PROFILING THE STREET-LEVEL DRUG TRAFFICKER ON VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this thesis is to conduct exploratory research to examine the possible variables that lead to the perpetuation of the drug problem, in the hope that such findings may suggest more effective approaches to solving the drug problem. The literature relating to the "war on drugs" is examined, and the data relating to 600 street-level drug traffickers arrested in Vancouver, BC between June 2001 and October 2002 are analyzed to form an empirically based profile of the drug trafficker in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Among other things, the findings reveal that a small group of "professional criminals" specialize in the trade of drug trafficking in the Downtown Eastside. The author argues that a greater understanding of the nature and characteristics of the retail drug trafficker and trade is needed for successful future policy on drug regulation and control.

DEDICATION

To My Mother

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Although many studies and analyses have been presented on the international trade in illicit drugs, very few are empirical and local in scope. Consequently, ongoing discourse regarding the sale, use, and regulation of controlled substances has continued to rest on an impressionistic, and at times even romantic, view of the subject. This thesis begins by surveying the Canadian literature on the drug problem, along with the significant studies on the international drug trade. After examining the drug problem, in its international and historical contexts, this study narrows in on the drug problem as it has manifested in Vancouver, BC. Facilitated by virtue of the fact that the author was directly involved in the police work undertaken to address the illegal drug trade in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood, this thesis provides an in-depth examination of the local drug trade through the quantitative analysis of arrest data. Specifically, this thesis presents groundbreaking empirical research on the profile of street corner drug sellers arrested in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood in the hope that the data gives rise to new drug policy perspectives and directions in Canada, which will in turn lead to the development of a realistic program for the treatment and rehabilitation of non-long term offenders.

The need for the study is confirmed not only by the author's direct experience with respect to the matter, but also by veteran police officers. These long time participants in the struggle to control Vancouver's drug problem believe that the retail drug salesman is the key to the problem, and therefore must be better understood before he/she can be controlled and/or stopped. Thus, the primary objective of this thesis is to

examine the possible variables that lead to the perpetuation of the drug problem, in the hope that such findings may suggest more effective approaches to solving the drug problem.

North American and Western European societies have been engaged in the so-called "war on drugs" for some time now. Surprisingly, the war has been largely ineffective in addressing the international problem. The first part of this thesis addresses the futile "war on drugs" by surveying the social, economic, and law enforcement problems of the international trade in illegal drugs. As discussed in the section that follows, the supplies of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana become cheaper and more plentiful when law enforcement agencies attempt to cease the flow of illegal drugs from outside major metropolitan centers. Of course, one would expect that such law enforcement actions would decrease the availability of drugs, and thus increase their price. However, the observed results are quite contrary to the expected outcomes. In his book *High Society*, Neil Boyd (1991) observes that seizures of even massive amounts of illegal drugs seem to do little to affect the availability of drugs on North American streets:

> In October 1988 about five tons of cocaine (street value $450 million) was seized in Northern Mexico. The market price of cocaine in North America was unaffected by this loss (Boyd, 1991:70)

Similar cases in which official seizures of illegal drugs have the paradoxical effects of reducing the price and increasing the purity of drugs available at street-level are reported below.

A review of some of the general literature available, together with a report of the Vancouver experience, facilitates the construction of a model that explains this apparent

paradox quite effectively. The immense differentials between the costs of producing heroin and cocaine in their regions of origin and the street value of the final product affords the international drug merchants a very wide field of play in which to escape the efforts of drug law enforcement teams. The economic model of the international drug trade, presented below, illustrates this well. Boyd (1991) also points out that:

> In Canada today a capsule of heroin costs about $35 and has a purity level of about 5%... The opium poppy farmers of the indigenous hill tribes of Northern Thailand receive about $1000 for ten kilograms of opium...When the drug arrives in Canada, the price escalates rapidly to about $125,000 a kilo (Boyd, 1991:32).

With this kind of economic leverage, the big international drug-trader can send three boatloads of product to a target country; but if one gets through, he will still make hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. A very similar economic analysis of the drug trade as it affects the United States and Great Britain is made by Richard Davenport-Hines' in *The Pursuit of Oblivion* (2001), which is discussed in detail below.

In addition to Boyd's (1991) and Davenport-Hines' (2001) works on the subject, the literature review in Chapter Two focuses on how the retail drug trade is carried out in three North American cities. Because the focus of the quantitative analysis presented in Chapter Six focuses on the street-level drug trafficker, Chapter Two details local studies of the drug trade as conducted in New York, St. Louis, Missouri, and Washington, DC. Aside from revealing many interesting facts and useful figures, all three studies effectively debunk the somewhat cinematic notion that the street-corner drug trafficker is an aristocrat of the criminal class, with affluence and even police protection in some jurisdictions. Such popular misconceptions are far from true, as these ethnographic studies show. To contextualize the review of the literature with respect to the drug

problem, as seen from Canada in general and Vancouver in particular, Chapter Three provides an analysis of the social, economic, and law enforcement problems posed by the international drug trade.

The present study is based on a sample of 600 drug arrestees in Vancouver's drug-afflicted Downtown Eastside over a two-year period. The study analyzes the arrest data of the 600 individuals as per the following main variables: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) criminal justice records, (3) number of additional convictions, and (4) sentence types. Among other things, the results of the present local study show that of the 600 people arrested, no less than 469 were actually Canadian citizens – a finding that runs contrary to public belief. The findings of this study contribute a great deal of factual knowledge to the ongoing public discussions regarding the drug problem in Canada, particularly in Vancouver.

In Chapter Six, the analysis of longitudinal conviction data constructs a clear profile of the street-level drug trafficker in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Importantly, the statistical analysis of the second through to the tenth arrests of some subjects reveals a cohort of hard-core repeat offenders. The various variables utilized in the statistical analysis are revisited in the discussion chapter, and certain reservations implicit in the data and the research methods are clearly stated. The important policy implications of the quantitative analysis are presented and considered in the final part of this thesis. Specifically, some of the policy implications for local practice are derived from the example of a very successful drug rehabilitation and control program that has been in place in Montréal for a number of years. In brief, the analysis of the literature and the findings of this statistical study suggest that law enforcement efforts require a

major change and re-orientation. The findings of the present study also suggest that the hard-core population of repeat offenders are probably not good candidates for rehabilitation, while offenders who avoid second and third arrests are likely to benefit more from treatment and rehabilitation than from incarceration.

It is the foremost aim of this thesis to bring new facts and analyses to the ongoing debate on drug policy in Canada in general, and in Vancouver in particular. A considerable amount of police work, at the expense of public funds, was required to arrest 600 offenders. This thesis will have achieved one of its major goals if the results of this study provoke new thought in the continuing discussions of the drug problem.

CHAPTER TWO
The Drug Trade: An Historical View

It is widely held that in any country experiencing sizeable immigration and urban growth, a large number of the problems that accompany these processes are attributable to the new residents who, as it is often claimed, are bringing some of their "old problems" to their new homes. In light of the problems created by drugs in Canada today, one of the primary aims of the thesis will therefore be to provide factual data to describe the street-level drug trade as it exists in one of Canada's largest and most vibrant cities. However, the nature of the drug problem dictates that in seeking answers to one set of questions, a whole different set of questions will often arise. Some of the questions that have arisen while preparing the analysis of a local retail drug market were very complex, often involving a complicated historical, economical, and psychological reality.

Before examining the present research questions, some general questions regarding the use and distribution of illegal drugs must first be addressed. One of the first questions that should be asked is: "why do some individuals use mind-altering substances in the first place?" In addition, it would also be useful to know: "why, at the same time, have many societies attempted to control the use of such substances?" The final question that must be asked is: "what can society do to alleviate the social negatives that go along with drug addiction and illegal trafficking?" The many ill-conceived schemes of prevention and law-enforcement that have been devised to address the drug problem must also be considered in such an analysis. Therefore, a brief historical overview of drug use and the various attempts to control drug use will help contextualize the current and local problems engendered by drug trafficking.

History and Economics: A Paradox

Human beings have been using mind-altering substances for as long as our records reveal. Herodotus, the indefatigable traveler of ancient Mediterranean lands, reports that he visited some Scythians who were sitting inside a tent made of leather throwing seeds on a pile of heated stones that lay within (Herodotus, 2004). As the seeds hit the stones, little puffs of smoke issued from them and filled the air. Herodotus (2004) reported that the Scythians were laughing and joking and having a lovely time in this strange activity. In response to the enquiries of the "Father of History" about what they were doing, the men told the famous Greek traveler that the seeds were those of the hemp plant and that this was the Scythian manner of bathing (Herodotus, 2004).

Davenport-Hines' (2001) *The Pursuit of Oblivion* is a historical treatment of drug use and drug policies in the United Kingdom and North America that presents the reader with the following puzzle. In many major drug markets, increased police efforts to control the flow of drugs have the paradoxical effect of increasing supplies and lowering prices (Davenport-Hines, 2001). When the usual police efforts to control the flow of drugs escalate into a "war" on drugs of national and international proportions, this effect becomes even more pronounced. For example, the effect of the Reagan Administration's attempts to control the drug trade in South Florida were especially dramatic (Davenport-Hines, 2001). In 1982, Reagan's Vice President, George Bush, coordinated the efforts of nine Federal agencies that were ordered to "pounce" on South Florida drug traffickers. Prosecutions for drug trafficking increased impressively by 64%, $19 million worth of suspected drug smuggler property was seized, and after a year of work, Federal agents had impounded six tons of cocaine and 850 tons of marijuana. The surprising result of all this activity was that two years later, the amount of cocaine and marijuana seized by the

same teams of Federal investigators had increased to 25 tons and 750 tons respectively. In other words, the Federal Government's "war" on drugs in South Florida had successfully increased the importation of cocaine by a factor of four, and diminished the trade in marijuana only slightly. In dollar terms, the price of a kilo of cocaine in 1982 was $60,000, whereas two years later it was only 40% of that figure, and by the end of the 1980s the price for a kilo of cocaine had declined to $15,000 (Davenport-Hines, 2001). In North America and Western Europe, the war on drugs originally started by the barbiturates-addicted United States President, Richard Nixon. It nevertheless continues based on the same assumptions that motivated Reagan's "war" on drugs, yielding some of the same results (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

Recent large-scale seizures of contraband drugs in Vancouver's dilapidated Downtown Eastside neighborhood had a rather similar outcome to President Reagan's efforts in South Florida. A police seizure of a large shipment of heroin in 2000 had the following paradoxical effect:

> In fact, the price of heroin went down and overdoses went up slightly in the month after the seizure of 100 kilograms of heroin in the Fall of 2000, according to the study by University of B.C. researchers in the current *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. At the time, the seizure was described as one of Canada's largest. It came after a police investigation of nearly two years and resulted in several arrests (Fayerman, 2003).

An economic reality underlies the apparent paradox revealed by these cases. By gaining a better understanding of this reality, appropriate social, legal, and law enforcement responses to this complicated problem will emerge. An economic model was recently suggested in an inter-provincial conference on the drug problem in Canada to explain the apparent failures of drug interdiction policy. The analysis put forth on this occasion

offered convincing support for the general explanation of the problem as offered by Davenport-Hines.

Davenport-Hines (2001) argues that the high-profit margins seen in the drug trade grow out of the extreme differential between the prices paid to primary producers and the prices paid by the eventual retail customer. It is argued that the illegality of the drug artificially increases its price. Drug trade profits grow exponentially between the peasant producer of opium poppy or cocoa leaf, and the large scale international wholesaler and urban drug lords who make the drugs available to the final consumer (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Given such price differentials, it is not surprising that the amount of contraband drugs that enter the lucrative North American markets, for example, is just a fraction of the amount that originated from Afghanistan, Columbia, the "Golden Triangle" of Thailand, Burma, Laos, and many other exotic and distant regions of the world (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

As the author, a member of the Vancouver Police Department, recently reported at an inter-provincial conference on drug problems in Canada, the example of the recent Vancouver "drug bust" supports the general model offered by Davenport-Hines (2001):

> ...[T]he simple and unavoidable fact is that the drug industry is simple and profitable. Its simplicity makes it relatively easy to organize; its profitability makes it hard to stop. At every level, the risk of enforcement shapes its pricing and its structure. Getting drugs from the poor world to a rich market requires a distribution network. This is where large sums of money start to be made. As Vancouver Police Department drug enforcement research confirms, the price paid to a Pakistani farmer for opium is approximately $90 a kilo. The wholesale price in Pakistan is almost $3,000. The North American wholesale price is $80,000. On the street at 40% purity, the retail price is $290,000 (Heed, 2002).

The consideration of some basic economic principles will reconcile the apparent paradox of increased law enforcement efforts leading to increased imports, higher quality, and

lower prices for illegal substances. As any introductory economics text will explain, most of the commodities offered in the market place have a certain elasticity of demand. Changes in the price of goods result in changes in market demand for those goods. When changes in price have very little effect on changes in the quantity demanded, that certain product is said to have a very high inelasticity of demand. A benign example would be the demand for gasoline in Los Angeles, California, for example. A less benign example of high inelasticity of demand would be the demand for crack cocaine in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The merchant who handles commodities with a high inelasticity of demand is clearly in a very enviable position. When he or she must raise the price of a certain product for whatever reason, he or she will not lose too many customers because the demand for the product remains high. However, when the same merchant operates in a competitive market, the forces of competition will operate to give the customers the desired quantity of goods at the best possible price. When, for whatever reason, the merchant becomes a monopolist, the situation changes. The merchant can charge whatever the market will bear for the sale of his or her product. The unfortunate effect of attempts by governments to ban, control, and police the markets for various drugs has been to achieve this economic principle, to the benefit of criminal enterprises large and small. Therefore, the net effect of successful government efforts aimed at controlling the flow of drugs is the protection of the monopoly position that the largest players occupy most of the time.

On the other hand, when the Federal drug forces acted to address the situation in South Florida, or when they carry out a successful operation in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the temporary elimination of some large-scale wholesaler in the trade occurs.

The unintended consequence of successful enforcement efforts then is that competitors jump to take the big operator's place. What follows is that prices temporarily decline, and drug quality temporarily increases, as new entrants to the affected markets compete to increase their market share. The "increase in overdoses" noted by police officials is a rough indicator of the increase in drug quality. Some addicts binge on the newer, high-quality product and die of intoxication as a result.

Therefore, the inconsistent results of governmental "wars" on drugs have generally been twofold. First, the prohibition of a narcotic, stimulant, or psychedelic substance has almost always made it profitable. There are countless instances of this phenomenon in Davenport-Hines' (2001) examination of the issue. It has become apparent that some people will develop an addiction to almost any substance if it is illegal, fashionable, and expensive. For example, who would have ever imagined that wealthy "playboys" would overdose on arsenic in the belief that it increased sexual potential? (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Second, the standard law enforcement practises have had the effect of "weeding out" the small players, thus protecting the large players' monopoly. The economic effects of banning recreational intoxicants have been experienced before in North American history. To draw an historical parallel with what follows, one must simply accept the fact that alcohol, like heroin, cocaine, and hemp products, is a mind-altering substance of an addictive nature.

The exact same pattern observed in international drug markets today was once seen at the national level when the ever idealistic United States banned the production and sale of alcohol within its territories by the terms of the *1919 Volstead Act* (Behr & Edward, 1996). As breweries and distilleries closed their doors, law-breakers small and

large jumped into the breach. Equipped with only their bathtubs and their backyard "stills," the bootleggers illicitly supplied the public with the prohibited substance. As the prices of alcohol rose with the decline in the number of producers, so did the fortunes of the criminal gangs of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco (Behr & Edward, 1996). These violent organizations struggled to defend their newly acquired monopolies, and in so doing, small criminal gangs suddenly saw big business and enjoyed all the resulting economic and political power. Large profits obtained through the illegal sale of alcohol allowed the small-time gangster to corrupt the police departments and occasionally even the Office of the Mayor in many US cities and towns, including New York, Chicago, and San Francisco (Behr & Edward, 1996).

Therefore, a noticeable result of America's thirteen-year ban on alcohol was the creation of powerful and well-financed criminal organizations that moved into other areas of crime with a new level of expertise, after this disastrous "experiment" came to an end. To compare this historic example of national policy with one from the present, one may consider the Capone Gang of Chicago of the 1920s and the Colombia Cartel, as they share similar origins. Both rose to wealth, power, and prominence because of idealistic attempts by governments to protect their citizens from their dangerous tastes. The major difference between the two examples noted here, namely "prohibition" versus the "war on drugs," is that the difference between the cost of the production of illegal alcohol and its final sale price never reached the exponential amounts attained in the production of cocaine and opiates (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Consequently, the magnitudes of monopoly profits enjoyed by gangsters during "prohibition" were small, compared to the monopoly profits earned regularly by the international wholesale drug providers and

urban drug lords of today. Another difference is that the amount spent by the US Federal Government on its "war on drugs" in recent years for example, dwarfs the sum expended to police to combat the illegal production and distribution of alcohol in the earlier period (Davenport-Hines, 2001). With sums of this magnitude being spent on law enforcement efforts, it seems only reasonable to question what governments are protecting their citizens from. The simple but misleading answer is that governments are trying to protect their citizens from addiction.

Drug Addiction

The vast amount of literature on drug addiction reveals that there is no consensus regarding the meaning of the term "addiction." This lack of consensus is illustrated by the fact that experts argue between the notions of "chemical dependency" and "habitudinal addiction" (Hurley, 2000). Landry (1994) offers one of the best concise definitions of addiction:

> ...addiction can be described as a progressive, chronic, primary disease that is characterized by compulsion, loss of control, continued drug use despite adverse consequences, and distortions in normal thinking, such as denial (Landry, 1994:11).

The three types of drugs that have addictive characteristics that can be briefly reviewed here are: (1) opiates (e.g. heroin), (2) stimulants (e.g. cocaine), and (3) a hybrid category that can be called "stimulant-narcotic," which includes both alcohol and cannabis. Psychedelic drugs such as LSD also have addictive properties (Landry, 1994). However, the final category will not be considered in this thesis, since such drugs do not comprise a major proportion of the drugs sold by the street-level traffickers examined in the present study.

Of the three main types of drugs considered in the present research, opiates are generally agreed to possess the most addictive effects because opiates cause the greatest "tolerance" towards the addictive substance (Landry, 1994). Opium users who become addicts develop an addiction that controls their life and renders them unfit for any activity, apart from serving their drug habit. This is one of the reasons why the solitary brave mandarin of Guangzhou (Canton) seized opium that belonged to the British East India Company and threw it into the sea just before the 1851 Opium War (Spence, 1999). The Celestial Empire feared the harmful effects of using opium on the working people of China (Spence, 1999). China was not an opium producing country, as much of its national territory was of an inadequate altitude. However, the use of opium for its medicinal effects of reducing pain and inducing sleep had been known since recorded history. It is therefore likely that opiate addiction goes much farther back in human history than written sources reveal.

Landry (1994) believes that the coca leaf may have been discovered by native populations in South America as long as 5000 years ago. Davenport-Hines (2001) cites archeological evidence and suggests that coca use in the region goes back at least 2000 years, while the first written source that cites the drug originates from the Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci, the seaman with the honour of having two continents named after him (Davenport-Hines, 2001). The most recent manifestation of cocaine use, namely crack cocaine, became the blight of inner cities in North America during the 1980s. The drug is the focus of one of the local area studies in Bruce Jacobs' (1999) book *Dealing Crack: The Social World of Streetcorner Selling.* While cocaine is not believed to be as addictive as the use of opiates such as heroin, it nevertheless has the

power to create compulsive use among its habitués, and withdrawal symptoms may even be worse than those of alcohol or opiates (Landry, 1994).

With respect to the use of cannabis, Davenport-Hines' (2001) first reference to the intoxicating and hence recreational use of various parts of the hemp plant is to a British seaman who visited India in the late 17th century and found that the local population drank a mixture of hemp seeds and water recreationally. There is little doubt that cannabis is not addictive in the way that alcohol, stimulants, and opiates are. The phenomenon of tolerance does not seem to exist, and there are no significant withdrawal effects for cannabis (Landry, 1994). It is generally agreed that the use of cannabis leads to habituation rather than addiction, and might be compared to an eating disorder rather than to the addictive use of alcohol, opiates, or stimulant drugs (Landry, 1994). In all probability, it is because of these pharmacological and social realities that cannabis has been "decriminalized" in some jurisdictions, and *defacto* legalized in others. Therefore, it may be asked why some governments have been so punitive with respect to the use of cannabis, since they are not really "protecting" their citizens from addiction. The answer appears to lie in the political determinants of the so-called "drug wars."

The "War Against Drugs"

As illustrated above, even a brief look at the history of drugs reveals that people have been using opiates and stimulants for a very long time, and that government attempts to ban or otherwise control the use of drugs are of relatively recent vintage. Davenport-Hines (2001) tracks the early stages of government attempts to control the use of drugs to the beginning of the 20th century. The reasons most commonly put forth to explain the creation of laws and law enforcement bodies to control the use of drugs

surround the negative results of drug addiction. Ironically however, President Nixon, one of the first drug warriors, was himself addicted to Dilantin (a barbiturate) long before he started his great "war on drugs" (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Other ironies exist.

For example, the production and distribution of opium and/or heroin was part of the United States' effort to win the war in South East Asia for many years. This resulted in, among other things, the creation of an airline by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency charged with the duty of collecting opium from the Golden Triangle (i.e. Burma, Thailand, and Laos). The opium was then parachuted into South Vietnam, where it was sent to Hong Kong, processed into heroin, and then sent around the world, including back to Vietnam where it was used by American troops (McCoy, 2003). Given this erratic history, it seems odd that the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom declare a "war on drugs" about every ten years or so. Many argue that the reasons for declaring such "wars" are mostly political.

