potential presence of covert bias is a possible explanation for the discovered effects. Racial/ethnic differences in social control may be based on negative stereotypes that decision-makers possess against minority youth. The results suggest that there are significant, positive relationships between race/ethnicity and social control, which adds to the

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growing body of literature surrounding racial/ethnic disparities in juvenile justice proceedings (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Frazier, 1988; Engen et al., 2002; Leiber & Fox, 2005).

Results of this study also illustrate important differences with respect to the magnitude of social control for Hispanic youth compared to Blacks. Although unexpected, across all offenders and within drug offenders, the direct effect of race and ethnicity on court outcomes was greater for Hispanic youth than for Blacks. It was predicted that due to the historical ramifications of racial segregation (Massey & Denton, 1987), poverty (Wilson, 1987, 1991), and the cultural influence of the war on drugs (Mitchell, 2009), Black youth would fare worse than Hispanics in regards to social control. This expectation was not found in the present study. One possible explanation for this finding, net of community context, is that Hispanic youth in addition to Blacks are perceived by court actors as in need of social control (Brennan & Spohn, 2008; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004). Support for this conclusion parallels prior macrolevel research of juvenile court outcomes where Blacks and Hispanics were both subjected to greater social control compared to Whites, but the effect was larger for Hispanic youth (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Rodriguez, 2013).

Influence of Community Characteristics on Race/Ethnicity and Drug Offending Relationships with Juvenile Court Outcomes. The third research question asked if any racial/ethnic and drug offending relationships with court outcomes were conditioned by underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality to produce greater social control. Overall, while disadvantaged community characteristics did not consistently influence race/ethnicity and drug offending relationships with social control, conflicting results can be attributed to the multiple court outcomes examined.

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Across all offenders, the conditioning effects of underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality were the most evident at the stage of intake. In particular, Hispanic youth charged with a drug offense and lived in counties with ethnic inequality resulted in greater social control at intake. This effect was not tempered by a drug distribution or drug possession since significant cross-level interactions were found for these relationships as well. The effect of race/ethnicity and drug offending in combination with disadvantaged community characteristics appears to play a larger role in the decisions of court actors at intake compared to adjudication and disposition. The *parens patriae* doctrine of the juvenile court resulted in a greater responsibility of the state to intervene with the social control and social welfare of juvenile offenders (Cogan, 1970). The doctrine maximizes the amount of discretion to diagnose and treat the needs of youth referred to the juvenile court. Case outcomes are not based solely on a juvenile's offense, but also take a youth's character and lifestyle into consideration when making decisions (Feld, 1999). Family status, school status, and community/neighborhood factors are all taken into consideration to what case outcomes are in youths' best interests.

In particular, the intake stage involves a large and diverse set of juvenile justice personnel that all provide input to how youth should be processed upon arrest. Police, social service workers, assistant district attorneys, and detention personnel all provide their viewpoint to intake officers. Intake officers generally have backgrounds in social work and focus on the assessment and needs of youth (Sanborn & Salerno, 2005), which parallels the purpose of the *parens patriae* doctrine. Therefore, one potential explanation for a greater number of effects at intake is based on findings of prior research where earlier stages of juvenile justice proceedings (i.e. intake) have greater amounts of discretion compared to later stages (Bell & Lang, 1985; Bishop et al., 2010; Leiber et al., 2011; Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Pope & Feyerherm, 1993). Multiple extra-legal

factors and various court personnel are involved at the stage of intake compared to adjudication and judicial disposition. This situation provides support that the greater amount of discretion awarded to decision-makers can translate to community, race/ethnicity, and drug offending effects with intake outcomes.

At adjudication, only two significant cross-level interactions emerged. Both Black and Hispanic youth who were charged with a drug distribution and lived in counties with underclass poverty received leniency at this stage of the proceedings. Even though the overall number of effects was minimal, the findings suggest that judges' decisions at adjudication correspond to a "correction" process or "correction bias factor" (Bishop et al., 2010; Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Fagan, Slaughter, & Hartstone, 1987; Leiber & Fox, 2005; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010). This means that decision-makers at later court proceedings "correct" for potential bias at earlier stages. For example, Bishop and colleagues (2010) examined four separate court outcomes and found evidence of a "correction effect" at disposition. Specifically, Black youth were more likely to receive an intake referral compared to similarly situated Whites, but were less likely than Whites to receive the more severe outcome of out-of-home placement at disposition.[62] The authors' suggested that judges at judicial disposition "corrected" for selection biases that appeared at earlier stages (see also Bishop & Frazier, 1988). This potential explanation is evident in the current the current study, where Black and Hispanic youth (especially those who lived in impoverished communities) who made it to the adjudication stage subsequently received lenient outcomes at disposition to counter overrepresentation and potential biases.

Paralleling the concept of the "correction" process, a particular finding within the analyses of only drug offenders warrants further discussion. Specifically, at judicial disposition, Black youth charged with a drug possession were more likely to receive residential placement

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[62] Race did not significantly predict the likelihood of petition or adjudication.

compare to similarly situated Whites. This effect appeared while controlling for community context. However, when Black youth were charged with a drug possession and resided in communities characterized by underclass poverty, they were more likely to receive community sanctions instead of the more severe outcome of residential placement. This latter result may be attributable to the influence of community characteristics on the perceptions of decision-makers of minority youth who are referred to the court for drug crimes. In other words, juvenile justice decision-makers may view Black youth charged with a drug possession as a victim, depending on if they lived in disadvantaged communities. In support for this argument, Farrell and Holmes (1991) posit that court actors invoke stereotypical perceptions of offenders when determining cases outcomes based on offender (e.g. race) and offense (e.g. drug crimes) characteristics. In some cases, however, court outcomes are decided based on the context surrounding the offender's social status and degree of disadvantage. If decision-makers believe that offenders have few alternatives to crime based on residing in socially disadvantaged locations, they will be perceived as being less blameworthy and subsequently receive lenient court outcomes.