United States President Richard Nixon believed that a war on drugs was necessary to "...erase the grim legacy of Woodstock" (Davenport-Hines, 2001:421). Woodstock was a semi-nude, marijuana-powered "love-in" and rock concert held in a small town of New York State that shocked the middle-classes, and outraged the President. The first visible results of Nixon's "war on drugs" revealed the "Law of Unintended Consequences" that is observed to rule in wars of all kinds. The first unintended consequence emerged when the Mexican border was closed to small-scale smugglers of marijuana. Nixon had actually opened the door to larger and better-funded Colombian organizations that brought cocaine with them when they arrived to distribute their product to American markets. The US Government's limiting of outside supplies in the American

market caused the second unintended consequence: a large internal production of the hemp plant was stimulated all over the United States, either outdoors in areas with warm climates and large empty open spaces, or indoors under artificial light (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

Most of the drug-war legislation ordered the same harsh legal penalties for marijuana as for cocaine. This added incentives for both international wholesalers and local dealers to switch out of the relatively inexpensive and highly competitive marijuana markets, and into the more lucrative and more easily monopolized heroin and cocaine trade. The general operative principle is that when the drug that is the focus of a "war on drugs" becomes unavailable, consumers will often switch to a more harmful drug. Nixon, upset by the fact that heroin was being consumed by US troops in Vietnam, overlooked two things. First, the CIA was supplying heroin more or less directly. Second, military law dictated that the eighteen to twenty year-old soldiers in Vietnam were not permitted to consume alcohol, their traditional intoxicant, until the age of twenty-one. The soldiers thus became ready purchasers of CIA-supplied heroin (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

The various "drug wars" that have taken place since the Vietnam War have revealed similar paradoxes, and more. Specifically, the political calculations of ambitious politicians always seem to play a large role in such "wars" as well. American Presidents and British Prime Ministers have used the drug issue to bolster their images politically. It remains politically popular in the United States to spend large amounts of money on drug prevention efforts in other countries, despite the call to suppress the drug

trade, the call to enact stiffer penalties for traffickers, and the continually increasing numbers of citizens who have used or who continue to use drugs of all kinds.

Both Republican and Democratic Presidents of the US have dramatized the struggle against drugs for their own political advantage. However, the "drug wars" have all yielded results that were exactly opposite to those promised by the politicians. The alternatives to drug "warfare" make the detoxification of the seriously addicted population a priority, along with treatment for those who are willing to make the effort to recover from drug addiction. This topic, which will be discussed in greater depth later in this thesis, is significant with respect to the street-level drug trafficker who is also addicted to drugs.

The prognosis for many types of addiction is rarely positive. At the same time, most prohibited drugs are expensive for the reasons explained above. Such circumstances often result in a situation wherein the street-level drug trafficker is engaged in the trade as a way of supporting his or her own addiction. This reality bears directly on the problem of street-level sales, since the presence of addiction in street-level merchants presupposes an entirely different approach to the problem than if, for example, street corner traffickers were simply poor and unemployed residents of inner city neighbourhoods. An understanding of both the economic and the character-related dimensions of the street-level drug trafficker is central to the research method employed in the present study.

CHAPTER THREE
Literature Review

The overwhelming amount of literature devoted to the topic of illegal drugs can be categorized into three basic types of studies. First, there are general studies that set out to analyze the problems generated by the international drug trade in terms of their cultural, institutional, and economic effects on a particular country or group of countries. Illustrative of this category are book-length studies such as Neil Boyd's *High Society* (1991) and Richard Davenport-Hines *The Pursuit of Oblivion* (2001) present general analyses of the drug problem as it relates to Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Second, there are ethnographic studies that concentrate on the economic and sociological context of drug sales in a particular place. Philippe Bourgois's (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* is an outstanding example of this second type of study, as it concentrates on the world of street corner drug sales in Manhattan's "Spanish Harlem." Finally, there are empirical local studies that examine the economic and law enforcement variables of street-level sales of illegal drugs in particular localities. This category includes studies such as the RAND Corporation's (1990) *Money from Crime: A Study of the Economics of Drug Dealing in Washington, D.C.*, and Bruce Jacobs' (1999) *Dealing Crack: The Social World of Street Corner Selling*. Both of these studies describe street corner drug traffickers and the world they inhabit in a run-down neighborhood in Washington, DC and in St. Louis, Missouri in the United States. The present thesis is an empirical local area study, and thus may be classified under the last of the three categories just described.

In the general type of study outlined above, there exist numerous passionate appeals of contradictory and opposed natures. The typical rhetorical approach to the problems presented by the international drug trade and its local manifestations are either to (1) increase the international and local law enforcement budgets, or (2) change the drug laws currently in force, decriminalizing presently illegal drugs and exploring treatment and rehabilitation programs. Additionally, there are numerous sensationalistic histories of relationships between organized crime and the operation of international drug markets that treat the drug problem as a "doorway" to lurid accounts of crime, espionage, and international covert action stories involving the CIA and other intelligence and secret service organizations. Neither the high profile crime and "dirty tricks" literature, nor the rhetorical appeals for and against the decriminalization of currently controlled substances, are relevant to the present study. A few academic studies examine the drug related activities of the CIA, such as McCoy's (1967) *The Politics of Heroin in South East Asia*; however, the discussion of this type of literature lies well beyond the scope of the present study.

The following review of the literature examines two important general works on the drug problem and then narrows in scope to focus on street-level drug sales and the type of individuals making such sales in particular. Two works that offer social, political, and policy treatments of the drug problem are Neil Boyd's (1991) *High Society* and Richard Davenport-Hines (2001) *The Pursuit of Oblivion.* Boyd's (1991) work presents a complete analysis of drug problems and drug policies from the Canadian perspective. Boyd also points to the important (1973) Le Dain Commission Report as a fundamental influence on Canadian drug policy, the general findings of which are also briefly

reviewed here. Following a brief discussion of the Le Dain Commission findings, Richard Davenport-Hines' (2001) *The Pursuit of Oblivion* is also discussed. Davenport-Hines' approach to the international political phenomenon known as the "war on drugs" follows the path marked out in the earlier text by Boyd. The following review of both works is intended to highlight the political and legal aspects of this phenomenon.

From the outset of *High Society*, Neil Boyd (1991) considers a number of general questions about the received doctrine in Canadian drug policy. The title of one of Boyd's chapters poses the key question directly: "Can We Just Say No to a War Against Drugs?" This chapter title reminds the reader, in a somewhat ironic way, that one of the best known "wars" on drugs began in the United States half a century ago under the patronage of First Lady Nancy Regan who invited the users of illegal drugs in the United States to "Just Say No!" One of Boyd's main concerns throughout the book is to call into question the appropriateness of the "war" metaphor and to suggest that there are much more sensible ways for Canada to proceed with national drug policy. Another major theme that is announced by Boyd at the outset of his work is the staggering contradiction between official attitudes towards the popular and legal drugs known chemically as ethanol and nicotine, versus the illegal drugs of marijuana, heroin, and cocaine. The comparison between the legal drugs, that many Canadians use at great cost to their personal health and well-being, and the illegal ones, that cost Canada billions each year in regulatory, rehabilitation, is central to his basic argument for change in national drug policy.

One point of comparison seems to be unique to Boyd's account. Other general treatments of the problem, including that of Richard Davenport-Hines which is discussed

below, do not provide the following insight. The reason that opiates, marijuana, and cocaine were made illegal, and the equally addictive and destructive commodities based on ethanol and nicotine were not, was that the use of the former class of drugs was associated with racial and ethnic minorities, such as Canadians of Chinese and African ancestry, whereas alcohol and tobacco use was sanctioned by "the great and the good" in Canadian society, namely, those of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. An Edmonton woman who was both a magistrate and a suffragette warned all Canada that: "White women might be seduced by Black men using cocaine, or by Oriental men smoking opium" (Boyd, 1991:10). The great Canadian leader and legislator Mackenzie King was of a similar opinion and, according to Boyd's account, did more than any other single person to insure the ban on opium, marijuana, and cocaine while pointing to the minority ethnicities who had introduced these substances into common use in Canada. Boyd also points out that the state benefits handsomely from the taxes on tobacco and alcohol sales, which could not be true for the drugs that were made illegal in more or less summary fashion, for the simple reason that the use of opium, cocaine, and marijuana only affected (and only affects) a relatively very small proportion of Canadian society.

The historical information and social analysis that Boyd brings forward allows readers to compare the similarities and differences between legal and illegal drugs. This trajectory makes it very reasonable to ask why Canada and most other advanced industrial societies tolerate the numerous negative effects of alcohol and nicotine on their populations, while at the same time, they spend billions of dollars on the regulation, control, and enforcement of another set of mood altering substances, which are used by a relatively tiny percentage of all Canadians? To emphasize the differences between the

legal and the illegal drugs, Boyd reminds the reader that alcohol and tobacco are as addictive as some of the prohibited substances (e.g. opiates) and more addictive than others (e.g. marijuana does not seem to be addictive, in the sense of inducing tolerance). Tobacco and the opiates, Boyd points out, are equally addictive:

> What links opiates to tobacco is the user's irresistible craving for the drug. In the absence of these two drugs, physical and psychological symptoms of withdrawal typically develop (Boyd, 1991:5).

The question that emerges dramatically in Boyd's initial chapter, then, is why alcohol and nicotine should be legally available, widely and expensively advertised, whereas very similar types of mood altering substances are banned, persecuted, and subject to extremely costly campaigns of regulation, control, and enforcement. This was one of the main questions investigated by the Le Dain Commission, established by the Federal Government in 1972. According to Boyd:

> The Le Dain Commission issued a final report in 1973 urging a very cautious movement towards the wise exercise of freedom of choice. Specifically, they urged that possession of marijuana no longer be a criminal offence and that heroin maintenance programs be encouraged on a closely monitored and experimental basis (Boyd, 1991:11).

The question that the reader is left with here is that, if the Le Dain Commission did not view marijuana and heroin as carrying the kind of threats to society that required an absolute ban to be supported by draconian (and expensive) judicial and law enforcement action, why does Canada continue to engage in a "war on drugs" that does not seem to be effective? Boyd captures the matter as follows:

> What we're doing now isn't working. High rates of premature death are more closely tied to legal drugs than they are to illegal drugs even when differences in rates of use are taken into account. Moreover, death is less likely from illegal drug use than from illegal-drug distribution and its control. We are at war with ourselves, and if we can better understand the

> dimensions of these battles, we might be able to find more peaceful resolutions of our conflict (Boyd, 1991:14).

The key phrase here is "isn't working." This reality provided one of the main reasons for the appointment of the Le Dain Commission back in 1972 and was evoked again almost a quarter of a century later when, according to Patrick Basham:

> British Columbia's Chief Coroner, Larry Campbell issued this rhetorical challenge: It's time someone stepped forward and said the "War on Drugs" is lost (Basham, 2001).

The Le Dain Commission adopted a very open attitude toward the drug problem in Canada and took massive amounts of testimony from Canadians who had become familiar with recreational drugs in one way or another. The major focus of the investigation was on the use of cannabis as a recreational drug. Essentially, after a lengthy and thorough examination of attitudes toward recreational drug use in Canada, the Commission discovered that the people who used cannabis used it for pleasure, in much the same way that they would use beer. The Commissioners were careful to examine the possible tolerance effects of the drug and found that, unlike other illicit drugs, cannabis does not create a tolerance (i.e. the ability and need to consume ever-increasing amounts), and as such, could be classified at worst as habit-forming, but not as an addictive substance. Cannabis, the Commission reported, had been in use in the human community for a very long time:

> Evidence of cannabis has been discovered in an Egyptian site considered to be between three and four thousand years old, and the Scythians are reported to have grown hemp in the Volga region during the same period. Herodotus wrote of the Scythian practice of inhaling the fumes of burning cannabis as part of a funeral purification rite about 450 B.C. (Le Dain, 1973, Chapter II, "Introduction").

The Commission found that official committees of enquiry into the use of cannabis have also been long-standing, citing more than ten instances that date back to a British Commission of Enquiry held in 1893. The Commission reported that the great amounts of time and energy spent examining cannabis use had not changed the public's view of the matter. Many commissions in many different countries had filed their reports, "[h]owever, the effects of these reports on government policy have generally been limited" (Le Dain, Chapter II, "Introduction"). The Commission noted that the pharmacological description of cannabis would depend absolutely on the dose administered. Ingestion of the active ingredient, THC, in small amounts produced the effect of mild intoxication while ingestion in a more concentrated form, for example as it appears in cannabis resin or hashish, could produce psychedelic and hallucinogenic effects.

The Commissioners were especially interested in the possible effects of the drug on driving ability. Citing the 1969 study by the US State of Washington Department of Motor Vehicles, the Commission noted that tests had not shown that driving under moderate doses of the drug affected drivers' ability in any significant way. Comparisons were made with the effects of alcohol consumption on driving ability:

> In order to obtain some standard reference point for the study, and to ascertain the sensitivity of the performance task to known drug-induced impairment, the subjects were also tested under a single dose of alcohol, designed to produce a blood alcohol level [BAL] corresponding to the legal standard of presumed driving impairment in Washington (0.10% [BAL]). The actual [BAL] achieved was 0.11%, a relatively high dose. The average number of errors under alcohol was significantly greater than that acquired under either the no-drug or marijuana conditions (Le Dain Commission, Chapter II, "Cannabis and Its Effects").

However, the Commissioners did not conclude that it would be safe to use cannabis products and then to drive a car. Like the 1969 study for the Washington State Department of Motor Vehicles, the Le Dain Commission concluded that, despite some "cautious studies" that indicated that the use of cannabis had not been seen to greatly affect driving skills, it would be premature to conclude that cannabis was without dangers in this respect.

In its general conclusions, however, the Le Dain Commission did not argue that the widespread use of cannabis, that it had identified, constitutes a grave public danger in terms of the implied and/or suggested "harm" to the individual or to society. In fact, the Commission noted that the "favourite pastime" of those embroiled in the cannabis controversy is to "explain away" the evidence with respect to the drug's effects:

> The evidence of the potential for harm of cannabis is far from complete and far from conclusive. It is possible to find some fault with the methodology or the chain of reasoning in virtually all of the evidence. Explaining away the evidence on one side or the other has become a favourite pastime of participants in the cannabis controversy. What is significant is that there is a growing body of evidence to explain away. The literature on adverse psychological reactions, both here and abroad, is now quite extensive (Le Dain Commission, "Conclusion").

Compared to the negative social effects of the widespread use of alcohol on Canadian society, cannabis use did not appear to present great problems:

> On the whole, the physical and mental effects of cannabis, at the levels of use presently attained in North America, would appear to be much less serious than those which may result from excessive use of alcohol (Le Dain Commission, "Conclusion").

For anyone wishing to get the most complete picture of the history and potential problems associated with cannabis use, the Le Dain Commission's final report will continue to constitute basic reading. However, it appears that, like prior commissions

charged with the investigation of the phenomenon of cannabis use, the Le Dain Commission itself has also failed to effect dramatic changes in law and/or practice.

Nevertheless, the Le Dain Commission report continues to constitute a fundamental part of the literature with respect to the drug problem in Canada. Many scholars recognize this, and have accordingly based their extensive efforts on this piece of work. In a recent econometric study of marijuana production, for example, Stephen T. Easton (2004) presents a statistical picture of cannabis production that fully supports the general finding of the Le Dain Commission. The data show that cannabis use by Canadians is a wide-spread daily practice now as it was thirty years ago when Le Dain and his fellow commissioners reported. Easton (2004) estimated the number of cannabis "growing operations" in British Columbia to be approximately 17,500 – which suggests an export value in the $2 billion range. In other words, Easton's econometric reasoning begs the question: should criminal gangs or State revenues benefit from a productive industry of this magnitude?

Some of the recent examinations into the various aspects of the drug problem systematically support the impressionistic theses that have already been developed in the present study. For example, Evan Wood et al. (2003) reported on the street-level effects of a Canadian police seizure of 100 kilograms of heroin in September 2000. The authors compared two groups of intravenous drug users before and after the removal of a large amount of heroin from the local drug market, and found that the street price of heroin actually decreased after the drug seizure. Thus, the authors conclude that, "[t]he massive heroin seizure appeared to have no measurable public health benefit" (Wood et al., 2003:165). The authors point out that this is not a small matter, given that of the $500

million spent annually on Canada's drug enforcement and control strategy, 93% goes toward the effort of controlling drugs on the supply-side.

Another recent study offers substantial illumination for a finding that emerges from the statistical study presented below. Specifically, the statistical profile of drug traffickers in the present study clearly illustrates the gradual emergence of a small hard-core group of recidivists who persist in their drug selling lifestyle despite numerous arrests and years of incarceration. As is noted elsewhere in this thesis, a thorough understanding of the addict/trafficker is needed to understand the dynamics of the drug problem as it exists in Vancouver. In their study of opiate users incarcerated in six correctional facilities in Ontario, Calzavara et al. (2003) show quite convincingly that a history of drug injection and incarceration is the best predictor of continuing drug injection behaviours while in state correctional custody. Upon reading Calzavara et al.'s study, readers who are unfamiliar with the drug problem in Canada might question: (1) how inmates in six Ontario prisons obtained drugs in the first place, and (2) where the "used needles" (with the potential to spread HIV through the prison system) come from? Those more familiar with the problems of drug law enforcement, however, will know that the drug problem in Canada is just as prevalent within correctional institutions as it is on the "outside." This observation is noteworthy because similar questions arise again when policy implications are examined in Chapter Seven.

The aforementioned book length study by Richard Davenport-Hines (2001) raises very important theoretical questions concerning the realities of drug use, drug rehabilitation, and the attempts to control drugs in several countries, including Great Britain and the United States. Given the focus of the present study on street-level sales, it

will also be crucial to discuss the participant-observer study by Bourgois (1995). This book follows the details of the lives of street-level traffickers in Manhattan's East Harlem in great detail, and provides a sociological analysis both of the retail drug merchants and of the world in which they function. Both Bourgois and Davenport-Hines attempt to look beyond the surface of sensationalism in their descriptions of drug use and drug sales, and the results in each case are excellent. The crucial findings of these two studies isolate important economic variables relevant to drug sales (Davenport-Hines, 2001) and highlight key sociological realities in the lives of street-level drug traffickers that make the drug problem what it is (Bourgois, 1995).

After a review of the work of Bourgois and Davenport-Hines, the literature review will focus more closely on the limited number of area-studies that exist, namely the RAND (1990) study entitled *Money From Crime: A Study of the Economics of Drug Dealing in Washington, D.C.* and Bruce A. Jacobs' (1999) study entitled *Dealing Crack: The Social World of Streetcorner Selling*. The review of these two area-studies will concentrate on the drug problem as viewed from the level of retail sales at street corner locations. These local studies represent important attempts to understand the problems that revolve around drug use and sales at the micro level, and as such, will provide a basis for methodological comparison to the present study.

Davenport-Hines' (2001) *The Pursuit of Oblivion*

Richard Davenport-Hines' (2001) *The Pursuit of Oblivion* presents a comprehensive "history of drug taking" by drawing upon early records of the use of mind-altering substances, searching out patterns of human attraction to, and human degradation by, the wide variety of such substances in existence. The most historic

examples involving the human use of opium poppy, cocoa leaf, and hemp products are brought forward by the author to indicate that the drug problem is an ancient one. At the same time, the author points out the importance of intoxicating substances in the early intrigues of empire, as the ships of nations such as Great Britain searched far and wide for goods to sell (Davenport-Hines, 2001). One of the important macro structures that Davenport-Hines' (2001) historical study reveals is that the drug trade has been an export trade from the very beginning. Briefly, drugs are usually exported from poor countries to the relatively wealthy metropolitan centers. Therefore, people in countries that have vast internal markets for illegal drugs, such as the United States and Canada, tend to believe that the drug problem is set upon them from the outside (Davenport-Hines, 2001). At one level, this is often true, although there are major exceptions.

When the United States fielded a highly publicized "drug war" along the Mexican border during the 1960s, the marijuana once grown in Mexico no longer crossed the border into the United States, and massive production of the drug was undertaken in the United States to replace supplies (Davenport-Hines, 2001). In this case, as in many others, Davenport-Hines (2001) points to the well-known "law of unintended consequences" to show how by using Draconian methods, official efforts to end drug trafficking often result in the increase of the amount of drugs available.

Davenport-Hines' (2001) useful insight into the history of the international drug trade is that, while drugs were an exported commodity early on, the relatively advanced countries were responsible for mounting the trade in the first place. Recall that the British colonized North America to promote the production of tobacco, a dangerous drug that was soon to be widely consumed in Europe. Tobacco, of course, is a highly

addictive psychoactive drug for which Europeans initially paid exorbitant prices (Davenport-Hines, 2001). The trade in tobacco, like the trade in other drugs, was an activity that could yield large profits to those who engaged in its production, transformation, and sale. Those who regard drugs as an evil brought into their society from the outside often forget that the European innovators and merchants were truly responsible for creating the international drug trade. The trade in opium might provide the best example of this.