Peterson and Hagan (1984) contend that similar to the legitimate opportunity structure of success in U.S. society, the drug trade is also stratified across racial lines. The opportunity to be a large and accomplished drug distributor ("villans") is more likely to occur to Whites, while Blacks are stereotyped as more likely to be drug users ("victims") because of their societal position (Sudnow, 1965). This argument therefore accounts for the lenient treatment of minorities compared to Whites for minor drug crimes based on structure and opportunity differences. Peterson and Hagan found support for the expectation of racial differences and also paralleled Farrell and Holmes' (1991) argument. Specifically, among minor drug crimes, minorities were viewed as "victims", less culpable, and did not receive as severe outcomes

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compared to Whites. The finding in the current study of an inverse relationship between being Black, charged with a drug possession (more minor crime compared to drug distribution), and residing in a disadvantage neighborhood parallels Farrell and Holmes (1991) and Peterson and Hagan (1984).

Furthermore, the argument put forth by Steen and colleauges (2005) confirms the above findings because depending on offender, offense, and community characteristics of drugs offenders, Black drug offenders may not always be subjected to greater social control and receive the most severe court outcomes compared to other types of offenders. The stereotype of a "dangerous drug offender" may not parallel racial and ethnic lines consistently across court outcomes, and to some degree also influenced by disadvantaged community characteristics. Even though Steen et al.'s (2005) argument was not specifically tested in the current study, the results add to the growing body of literature that contends that the relationship between race/ethnicity and different types of drug offending are not as transparent as previously thought (Farrell & Holmes, 1991; Peterson & Hagan, 1984).

Moving forward, when analyses were conducted within drug offenders, community characteristics influenced joint race/ethnicity and drug offending relationships in a different manner. The largest number of significant cross-level interactions occurred at adjudication, where depending on where minorities and drug offenders lived, they either had a higher or lower risk of being adjudicated delinquent. The specific findings within drug offenders illustrate important differences to how juvenile court outcomes may vary depending on the comparison group. When Black and Hispanic youth are charged with a certain type of drug offense and live in counties with various indicators of disadvantage, court outcomes may different depending on comparisons of other drug offenders, or all other offense types. The complexity of the overall

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findings is another reason why it is difficult to find consistent support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective.

Theoretical Conclusions

In light of the overall findings *across* court outcomes, and the more specific effects that emerged *within* each stage, there are various theoretical conclusions surrounding the influence of community characteristics on the social control of youth. First, it would seem premature to fully reject that Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical model cannot explain juvenile court outcomes as a form of social control. Even though constant support was not found for all of the six research hypotheses throughout all three stages, the current study found racial/ethnic and drug offending disparities in social control, controlling for and interacting with disadvantaged community characteristics.

In conjunction with this argument, it may also be premature to reject the applicability of the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control because only a handful of studies have specifically tested the perspective. Conceptually, weight should still be given to the theoretical model. More empirical examinations are warranted and further refinements of the perspective are needed before the theory is entirely dismissed. An example of a potential refinement is that future examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory and other structural perspectives should include Hispanics as an additional minority group in conjunction with Blacks. This consideration is especially important since at times, greater social control was found for Hispanic youth but not Blacks, or if both minority groups received disadvantaged outcomes, the effect was larger for Hispanics than Blacks.

Second, acknowledging the lack of expected findings surrounding the influence of disadvantaged community characteristics on social control, alternative theoretical perspectives

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may be able to account for the reported relationships. For example, as introduced earlier (and to reduce repetition), one macrolevel theory that could be explored from the current findings are differences in court outcomes based on the contextual distinctions of rural, suburban, and urban locations (Feld, 1991; Weber, 1969). The degree of bureaucratization in urban versus rural jurisdictions corresponds to the different way that youth are treated in the juvenile court, and this may be especially true for minorities.

Attribution theory is another perspective that may explain the above findings concerning the influence of community context on juvenile court outcomes (see Heider, 1958). Attribution theory proposes that decision-makers base outcomes through personal judgments concerning the personal and environmental/structural characteristics of offenders which correspond to offending behavior and risks of recidivism. The "patterned responses" that decision-makers use to determine outcomes are based on the attribution process and are influenced by stereotypes of the causes of delinquency and crime (Albonetti, 1991). For example, judges may rely on stereotypes based on race, gender, or earlier case outcomes to determine the likelihood that an individual will recidivate. Therefore, attributions of stable traits (e.g. race, gender) and dispositions are predicted to increase the severity of outcomes, while temporary or situational characteristics of offenders are predicted to result in lenient outcomes. Attributions can explain how decision-makers' attributions of offenders can influence court outcomes. Both internal and external attributions play an important role in determining an offender's culpability and accountability, as well as the degree of social control (Rodriguez, 2013; Sanborn 1996).

Attribution theory can also be more broadly applied to the social control of youth when decision-makers focus on external attributions and how community characteristics can be utilized as a larger framework when assessing accountability of offenders (Emerson, 1969). For

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example, Rodriguez (2013) proposes that external attributions in the form of neighborhood context can decrease the culpability, provide an "excuse" for delinquent behavior, or see the youth as a "victim" of their neighborhood. In addition, Rodriguez (2007, 2010) states that while negative external attributions at the individual-level may decrease accountability for offending behavior (Bridges & Steen, 1998), it may also result in greater social control if court officers believe the youth needs formal interventions and treatment. Indicators of neighborhood concentrated disadvantage (i.e. poverty, unemployment, female-headed households) and high community crime rates (Rodriguez, 2007) may make youth vulnerable to delinquency, and be seen by court actors as in need of intervention in the form of social control.

The argument by Rodriguez (2007) is also illustrated in the quantitative and qualitative research by Bridges and colleagues (1995). Instead of juvenile court officers encompassing negative, fearful, and threatening feelings about minority youth, minority overrepresentation in confinement was justified with feelings of wanting to help and provide services to minorities referred to the juvenile court. Judges wanted to remove youth from problematic family situations and adverse community conditions, which corresponded to the placement of minority youth in secure detention and residential commitment (Bridges et al., 1995). Greater social control of minority youth compared to Whites may not automatically translate to feelings of threat and perceptions of dangerousness on behalf of decision-makers, but that court actors believe that minorities need help and should be removed from detrimental social conditions (Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Leiber, 2011).

Paralleling the second theoretical conclusion, the degree of support for the research hypotheses also depended on the stage examined. At some stages, community characteristics, race/ethnicity, and drug offending were not predictive of court outcomes, while at other stages

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the independent variables of interest exerted positive and/or negative effects on court outcomes. One of the difficulties in researching the complexities of juvenile court outcomes is that each decision-making stage is comprised of different court actors. Therefore, it is challenging to find consistency in the findings and overall support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory when various decision-makers determine each dependent variable.

In light of this challenge, different variations of organizational theory have attempted to explain varying juvenile court outcomes based on the complexities of the court community (D'Angelo, Brown, & Strozewski, 2012, Dixon, 1995). Decision-making within the juvenile and criminal courts is considered complex because each stage reflects different goals, orientations, issues, and responsibilities (Bishop et al., 2010; Hagan, Hewitt, & Alwin, 1979). It has been argued that courts themselves can actually be considered their own community (Eisenstein, Flemming, & Nardulli, 1988; Eisenstein & Jacob, 1977) or unique "social worlds" (Ulmer, 1997). Local court communities and the culture of the court itself can influence social control, which can result in variations in court outcomes across different jurisdictions (Ulmer & Kramer, 1998). In other words, differential treatment of offenders throughout court outcomes can be conditioned by characteristics of the court itself (Kautt, 2002) not just case-level factors and/or structural context.

In particular, Bishop and colleagues (2010) integrated the focal concerns perspective (Steffensmeier, 1980; Steffensmeier et al., 1998) and the organizational coupling framework (Aldrich, 1979; Aldrich & Whetten, 1981) to explain juvenile court outcomes as a form of social control. Bishop and colleagues (2010) propose that the juvenile court is comprised of numerous bureaucracies, and each decision-maker has specialized interests, concerns, and perceptions that are taken into consideration when deciding the outcomes of juvenile offenders. Police agencies,

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court intake offices, judges, and probation departments all made decisions concerning how youth are processing in the juvenile court. Some processing junctures are considered "loosely coupled" (i.e. intake, judicial disposition) where multiple actors are responsible for decisions and discretion is enhanced. Other stages are "tightly coupled" (i.e. formal charging, adjudication), where there are fewer decision-makers involved, and legal factors (i.e. crime severity, prior record) are more likely to drive court outcomes.

At the intake stage, police officers, intake personnel, detention staff, and at times school officials provide recommendations about the youth who is referred to the juvenile court. The interests of each of the actors differ. For example, police officers may be more concerned with holding the offender accountable for the offense and the safety of the community (i.e. perceptions of dangerousness of the offender), rather than the welfare of the youth (Harris, 2007). The interests of intake personnel are different than police officers because they are more likely to focus on the needs, rehabilitation, and treatment of the youth based on different risk factors (e.g. family situation, hostile living environment, school problems) (Bridges et al., 1995). When decisions are made if the youth should be released, referred for informal processing, or processed formally, the conflicting interests of all of the decision-makers can result in racial disparities that are influenced by each actor's perceptions. Therefore, intake decisions are determined by legal (e.g. crime severity), extra-legal (e.g. race) and contextual factors (e.g. the condition of the youth's family) (Bishop et al., 2010).

The adjudication stage is considered a "tightly coupled" decision-making point. This is because the judge is the sole decision-maker and decisions are based on legal rules and procedures. The severity of the youth's offense and prior record are legal factors that are the most influential aspects that determine if a youth is found guilty or innocent. The influence of

race should not influence adjudication decision-making because demographic and contextual factors are not taken into consideration at this specific stage.

The stage of judicial disposition is also considered "loosely coupled." While the judge is predominately the final decision-maker at this stage, written reports and recommendations are usually submitted by prosecution, defense, and probation personnel in determining a youth's final disposition (Bishop et al., 2010; Sanborn, 1996). Each type of court actor once again reflects diversity in opinions and interests of the youth. For example, prosecutors may be concerned with community protection (similar to police officer's perceptions at the intake stage), while probation officers may suggest recommendations surrounding potential treatment implications of the juvenile offender (Singer, 1995). As a result, Bishop and colleagues (2010) proposed that decisions made at judicial disposition will be influenced by legal, socio-demographic, and contextual factors, which can result in racial disparities in social control. Bishop et al., (2010) integrative perspective attempts to better explain the complexities of court decision-making and why researchers should expect varying results across each court outcome. This is particularly true surrounding the contingencies of when race matters in juvenile justice processing.