Opium products have been used for medicinal purposes since ancient times. However, with respect to the recreational use of the opium poppy, the Chinese immigrants brought their opium habit and introduced the opium problem to the big cities of Europe and America (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Accordingly, Davenport-Hines (2001) provides many examples wherein Chinese immigrants imported opium to the United States and Great Britain. However, at the same time, Davenport-Hines (2001) reminds us that the Chinese Empire had literally been forced by the British Armed Forces to accept the trade in opium (grown in British India) in the first place. The First and Second Opium Wars fought between Great Britain and China in the mid-19th Century were fought for the distribution rights of drugs in one of the largest markets on earth. When a Mandarin official named Lin Zexu threw British opium, warehoused in Canton, into the sea, the British retaliated by invading the country, forcing the Empire of Heaven to (1) import opium and (2) create the necessary treaty ports and other facilities to make importation possible (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Therefore, the fact that Chinese immigrants later brought the opium back to the large cities of Great Britain and North

America when they arrived as common labourers, cooks, and laundry men represents a somewhat unpleasant historical irony.

Another point that Davenport-Hines (2001) stresses is the fact that the history of drug addiction in European and North American countries reveals that people use drugs recreationally to produce pleasure – at least at first. In this respect, people who use the forbidden opiates, stimulants, and hallucinogenic drugs Group A (illegal) find pleasure as those people who use alcohol and tobacco Group B (legal). Both sets of drugs give some sort of pleasure, physical comfort, or relief to their users, and possibly lead to physiological or habitudinal addiction (Davenport-Hines, 2001). The reasons are more or less unexpected with respect to why certain drugs are found in Group A (illegal) while others are found in Group B (legal). However, Davenport-Hines (2001) thoroughly investigates these classifications and discovers an important general principle of the drug phenomenon: when a drug from Group B (legal) is placed into Group A (illegal), another mood-altering drug will often take its place in Group B (Davenport-Hines, 2001). For example, Davenport-Hines (2001) notes that when the United States experimented with the prohibition of alcohol in the 1920s, there was a significant shift to using products of the hemp plant, which were an inexpensive alternative to alcohol with similar intoxicating effects (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

In addition to the historical use of drugs among Europeans and Americans, Davenport-Hines (2001) also makes several powerful arguments about the modern drug problems, all of which are relevant to the present study. Davenport-Hines' (2001) first general point is of great significance to anyone who has studied the local drug use and law enforcement scene in Vancouver, BC and similar cities. The economic mechanism

involved was described in detail earlier and will be mentioned here briefly. When law enforcement efforts lead to the arrest and incarceration of major traffickers and/or the seizure of massive amounts of heroin or cocaine, the street-level price of drugs decreases while the drug quality miraculously increases (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

Davenport-Hines (2001) explains several cases in terms of macro-economic reasoning to show why prices decrease and quality improves; his model illuminates the apparently paradoxical effects of drug "busts." Essentially, supply-side drug enforcement actions temporarily remove the largest and strongest players from the scene. In the highly lucrative and competitive world of the international drug trade, the effect of removing the large players affords the smaller players a chance to gain market share. The smaller players compete for market share by lowering prices and increasing quality, as would any corporation competing in today's marketplace. At present, the illegal drug trade employs this macro economic strategy simply because when governments make a drug illegal, an artificial monopoly results from a large differential between the production price of the drug in poor countries, and the street-level drug price. Thus, when drug law enforcement agencies seize large quantities of a Group A drug, a larger player is temporarily removed from the market, which results in an influx of competitors offering bargains at the street-level. The goal of the small players is to take over as much market share as possible from the displaced large players while those players are temporarily out of the picture. One result of having cheaper and purer drugs, as noted earlier, is usually a temporary rise in the number of deaths by drug overdose; this phenomenon is also noted to occur after local area drug "busts."

A second theoretical point in Davenport-Hines' historical treatment of the drug problem concerns the politics of the so-called "war on drugs." The "presidential drug wars" is a term used to describe the periodic efforts made by national governments to interdict drug sources (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Beginning with US President Richard Nixon, Davenport-Hines describes how politicians have used the "war" on international drug trafficking and increased local enforcement as a political tool to gain a political advantage. These political maneuvers, as extensively documented by Davenport-Hines, can often create drug policies that have exactly the opposite effect from the original intent. Essentially, the "war on drugs" during the 1980s was a paradox; instead of decreasing international drug trade, the "war on drugs" actually expanded the problem (Davenport-Hines, 2001). In the UK and the US, drug addiction and police problems increased during the 1980s, in contradiction to the goal of the "war on drugs." The result of the "war on drugs" paradox was that when governments applied more pressure on drug dealers, the drug trade became even more profitable. An irreverent and eminently readable comment by former Vancouver police officer Gil Puder contained in The Fraser Institute's *Sensible Solutions to the Urban Drug Problem* (2001) emphasizes the very same point for a period covering Puder's 17 year experience of police work in the city.

The reason for the paradox of supply-side regulation resulting in lower drug prices (and greater purity) at street-level was that an incessant demand for illegal drugs in Europe and North America, along with the decreases in price created by increased enforcement efforts, brought even larger and more powerful criminal organizations into European and North American drug markets over time (Davenport-Hines, 2001). Manufacturing drugs was easy because of an abundance of raw materials, and no great

technical barriers to transform raw materials into finished product. Simple manufacturing techniques attracted vigorous investment because of potential high profit margins. The final conclusion from Davenport-Hines' (2001) work, based on extensive historical analysis, is that the current drug policies in the United Kingdom and North America are actually *increasing*, rather than decreasing, the drug problem. The drug policies currently in force in most countries ensure high profits for drug producers while offering little or no disincentives to final consumers (Davenport-Hines, 2001). The alternative approach to the "presidential drug wars," Davenport-Hines (2001) argues, is a general movement towards legalization with the goal of making the international trade unprofitable, and educating and treating drug users rather than applying the same range of punishments used for cases of common crime. Davenport-Hines (2001) explains that programs featuring legalization and medical treatment for users, as employed in Holland for example, provide a policy approach that has already begun to mitigate the worst aspects of the drug problem. The basic premise of Davenport-Hines' (2001) argument is that drug addiction should be treated as a medical problem, and not as a crime similar to those of theft, extortion, and murder.

Bourgois' (1995) *In Search of Respect*

Philippe Bourgois' (1995) *In Search of Respect* studies how street-level sales in New York City's East Harlem neighborhood are a result of urban overcrowding, in more than one respect. Bourgois is an anthropologist who spent five years in a drug-ridden Manhattan neighborhood studying retail drug traffickers and their families. However, Bourgois originally moved into the neighborhood because of the notoriously high New York City rental fees, a relevant detail considered later when discussing the problem of

drug selling in big city neighborhoods. New York City inhabits extremely wealthy and desperately impoverished populations, side-by-side. Millionaires live on Park Avenue from 70th Street through to the streets numbered in the eighties. Meanwhile, crack and heroin junkies reside and also traffic these commodities only a mile or so farther uptown on the same boulevard, Park Avenue, from 96th Street beyond. Bourgois' (1995) basic sociological argument is that the poorly educated minority populations of New York have little or no long-term prospects of decent employment and self-betterment, and therefore, turn to desperate entrepreneurial efforts (e.g. drug selling) to succeed in the economic struggle known as "American life."

Bourgois' (1995) sociological argument is similar to the one made many years ago by Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell (1959) in *Crime and the American Way of Life,* which chronicled the rise of the Italian Mafia as an important, albeit illegal, business organization. The argument is that the usual pathways to success in America are blocked because of discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities, and a shortage of educational and training opportunities. This causes members of these groups to turn to crime as a way of "succeeding" in American life (Bourgois, 1995). As described in the famous "Horatio Alger" myth, a determined individual can succeed in America by working hard (Bourgois, 1995). Therefore, the model of "success" is business, and according to Daniel Bell (1959) and Philippe Bourgois (1995), the denizens of the drug world aspire to this model. As the present author has reported in a different context:

> If only it were legitimate, there would be much to admire about this industry. To start, it is highly profitable. It produces goods for a small fraction of the price its customers are willing to pay. It cleverly takes advantage of the globalization of the economy, and skillfully responds to changing markets and distribution routes. It is global but dispersed, built on trust, marketing its wares to the young without spending anything on

> conventional advertising. It brings rewards to some poorer countries, and employs many of the world's disadvantaged and unskilled. Unfortunately, I am not talking about NIKE; I am describing the world drug industry (Heed, 2002).

Bourgois' (1995) describes a world that includes three individuals: Ray, Primo, and Cesar, who all, in different ways, desire to succeed in life but fail to escape the chaos of discrimination, brutality, drugs, and other personal failures that affect their lives. Ray is an entrepreneur who owns several locations where crack is sold. Ray employs Primo, who in turn employs Cesar as a lookout and bouncer. When Ray attempts to change his crack selling operation into a normal corner grocery store, Primo and Cesar are delighted and work feverishly to prepare the premises. All three street-level entrepreneurs are possessed by a deep desire to work legally. Unfortunately, not only do economic and social pressures defeat them in running the grocery store, but also the economic competition from other street traffickers cause Ray to nearly fail even as a crack merchant. Ray's situation highlights the fundamental underlying structural reasons that explain why some New York City neighborhoods have turned into open-air drug bazaars (Bourgois, 1995).

Bourgois (1995) points out that the economic infrastructure of New York City has been transformed from an industrial economy to one based on service, in a long process that began in the 1970s and continues today. The honourable positions that uneducated and unskilled male workers once filled in the New York industrial-based economy no longer exist. The traditional male unskilled positions that the older relatives of Primo, Cesar, and their friends once held are no longer present in the service-based economy. This shift from an industrial to service-based economy has left young men like Primo and Cesar searching for menial labor or service personnel jobs. Cesar, who is a

dark-skinned Puerto Rican, is unable to secure a construction job because workers of other ethnic backgrounds dominate and protect their relatively highly paid union jobs from outside ethnic groups. Primo, on the other hand, fails to find a job in the service economy because he lacks skills and cannot adapt to new work environments. Unable to secure a job, both young men are submerged by their circumstances and resort to selling and using drugs (Bourgois, 1995). By the time that Bourgois'(1995) ethnographic account comes to a close, almost everyone involved in the drama either dies by overdose or violence, or is languishing in jail. In light of Bourgois' (1995) study, perhaps the most important perspective about the lives of drug traffickers among the urban poor is the economic one. Despite the lurid stories carried by the media, street-level drug traffickers earn very little money on average. Even when they do succeed as street-corner drug merchants, Bourgois's neighborhood drug traffickers Primo and Cesar are as relentlessly exploited by illegal entrepreneurial "employers," as they would be exploited by legitimate employers (Bourgois, 1995). In short, the risk/reward ratio that governs the street drug trafficker's life tilts entirely toward risk, and offers little reward aside from opportunities to engage in excessive use of the product (Bourgois, 1995). The statistical studies carried out by the RAND Corporation (1990) and by Bruce Jacobs (1999) of the University of Missouri tell a similar story to the sad tale of blasted lives described by Philippe Bourgois.

The Economics of Street-Level Drug Sales

Similar to Philippe Bourgois' (1995) argument, Bruce Jacobs (1999) believes the transformation of St. Louis from an industrial to a service-based economy is the primary reason for shaping street corner drug sales in that city. The loss of a traditional blue-

collar industrial economy has contributed to unemployment (particularly Black unemployment), decay of the urban center, and the creation of the street corner "crack" economy. Social tensions increase, as most analysts would agree, in any period of rapid economic or demographic change. In periods of economic downturn, social problems such as increased drug use, may manifest in a transformation process that involves social roles and economic rewards of groups and individuals (Jacobs, 1999). Using street-level research carried out in St. Louis, Missouri, Jacobs (1999) shows how the long economic decline of what was once a thriving industrial city results in population loss, unemployment, neighborhood decline, and increased drug sales.

One very interesting aspect of Jacobs' (1999) work on the "crack" economy of the Black ghetto in St. Louis is his discussion about the difficulties in collecting data for a quantitative, or even qualitative, study. According to Jacobs (1999), the researcher who wants any sort of qualitative, anecdotal, or personal data from drug market participants must face an entire range of problems. For example, Bourgois (1995) had to spend no less than five years living in the same neighborhood with the people he wished to study.

In contrast, Jacobs' (1999) study was a quantitative short-term undertaking. Jacobs did not have nor wish to take the time to build personal relationships with street-corner drug market participants, unlike Bourgois (1995), who wrote about the personal lives of drug dealers. Instead, Jacobs sought quantitative rather than qualitative information. However, to collect quantitative information, Jacobs nevertheless needed to become acquainted with street-level traffickers. To identify the street-level traffickers and their social and economic characteristics, Jacobs (1999) argues that researchers must

face personal risks, long periods of boredom, unpleasant and threatening reactions from the police, and other problems.

The foremost problem confronted by any research team seeking quantitative data in a study such as the one conducted by Jacobs (1999) is the problem of personal danger. To begin, the traffickers may be violent and unpredictable. In addition, because "crack" sales are illegal, the "crack" dealer becomes a special target to other criminals who believe that it is relatively easy to rob the drug dealer of his illegal gain (Jacobs, 1999). This belief is common since, the "predators" know the dealer will not report a robbery to the police. Some dealers are not slow to take violent action. Jacobs (1999) reports one case within which a sidewalk "crack" trafficker who had been cheated in a deal by a customer allegedly armed himself, pursued and killed the car full of the "predators" who had robbed him. Thus, the first problem confronting a researcher who wants to collect data in a functioning drug market is a dangerous research environment wherein both dealers and "predators" regularly use violence to achieve their goals.

To gather his initial sample of 40 working "crack" traffickers, Jacobs (1999) first used a direct approach to drug market participants, and then what he calls "chain referral" (i.e. the "snow-ball" sampling technique) whereby his first informant put him in touch with other informants who found still more "crack" traffickers willing to answer questions. The only problem with his approach was that the "crack" dealers in the study offered information for payment (Jacobs, 1999). This raises a concern relevant to the research that will be described: when the researcher pays for information, the quality of the information may be affected by the informant's desire to tell a "good story" (Jacobs, 1999). In addition, as Jacobs (1999) points out, investigators may obtain misleading

results because people involved in criminal activity are often very discreet about many aspects of their lives and obviously do not disclose all details. Informants may also have a tendency simply to lie or to exaggerate, as discovered by Jacobs (1999), when he tried to determine the extent to which the street-level "crack" seller is also a drug addict.

Jacobs (1999) carefully questioned his informants regarding their use of "crack." Mildly put, the qualitative responses from informants were unconvincing. With no exceptions, street-level "crack" traffickers denied the personal use of the drugs they sold, and based their remarks on the supposedly awful effects of the almost instant drug-addiction that "crack" allegedly produces. The informants claimed what they believed to be a well-known truth, specifically that the use of "crack" leads to the loss of any sense of responsibility, to almost immediate physical deterioration of the user, and to many other dire effects. In this section of his study however, Jacobs (1999) concludes that the informants interviewed were just as likely to use their own product, contrary to the responses indicated.

Philippe Bourgois' (1995) talkative "crack" dealer friends certainly used the product they sold. Bourgois (1995) used his hand-held tape recorder to catch the dealers mention that they no longer use drugs, while at the same time, he observed them use house keys to tip loads of cocaine powder into their nostrils. An experienced detective who had worked in drug enforcement for the Vancouver Police Department for 15 years at the time of the report, quoted here, sees the trafficker-user as an important aspect of the street-level drug sales problem:

> The drug strategy in Vancouver will be required to address different levels of the drug continuum. At the lower end, health and social services will primarily deal with addicts and substance abusers who are poverty

> stricken, dual disordered, and in need of a multitude of different services...
>
> At the opposite end of the continuum are high-level, profit-oriented traffickers who are initially and largely the concern of the police... The addict-trafficker lies between these two groups. This individual is the sidewalk dealer who is the common connection between the profit motivated wholesaler and the addict user. They traffic at the street-level in order to maintain their drug habits. Typically, persons in this category are chronic offenders, with long histories of trafficking related behavior. Addiction and trafficking have become a lifestyle for these subjects, that may at times be miserable, but always seems to be viable (McLaren, 2004:2).

Detective McLaren offers a cogent view of the drug problem based directly on experience. The present study builds on McLaren's viewpoint by exploring data relating to the addicted street trafficker. At this point, however, the literature review discusses some recent studies that investigate the identity and characteristics of street-level traffickers in order to provide context for the statistical results of the present study to be discussed below.

Street-Level Drug Markets

Philip Bean (2002) is one of the leading British experts who studies drug markets and the key individuals operating within them. A comment made early in Bean's (2002) *Drugs and Crime* is particularly relevant to the present study:

> Drug use is heavily concentrated in the deprived areas of cities and, although not exclusively so, often enough to be more than coincidental. That community is invariably a poor neighbourhood... In her description of Bladon in northern England, Janet Foster (2000) describes it as containing drug abuse and crime combined with a debilitating range of other social problems, high levels of truancy, poor health and pervasive unemployment (about 50%) where exclusion and deprivation are very much in evidence (Bean, 2002:20).

The above passage describes Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the area of focus to this thesis from which data relating to arrested drug traffickers will be drawn.

Dorn, Murji, and South's (1992) *Traffickers: Drug Markets and Law Enforcement* studies the British drug markets and the people working in them. Dorn et al. (1992) base their insights on the development of British drug markets in the 1980s, using information from twenty-five convicted traffickers in prison at the time, and an additional fifty-five former traffickers who were willing to share their recollections. The same caveats for the Dorn et al. (1992) study apply as those in the case of the Jacobs (1999) and Bourgois (1995) studies described earlier. The main consideration is, how do researchers know that convicted and/or retired criminals were telling the truth when they answered questions? Dorn et al.'s (1992) five-point typology of drug market types provides a useful mechanism to analyze local drug markets, even if the truth-value of criminal informants is merely probabilistic. The insights of police officers who have worked in narcotic sections for many years supplant these testimonies. Dorn et al. (1992) suggest, for the British markets they researched, the basic seven types of drug market firms are:

- Trading "charities" (i.e. networks with an ideological commitment to certain drugs, especially cannabis).
- Mutual societies (i.e. friendship networks of user-dealers).
- Sideliners, or legitimate businesses that have a "side line" drug sale business.
- Criminal diversifiers, or criminal gangs in some other area moving in to take over drug sales in certain markets.
- Opportunistic irregulars, or part-time sales men who make occasional forays into drug markets.
- Retail specialists, who use some retail store and special employees to sell drugs using the store as a cover.
- State-sponsored traders (i.e. drug informants who work with police and are allowed to continue to do business).

Note that not all of these categories include the addict-dealer described earlier by Detective McLaren. In fact, Dorn et al. (1992) state that the "criminal diversifiers" strongly discourage the use of drugs by anyone in their organization.

Ruggiero and South's (1995) *Eurodrugs: Drug Use, Markets, and Trafficking in Europe* cites the Dorn et al. (1992) study, but adds a perspective on continental drug markets that contradicts one of Dorn et al.'s main findings. Dorn et al. (1992) could not find evidence of large criminal conspiracies in UK drug distribution. On the other hand, Ruggiero and South (1995) examined drug markets in Italy and found evidence that legitimate businesses, often large-scale in nature, were deeply involved at the wholesale level. Ruggiero and South (1995) believe the street-level trafficker in Turin, Italy went through a "de-skilling" process, and as a result became a small-scale, economically desperate operator, and not a professional criminal. Ruggiero and South's (1995) view of the street-level drug merchant as an ineffective criminal, with a prognosis for a short life on the street, closely matches Bourgois' (1995) profile of street-level merchants in the American cities of New York and St. Louis.

Broader Questions of Drug Policy Suggested in the Literature

There are cases where street-level drug trafficking increases because of broad complex factors, some of which may not be obvious to the uneducated reader. In newspaperman Gary Webb's (1998) *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras and the Crack Cocaine Explosion*, cited in Auriana Ojeda's (2002) *Drug Trafficking*, Webb examines the much-discussed CIA plot to flood the (African-American) neighbourhoods of South Central Los Angeles with "crack" cocaine. In a brief statement entitled "Drug Trafficking Has Corrupted the American Government," Webb refers to his controversial

three-part series originally published in the crusading and very independent newspaper of San Jose, California called the *San Jose Mercury News*. In this series, Webb named Nicaraguan drug traffickers commissioned to sell cocaine in Los Angeles in order to raise money for President Reagan's covert operations against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (Ojeda, 2002).

David C. Jordan's (1999) *Drug Politics: Dirty Money and Democracies* generalizes the points made by Webb, and recommends a book-length remedy to the drug problem. Webb looked at one case where drugs imported into American cities were tied to a particular covert CIA program (Ojeda, 2002). Similar to Webb's work, Jordan (1999) not only shows methods in which the intelligence services make use of the international drug trade to achieve CIA objectives, but also criminal banking practices and globalization of American capital. Jordan (1999) also describes the American "democratization agenda," whereby American governments turn a "blind-eye" to the drug trade in some part(s) of the world (e.g. Afghanistan) because a current US ally is deeply involved in the drug trade.

Jordan (1999) begins his survey of what could be called "dirty tricks and the drug trade" by identifying five assumptions that underlie the "presidential drug wars" and by showing how each assumption is contradicted in practice. Jordan's five assumptions can be simply rephrased as follows:

- The drug trade is a simple matter of supply and demand. The reality is that, as experience shows, disrupting supply enforces the monopoly of the largest suppliers who benefit by prices that are much higher than if no "interdiction" of supply was in place.

- The major culprits in the international trade in drugs are minority ethnicities, foreigners, criminal elements, etc. In fact many elements of the dominant society are involved in, and profit from, the drug trade.