Empirical Conclusions

Analyses examining the association between underclass poverty, racial/ethnic inequality and the social control of different groups of youth revealed unexpected differences that warrant further empirical discussion. In particular, underclass poverty did not exert an additive effect on juvenile court outcomes, yet at times did interact with race/ethnicity and drug offending to result in greater social control. One explanation for this finding may be based on the construction of the underclass poverty index. The measure of underclass poverty mirrored Sampson and Laub's

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(1993) original index, which included the proportion of Black residents within each county. The proportion of Hispanic residents within each county was added to the underclass poverty index in the current study to mirror the theoretical assumptions of Sampson and Laub (1993). From the inclusion of both Black and Hispanic populations into the index, the underclass poverty measure may not be a true indicator of disadvantage. Therefore, the underclass poverty measure may not be capturing disadvantaged communities solely based on an economic standpoint, and a potential reason for the lack of effects across court outcomes.

Further investigation has found that when racial and ethnic composition is incorporated into a measure of structural disadvantage, it is difficult to disentangle if there are true racial/ethnic differences in social control (Peterson & Krivo, 2005; Kubrin, 2003; Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001). Although prior research has incorporated race/ethnic measures into disadvantaged indices, strong claims are made concerning the similarities between race/ethnicity and social control. In other words, researchers are theoretically using race/ethnicity as a proxy for social class, but methodologically may have to include minority composition into measures of underclass poverty due to issues with multicollinearity (Baller, Anselin, Messner, Deane, & Hawkins, 2001; Land, McCall, & Cohen, 1990). If there are not issues with multicollinearity, minority composition should be included as separate measures in future analyses, as there is the potential for more support for the research hypotheses since the measure of underclass poverty would be a more stringent indicator of economic disadvantage.

Minority composition has also been included as a primary indicator of group threat according to the minority/racial group power threat thesis (Blalock, 1967). The inclusion of an underclass poverty measure that is strictly based on economic indicators and a separate measure of minority composition would offer differing operationalizations of what decision-makers may

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perceive as threatening populations. Within the adult criminal sentencing literature, the

minority/racial group power threat thesis (Feldmeyer & Ulmer, 2011; Jacobs, Carmichael, &

Kent, 2005; Wang & Mears, 2010) and relationship between minority composition and greater

social control (Bridges & Crutchfield, 1988; Myers & Talarico, 1987; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004)

has received some support. Additional examinations are needed concerning the applicability of

the Blalock's (1967) perspective in the juvenile justice system (Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Leiber

et al., forthcoming).

It is also possible that the underclass poverty measure did not consistently exert

significant effects on court outcomes due to the exclusion of important indicators of

poverty/disadvantage. Measures of unemployment or individuals with less than a high school

education (Morenoff et al., 2001; Rodriguez, 2010, 2013; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998) have been

included in community-level indices of structural or concentrated disadvantage as important

predictors of crime and social control. Lack of direct and/or interaction effects of race/ethnicity

and drug offending with the underclass poverty measure may be attributable to the lack of these

indicators in the disadvantaged index.

The lack of consistent findings in support for the macrolevel theory of inequality and

social control may also be attributable to the utilization of county-level data. While Sampson and

Laub (1993) proposed that counties characterized by underclass poverty and racial inequality

would subject youth to increased social control, it may be that counties are too large of a unit of

analysis to see meaningful differences in indicators of underclass poverty and racial/inequality.

For example, Rodriguez (2013) justified the utilization of zip codes instead of counties based on

the quality of data provided from Maricopa County in Arizona. Delinquency rates are

consistently produced to identify more high-risk communities in need of intervention and policy

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initiatives are based on information at the zip code level, not the county level. In addition, the caseloads assigned to juvenile probation officers are determined by zip codes. Furthermore, Peterson and Krivo (2005) argued that prior research on race differences in violence that was measured across *cities* was a somewhat large level of aggregation. One could conclude that Peterson and Krivo (2005) would also consider counties to be an even larger unit of analysis to examine racial/ethnic differences in social control. This explanation is two-fold. First, decision-makers' perceptions may be based not necessarily on the poverty and inequality characteristics of counties, but more finite measures of zip codes, neighborhoods, or even census tracts. Second, indicators of community disadvantage at the county-level may be too large and mask real differences in poverty and inequality that can be measured at the zip code, neighborhood, or tract level.

More support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical model may be found with a macrolevel unit of analysis that is smaller than the county-level. Zip codes should be considered a more precise unit of analysis and may be more applicable to Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective in light of the current findings. For example, even when controlling for community characteristics, racial/ethnic minorities were subjected to greater social control at certain stages compared to Whites. These findings highlight the potential for a "second-order social threat" as argued by Rodriguez (2007) as a potential explanation for the current findings. Rodriguez (2007) examined the relationship between race/ethnicity and community context on the decision to detain youth, and argued that the social control of Latino/a youth may not only occur when they reside in communities characterized by disadvantage, but also when they reside in more prosperous communities as well.

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In other words, a "second-order social threat" emerges not based on negative perceptions of only juvenile court decision-makers, but is based on a more general threat that juveniles bring to communities. Greater social control can result from court actors wanting to protect more affluent communities, or remove youth from problematic disadvantaged communities. This provides further justification that abandoning the macrolevel theory of inequality and social control would be premature, as the perspective has yet to be tested with community indicators at the zip code (or census tract) level. Siding with Rodriguez (2007), it would be problematic to assume that the role that race/ethnicity plays in juvenile court outcomes are not influenced by community characteristics. Examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective with county-level data may result in an incomplete conclusion about how underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality influence the social control of youth from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Furthermore, while alternative theoretical perspectives were discussed earlier to help explain the association between individual and community-level measures with social control, there are also additional political or cultural measures that may explain the reported relationships above and beyond the measures explicitly used by Sampson and Laub (1993). In particular, the *index of dissimilarity* (*D*) is an indicator used throughout the literature to measure the degree of distribution of two groups (i.e. Blacks versus Whites, Blacks versus Hispanics) across geographic locations (Massey, 1990; Massey & Denton, 1993, Ousey, 1999; Peterson & Krivo, 1993).[63] The amount of racial/ethnic segregation across counties may be an important indicator of social control. Likewise, the inclusion of additional macrolevel indicators of *morality* (proportion of births to unwed women, teenage birth rate, proportion of female unemployment)

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[63] Values of the dissimilarity index range from 0-100. For example, a value of 0 indicates that Black and White residents are distributed evenly across locations, where a value of 100 indicates complete segregation of Blacks and Whites (Peterson & Krivo, 1993).

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or *political attitudes/affiliations* of decision-makers and/or residents may help explain the present findings. For example, counties with a large proportion of female unemployment or births to unwed mothers may fuel different race and gender stereotypes and result in greater social control for youth (and various racial/gender subgroups) because these county characteristics can be seen as threatening to middle class standards. In regards to political affiliation, it is also possible that racial/ethnic differences in social control emerge in more conservative locations compared to liberal localities (Jacobs & Carmichael, 2001; King & Wheelock, 2007). Moving forward, empirical examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective may benefit from certain refinements with the inclusion of different political and cultural measures that were not included in earlier analyses.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It must be noted that the current study is not without limitations. One way in which this study may be limited is that the sample contained all delinquent referrals within one state. While prior tests of Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective (e.g. Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Leiber & Stairs, 1999; Leiber, 2003) only examined a handful of counties and the current study provided an in-depth examination of one state, the results in the present study cannot be generalized beyond the Northeast state. Geographical differences of the Northeast state compared to other states throughout the United States may produce different results that cannot be applied to other counties. Future research can benefit from testing Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective from a nationally representative sample of U.S. counties, as the theory was originally tested with data from over 200 counties across the United States.

Another limitation in the current study is the linking of 2000 U.S. census data for delinquent referrals that occurred from 2005-2010. At the present time, race and ethnic-specific

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measures that were included in the county-level indices have yet to be released for the 2010 U.S. census. It would have been ideal to link the 2000 U.S. census measures with 2000-2004 referral data and 2010 U.S. census measures with 2005-2010 referral data to perform a more detailed examination of how community context influences court outcomes. Therefore, the relationship between community characteristics and juvenile court outcomes with delinquent referrals that occurred in the latter half of the decade may not be as applicable to the measures in the 2000 U.S. census as they would be with data from the 2010 U.S. census.

In regards to the racial and ethnic groups included in this study, Hispanic youth were treated as a homogenous population. Therefore, it must be noted that the results may not be generalizable to different types of Hispanic populations (see also Reingle, Jennings, Maldonado-Molina, Piquero, & Canino, 2011). It may be that juvenile justice decision-makers encompass biases against certain ethnic groups but not others. This issue can subsequently result in differences in court outcomes across ethnicity. For example, the social control of Puerto Ricans compared to Cubans was not able to be disaggregated from the Hispanic measure, so the current study could not examine how ethnic differences in social control could vary across different types of Hispanics. Future research should include various ethnic groups above and beyond the homogeneous term of "Hispanic" (Carter, 1983; Wilson, Puhrmann, & Piquero, 2011).

Furthermore, the data providers for the current study did not feel comfortable with the stability of the data for the 11-year period that pertained to detention status. This issue is an additional limitation to the current study, as prior research has found that minority youth are also overrepresented at the stage of detention (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Frazier & Bishop, 1995; Guevara, Herz, & Spohn, 2006; Leiber, 2013; Maggard, 2013), and indirect and interactive race/ethnic effects occur at other court outcomes through its effect with detention (Bishop, 2005;

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Frazier & Cochran, 1986; Leiber & Fox, 2005). In other words, the high rate of minority youth detained at the early stages of court proceedings results in a cumulative disadvantage or "bias amplification" (see Dannefer & Schutt, 1982; Liska & Tausig, 1979) and more severe outcomes as youth are processed through the system (Rodriguez, 2010; Wu, 1997; Zatz, 1984). Detention is an additional stage that could have been examined as a dependent variable, but also included as an independent variable when predicting subsequent court outcomes to investigate if any racial/ethnic effects indirectly affected court outcomes through detention.

Furthermore, it is not known if there is any type of detention reform (i.e. Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative) that has been implemented in in the Northeast state from 2000-2010. While the overarching goals of the JDAI are to reduce the reliance on secure confinement of youth in the juvenile and adult justice systems, improve public safety, reduce racial/ethnic biases in the use of detention, and motivate additional juvenile justice reforms (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009) the current study is unaware if the Northeast state has implemented JDAI initiatives. In particular, some localities that have implemented detention reform initiatives utilize objective decision-making tools in determining when youth should be held in secure detention. The purpose of screening tools are to ensure consistency in the decision to detain youth based on specific criteria, and not on a reliance of extra-legal factors (e.g. race/ethnicity) (Feyerherm, 2007; Leiber & Boggess, 2012; Mallett & Stoddard-Dare, 2010). Therefore, future research that tests Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective would benefit from: (1) the inclusion of detention as a dependent variable, (2), as an additional predictor at later court outcomes, and (3) control for measures that indicate JDAI or any type of detention reform (see Leiber & Jamieson, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

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A closely related limitation corresponds to a lack of control measures in the current study that indicated juvenile justice resources of each county. Prior research has argued that court outcomes can be influenced by the constraints of an organization based on the demand and availability of resources (Hasenfeld & Cheung, 1985; Leiber, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993). In regards to the juvenile justice system, one example of resources is the number of available beds in detention centers and/or residential treatment facilities. Based on the capacity of youth within these locations, decision-makers may take the degree of resources available into consideration before deciding whether to place a youth in secure detention or sentence them to out-of-home placement. Therefore, county spending on criminal/juvenile justice resources may influence levels of social control, and future research should consider the inclusion of resources (e.g. police expenditures per person in each county) as important predictors of court outcomes.