- The major banks are victims of the big criminal organizations and can do nothing about money laundering, movement of ill-gotten gains, etc. On the contrary, what has taken place is the "criminalization" of international banking and finance.

- All governments are fundamentally opposed to and prepared to do away with the international trade in illegal drugs. In fact many governments use the drug trade for various purposes and this includes the Government of the United States.
- The major social forces in the metropolitan countries are all enthusiastic participants in the "war on drugs." On the contrary, the social values promoted by leading sectors such as the entertainment sector in fact glamourize drug use, while other sectors reject the "drug wars" and, indeed, insist on decriminalization, legalization, and treatment (Jordan, 1999).

Although several of Jordan's points are relevant for the present study, one issue is particularly important to this thesis: whether or not the major culprits in street-level drug trade are ethnic minorities and foreigners.

For example, one of the claims regarding the drug epidemic in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is that Hondurans, connected with large-scale international drug markets, are carrying out most of the trafficking. The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* article "Vancouver Faces a Rising Crack Problem" (2000) claims specifically that due to tough policing tactics, Honduran drug sellers relocated drug operations from Portland, Oregon to Vancouver, British Columbia. The empirical section of this thesis will test this claim in a specific way.

The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* article (2000) is written from a traditionalist point of view of the drug problem, which posits that the real evils in society are introduced from the outside, or by ethnic minorities. The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* article (2000) was adamant that the best response by the police is a "tough" response, and favours the supposed success of the Portland Police in driving the Honduran drug traffickers out of

the city. The article reports that police officers "beat up" detained Hondurans before handing them over to the American immigration authorities of the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS), thus expeditiously solving the drug problem in the city. However, matters are not always as parsimonious as this article suggests. Nevertheless, the methods proposed are those already employed by exemplars of what might be called the "drug war mentality." Much literature on the so-called "war on drugs" documents enthusiastic proponents in favour of the "war" approach. Equally so, there is a substantial amount of literature that purports the views of critics who maintain that not one "war on drugs" has ever succeeded. Many of the enthusiastic proponents of "war on drugs" are the so-called drug "Czars" who have lead the American "war on drugs" in the past.

Ojeda's (2002) *Drug Trafficking* provides a sample of opinions from these proponents. Ojeda's (2002) survey of authors in favour of continuing the "war on drugs" in the United States contains the opinions of two politicians, two former drug "Czars," and two professional warriors for the cause. A sample of a pro-drug war opinion, taken from the remarks of William J. Bennett who was the drug "Czar" under George Bush Senior, is that the "drug war" has been a success because rates of illegal drug use have declined (Ojeda, 2002). However, it is important to note that Bennett does not support his claim with evidence. Bennett's second claim "...forceful interdiction can help to increase the price and decrease the purity of drugs available..." (Ojeda, 2002:37-38), again is not backed with evidence. His second claim, in fact, contradicts numerous examples of the exact opposite effect, as mentioned earlier. The mind-set of the typical anti-drug warrior becomes clear when one considers the facts that Bennett's assertions

have been contradicted repeatedly by empirical based studies, and that his assertions have not affected the official view.

The reasons for mounting a "war on drugs" have little or nothing to do with the actual state of drug markets, be they local, international, or otherwise. Instead, the political reasons underlying the typical "war on drugs," either in the United Kingdom or in North America, have been described in detail by Davenport-Hines (2001) in the chapter entitled "Presidential Drug Wars." Despite the various claims of the efficacy of the drug wars, the "war on drugs" is simply intended to achieve a political gain. Politicians promote the imaginary "war on drugs" regardless of whether the war succeeds; they promote it to better their careers and gain political advantage over opponents (Davenport-Hines, 2001).

The Drug Warriors

Dan Baum's (1996) *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* purports that not one of the wars on drugs has succeeded in any fashion whatsoever. Covering the period of rising drug use and drug war enthusiasts from the late 1960s to the 1990s, Baum uses an informal and impressionistic style to describe contradictions in the US Government's "wars on drugs." The historical highlight may be the annual Christmas party of a drug legalization organization in Washington, DC where the drug war "Czar" at the time, Peter Bourne, "frosted his nose" with cocaine (Baum, 1996:105). Toward the end of his novelistic and disturbing treatment of the drug problem, Baum observes a night court session in Chicago, where he talks to a public defender who mentions "what we do here is process young Black men for prison" (Baum, 1996:336). There are, undoubtedly, many criticisms that can be made of Baum's non-

scientific and reportorial style. However, some may argue the Baum's reportorial style is more appropriate than an "Alice in Wonderland" treatment of the "war on drugs."

Michael Massing's (1998) *The Fix* is written in a similar novelistic style to Baum's work just described. Massing covers a narrower time period and provides useful portraits of important personalities who have impacted drug policy both from the drug war and the treatment side (Massing, 1998). Massing's portrait of William J. Bennett, the drug "Czar" mentioned earlier, is a mandatory read for anyone wishing to understand the mind of the anti-drug warrior (Massing, 1998). Even more useful is Massing's analysis of an important individual, Dr. Jerome Jaffe, who is positioned on the other side of the barricades from Bennett (Massing, 1998). Massing describes Dr. Jaffe as a physician devoted to developing a treatment for serious drug addiction (Massing, 1998). Massing (1998) closes *The Fix* with an appeal to create a drug and alcohol abuse treatment system that is both comprehensive and national in scope. At the same time, he notes that in the 1999 federal budget, efforts to deal with the drug problem totalled $17 billion with 66% of that devoted to enforcement and 34% for treatment (Massing, 1998). In general, Massing (1998) claims that the only reasonable way to go forward to confront the drug problem is to increase spending on treatment. Therefore, based on Massing's argument, it seems reasonable to examine sources devoted entirely to the subject of treating drug and alcohol addiction.

Drug Treatment Programs: General Sources

As a central part of their approaches, both the works of Davenport-Hines (2001) and Massing (1998) argue for the replacement of drug supply interdiction and drug law enforcement with an addiction treatment program. Both authors closely follow the lives

and careers of a small number of physicians who devoted their entire careers to developing treatment plans for drug and alcohol addiction. Mim J. Landry's (1994) *Understanding Drugs of Abuse: The Processes of Addiction, Treatment, and Recovery* describes general work conducted on drug addiction and treatment, and can also be used by physicians as a handbook for addictions and treatments. Landry's (1994) work describes every kind of opiate, narcotic, stimulant, psychedelic, and mood-altering drug including alcohol, and in a section entitled "Chemical Addiction," a treatment for each type of drug addiction is presented.

Carol Wekeser's (1997) *Chemical Dependency: Opposing Viewpoints* is in the series of books by Ojeda's (2002) *Drug Trafficking*. Wekeser's (1997) work contains a collection of general essays on chemical addiction, and although it is not as useful as other volumes in Ojeda's (2002) series, Wekeser's work makes a very important statement from the US Department of Health and Human Services regarding chemical dependency:

- Addiction is a chronic relapsing disease
- Addiction has no "cure" but can be controlled through treatment
- Treatment for addiction is effective and is becoming more so
- The costs of untreated addiction... far exceed the costs of treatment (Wekeser, 1997:51).

One can only imagine how this US Department failed completely to communicate the above message to the US Department responsible for the drug wars. A similar volume in the Ojeda's (2002) series entitled *Addiction: Opposing Viewpoints* (Hurley, 2000) also holds a useful collection of articles documenting the realities of addiction, but nothing as dramatic as Wekeser's statement above. Two general books on sources should be

mentioned, La Mond Tullis' (1991) *Handbook of Research on the Illicit Drug Traffic* and Steven R. Belenko's (2000) *Drugs and Drug Policy in America: A Documentary History.* Tullis's book compiles materials up to the end of the 1980s and very few area-based studies are mentioned. It is, therefore, somewhat out of date. Belenko's book is a compendium of relevant documents.

CHAPTER FOUR
Drug Trafficking in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

A significant portion of the drug problem in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) area of Vancouver, BC is related to imported drugs, largely, those of cocaine and heroin. Cocaine is sold in two forms: (1) "rock cocaine," which is the result of a process that creates "crack" cocaine from cocaine powder; and (2) "powder cocaine," which may be smoked, inhaled through the nostrils ("snorted" as per street jargon) or injected. Heroin is a powder that can be smoked, snorted or injected. Both of these illicit drugs are imported into Canada. In addition to these substances, also available are the illegal substances that can be produced in Canada, such as marijuana and methamphetamine (known locally as "meth"). Drug trafficking is organized criminal activity, carried out for profit. The Vancouver Police is mandated to enforce the *Controlled Drug and Substances Act* within the city of Vancouver. The enforcement of laws prohibiting the importation of illicit drugs is within the mandate of Canada Customs and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The Mid-Level Drug Trafficker

The mid-level trafficker obtains cocaine or heroin from the importer or upper level trafficker. He then divides the cocaine or heroin into smaller amounts to be sold for a profit, and may or may not process it prior to re-sale. The processing could involve "cooking" cocaine into "crack" cocaine. This increases the volume while it decreases the purity. Since crack cocaine is smoked, however, it goes directly to the blood stream via the lungs. This provides a more explosive "hit" to the user. Reducing purity generally

involves reducing the price, which is becoming a less common practice. These circumstances have resulted in higher potency cocaine reaching end users.

The mid-level traffickers sell cocaine and heroin to the final trafficker who sells to the end user. Each time the illicit drug goes down the trafficking chain toward the end user, there are quantity and price changes. The end user and/or addict cannot afford to buy large enough quantities to enjoy the volume discounts available. Addicts are impulse buyers, driven by the cravings that come from their addiction, which results in astounding productivity, as seen in their ability to raise money to feed their habit. The money they raise primarily comes from criminal activity: drug trafficking, robbery, theft, prostitution, extortion, and "break and enters."

Open-Air Drug Trafficking in the Downtown Eastside

Trafficking to the end user in the Downtown Eastside occurs in various places, including the open-air, licensed premises, businesses and other premises. The mid-level trafficker delivers the substance to the street-level trafficker, which may occur outside or within the Downtown Eastside. Rock and powder cocaine, marijuana and heroin are all packaged in quantities to be sold to the end user in $10 amounts, which is a marketing strategy that makes it easy to sell and buy – an attractive introductory price for anyone.

Open-air trafficking in the Downtown Eastside is very aggressive. The dealers are very competitive, looking to sell as quickly as possible to potential buyers. The buyer and seller are often looking for each other to connect to complete the transaction. As the business is so competitive, the open-air trafficker will often hire "steerers." The "steerer" is often an addicted trafficker who will locate a purchaser and bring the purchaser to the street-level trafficker. Steering drug deals are very competitive. The steerer will often

approach everyone in areas of high drug trafficking to ask if they are looking for illicit drugs. The "steerer" is paid one "rock" (i.e. "crack" cocaine in crystal form) for every ten "rocks" sold. The trafficker will hire people to "steer" for them on a commission-only compensation arrangement, either for money or illicit drugs.

The greater the enforcement pressures from covert law enforcement and the presence of uniformed officers, the more sophisticated street trafficking becomes. It is not uncommon for one trafficker to "steer," one to hold the substance and another to take the money. In another variation, the employees of the street trafficker will seek approval from their employer to sell to someone that they do not know. When the deal is complete and there is no immediate arrest, the money will go back to the main dealer.

Counter-Surveillance on the Police

Busy traffickers will also hire others to help them "keep six," or watch for the police. These people are paid either in cash or illicit substances. At times, counter-surveillance on the police can become so elaborate that it employs the use of bicycles. Consequently, the police have observed busy traffickers selling at a rate of more than one deal for every thirty seconds. With such sales, some drug traffickers can afford to hire people to alert them to the dangers presented by approaching police officers.

Infrastructure that Supports Drug Trafficking

Areas of high drug trafficking share common characteristics and/or infrastructure that encourage the illicit drug culture, including inexpensive housing that is often used by people who rely on social assistance for part of their income. The support of charities and social programs that feed and provide services to drug addicts allow the addict to

spend the cash they save (on food and/or shelter) on the purchase of illegal drugs. Densely populated areas create more opportunities for petty criminals to operate. Drug addiction generally demands constant opportunities to raise small amounts of money. Commuter and event parking lots, particularly those wherein out-of-province vehicles park, make ideal targets for illicit drug-driven thefts. Some pawn shop proprietors and other under cover merchants who trade in stolen property provide opportunities for drug addicts to turn pilfered items into quick cash for the addict's next drug purchase.

The Drug Debate in Vancouver

Various observers have taken many positions on the drug problem in Vancouver, critics expressing views that run the entire political spectrum, from liberal to conservative. One of the most debated questions concerns the ethnicity of the typical street-level drug trafficker. Many argue that Vancouver's drug problem has been imported from outside the country, which has played a role in rendering Canada's "war on drugs" futile. Therefore, one of the principle goals of the present thesis is to reveal a profile of the street-level drug trafficker active in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

As noted above, it is very typical for those who engage in the debate regarding the sale and use of illicit drugs in almost any country to advance the idea that the drug problem is something that afflicts society from the outside. For some, it follows that most traffickers of illegal drugs must have entered the country from abroad. Another idea often expressed very confidently by the newsmakers who comment on the drug problem is that the drug merchants become immensely rich through the course of doing business. Among other things, the collection and analysis of statistics relating to drug arrests in the present study tests the two foregoing claims namely those concerning:

(1) the national origins of people involved in the illegal drug trade, and (2) the levels of wealth attained by the retail distributors of illegal drugs. Myths about important topics often have a way of being debunked by empirical research. This can certainly happen with respect to the current myths surrounding the origins of the drug problem, and the fortunes it is commonly said to be creating for the common criminals who sell drugs on the street.

Certainly, if the trafficking of controlled substances were something imposed on society from the outside, then the obvious response of those who favor the "war on drugs" approach would be to insist that public authorities defend the borders more effectively. It would be argued that extra vigilance is required to detect, intercept, and seize drug shipments coming into the country. In fact, this is the response that was utilized in the South Florida anti-drug campaign referred to above. It may be remembered that, as became obvious when the South Florida case was carefully examined, the simple "defend the borders" response produced the paradoxical result of ***increasing***, rather than decreasing, the flow of drugs into the country. The response also had the unintended consequences of lowering the price of the drugs, while increasing its purity. This was the exact outcome of a "drug bust" that took place in Vancouver, as noted earlier in this study.

Sometimes it appears that the harder the public authorities try to "seal up" the borders to prevent drug smuggling, the more drugs become available – at lower prices and of a better quality. Furthermore, it might be expected that if the drug problem is shown to be imported from outside our borders, then it would be people from outside our borders who are most involved in the trade. This is one of the first points to be

considered in the following discussion of drug arrest statistics gathered from Vancouver drug arrests in 2001 and 2002.

A statistical examination of the facts in question will shed considerable light on the debate concerning the most effective way to respond to the drug problem. The debate on drugs and drug policy in Canada often moves from issues surrounding "defending the country" to that of devising adequate punishment for drug merchants. Therefore, it is quite important to develop a statistical profile of the drug merchants, to determine who they are, in aggregate terms.

In addition to their national origin, it is desirable to determine the age of the typical retail drug distributor, their economic circumstances, area of residence, and if they are prone to encounters with the law. Some participants in the drug debate, both nationally and internationally, claim that only lifetime career criminals are involved in retail drug distribution. Society's interest in crime stories, the romance of "the mob" as played out on television and film, and the age-old human tendency to romanticize the "bad guy" all play a role. Criminal life in general, and the life of the drug merchant in particular, are often romanticized in song and story. Empirical research can test such affection.

Finally, the public and professional discourse on drugs inevitably contrasts two types of possible community responses to the activities of the drugs vendor. The popular response for many years, and in many countries, has been to call for increasingly stiffer penalties for drug offenders – for drug users and drug traffickers. Let us call this the "authoritarian response." This authoritarian response is understandable given the almost universal human tendency to imagine that harsher punishments will more effectively

inhibit potential criminals from entering a life of crime. Often, however, the harshly punitive legal response to the problem of drugs in the community does not often distinguish between the various types of drugs that are trafficked in a community. A contrary result of this fact is, unfortunately, that penal institutions are soon filled to capacity with prisoners serving relatively long sentences for rather trivial drug convictions. Some of the prison population has been found guilty of trafficking highly addictive and dangerous drugs such as the various products of opium and cocaine. By contrast, others are serving long sentences for offences involving relatively less harmful drugs such as the various products of the hemp plant. To shed light on the differences involved, some of the statistics analyzed below were collected by the type of drug involved in the arrest.

CHAPTER FIVE
Research Method

As the above review of the drug problem generally suggests, many methodological issues must be considered when designing an empirical study to examine a particular drug market. The present study will build on the experiences of past local area studies. Therefore, it will be centered on a large number of cases, and will consider a number of variables that go beyond the scope of previously conducted studies.

Research Question and Objective

The mass media has reported that the drug trafficking problem in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver has been exacerbated by an influx of Honduran refugees who have dominated the trade and contributed to the problem. The primary objective of the present study is to conduct exploratory research to examine the possible variables that lead to the perpetuation of the drug problem. The author sets out to achieve this research goal through: (1) the analysis of the literature in the area (as presented above), and (2) through the development of an empirically based profile of street-level drug traffickers arrested in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver. The study is designed to address several research hypotheses, including whether the majority of drug traffickers in the Downtown Eastside are Honduran, and whether the majority of drug traffickers in the Downtown Eastside are "millionaires," as so many have come to believe. Through quantitative analysis, ethnic, gender-based, and personal criminal history-based patterns will be revealed. Additionally, hypotheses concerning the nature of the local drug market and the apparent causes of its existence will also be tested.

Sampling

To test the main research hypothesis, and develop an empirically based profile of the street-level drug trafficker, the Chief Constable of the Vancouver Police Department, in conjunction with the Office of Research Ethics at Simon Fraser University, granted the author permission to use the archival drug arrest data collected by the Vancouver Police Department's Drug Unit. These data are routinely available to the author during the course of his work with the Vancouver Police Department. Specifically, every file (total of 600) that involved the arrest of a drug-trafficker in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside between June 2001 and October 2002 was examined for the purposes of this research. Thus, a "sampling" method was not employed. The findings of the foregoing analyses are therefore not only representative of this population, but factual. The databases used to collect the data were:

- Police Record Information Management Environment BC (Vancouver Police)
- Canadian Police Information Centre (RCMP)
- Field Operating Support System (Canada Immigration)
- Management Information System Central Registry (BC Ministry of Families)

It is important to note that the research method employed upholds the privacy of the subjects of interest in this study. Specifically, the names of the arrestees were only used to facilitate the consolidation of the data from the various databases into the one data set used in the present research. Code numbers were assigned to each arrestee in place of their respective names, and names were subsequently removed from the data set entirely. Thus, the foregoing analyses were performed on an "anonymized" data set, wherein the group of arrestees is examined in terms of the aggregate.

Data Collection Instrument

A data collection instrument was created to facilitate the collection of information on demographic variables such as age, gender, residence, country of birth, reported ethnicity, immigration status and economic status (see the appendix for a copy of the "Data Collection Instrument"). Data relating to the criminal histories of the arrestees under study were also collected on variables such as the first 10 convictions and respective sentencing, first drug conviction and respective sentence, total drug trafficking convictions, total criminal convictions, type of drug trafficked at time of arrest, re-arrests (within two months), and whether the arrestee was under court order at time of arrest.

The first level of analysis will examine and present the data in a descriptive form. The second level of analysis will use the descriptive statistics to reveal even more information regarding the sample of arrestees under study. Specifically, bivariate analyses such as measures of significance and correlation will be performed to examine relationships between the variables. Multivariate analyses will also be discussed. The analyzed data will be presented in aggregate form and thus will not reveal the identities of the arrestees under examination.

Presently, no research has been conducted to examine who exactly is engaged in the drug trafficking that occurs in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The present exploratory research is therefore groundbreaking. In addition, the empirical findings of this study will permit a normative discussion of the drug problem in Vancouver, and suggest possible effective responses to the problem. The analysis of the problem, and the prescriptive suggestions for its solutions will be of value to current public discussions, not only for the Downtown Eastside neighborhood in Vancouver, but also for the city of

Vancouver and its region as a whole. More generally, this study will promote the need for empirically based drug policy, with applications elsewhere in Canada.

Operational Definitions

As stated above, information relating to a variety of variables is captured for the purpose of analysis. Operational definitions of the variables used and referred to in this study are provided below. First, the term "Drug Trafficker" is defined as an individual who supplies drugs in return for profit.

The "Offender's Residence" refers to the area within which the address given by the accused to the investigators is classified. This category would also be updated if the jail officials are able to refute the initial information. For the purposes of the present study, this variable was collapsed into four groups: the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver, elsewhere in the city of Vancouver, other and "no fixed address." The "Downtown Eastside" is defined as the geographic area in Vancouver, BC that is encompassed by Cambie Street on the west, Clark Drive on the east, Pender Street on the south, and Cordova Street on the North. The "City of Vancouver" is defined as the geographic area that is represented as such on maps, and is policed by the Vancouver Police Department.

The "Country of Birth" refers to the country named by the accused at the time of arrest and/or at the jail at time of booking. This may also change if information from Canada Immigration shows the initial information given by the subject to be incorrect. For the purpose of the present study, the countries were collapsed into the following nine regions: North America, Central America, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia/Oceania. "North America" refers to Canada, the

United States of America, and Mexico. "Central America" refers to Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The "Caribbean" refers to Jamaica, Haiti, Barbados, Grenada and Cuba. "South America" refers to Guyana and Venezuela. "Europe" refers to England, Spain, Hungary, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands. The "Middle East" refers to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Israel. "Africa" refers to Morocco, Angola, Egypt, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zambia and Somalia. "Asia" refers to Vietnam, Laos, Hong Kong, China, India, Korea and the Philippines. "Australia/Oceania" refers to Fiji.