Paralleling this limitation, there may be differences in court outcomes across rural, suburban, and urban geographic locations that were not captured by the *urbanism* control variable. As introduced earlier, both theory and prior research contend that classifications of areas by rural, suburban, and urban locations can help further understand the relationship between race/ethnicity and social control. In the current study, while urbanism was predictive of greater social control at intake and disposition and lesser social control at adjudication, this measure of county population could be considered a proxy of a county's degree of urbanism.

Feld (1991) argues that the social control of youth depends on rural, suburban, and urban locations which correspond to "justice by geography." Urban jurisdictions are characterized as diverse and heterogeneous and result in greater social control based on the formal and bureaucratized nature of the juvenile court. While minority youth are more likely to live in urban locations compared to Whites (Jargowsky, Desmund, & Crutchfield, 2005), race/ethnic

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differences in court outcomes are more likely to occur in urban courts due to processing cases more quickly, formally, and focusing on offense criteria rather than the needs of the youth (Feld, 1995; Kempf-Leonard, 2007). Rural jurisdictions are characterized as more similar and homogeneous and result in more informal case processing and lenient case outcomes. Due to the effects of "suburban sprawl" (Jargowsky et al., 2005; pp. 171), race/ethnic disparities to the disadvantaged of minorities is less evident due to rural courts having fewer cases, fewer serious cases, and more flexibility to meet the needs of predominately White youth who reside in rural and suburban counties (Kempf-Leonard, 2007).

As stated earlier, the present study did not focus on explicit distinctions across rural, suburban, and urban counties (or urban v. rural/non-urban). Future research should attempt to examine racial/ethnic disparities in social control utilizing multi-level modeling with various indicators of urbanism (e.g. disaggregating counties across rural, suburban, urban localities; single jurisdiction analyses) instead of measuring urbanism as a continuous variable (see also Mitchell, 2005; Pope, 1976; Ulmer & Johnson, 2004; Zimmerman & Frederick, 1984). The presence and/strength of racial/ethnic differences in juvenile court outcomes may differ depending on how urbanism is measured. The utilization of urbanism as a continuous measure also implies a linear relationship between county population and social control. It is possible that county population has a curvilinear effect on juvenile court outcomes, and future research should test for potential relationships between the squared and cubed measures of urbanism and social control.

Further limitations of this study arose from the void of central individual-level variables pertaining to offender and case characteristics. In particular, indicators of family structure/living arrangement (intact versus non-intact) (Bishop et al., 2010), school status (in school versus out of

school (e.g. suspended/expelled)) (Rodriguez, 2007), influence of drugs and/or alcohol (no vs. yes) (Paternoster & Brame, 2008), parental incarceration (Rodriguez et al., 2009), and family income level (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005) were not available in the data provided. These variables have been found in prior research to be predictive of juvenile court outcomes and at times correspond to greater social control for minority youth compared to Whites (Bishop, 2005; Bishop & Leiber, 2011). For example, family assessments produced racial disparities in intake outcomes based on the finding that minority youth are less likely than Whites to reside in two-parent homes and decision-makers encompassed more negative beliefs about Black families than White families (Frazier & Bishop, 1995; Kempf-Leonard, Decker, & Bing, 1990; Krisberg & Austin, 1993). School status is another important measure that interacted with race in prior studies and resulted in greater social control. Problems with school performance and attendance have been related to harsher intake outcomes for minorities compared to Whites (Leiber, 1995; Kempf-Leonard & Sontheimer, 1995; Jarjoura, 1993). Overall, future studies should include the above measures either as independent variables of interest or control measures based on their important implications for all youth referred to the juvenile court, and especially minorities.[64]

Lastly, the current study would have been significantly strengthened with a qualitative component and/or quantitative indicators of the attitudes and perceptions of court actors (Corley, Bynum, & Wordes, 1995; Gaarder et al., 2004; Leiber 2003, Leiber & Jamieson, 1995). The inclusion of various qualitative techniques such as interviews and observations of juvenile court personnel can provide a greater understanding of what decision-makers take into consideration when assessing the court outcomes of youth (see also Gaarder et al., 2004). In particular, when

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[64] Although the current study included analyses across all types of offenders and within drug offenders, a task for future research would be to specifically compare the juvenile court outcomes of drug offenders to person, property, probation violators, and other types of offenders. In the current study, the reference category was "other" offenses; therefore direct comparisons of youth charged with a drug offense compared to youth charged with additional offenses (e.g. person offense) were not performed.

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macrolevel indicators of threatening populations produce differences in social control, it is inferred that the effects correspond to stereotypical beliefs of court actors based on disadvantaged community characteristics (see Liska, 1987). A more nuanced approach to the influence of macrolevel characteristics on social control would be to test microlevel assumptions of racial/ethnic stereotypical beliefs and attitudes through interviews/questionnaires with juvenile court personnel. Potential racial/ethnic stereotypes and biases can be captured and measured through qualitative means that cannot be assessed through macrolevel characteristics (Leiber & Jamieson, 1995). In the current study, when race/ethnic and drug offending relationships were found with court outcomes, it was assumed that the reason for these effects was due to attitudes and potential stereotypes of court actors. Interviews and observations can help understand potential reasons for the inconsistent results (e.g. greater social control at intake, leniency at adjudication) across each court outcome. Furthermore, in-depth interviews can validate why a "correction effect" may be occurring at later court stages, especially how community context may or may not influence the reported relationships.