The "Status in Canada" variable captures information regarding whether the arrestee was a Canadian citizen, landed immigrant, refugee, seeking deportation, to be deported, previously deported and those who have no record. "Canadian citizen" refers to a person who was born in Canada and received a certificate of Canadian citizenship, either through birth or through application to Canada Immigration. "Landed Immigrant" refers to a permanent resident or an individual entitled to full citizenship status. A permanent resident (PR) refers to a person who has acquired permanent resident status and has not subsequently lost that status. The most common way a PR may lose his or her status in cases the police deal with is when a deportation order is issued as a consequence of a serious criminal conviction in Canada.

"Refugee" refers to one who is determined to be a refugee, or claims to be a refugee, and Canada Immigration has not indicated otherwise. This category also includes convention refugees. A refugee claimant is a person who has made a claim for refugee protection within Canada against their country of origin. Refugee claimants are issued departure orders (removal orders) that are not enforceable until the conclusion of

the refugee claim process. Once a refugee claimant's case has concluded, they have 30 days to effect their own departure order (i.e. leave Canada and check out on the way out) otherwise they are subject to a deportation order (i.e. the departure order turns into a deportation order, which is a life-time ban from Canada). Refugee claimants are eligible to work in Canada, receive welfare benefits, and are provided with federal health care benefits. A convention refugee (CR) refers to a person who has been deemed to be a refugee by the Refugee Protection Division. Persons who have been deemed to be refugees are eligible to apply for permanent resident status in Canada. Not all refugee claimants can become permanent residents (e.g. people with criminal convictions cannot become permanent residents unless pardoned by the criminal justice system). The deportation of refugees is limited to those who have been deemed to be a danger to the public by the Minister of Immigration.

"Deportee" refers to one who was previously deported, or was awaiting deportation, at the time of the arrest. "Seeking Deportation" refers to one who is in the process to be deported. A "Previous Deport" refers to persons who have been issued a deportation order and have confirmed their departure from Canada. Persons who have previously been deported are not allowed to return to Canada without first having obtained consent from the Minister.

"Welfare" refers to whether the subject was receiving social assistance from the government at the time of arrest. The "Year of Arrest" variable captures whether the accused was arrested in 2001 (between June 2001 and December 2001) or in 2002 (between January 2002 and October 2002).

The "Drug(s) Trafficked" variable refers to the narcotic(s) held out for sale. The main categories into which the drugs are classified for the purposes of this study are: cocaine, heroin, marijuana, cocaine and heroin, cocaine and marijuana, methamphetamine, and "other." The "other" category captures drugs that do not fall into one of the above-mentioned categories, such as Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD). Interestingly, although it is rare for drug analysis tests to not confirm the drug as being what it was claimed to be, this alone does not affect the legal proceedings or outcome.

"Previous Criminal Record" refers to whether the subject has a previous criminal record, which may or may not include drug convictions. "Repeat Arrest" refers to whether the person was re-arrested for a criminal offence within two months of the original incident. This arrest could result from a breach of court imposed conditions. "Court Order" refers to whether the arrestee was subject to a court order at the time of the offence, such as probation, bail or an "Undertaking to Appear."

The type of "conviction" the arrestees received falls into one of the following categories: property offences, victim offences, obstruction of justice offences, drug offences, driving offences, and "other" offences. "Property offences" refers to offences such as theft, fraud, possession of stolen property, break and entry and mischief. "Victim offences" include robbery, assault and sexual offences. "Obstruction of justice offences" include obstruction and failures to appear in court. "Drug offences" include drug possession, drug trafficking. "Driving offences" include offences such as impaired driving. "Other offences" include offences that do not fit into the above-noted categories.

The type of "sentence" given for each conviction was grouped into one of the following categories: non-carceral term, carceral term and order terminated/absolute

discharge/stay of proceedings. "Non-carceral terms" include probation, suspended sentences, conditional discharges, conditional sentences and fines. "Carceral terms" include custody and time-served. The final category is straightforward and includes the dispositions named, namely orders that have been terminated, absolute discharges and stays of proceedings.

Research Limitations

It is important to note that this research was limited by a number of factors. First, the databases from which the data were gathered contained information specific to the street-level drug traffickers who have been apprehended and charged. This limitation precludes the formulation of global conclusions concerning those who market drugs at the retail level. As is well known, many drug traffickers do not operate in open public markets such as Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Less conspicuous markets for drug traffickers include schools, workplaces, and social clubs. Drug trafficking, as it occurs in less conspicuous markets, is not examined in this study.

A second limitation concerns the relationship between drug use and drug sales. Large-scale studies such as the RAND (1990) study have presented conclusions concerning the extent to which drug traffickers are motivated by their need to support their own drug habits. The present study does not examine the relationship between drug use and drug sales, as data of a qualitative nature would be required.

A final limitation of the present study concerns the possible relationship between employment status and arrest for drug trafficking offences as revealed by the RAND (1990) study. Due to the demographics of the population under study, the present

research will focus more on whether the arrestee was receiving economic assistance, as opposed to whether the arrestee was employed, at the time of the arrest.

CHAPTER SIX
Results

The sample used to generate the following data relates to the arrest information regarding 600 drug arrests in Vancouver's drug afflicted Downtown Eastside over a 16 month period, namely between June 2001 and October 2002. As delineated in the previous chapter, the information presented here comes directly from police and government records. The raw data were grouped according to a number of critical variables and analyzed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Descriptive Statistics

Personal Variables

Data relating to the demographics of the arrestees under study were captured and included variables such as gender, year of birth, area of residence, country of birth, immigration status and welfare recipient status. The majority of the arrestees sampled were males (81.5%, n = 600), born between the years 1960 and 1983 (82.5%, n = 600), living within the city of Vancouver (see Table 1). Interestingly, 37.7% of the sample reported that they reside within the Downtown Eastside, 14.5% reported that they are of no fixed address, and 9.7% reported an address that did not fall into any of the above categories (n = 600) (see Table 1).

The most surprising personal statistic presented here concerns the country of birth variable. Of the 600 cases recorded and analyzed, no less than 435 (72.5%, n = 600) of the individuals apprehended were born in North America; 410 arrestees were born in

Canada (68.3%, $n = 600$). Moreover, 469 of the arrestees were actually Canadian citizens (78.2%, $n = 600$) (see Tables 1 and 2). The simple way to relate these facts

Table 1: Frequency distribution table of the particulars of the accused.

Variable	Frequency	*N*	Total Percent (%)
Offender's Gender			
Male	489	600	81.5
Female	111	600	18.5
Year of Birth			
1932 to 1959	88	600	14.7
1960 to 1971	248	600	41.3
1972 to 1983	247	600	41.2
1984 to 1988	17	600	2.8
Offender's Residence			
Downtown Eastside	226	600	37.7
City of Vancouver	229	600	38.2
Other	58	600	9.7
No Fixed Address	87	600	14.5
Country of Birth			
North America	435	600	72.5
Central America[1]	72	600	12.0
Caribbean	14	600	2.3
South America	3	600	0.5
Europe	15	600	2.5
Middle East	12	600	2.0
Africa	9	600	1.5
Asia	35	600	5.8
Australia/Oceania	5	600	0.8

[1] Note: Forty-one Hondurans are represented in this category.

Table 2: Frequency distribution table outlining further particulars of the accused.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Status in Canada			
Citizen	469	600	78.2
Landed Immigrant	39	600	6.5
Refugee	42	600	7.0
Seeking Deportation	7	600	1.2
To Be Deported	24	600	4.0
Previously Deported	2	600	0.3
No Record	17	600	2.8
Welfare Recipient			
Yes	423	600	70.5
No	177	600	29.5

to the ongoing discussion on drug policy would be to say that while the drugs may come into Canada from abroad, the people who sell them do not. However, it does not follow from this that there is no international dimension to the drug trade. Internationally speaking, the drug trade is organized and executed by people of all nationalities. One Central American nation that has been mentioned in this connection is Honduras. This is a country that seems to have become a major staging point for drug sales to North America in general and to Vancouver in particular. Of the 600 arrest cases analyzed here, however, only 72 (12%, n = 600) involved individuals were born in Central America; 41 of those individuals were born in Honduras (6.8%, n = 600) (see Table 1).

Another global statistic of relevance to the ongoing drug policy debate in Canada concerns the proportion of people who sell drugs and simultaneously receive public

assistance money (i.e. "welfare"). A reasonably large proportion of the sample under study was receiving public assistance at the time of arrest (70.5%, $n = 600$) (see Table 2). This high proportion of welfare recipients among those arrested for trafficking will not surprise those who have read Bruce Jacobs' (1999) study of street-level drug sales in St. Louis, or the RAND Corporation study (1990) that describes street corner drug sales in Washington, D.C. However, this statistical discovery might constitute surprising news for many who have followed the public discourse on illegal drug sales in Canada. It has often been claimed that the drug trade has transformed petty criminals into millionaires. These statistics seems to tell a different story. Some of those living on the economic fringes of society supplement their income through drug sales. These data will go a long way to dispelling popular notions of the drug "pusher" as a well-dressed gangland figure decorated with expensive clothing and flashy jewelry. Most of the arrests described in the present study were of relatively poor individuals.

While it is possible that some of the arrested traffickers cheated in one way or another on their applications for, or their receipt of, welfare funds, the overall picture conveyed by this statistic is one of low economic levels shared by the street drug-trafficker population as a whole. Thus, the evidence presented here supports the general picture drawn by the smaller American studies mentioned above, as well as the rather grim ethnographic account of "drug pusher" life painted by Bourgois (1995), discussed earlier.

Table 3 presents frequency distributions regarding the criminal justice related circumstances of the arrestees, such as age at time of arrest, drug(s) trafficked, and previous encounters with the law. The most telling statistic in this table is the one that

indicates trafficking in cocaine constitutes the major sales activity on the part of the 600 individuals arrested during the period covered by these statistics. Out of the 600 arrest cases, 430 arrests (71.7%) were for cocaine sales. Another relatively dangerous drug, heroin, accounted for only 22 arrests (3.7%, $n = 600$), while the trafficking of cocaine and heroin together accounted for another 62 cases (10.3%, $n = 600$). Marijuana sales accounted for a similar amount at 64 cases (10.7%, $n = 600$).

Table 3: Frequency distribution table of the criminal justice related circumstances of the accused.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Year of Arrest			
2001	299	600	49.8
2002	301	600	50.2
Age at Time of Arrest			
17 and Younger	11	600	1.8
18 to 24 Years Old	146	600	24.3
25 to 30 Years Old	115	600	19.2
31 to 36 Years Old	138	600	23.0
37 to 42 Years Old	110	600	18.3
43 to 48 Years Old	53	600	8.8
49 to 70 Years Old	27	600	4.5
Drugs Trafficked			
Cocaine	430	600	71.7
Heroin	22	600	3.7
Marijuana	64	600	10.7
Cocaine and Heroin	62	600	10.3
Cocaine and Marijuana	6	600	1.0
Methamphetamine	9	600	1.5
Other	7	600	1.2

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Previous Criminal Record			
No	85	600	14.2
Yes, unrelated offence	74	600	12.3
Yes, drug offence	441	600	73.5
Repeat Arrest			
Yes	348	600	58.0
No	252	600	42.0
Court Order			
Yes	344	600	57.3
No	256	600	42.7

Cocaine is by far the most trafficked drug in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. This fact is relatively consistent with the general fact reported in the literature on the drug problem to the effect that a cocaine epidemic is sweeping across North America and Western Europe. In addition, Table 3 reveals another important fact about the retail drug seller in Vancouver. Of the 600 drug arrests tabulated, 441 arrestees (73.5%) were shown to have previous arrests for drug offences, and 344 (57.3%) were under a court order at the time of arrest. This suggests a relatively low level of turnover for the street-level drug seller in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Specifically, it would appear that having a previous brush with the law over drug related offences did not have the effect of driving traffickers out of the trade. The profile of the typical street-level drug trafficker on subsequent arrests and convictions is the subject of the remaining tables to be described in the next section.

Conviction History

The tables that follow present data that relate to the criminal histories of the arrestees. It is important to note that since not all of the 600 offenders were arrested as many as ten previous times, the sample size of arrestees as it relates to the conviction variables decreases as the number of criminal convictions grows. For example, Table 4 reveals that 90 arrestees did not have a prior criminal conviction when they were arrested for drug trafficking during the period this study examines (15%, n = 600). The "Year of First Conviction" variable therefore presents data that relates to the remaining 510 arrestees (see Table 4).

Table 4: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the first conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
First Conviction			
No Convictions	90	600	15.0
Property Offences	225	600	37.5
Victim Offences	58	600	9.7
Obstruction of Justice	25	600	4.2
Drug Offences	140	600	23.3
Driving Offences	31	600	5.2
Other Offences	31	600	5.2
Year of First Conviction			
1958 to 1969	6	510	1.2
1970 to 1973	13	510	2.5
1974 to 1979	41	510	8.0
1980 to 1985	96	510	18.8
1986 to 1991	117	510	22.9
1992 to 1997	98	510	19.2
1998 to 2002	139	510	27.3

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Age at First Conviction			
17 and Younger	143	510	28.0
18 to 24 Years Old	245	510	48.0
25 to 30 Years Old	67	510	13.1
31 to 36 Years Old	31	510	6.1
37 to 42 Years Old	17	510	3.3
43 and Older	7	510	1.4
Sentence for First Conviction			
No Convictions	90	600	15.0
Non-Carceral Term	365	600	60.8
Carceral Term	140	600	23.3
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	5	600	0.8

Interestingly, 225 people were arrested for property offences (37.5%, $n = 600$), a statistic that outranks the 140 people arrested for drug offences (23.3%, $n = 600$) for first conviction (see Table 4). Also of interest is the fact that the majority were first convicted sometime between 1998 and 2002 (27.3%, $n = 510$) and were between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of the first conviction (48%, $n = 510$) (see Table 4). This pattern is evident throughout the conviction histories of the arrestees. Specifically, property offences were more common than drug offences, and most of the subjected were convicted recently, between 1998 and 2002 (see Tables 4 to 13).

An overwhelming proportion of convicted first offenders are given non-carceral sentences for their first conviction (60.8%, $n = 600$) (see Table 4). Many would argue, of course, that keeping first offenders out of jail would keep them away from hardened

criminals and give the largest number of first offenders a chance to think twice before returning to a life characterized by criminal activity in the form of prohibited drug sales. It is probably not possible to make such an argument on the basis of statistics of this type. However, it is worth mentioning that carceral terms are meted out the majority of the time for the third through to the tenth convictions (see Tables 6 to 13). Obviously, the courts in Canada are willing to exercise considerably less leniency for the third offence.

Table 5: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the second conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Second Conviction			
No Convictions	142	600	23.7
Property Offences	181	600	30.2
Victim Offences	59	600	9.8
Obstruction of Justice	74	600	12.3
Drug Offences	104	600	17.3
Driving Offences	13	600	2.2
Other Offences	27	600	4.5
Year of Second Conviction			
1958 to 1967	4	458	0.9
1968 to 1973	15	458	3.3
1974 to 1979	28	458	6.1
1980 to 1985	81	458	17.7
1986 to 1991	88	458	19.2
1992 to 1997	114	458	24.9
1998 to 2002	128	458	27.9
Sentence for Second Conviction			
No Convictions	142	600	23.7
Non-Carceral Term	254	600	42.3
Carceral Term	201	600	33.5
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	3	600	0.5

Table 6: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the third conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Third Conviction			
No Convictions	179	600	29.8
Property Offences	152	600	25.3
Victim Offences	44	600	7.3
Obstruction of Justice	84	600	14.0
Drug Offences	92	600	15.3
Driving Offences	16	600	2.7
Other Offences	33	600	5.5
Year of Third Conviction			
1958 to 1967	4	421	1.0
1968 to 1973	8	421	1.9
1974 to 1979	29	421	6.9
1980 to 1985	69	421	16.4
1986 to 1991	88	421	20.9
1992 to 1997	108	421	25.7
1998 to 2002	115	421	27.3
Sentence for Third Conviction			
No Convictions	179	600	29.8
Non-Carceral Term	183	600	30.5
Carceral Term	238	600	39.7

Table 7: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the fourth conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Fourth Conviction			
No Convictions	200	600	33.3
Property Offences	163	600	27.2
Victim Offences	37	600	6.2
Obstruction of Justice	71	600	11.8
Drug Offences	84	600	14.0
Driving Offences	14	600	2.3
Other Offences	31	600	5.2
Year of Fourth Conviction			
1958 to 1967	3	400	0.8
1968 to 1973	7	400	1.8
1974 to 1979	24	400	6.0
1980 to 1985	58	400	14.5
1986 to 1991	88	400	22.0
1992 to 1997	110	400	27.5
1998 to 2002	110	400	27.5
Sentence for Fourth Conviction			
No Convictions	200	600	33.3
Non-Carceral Term	155	600	25.8
Carceral Term	242	600	40.3
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	3	600	0.5

Table 8: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the fifth conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Fifth Conviction			
No Convictions	223	600	37.2
Property Offences	125	600	20.8
Victim Offences	40	600	6.7
Obstruction of Justice	61	600	10.2
Drug Offences	94	600	15.7
Driving Offences	10	600	1.7
Other Offences	47	600	7.8
Year of Fifth Conviction			
1958 to 1967	2	377	0.5
1968 to 1973	6	377	1.6
1974 to 1979	22	377	5.8
1980 to 1985	46	377	12.2
1986 to 1991	77	377	20.4
1992 to 1997	115	377	30.5
1998 to 2002	109	377	28.9
Sentence for Fifth Conviction			
No Convictions	223	600	37.2
Non-Carceral Term	163	600	27.2
Carceral Term	212	600	35.3
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	2	600	0.3

Table 9: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the sixth conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Sixth Conviction			
No Convictions	233	600	38.8
Property Offences	114	600	19.0
Victim Offences	30	600	5.0
Obstruction of Justice	69	600	11.5
Drug Offences	102	600	17.0
Driving Offences	17	600	2.8
Other Offences	35	600	5.8
Year of Sixth Conviction			
1958 to 1967	2	367	0.5
1968 to 1973	5	367	1.4
1974 to 1979	15	367	4.1
1980 to 1985	44	367	12.0
1986 to 1991	67	367	18.3
1992 to 1997	111	367	30.2
1998 to 2002	123	367	33.5
Sentence for Sixth Conviction			
No Convictions	233	600	38.8
Non-Carceral Term	143	600	23.8
Carceral Term	224	600	37.3

Table 10: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the seventh conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Seventh Conviction			
No Convictions	259	600	43.2
Property Offences	97	600	16.2
Victim Offences	35	600	5.8
Obstruction of Justice	79	600	13.2
Drug Offences	87	600	14.5
Driving Offences	10	600	1.7
Other Offences	33	600	5.5
Year of Seventh Conviction			
1958 to 1967	1	341	0.3
1968 to 1973	2	341	0.6
1974 to 1979	14	341	4.1
1980 to 1985	40	341	11.7
1986 to 1991	59	341	17.3
1992 to 1997	104	341	30.5
1998 to 2002	121	341	35.5
Sentence for Seventh Conviction			
No Convictions	259	600	43.2
Non-Carceral Term	113	600	18.8
Carceral Term	228	600	38.0

Table 11: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the eighth conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Eighth Conviction			
No Convictions	287	600	47.8
Property Offences	99	600	16.5
Victim Offences	32	600	5.3
Obstruction of Justice	54	600	9.0
Drug Offences	85	600	14.2
Driving Offences	11	600	1.8
Other Offences	32	600	5.3
Year of Eighth Conviction			
1958 to 1967	1	313	0.3
1968 to 1973	2	313	0.6
1974 to 1979	8	313	2.6
1980 to 1985	40	313	12.8
1986 to 1991	50	313	16.0
1992 to 1997	92	313	29.4
1998 to 2002	120	313	38.3
Sentence for Eighth Conviction			
No Convictions	287	600	47.8
Non-Carceral Term	94	600	15.7
Carceral Term	217	600	36.2
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	2	600	0.3

Table 12: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the ninth conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Ninth Conviction			
No Convictions	304	600	50.7
Property Offences	93	600	15.5
Victim Offences	20	600	3.3
Obstruction of Justice	56	600	9.3
Drug Offences	77	600	12.8
Driving Offences	21	600	3.5
Other Offences	29	600	4.8
Year of Ninth Conviction			
1958 to 1967	1	296	0.3
1968 to 1973	1	296	0.3
1974 to 1979	7	296	2.4
1980 to 1985	36	296	12.2
1986 to 1991	48	296	16.2
1992 to 1997	87	296	29.4
1998 to 2002	116	296	39.2
Sentence for Ninth Conviction			
No Convictions	304	600	50.7
Non-Carceral Term	78	600	13.0
Carceral Term	217	600	36.2
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	1	600	0.2

Table 13: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the tenth conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Tenth Conviction			
No Convictions	321	600	53.5
Property Offences	94	600	15.7
Victim Offences	19	600	3.2
Obstruction of Justice	48	600	8.0
Drug Offences	82	600	13.7
Driving Offences	10	600	1.7
Other Offences	26	600	4.3
Year of Tenth Conviction			
1958 to 1967	1	279	0.4
1968 to 1973	1	279	0.4
1974 to 1979	6	279	2.2
1980 to 1985	28	279	10.0
1986 to 1991	54	279	19.4
1992 to 1997	79	279	28.3
1998 to 2002	110	279	39.4
Sentence for Tenth Conviction			
No Convictions	321	600	53.5
Non-Carceral Term	61	600	10.2
Carceral Term	215	600	35.8
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	3	600	0.5

Another somewhat unexpected pattern concerns drug offence arrests, and the relatively slow and gradual decline of the number of repeat offenders through time. Of the 600 arrestees examined, 510 had a previous conviction (85%, n = 600) (see Table 4). The proportion of repeat offender decreases through to the 10^{th} conviction. However, the data show that 279 offenders had at least 10 prior convictions at the time of arrest (46.5%, n = 600), and of these people, 258 had eleven or more prior convictions at the time of their arrest (43%, n = 600) (see Tables 13 and 14). Moreover, although the largest proportion of people with more than 10 prior convictions had 11 to 20 convictions at the time of arrest (15.8%, n = 600), 87 individuals had 31 or more prior convictions at the time of their arrest (14.5%, n = 600) (see Table 14). These figures suggest that a core group of incorrigible offenders remain responsible for most of the street-level drug sales in Vancouver.

Table 14: Frequency distribution table of data relating to over ten convictions.

Variable	Frequency	n	Total Percent (%)
Over Ten Convictions			
Not Applicable	342	600	57.0
11 to 20 Convictions	95	600	15.8
21 to 30 Convictions	76	600	12.7
31 or More Convictions	87	600	14.5

Vancouver Police Detective McLaren argues that the real problem in street-level drug sales is posed by dealer addicts, as such individuals seem to have to continue to make sales in order to get the money required to support their own drug habit. If future research sheds light on Detective McLaren's insight, then a much fuller discussion of the

idea of employing treatment plans, rather than administering sentences, for first and second time offenders might be seen as a more sensible answer to the problem.

It is interesting to compare the information captured in Table 15 to the information captured in Table 4. As discussed above, Table 4 presents data that relate to the first "general" conviction of the arrestee. Table 15 reveals information relating to the first drug conviction of the arrestees under study. Both tables show that most of the

Table 15: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the first drug conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*n*	Total Percent (%)
Year of First Drug Conviction			
1971 to 1973	5	422	1.2
1974 to 1979	19	422	4.5
1980 to 1985	56	422	13.3
1986 to 1991	58	422	13.7
1992 to 1997	89	422	21.1
1998 to 2002	195	422	46.2
Age at First Drug Conviction			
17 and Younger	34	422	8.1
18 to 24 Years Old	200	422	47.4
25 to 30 Years Old	86	422	20.4
31 to 36 Years Old	57	422	13.5
37 to 42 Years Old	30	422	7.1
43 to 48 Years Old	10	422	2.4
49 to 62 Years Old	5	422	1.2
Sentence for First Drug Conviction			
No Convictions	178	600	29.7
Non-Carceral Term	220	600	36.7
Carceral Term	199	600	33.2
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	3	600	0.5

subjects were between 18 and 24 years old when they received their first general conviction (48%, n = 510), and their first drug conviction (47.4%, n = 422). Table 15 also shows that 422 arrestees of the 600 under study had a prior conviction at the time of their *drug*-related arrest (70.3%, n = 600). It is interesting to note that the vast majority of first convictions are the result of a property crime (37.5%, n = 600), as opposed to a drug offence (23.3%, n = 600). This suggests that the introduction to recidivistic drug trafficking does not start through the drug culture itself, but through property crimes. Many life-long offenders may get involved in property crimes to support their drug habits; however, the data show that property crimes actually precipitate drug trafficking.

Table 4 reveals that many first-time offenders were given a non-carceral sentence (60.8%, n = 600) instead of jail time (23.3%, n = 600) for their first conviction. Table 15 shows that 33.2% (n = 600) of offenders received jail time for their first drug conviction as compared to 23.3% (n = 600) of offenders who received a carceral term for their first general conviction (see Tables 15 and 4, respectively). The higher carceral rate for the first drug conviction may be because of the offender's prior criminal history. A comparison of these two tables also show that the courts appear to have responded to the crimes in a rational and gradual way.

Tables 16 and 17 are different because they present data that relate to the first trafficking conviction, and the total trafficking convictions, respectively. When the data are viewed in this light, carceral sentences are seen to be the most common disposition, with 43.8% of traffickers receiving jail time, as opposed to the mere 19% who received a non-carceral term (see Table 16). Table 17 shows that 379 arrestees had prior trafficking convictions (63.2%, n = 600). The majority of those with prior trafficking convictions

had 1 to 3 prior trafficking conviction (62%, n = 379), while a mere 4% of those with trafficking convictions had 11 to 25 (n = 379) (see Table 17).

This apparent sentencing pattern appears supported by the tests of correlation (see Table 18). A quick glance at this table shows that the variable "previous criminal record" correlates more highly with the number of convictions than with any of the other variables. In other words, the length of prior criminal records is a better predictor of

Table 16: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the first trafficking conviction.

Variable	Frequency	*N*	Total Percent (%)
Year of First Trafficking Conviction			
1971 to 1973	4	379	1.1
1974 to 1979	7	379	1.8
1980 to 1985	28	379	7.4
1986 to 1991	39	379	10.3
1992 to 1997	69	379	18.2
1998 to 2002	232	379	61.2
Age at First Trafficking Conviction			
17 and Younger	14	379	3.7
18 to 24 Years Old	154	379	40.6
25 to 30 Years Old	82	379	21.6
31 to 36 Years Old	70	379	18.5
37 to 42 Years Old	38	379	10.0
43 to 48 Years Old	15	379	4.0
49 to 62 Years Old	6	379	1.6
Sentence for First Trafficking Conviction			
No Convictions	221	600	36.8
Non-Carceral Term	114	600	19.0
Carceral Term	263	600	43.8
Order Terminated/ Absolute Discharge/ Stay of Proceedings	2	600	0.3

Table 17: Frequency distribution table of data relating to the total trafficking convictions.

Variable	Frequency	*N*	Total Percent (%)
Total Trafficking Convictions			
1 Conviction	119	379	31.4
2 to 3 Convictions	116	379	30.6
4 to 5 Convictions	65	379	17.2
6 to 10 Convictions	64	379	16.9
11 to 25 Convictions	15	379	4.0

Table 18: Table of significant relationships with correlational values greater than 0.30.

	Independent Variables			
Dependent Variables	Address	Country of Birth	Previous Criminal Record	Court Order at Time of Arrest
Sentence for the 3rd Conviction		.363*	.478*	
Sentence for the 4th Conviction				.308†
Sentence for the 6th Conviction		.340*	.449*	
Sentence for the 7th Conviction		.330*	.433*	
Over 10 Convictions	.328*			

Note: * denotes a Contingency Coefficient value, while † denotes a Cramer's V value. All measures of correlation performed at the 0.05 alpha level.

more arrests than, for example, the arrestee's country of birth or address. Notwithstanding this however, the variables "country of birth," "address," and "court order at time of arrest" do seem to share moderate positive correlations with some of the sentences meted out for specific convictions (see Table 18). Table 19 presents all of the significant correlational relationships found in the data.

The problems of repeat drug offenders, and their possible drug addiction(s), would have to be considered more closely for the purpose of long term planning that may begin to meet the challenges of the drug problem encountered in Vancouver, and possibly other cities. Before such long term planning is discussed in greater depth, the following discussion will draw upon the data presented in graphical form, allowing the reader to effectively compare the data with respect to numerous variables throughout time.

Table 19: Table of all significant relationships.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variables	Year Of Birth	Sex	Address	Drugs Traff-icked	Country Of Birth	Status In Canada	Repeat Arrest in Time Frame	Prior Record	Court Order At Arrest	Welfare
Year Arrested	.130†			.169†			.085'			
First Conviction							.203†		.288†	
Second Conviction							.233†		.270†	
Third Conviction							.271†		.269†	
Sentence for the 3rd Conviction	.251†		.260†		.363*	.277†	.252†	.478*	.263†	.122†
Fourth Conviction							.274†		.308†	
Sentence for the 4th Conviction										
Sixth Conviction							.244†		.298†	
Sentence for the 6th Conviction			.232†		.340*		.238†	.449*	.281†	.120†
Sentence for the 7th Conviction			.226†		.330*		.235†	.433*	.289†	
Ninth Conviction							.230†		.266†	
Over 10 Convictions		.156†	.328*		.226†		.196†	.251*	.228†	

Note: * denotes a Contingency Coefficient value, while † denotes a Cramer's V value, and ' denotes a Phi Coefficient value. All measures of correlation performed at the 0.05 alpha level.

Drug Offence Patterns

Figures 1, 2 and 3 succinctly present the data captured in Tables 4 to 13 through the use of line graphs, which as aforementioned, allow for a comparative analysis of numerous variables over time. Figure 1 presents the data relating to the types of offences committed, from the first to tenth convictions. As one would expect, the "no convictions" curve rises sharply over time to reflect the fact that individuals recidivate less as the number of prior convictions increases.

The arrestees' prior records contain various offences, most notably property and drug related offences (see Figure 1). It is interesting that the "property offences" curve declines, but never falls below the curve describing arrests for drug offences. Conversely, drug offences never see a percentage increase over property offences in this series. It might seem that the same population of offenders that sells drugs must also commit a property offence to support their desire to buy drugs. However, future research would have to support such hypotheses in order to draw firm conclusions. Additionally, the data seem to indicate that a population of more or less hard core criminals is responsible for a large number of the street-level sales of illegal drugs, and that the drug offence conviction pattern remains fairly stable past the first conviction, accounting for approximately 15% of all cases.

Figure 2 displays data that relates to the years in which the offenders were convicted for their first to tenth convictions. This figure shows that there was a fairly even spread over time with respect to when the offenders had received their convictions. Most of the arrestees under study had committed most of their prior offences between the years 1998 to 2002, suggesting that the majority of the arrestees are fairly new offenders.

Figure 1: Line chart of the types of offences the offenders committed, from the first conviction to the tenth conviction.

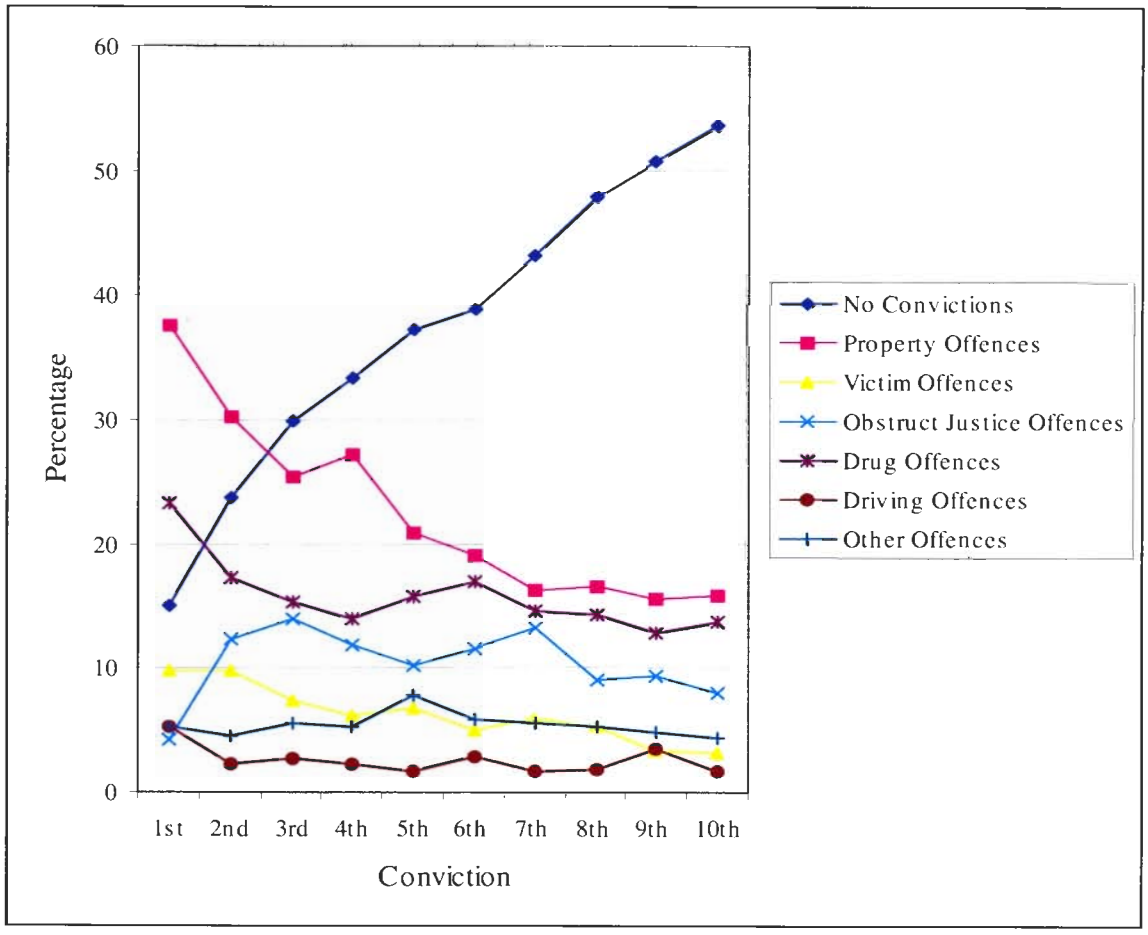


Figure 2: Line chart of the years in which the offenders were convicted for their first to tenth convictions.

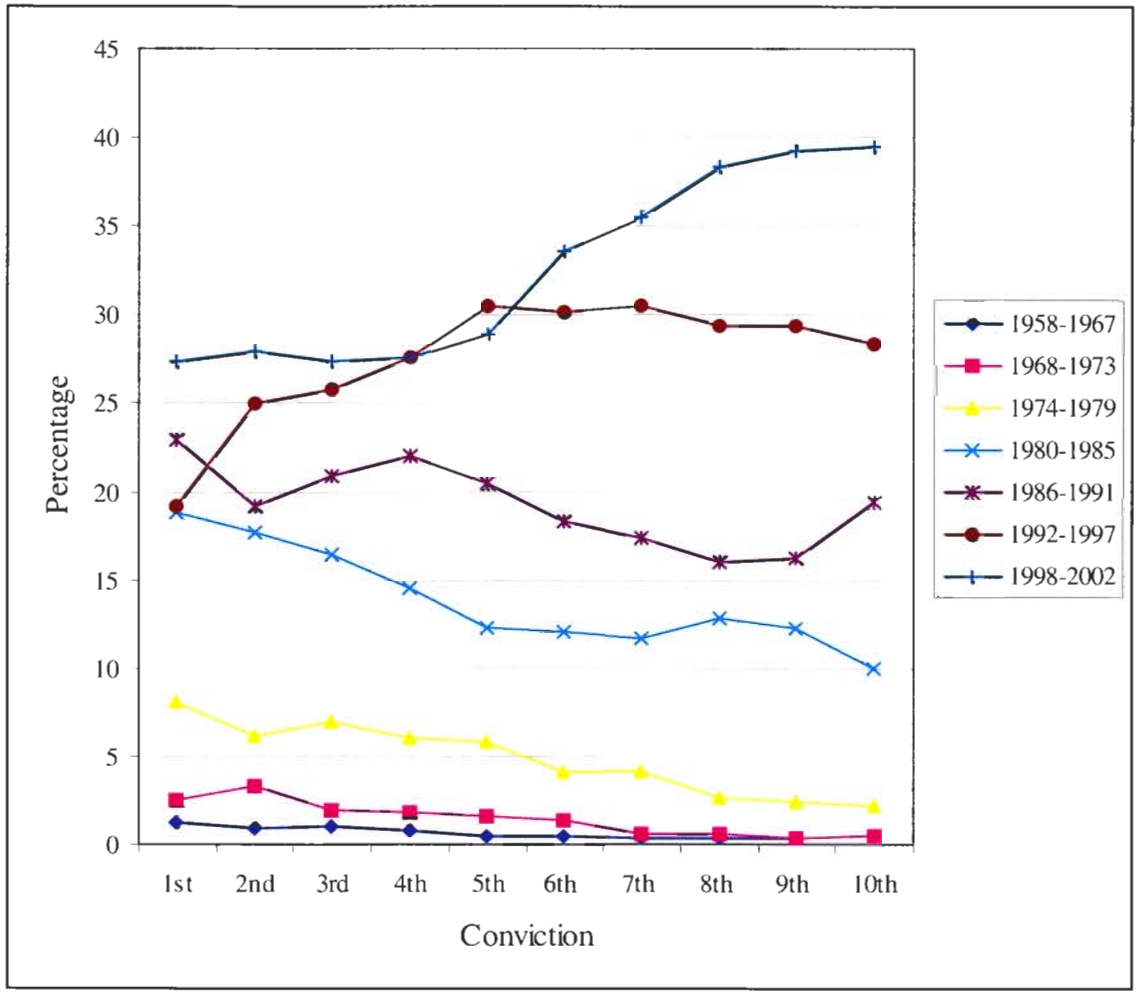
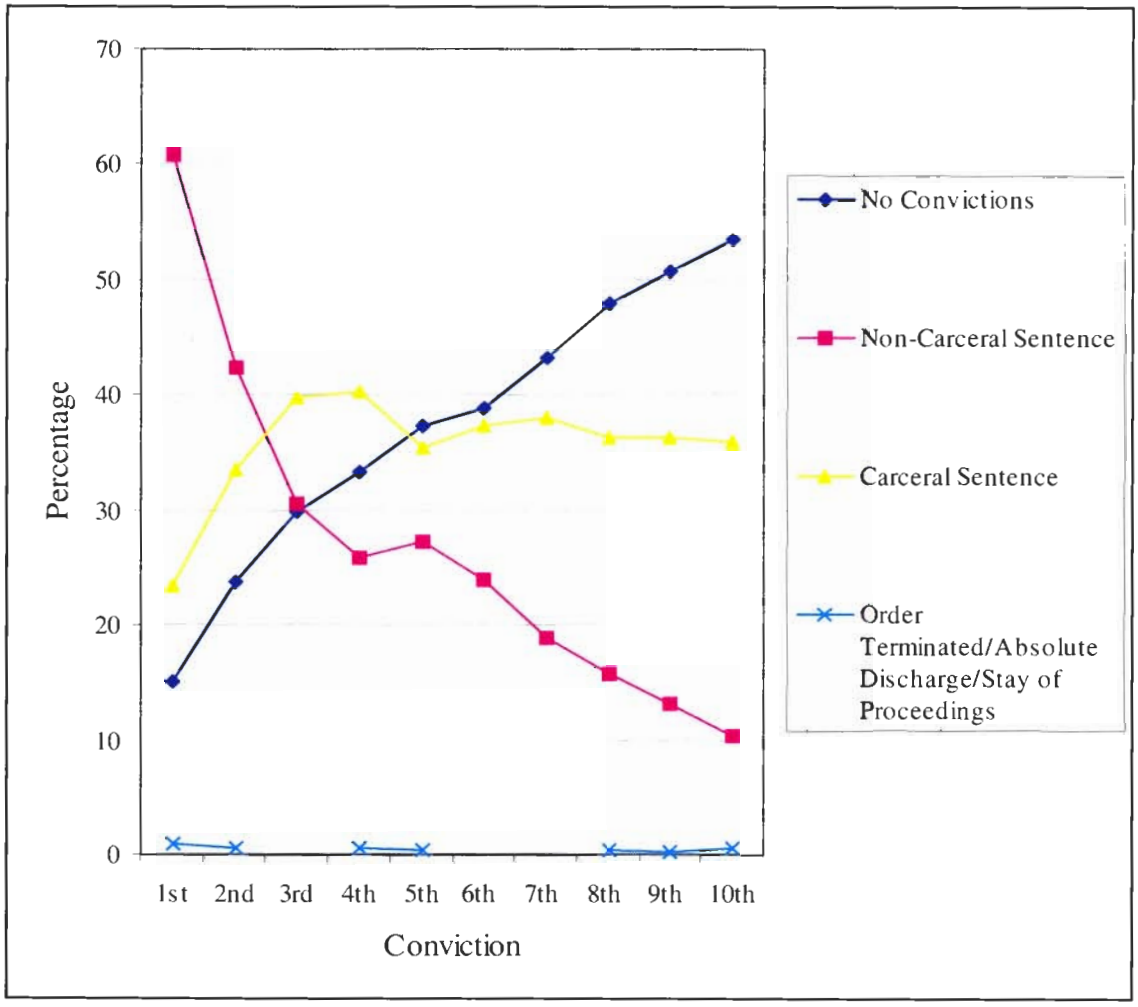


Figure 3 presents the data gathered on the sentences the offenders received for their first to tenth convictions. This figure reveals that the recidivist rate decreases as a function of prior convictions, and the likelihood of receiving a non-carceral sentence also decreases with the number of prior convictions. The human picture presented shows the creation of a drug trafficking offender population that very slowly gets smaller and more "hard core." In all likelihood, this "hard core" drug trafficking population is the group that is represented on the graph by the line representing offenders who have received jail