For example, Leiber (2003) discovered through qualitative interviews that county prosecutors would dismiss cases based on the belief that intake officers filed "elevated charges" that lacked legal sufficiency (Leiber, 2003; pp. 116). One county prosecutor believed that intake officers had a revengeful attitude for youth who did not conform to the expectations of the officer. If the youth missed an intake conference, did not agree with parents' attitudes, or claimed any gang knowledge, the county prosecutor believed that this was enough justification for an intake officer to file a petition. Once the county attorney's office received the petition, the elevated charges would be dismissed and the youth would be released. In this particular study, the qualitative findings added to the results from quantitative analyses to provide a more

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descriptive explanation of court outcomes. Future studies of the relationship between structural disadvantage, court actors' perceptions, and juvenile court outcomes should attempt to integrate a mixed methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative analyses to disentangle when community, race/ethnicity, and drug offending influence social control.

Implications for Policy

Although results from the current study did not provide overall support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical model, the research presented here did show that minorities and drug offenders were subjected to greater social control compared to Whites, net of community and individual-level considerations. The macrolevel theory of inequality and social control focuses on the aspects of disadvantaged communities that court actors may take into consideration when deciding the outcomes of youth referred to the juvenile court. Underclass poverty and racial/ethnic inequality did not influence court outcomes directly as predicted by the theory, but at times did interact and result in greater social control for minority youth and different types of drug offenders. The policy implications derived from the current study focus more on strategies to reduce the overall presence of youth within the juvenile justice system, but also address the need to decrease the overrepresentation of minority youth at the community, organizational, and individual-level. Therefore, there are implications of this study that are relevant to policies and programs surrounding the juvenile justice system in general, and in particular, disproportionate minority confinement/contact (DMC).

In 1988, the Disproportionate Minority Confinement (DMC) Mandate (now known as the Disproportionate Contact Mandate) was implemented as a result of the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) of 1974 (Leiber et al., 2011; Leiber & Rodriguez, 2011). In 2002, modifications from the JJDPA broadened the emphasis of minority

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overrepresentation not just in terms of confinement, but throughout all contact stages of the juvenile justice system. Over 25 years after its initial implementation, the goal of the DMC mandate continues to aim for the equitable treatment of all youth regardless of race and ethnicity (Feyerherm, Snyder, & Villarruel, 2006). Five ongoing phases across each state in the U.S. attempt to examine why minority youth are overrepresented through each stage of the juvenile justice system. These phases include: (1) identifying DMC, (2) assessing the potential causes, (3) intervening, (4) evaluating, and (5) continuous monitoring.

On the basis of the first and second phases of the DMC mandate and the results of the current study, interventions with juvenile justice decision-makers are needed in the form of cultural sensitivity training and the identification of covert/subtle biases. Court actors may not consciously be aware that potential stereotypes against racial and ethnic minorities affect their perceptions and subsequent decisions. These interventions would expand efforts to sensitize decision-makers about the power of racial/ethnic stereotyping on court outcomes. For example, Devine's (1989) experiment(s) of automatic and controlled processes of prejudicial racial beliefs uncovered the presence of unconscious racial prejudice. Automatic processes occur through unintentional responses and are initiated through cues in the environment. Controlled processes are intentional and are activated knowingly by the individual. Results indicated that individuals who identified as having both high *and* low prejudicial beliefs of Blacks encompass stereotypes that can support prejudicial responses to the disadvantage of Blacks (see also Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000).

Some prior research has also focused on the influence of racial primes and attributions on unconscious racial stereotypes specifically with juvenile court actors and police officers (Bridges & Steen, 1998; Graham & Lowery, 2004). If overt or covert racial stereotyping begins with a

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youth's first contact with a decision-maker (i.e. police officer), this initiates the emergence of racial/ethnic disparities even before the youth enters the juvenile court. However, this does not mean that police officers should arrest White youth more often that minorities because that will not "solve the problem." Racial/ethnic disparities are problematic whether White, Black, or Hispanic youth are overrepresented. After the consideration of both legal and extra-legal factors, race and ethnicity should not significantly predict court outcomes.

In light of these findings and the overall goal of the DMC mandate, priming and automatic/controlled processes experiments with juvenile court officers would be an innovative (yet possibly controversial) intervention to help identify to court actors the presence of unconscious bias in decision-making. Therefore, continuing education to inform juvenile court personnel and judges about the problems associated with unconscious racial/ethnic stereotypes and negative attributions associated with youth of different racial/ethnic backgrounds is essential for the equal treatment of all youth.

It is important to note that while the above policy implications focused specifically on the DMC mandate, there are more general policy implications that have been tied to the DMC mandate, but also have implications for reducing the overall presence of youth in the juvenile justice system. In the current study, while race/ethnicity did predict greater social control, the effects were for the most part, small in magnitude. However, legal factors in the form of crime severity, number of prior referrals, and number of current charges were also associated with disadvantaged court outcomes, and the effects were some of the largest across each statistical model. These results suggest that youth continue to commit serious and multi-charge offenses (Feld, 1999; Lauritsen, 2005), and initiatives need to be implemented to decrease the number of youth regardless of race/ethnicity from engaging in offending behavior in the first place (i.e. at-

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risk youth) and appearing in juvenile court (i.e. system-involved youth) (Pope & Leiber, 2005). Policies at the community-level can help decrease the presence of all youth referred to the juvenile court, but the effect may be even larger for minorities.