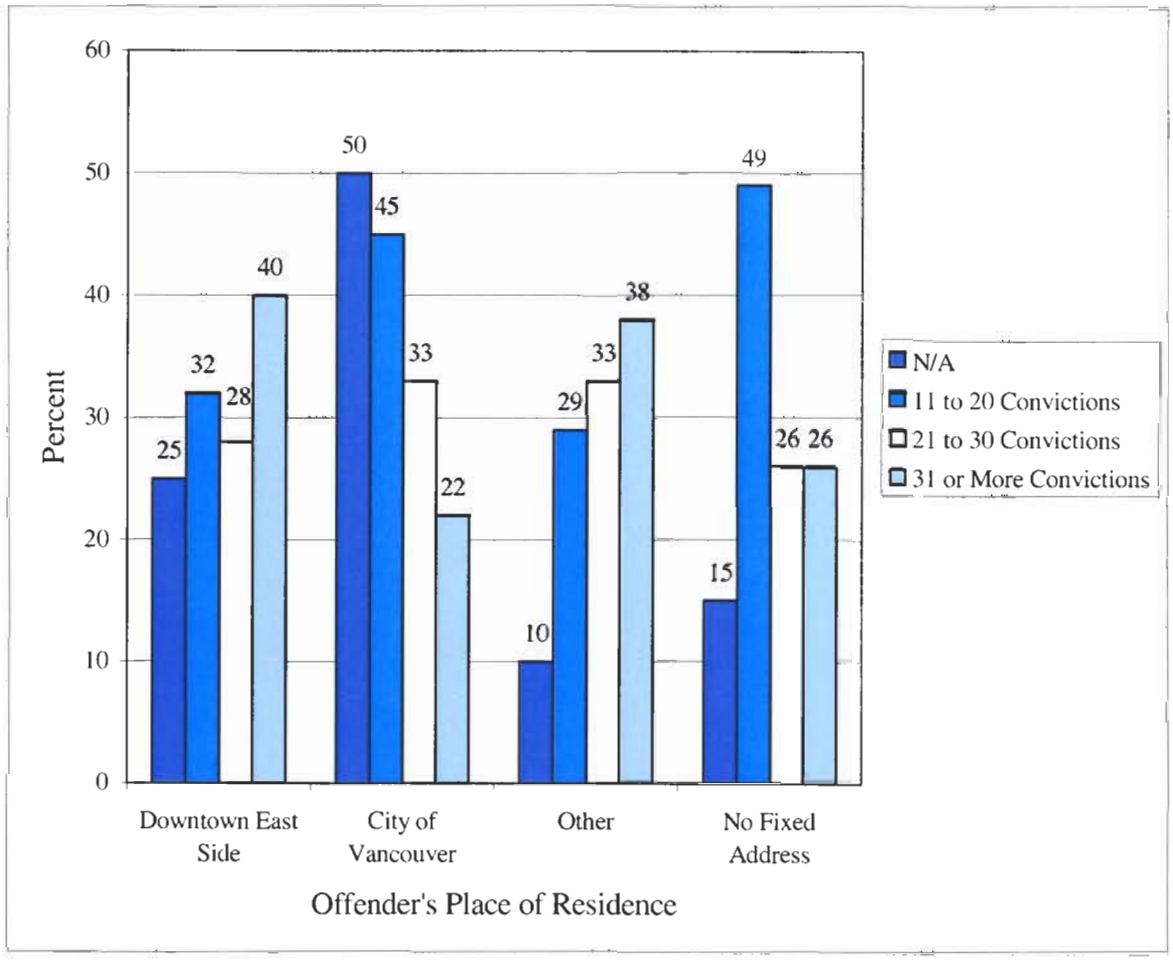
Figure 3: Line chart of the sentences the offenders received for their first to tenth convictions.



sentences for their convictions. It is worth noting here that after about the fifth arrest, the carceral sentence rate for this population becomes quite stable, accounting for approximately 35% to 40% of all sentences, through to the tenth arrest.

The bar graph presented in Figure 4 pinpoints the primary geographic location of this "hard core" drug trafficking population: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. It is there that the population of arrestees with 31 or more convictions is the largest, compared to the greater part of Vancouver, and the two other "catch all" categories. Only the briefest

Figure 4: Clustered bar graph of the offender's place of residence by the number of convictions they had.



glance at Figure 4 will convince the reader that the Downtown Eastside represents the Vancouver drug problem in a neighborhood sense.

Non-Parametric Tests of Significance and Correlation

The bivariate analyses displayed in Figures 5 to 7 were selected for the facts that the variables shared both statistically significant and moderately strong positive correlations (see Tables 18 and 19). The data that these three figures display are of value in that they clearly show that the drug traffickers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are

Figure 5: Clustered bar graph of the offender's country of birth by the sentence they received for their third conviction.

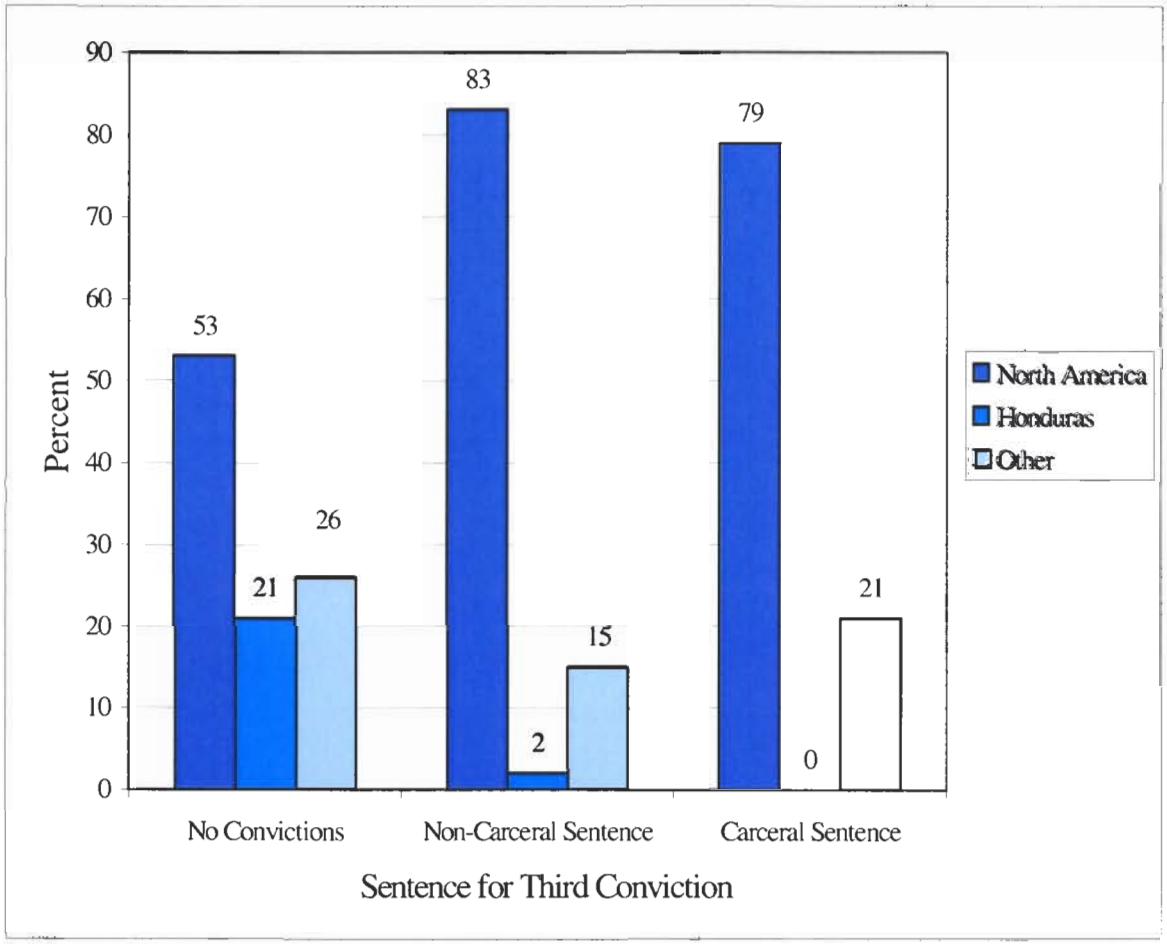


Figure 6: Clustered bar graph of the offender's country of birth by the sentence they received for their sixth conviction.

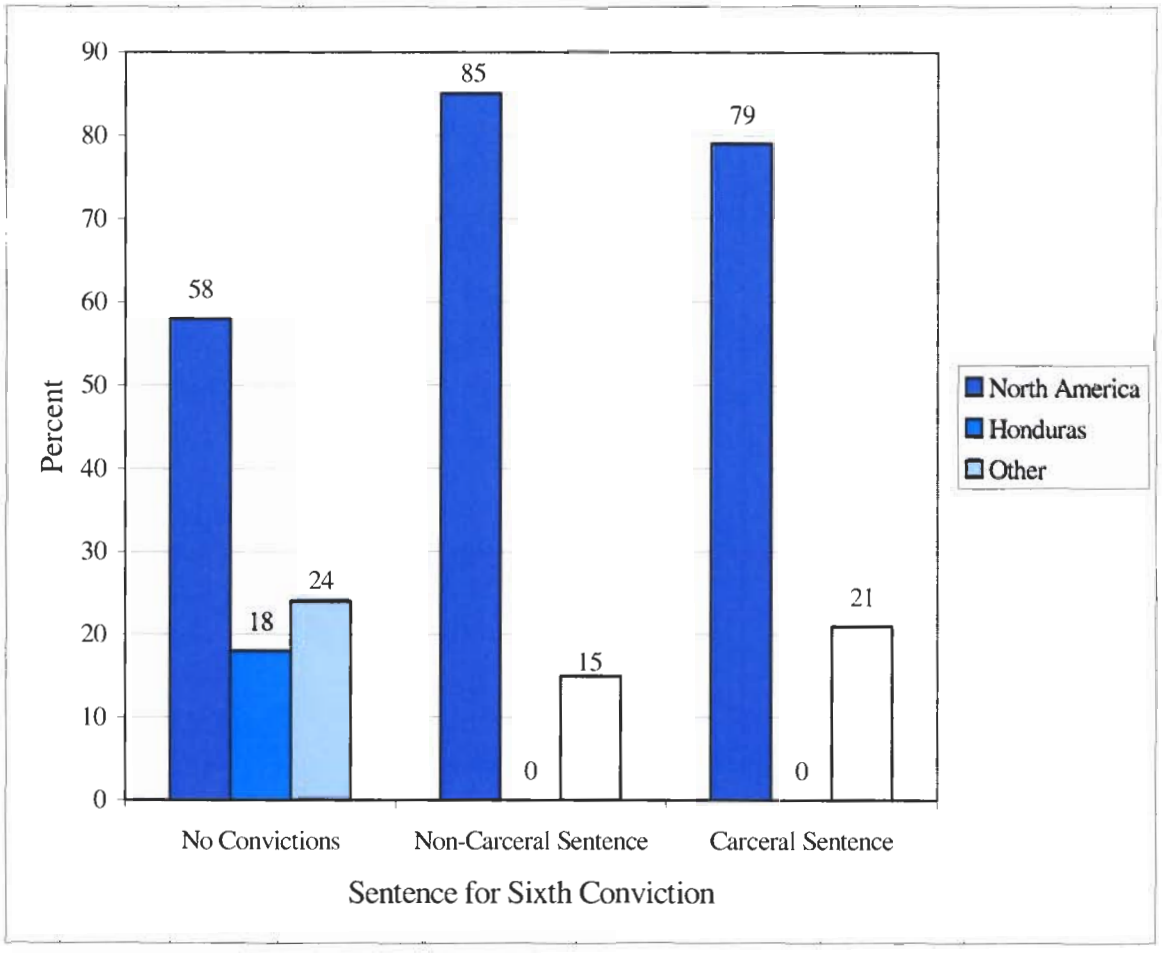
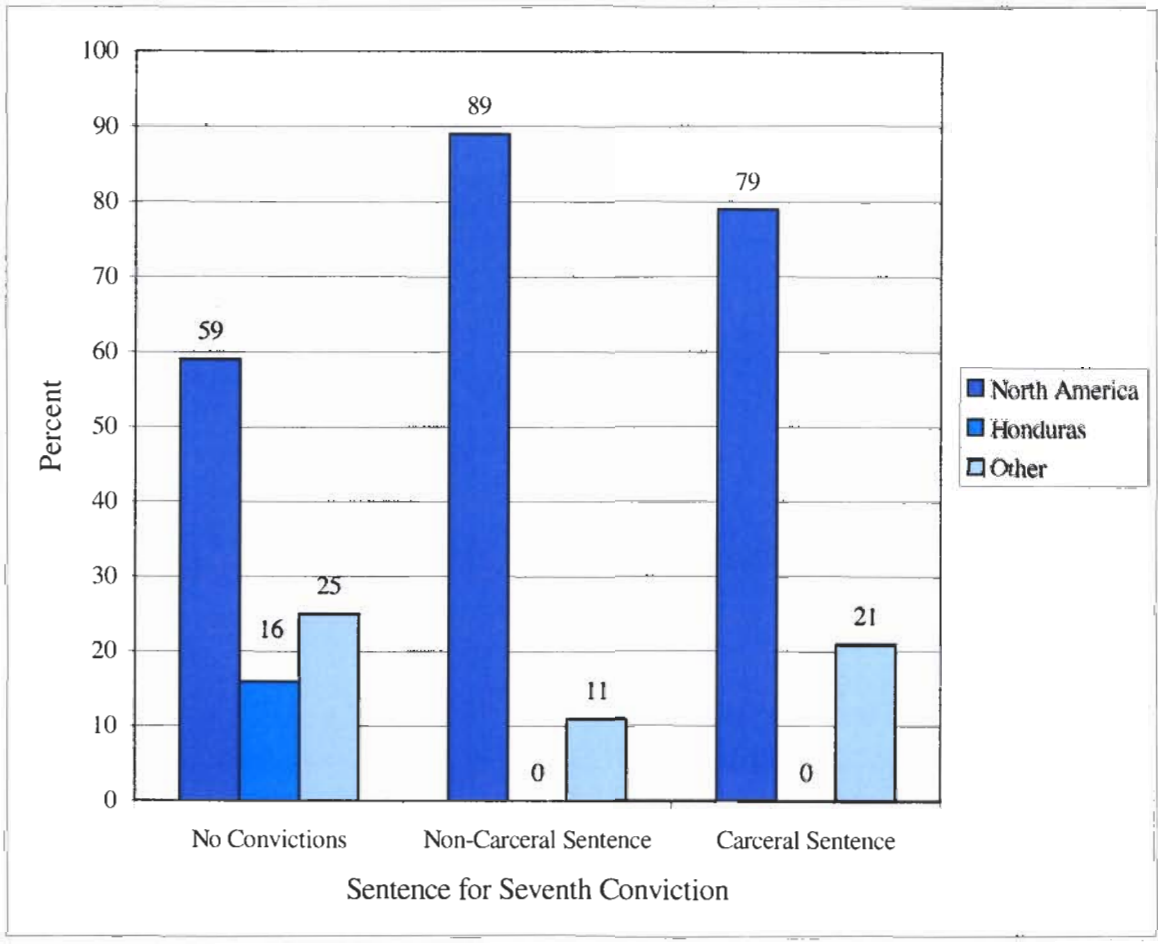


Figure 7: Clustered bar graph of the offender's country of birth by the sentence they received for their seventh conviction.

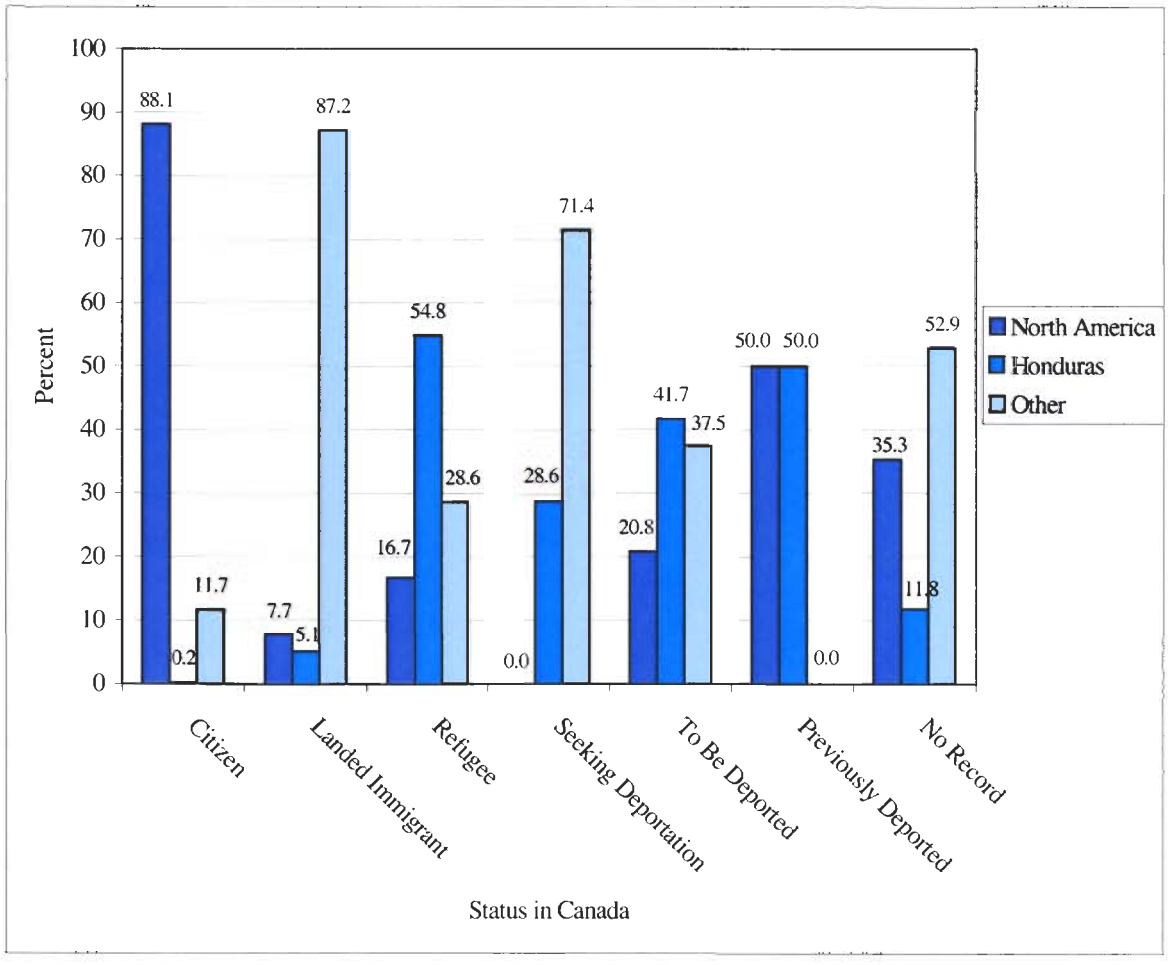


for the most part born Canadians, as opposed to Hondurans, who trail way behind the born Canadians and others in every sentencing category. North Americans also lead with respect to the types of sentences received, and when viewed in this light, the Hondurans only figure prominently in the "no convictions" category (see Figures 5 to 7). It is possible, however, that the Hondurans are involved in Vancouver's drug trade at a level higher than what can be observed on the street. It is also possible that the Hondurans have lengthy criminal histories, but due to the fact that they immigrated to Canada, such information did not follow with them and therefore does not come into play at

sentencing. Such hypotheses would have to be tested by future research for law enforcement action to effectively address such a phenomenon.

Finally, although the relationship shared between the "Status in Canada" and "Country of Birth" variables was statistically insignificant, the crosstabulation that depicts this data is nevertheless important to this thesis. First, the data show that the Honduran arrestees comprised the largest proportion of those with refugee status (54.8%, n = 42) (see Figure 8). The Honduran arrestees also comprised the largest proportion of those people to be deported (41.7%, n = 24) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Clustered bar graph of the offender's status in Canada by the offender's country of birth.



The results seem to suggest then that there is some substance to what the media has reported with respect to drug traffickers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. However, the media's claim that Honduran refugees are responsible for most of the drug trafficking in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is only correct when the "refugee" and "to be deported" arrestee populations are examined in a vacuum. Therefore, it is clear that the media's claim, and the research hypothesis guiding this thesis, namely that Hondurans comprise the majority of arrested drug traffickers in the Downtown Eastside, is refuted by the statistical data as presented, illustrated and discussed above. The policy implications of the statistical findings presented in this chapter will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Discussion

The Drug Problem in Vancouver and the "Four Pillars" Approach

The present study reveals findings that shed a great deal of light on the drug problem in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The results described above generally establish that the high immigration levels into Canada is not a cause of the drug trafficking problem in the Downtown Eastside, contrary to claims made by the media. In fact, most of the 600 records examined involved individuals who were born in Canada. The data does not support one of the media's broad assertions, namely that many of the street-level drug traffickers in the Downtown Eastside were wealthy at the time of their arrest. As noted, this data tends to support the findings of Boyd (1991), Bourgois (1995), Jacobs (1999), and others, specifically with respect to the fact that street-level drug traffickers originate from the poorer strata of society and tend to remain poor while selling drugs.

Another main finding is that as the number of drug arrests increase, the number of hard-core drug traffickers also increases. Interestingly, a close examination of MacPherson's (2001) *A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver* suggests that the social, economic, and correctional aspects of the drug sales problem can be addressed in a positive and productive fashion by following the perspectives outlined in the plan with respect to drug rehabilitation and drug control.