For example, direct services to disadvantaged communities are a form of *prevention* and *intervention* initiatives to reduce the presence of youth in the juvenile justice system by focusing on the causes of delinquent behavior and provide greater access to amenities to build pro-social skills and functioning (OJJDP, 2009). Direct services address the adverse effects of impoverished communities, school problems, negative family environments, and delinquent peers. Stated differently, direct services target at risk-risk youth, their families, and communities to improve social well-being and increase the quality of relationships within families and peers (Hsia, Bridges, & McHale, 2004; OJJDP, 2001). Family therapy, parent training, cognitive behavioral treatment, afterschool programs, and mentoring are some of the direct services that have been implemented as *prevention* programs based on the DMC mandate, but can also be applicable to all at-risk youth regardless of race/ethnicity. For example, the Syracuse Family Development Research Program (FDRP) was early childhood program that focused on increasing family functioning through educational, health, and nutrition services with an overarching goal to improve youth's daily functioning and decrease the likelihood of initial delinquent behavior (Barnett et al., 2005). *Prevention* programs emphasize specifically on youth who have not been adjudicated delinquent, but focus on problematic situations that can serve as a facilitator for future delinquent behavior. Specifically, the findings from the current study show the need for the implementation of *prevention* programs to decrease the presence of youth in the system.

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Intervention programs are reactive in nature and are implemented in communities that have already been identified as problematic in terms of youth presence in the juvenile justice system as well as minority overrepresentation. *Intervention* programs attempt to alter a youth's delinquent trajectory once they have been arrested, received diversion, or adjudicated delinquent (OJJDP, 2009). Education and computer training, life skills training, and mental health services are examples of community-based *intervention* programs. In regards to the finding in the current study, intervention programs in particular could help decrease the presence of youth who continue to return to the juvenile court for delinquent behaviors (i.e. have a prior record, multiple current charges), and attenuate the severity of their offenses. Some intervention programs have also been implemented within the juvenile court in addition to programs at the community-level. For example, in New Mexico, *intervention* programs have been implemented in the Juvenile Detention Center that focuses on educational opportunities, substance use treatment, and therapeutic group activities (Cabaniss, Frabutt, Kendrick, & Arbuckle, 2007). Youth who are held in secure detention receive opportunities for rehabilitation and support which can subsequently decrease the likelihood that they will commit future offenses once released back into the community.

Overall, policies and services should not solely be directed towards the equitable treatment of youth once they are referred to the juvenile court. Both *prevention* and *intervention* strategies need to be implemented successfully within the context of disadvantaged communities but also within detention and residential treatment facilities as well. Policies need to focus on adverse environment, school, family, and peer conditions that contribute to offending in the first

place, and later fuel stereotypes and negative perceptions that work to the disadvantage of minority youth.[65]

Lastly, in regards to drug offending, one policy implication would be to increase the use of juvenile drug courts compared to traditional probation services (Rodriguez & Webb, 2004; Schaeffer et al., 2010; Shaw and Robinson, 1998). Results from Stein, Deberard, and Homan's (2013) meta-analysis of the effectiveness of juvenile drug treatment court indicate that youth who graduate from juvenile drug court have lower rates of recidivism. This effect was found during the time that a youth was enrolled in the program, and in the year following graduation. In light of these findings, the impact of juvenile drug courts corresponds with more beneficial outcomes for youth who graduate from these programs. However, it was discovered that minority youth tend to have a lower probability of success in juvenile drug courts and a higher probability of recidivism (during and after graduation).

This result may be linked to increased risk factors surrounding fewer minority families participating with the youth in drug court and low involvement in parenting skills training and family therapy (Applegate & Santana, 2000; Stein et al., 2013). Compared to adult drug courts, parent and family involvement is required with juvenile drug courts due to the age of the youth. Increases in the success for minority participants throughout juvenile drug courts may occur if the community programs and interventions discussed earlier can translate to a more consistent involvement of families of minority youth.

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[65] The above examples are only meant to be an overview of policies and programs that have been or can be implemented to decrease the presence of youth and especially minority youth in the juvenile justice system. A more comprehensive review is provided in the DMC Technical Assistance Manual (OJJDP, 2009), and the research by Farrington (2012), Loeber and Farrington (2001), and Piquero, Farrington, Welsh, Tremblay, and Jennings (2009).

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Conclusion

Despite the lack of macrolevel support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) perspective with the utilization of more recent data, the present study addressed various theoretical and empirical voids in the literature testing Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory as well as the overall macrolevel research surrounding the relationship between race/ethnicity and juvenile court outcomes (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Freiburger & Jordan, 2011; Rodriguez, 2007, 2010, 2013; Thomas et al., 2013). Race/ethnicity individually and in combination with drug offending and/or disadvantaged community characteristics predicted social control as measured by three juvenile court outcomes. The results, however, varied depending on the specific stages examined. Overall, the current study provided a more recent test of Sampson and Laub's (1993), examined if there was a continued influence of the war on drugs on juvenile court outcomes, disaggregated the drug offender into more finite groups, included Hispanic youth as an additional minority group, and incorporated various methodological advancements and statistics techniques (i.e. HGLM). Future examinations of Sampson and Laub's (1993) theoretical model should not yet be abandoned on the basis of a limited number of studies, but both theoretical and empirical modifications should be considered if researchers continue this line of inquiry.

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