The "Four Pillars" referred to in *A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver* (2001) are: (1) prevention, (2) treatment, (3) enforcement, and (4) harm reduction. The materials, concepts, and statistical analyses

brought forth in the present study could play a role in Part I of this plan (i.e. prevention). Specifically, the concept of "prevention" embraces all types of public education programs aimed at dramatizing the effects of drug and alcohol use. The findings of the present study are entirely consistent with the educational effort to be undertaken within the "Four Pillars" framework in the following sense. Education could play an important role in informing the public about the behavioural transformation of a first time drug offender who languishes in jail rather than being rehabilitated in a drug treatment program. Unfortunately, an offender who experiences prison often finds his way there through the following sequence of events: (1) drug user/occasional seller, (2) drug addict/occasional seller, (3) confirmed drug trafficker, and lastly (4) long-term prisoner. This sequence matches the profile of the hard-core repeat offender that emerges from the present study of drug trafficking arrest records. Supplementing the city of Vancouver's current drug education materials with more concrete and specific information regarding the long-term prospects for drug users in Vancouver will go far in educating individuals in contemplation of drug trafficking of their likely future if they pursue the trade.

The treatment pillar in *A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver* (2001) includes a broad range of medical, social, and economic responses to the predicament of the first- and second-time drug offender. While the 600 arrestees examined in the present study were arrested for trafficking, much of the "Four Pillars" rationale applies to the first- and/or second-time offenders arrested for trafficking and the lesser offence of possession. The "Four Pillars" approach targets both types of the first- and/or second-time offenders because they are at the early stage of their drug problem, wherein the border between the user and seller is easily blurred, but later

becomes more defined as the number of drug trafficking arrests increases. Recall the case of Les Podolski outlined by Boyd (1991) in this connection. Podolski started to use heroin for recreation, became involved in dealing, and then was at the mercy of a RCMP shotgun that came nosing through his bathroom door (Boyd, 1991). Treatment responses include detoxification, outpatient counseling, residential treatment, ongoing medical care, help with housing and jobs, and the full spectrum of social service supports. The results of the present study suggest that first- and second-time offenders respond positively to the many aspects of treatment – more so than a hard-core permanent offender who has a significant arrest history. This finding supports the idea of concentrating treatment efforts on first- and second-time offenders, while acknowledging that long-time offenders with repeat offences will probably not benefit from continued treatment.

The enforcement pillar in MacPherson's (2001) *A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver* advances the idea of increasing enforcement efforts by specifically targeting the professional criminal and the criminal organization in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. This rationale is supported by the present study's finding that a small population of hard core trafficking offenders emerges as the number of arrests increases. From a policing perspective, it is very reasonable to assume that this small population of repeat offenders has the most palpable links to local and international criminal organizations that stand behind, make use of, and supply the retail drug merchant. Concentrating police effort on this cohort of hard-core trafficking offenders, rather than targeting all traffickers, is one way to advance the enforcement goals outlined in MacPherson's (2001) *A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver.*

The harm reduction pillar put forth by MacPherson (2001) forces the scholar to take a step back and evaluate the effects of drug sales and use on the community as a whole. One of the aspects of drug policy in Vancouver, then, should be to prioritize and ensure the protection of the community, rather than to simply concentrate on the problems of the individual user. The present study relates to this perspective in a very simple way. The statistical analyses presented above support Detective McLaren's observation that the "dealer-user" is the crux of the problem in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver; further research would have to be conducted to determine whether the same can be said for the greater community of Vancouver as a whole. The "dealer-user" is someone who must sell drugs to support a drug habit. By concentrating on individuals in this category, who can benefit from treatment, the overall goal of preventing harm to the community will likely be achieved.

Opposing Viewpoints on Drug Policy

The media and certain politically oriented groups view the drug use and trafficking problem in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside as a problem inflicted on Canadian society by evil forces originating from outside of Canadian society. While neither cocaine nor heroin are grown or processed in Canada, but instead imported by powerful and well-funded international criminal organizations, the act of closing the borders, harassing immigrants, and continuing the advancement of the "war on drugs" will not reduce the drug problem in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the Vancouver region as a whole, or in Canada nationally. Scholars in this subject area have known these facts for some time. In "Witch Hunts and Chemical McCarthyism: The Criminal Law and Twentieth Century Canadian Drug Policy" (2001), Eugene Oscapella makes it

quite clear that the hard drug business in Canada is equally shared by Asian importers and Canadian-born motorcycle gangs. The statistical analysis presented above clearly shows that Canadian-born individuals are responsible for local sales and distribution. This implies a shift in the emphasis of enforcement from the international drug providers to the street-level drug traffickers. The present study illuminates the aggregate identity of the street-level drug traffickers. The end result is the same, whether these "final sellers" are using the drugs as a way to make a living or simply to use drugs.

The statistical findings reported above also reveal a fairly consistent pattern in the development of a street-level drug trafficker over time. The findings also suggest that individuals removed at an early stage, from the progression of first-time user to long-term prison resident, will benefit personally, will no longer contribute to the drug problem in the streets, and will no longer contribute to the harm done to the community as a whole as a result of this activity.

Some commentators and legislators interested in the drug problem believe that heavy sentencing for first-time drug offences will eliminate the drug problem. In contrast to this viewpoint, the present study shows that Canadian courts have taken a more sophisticated and effective response. By offering first- and second-time offenders rehabilitation, the judiciary has demonstrated their understanding of MacPherson's (2001) message. The research presented above supports this assertion and also suggests that the media, political groups, and the public in general, should be educated about the nature of the drug world and the different types of individuals involved, to thereby change the notion shared by these groups, that offenders should be imprisoned with the key thrown away.

The majority of street-level drug traffickers arrested in Vancouver were Canadian citizens. This finding naturally begs the question: *why do these particular individuals carry out the retail trade in illegal drugs?* The descriptive statistics presented in Chapter Six suggest a possible answer to this question. The data clearly show that a significant number of the drug trafficking arrestees were on welfare. Another important finding, with criminogenic implications, was that a significant number of those individuals arrested had committed a property crime for their first criminal offence. By analyzing the successive arrests for each individual, in addition to the demographic data, the present research formed a profile of the long-term hardcore drug trafficker.

A recent international forum held on the problems created by the global trade of illegal drugs and the prevalence of illegal drug use in some of the metropolitan countries found representatives of almost every viewpoint on the drug problem. A review of some of these viewpoints will provide the reader with a foundation to confront the policy implications for this problem. The forum within which the various viewpoints were expressed was the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2002). The WEF is a body that meets regularly to discuss matters of public importance that arise at the "crossroads" of law, economics, and social policy. The subject of attacking the drug trade was discussed at the WEF, and is of most interest to this study.

The prominent participants of the WEF drug trade panel were, among others, George Soros, Chairman of Soros Fund Management USA; Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat Senator from Vermont; Otto C. Honegger, Executive Producer of Swiss Television; Otto Schily, Federal Minister of the Interior of Germany; Robert Portman, US Republican Congressman from Ohio; and, author, social commentator, and sometimes California

gubernatorial candidate Arianna Huffington. The drug problem was discussed through various lenses, and discussion took various forms including: (1) economic analyses (George Soros); (2) legal approaches (Patrick Leahy); (3) medicalization (Honegger and Schily); and finally, (4) moral condemnation of the "war on drugs" (US Congressman Robert Portman). A critical analysis of each of these positions is necessary, because when taken together, they represent almost all possible policy implications currently held by public officials and others in positions to influence public policy on the drug problem.

George Soros addressed the panel and presented an economic model of the international drug trade very similar to the one offered by Boyd (1991) with reference to the Canadian drug problem, and Davenport-Hines (2001) with reference to the British and American situations. Soros explained to his fellow WEF panelists that the major obstacle to an effective regulation of the international trade in drugs is the high profit margins enjoyed by drug traffickers both internationally and locally. Soros argued that the important point to consider was the business model in place in most countries and internationally. Soros maintained quite forcefully that any business with such a large discrepancy between costs of production and market price would find ways to thwart public policy so as to continue to do business. His description of the business model utilized by the international drug trade drew support from the business-oriented audience members. One businessman, not identified by name, said that if he personally were to direct a business with a $6 billion annual turnover reporting $2 billion annual profits, that there would be no authorities anywhere capable of stopping him.

US Senator Leahy addressed the forum on the international drug trade problems by acknowledging that the absolutist legal framework applied by US authorities was

clearly inadequate. According to Leahy, the tragic flaw in the US approach was that the US authorities were prone to focus on enforcement, while ignoring all other possible solutions. This was entirely counterproductive, Leahy said. He was especially critical of the "warfare" rhetoric in use in several countries, since it represented a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the problem. Leahy illustrated this by explaining that the US government is applying vast resources in the hope of interdicting the flow of illegal drugs, to no noticeable effect, while entirely ignoring the options of prevention and harm reduction through education and rehabilitation. In some cases, Leahy related, huge sums had been advanced to particular countries identified as hubs of drug production and distribution, but without any guarantees as to the effectiveness of policies undertaken, and with no attention whatsoever to drug rehabilitation programs in such countries. Leahy argued that Colombia offered an example of this. The Senator pointed out that pouring vast sums of money into a single country was ill advised, given that the most probable result would simply be the displacement of drug cartels to a nearby country.

Otto C. Honegger, an executive in Swiss television, described the Swiss model of combating the problem of drug addiction. His outline of the problem was markedly similar to the description of "Swiss Drug Policy" presented by Martin Büchi and Ueli Minder in their (2001) review entitled "Swiss Drug Policy: Harm Reduction and Heroin-Supported Therapy." The Swiss model, according to Honegger, focuses on the prevention of addiction, the provision of therapy for addicts, and the vigorous implementation of various programs designed to diminish the harm caused by drug addiction. Honegger was joined in this position by Ethan A. Nadelmann, an official in an

American foundation dedicated to working on addiction problems. Nadelmann agreed with Honegger, adding that harm reduction is the best way to focus on the drug problem. Nadelmann remarked that "[p]rohibition is the abdication of a regulatory strategy" (World Economic Forum, 2002). In other words, the government decree that "there shall be no drugs!" is a strategy that has failed. The failure of simple prohibition policies was discussed earlier in this thesis with respect to the US experience during the period within which the production and distribution of alcohol was illegal in the United States (1919-1932). To most participants of the WEF panel on the international drug trade, current drug policy appeared to be making the same mistakes and producing the same effects.

Otto Schily, Federal Minister of the Interior of Germany, explained how his country has responded to the problems of the international drug trade and to the use of illegal drugs in Germany. Schily claimed that the basic assumption underlying German policy was that the addict must be treated not as a criminal, but rather, as someone who has a serious disease. While treating the addict as someone suffering from a major disease, Schily contends that Germany also actively pursues dealers and traffickers in an attempt to limit the destructive outcomes of drug use.

Juan Carlos Echeverry Garzón, Director of Columbia's National Planning Department, spoke as a government official of a country that processes and distributes greater quantities of illegal drugs than any other country in the world. Garzón questioned whether the joint Colombian-US effort aimed at "choking" the drug trade through interdiction and enforcement was both contradictory and self-defeating. Garzón said that this was a valid question, given that any successes in the drug interdiction policy seemed

to have the effect of guaranteeing artificially high prices for drugs, which then had the unintended consequence of encouraging drug cartels to continue the trade.

The one dissenting voice to the majority view expressed at the WEF panel was that of US Congressman Robert Portman. Congressman Portman directly opposed the other WEF panelists by arguing that the drug problem was first and foremost a moral problem. Recognizing that current drug control efforts met with great difficulty, Portman said that it was clear that the corrosive effects of drugs on families and individuals in their communities far outweighed the difficulties of controlling the international trade in drugs. For Portman, the prohibition against illegal drugs was a moral issue and should be presented to children and other potential users as such. Taking drugs should be described as "morally wrong," Portman asserted. After this is made clear to children, Portman argued that the dangers associated with drug taking should be explained. Portman's expressed position on this problem coincides almost exactly with the positions of the various drug warriors discussed earlier in this thesis. However, author and columnist Arianna Huffington immediately opposed Congressman Portman's moralistic perspective.

Ms. Huffington challenged the equity basis of Portman's position. According to her, the United States' system of enforcement is itself immoral. Huffington supported her position by arguing that the poor and minorities are predominantly jailed for non-violent drug offences, while members of the dominant community are not often required to serve prison sentences at all. Affluent offenders, according to Huffington, are commonly spared harsher punishment, ironically, on the condition of participating in treatment programs.

Contradictions in Current Drug Policy

The participants in the World Economic Forum panel on "Attacking the Drug Trade" also held a wide range of positions on what drug policy could and/or should be. These positions included (1) market solutions, (2) decriminalization and treatment, (3) moral rejection and absolute prohibition, and (4) social equity solutions.

The economic analysis of the drug problem simply posits that by prohibiting any substance, its market price will therefore increase. If the market price soars far over the costs of production for any given illegal substance, the limitation and/or regulation of the trade in this item will be virtually impossible. This is essentially the same economic model of the international drug trade as the one set out in Chapter Two. The economic analysis brought forward in the present study points to a contradiction inherent in most current policy packages that purport to improve, settle, or even limit the drug problem. When the criminalization of sales and the interdiction of supplies function as key elements of policy, the economic effect of such policy will be to artificially inflate the price of the product, which then functions to attract criminal elements to the trade at every level.

A preliminary policy implication that would follow from this analysis would be to encourage the decriminalization and/or legalization of trade in currently illegal substances, such that the prices of these items would fall and the economic rewards to criminal organizations would radically diminish or, perhaps, disappear entirely. Under such conditions, the trade in drugs could be more easily regulated both internationally and locally. This, according to the literature reviewed above, is what happened in the United States after the repeal of the prohibition of alcohol in 1932. Some of the large and powerful criminal gangs, that had been created mostly by virtue of the artificially high

prices for alcohol, applied their money and expertise to new areas of activity; other criminal gangs were dismantled, as the leaders were put in prison one by one.

Although "decriminalization and treatment" as a possible policy response does not entirely dissolve the contradictions associated with the "prohibition and enforcement" policy package currently in use in North America, it is clear that a decriminalization and treatment policy still faces significant institutional barriers. The conservative American Congressman Portman, referred to above, may have been a lone voice at the World Forum; however, his absolutist position on the drug problem still has a powerful political resonance in North America. After all, the politicians who built their careers on a "war on drugs" platform must have had a certain amount of political support in their constituencies to persevere with such crusades. It is likely, therefore, that powerful political and economic forces will continue to militate against any decriminalization and treatment policy package. The opposing forces would not only include those who oppose the decriminalization and treatment approach for religious and/or political reasons, but would also include the alcohol and tobacco industries, which presently enjoy a highly profitable monopoly on legal mood altering and addictive substances. For example, new laws and public campaigns to decriminalize cannabis in certain jurisdictions have been met with stiff resistance, in addition to the aggressive legal and police actions taken to limit and regulate cannabis use. It has been suggested (and/or implied) by several authors, among whom may be mentioned the late Gil Puder, that law enforcement bodies ironically oppose changing drug laws because current drug laws justify departmental funding (Basham, 2001).

Nevertheless, the "moral rejection and absolute prohibition" approach to the drug program has been shown to be a failure in country after country, as noted in almost all of the literature reviewed in Chapter Three. Clearly, a policy of attempting to indoctrinate young people under the "Just Say No!" banner was not an effective response to the drug problem. The "mixed messages" elicited by a social and political regime that permits alcohol and tobacco use, but regulates and severely punishes everything else, are not often discussed in this connection, with the notable exception of the discussion advanced in Boyd's (1991) *High Society*, which identifies this contradiction in social policy as one of the most compelling conundrums relating to Canadian drug law and social policy. Laws in most countries today severely restrict drugs (other than alcohol and tobacco) taken for mood altering and recreational purposes, whether they are known to be harmful (e.g. heroin) or relatively harmless (e.g. cannabis). For example, the physical and emotional damage caused by alcohol use in North American society far outweighs that caused by the use of any of the illegal substances, as noted by Landry (1994). The addictive quality and destructive health effects of tobacco products are also well known, but tobacco products are subjected to minimal regulation and/or addiction prevention policies in most North American jurisdictions. This apparent "schizophrenia" of social control sends a contradictory message to the very target group of the "Just Say No!" type of campaign (i.e. children and youth). Therefore, a "social equity" approach to the drug problem might also include the imperative that all mood altering or addictive substances be subjected to the same social controls.

The socially disparate functioning of the drug laws is clearly a policy contradiction, and does little to inspire respect for society's attempts to regulate or control

the drug problem. Drug policy can be perceived as punitive toward certain groups but relatively benevolent toward others. When the prisons are full of prisoners serving terms for minor drug law infractions, and those prisoners include minority groups in numbers that are highly disproportionate to the percentage of their respective total population, the contradiction in social policy becomes clear to everyone. When considering the effectiveness of any given social policy, then, governments would do well first to examine whether the policy in question would operate uniformly across all sections of the population. If minority groups continue to be targeted for punishment, or are unfairly blamed for the existence of the drug problem, as has happened in Canada, it seems likely that the creation of an effective policy that responds to the grave social problems presented by the use of drugs and the trade in drugs remains a distant dream, if not a utopian fantasy.

Questions of ethnicity as they relate to the drug problem in Vancouver partly prompted the quantitative analysis of arrest and drug trafficking conviction data, as presented in this thesis. As discussed above, the statistical findings of the present study clearly refute the popular perception that Vancouver's drug problem was "imported from abroad." The street-level drug trafficking problem in Vancouver is a problem that is perpetuated largely by Canadian citizens, and must therefore yield to policy approaches designed by and for Canadian society.

Policy Implications

By way of introduction, it will be useful to refer to a policy statement made by a Canadian official at an international conference on the drug problem held only a few years ago. The Honourable David Kilgour, who in 1998 was a Member of Parliament for

Edmonton and Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa, addressed an international conference on "Drugs, Criminal Justice and Social Policy: New Alternatives for An Old Problem." Mr. Kilgour began his remarks by making it clear that Canada's approach to the drug problem was not only to deal with the supply of illegal drugs, but also to address the demand side of the problem. Then, in the course of outlining the policies that Canada had implemented internationally to respond to the global trade in drugs, Kilgour described a program introduced in Montréal in 1992:

> An innovative pilot project launched by the Montréal police in 1992 to assist a neighbourhood overrun by drug related crime is a good example of a balance between supply and demand reduction. In essence, it employs a get-tough approach with people caught selling drugs while offering treatment instead of jail to those found in simple possession. A team of officers trained in "problem-solving policing" was put in place full time to stop the neighbourhood's crime from getting worse and to give residents a greater sense of personal safety. On the street, police offered drug users support and assistance as an alternative to arrest for possession. Agreements were made with detoxification and treatment centres in the area to allow those needing help to be referred there by police. Evaluations carried out during the yearlong pilot project indicated such a high level of success that the program has been renewed and extended to other neighbourhoods (Kilgour, 1998:6).

A number of elements of the 1992 Montréal plan warrant closer examination. The first element is the insistence that any effective drug policy should distinguish between the supply and demand elements of the problem. The second element of interest in the Montréal plan is the idea of presenting first time drug offenders with a radical choice between treatment or a period of incarceration. Finally, it should be pointed out that the policy described by Kilgour assumes the existence of adequate numbers of effective detoxification and treatment centres. Following the Honourable Mr. Kilgour, then, it seems fair to say that any policy suggestions made to respond to the situation that

exists in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood would have to include an assessment of, and a demand for, the economic support of such centres.

If such facilities can comprise a part of a plan to attack Vancouver's drug problem, the policymakers must determine the extent to which a disposition choice, such as jail or treatment, can be considered. Moreover, in proposing such a choice, it would seem that the quantitative findings of this study as they relate to arrest, conviction, and sentencing patterns, would be of considerable utility. Similarly, given the findings of this study, it would appear that policymakers would also have to determine how policies intended to achieve drug regulation and control by the interdiction of supplies might be modified or, under some circumstances, scrapped altogether.

As noted in Chapter Six, Table 3 presents the finding that of the 600 drug arrests analyzed for this thesis, no less than 441 arrestees (73.5%, n = 600) were shown to have previous arrests for drug offences. This suggests that those arrestees had been part of the drug world for some time before their arrest. Had it been true that the first arrests for drug offences of this group were more commonly for possession of, rather than the sale of, prohibited substances, an argument similar to Kilgour's description of the early-intervention style Montréal plan could be advanced here. However, the data gathered in this study do not support such policy. The reality of recruitment to the drug world, as experienced in Vancouver, is a little more complicated.

Thus, it may be recalled at this point that when examining the Vancouver figures for first convictions, the total proportion of property offences (37.5%, n = 600) outranks the total proportion of drug offences (23.3%, n = 600). Although the process by which these arrestees move from committing property offences to committing drug offences

remains beyond the scope of the present research study, this topic is nevertheless suitable for further research into the drug problem in Vancouver.

Of most interest in the statistical profile reported above is the group of 140 individuals whose first conviction was for a drug offence (see Table 4). If the Montréal program were employed with such individuals, they would be given the choice between treatment and incarceration as a disposition for their drug offence(s). The obvious strength of this type of approach is that it clearly differentiates between the supply and demand sides of the drug problem.

After surveying and critically analyzing the entire range of possible policy implications suggested by the above review of the literature and the foregoing statistical analysis, three main policy directions emerge. First, the "market solution" advocates the legalization of drugs that are presently illegal, with the aim of narrowing the gap between producer prices and final market prices. Proponents of the market solution argue that narrowing the disparity between producer and market prices would make serving these markets unattractive to large, rich, and powerful criminal organizations. Second, the "decriminalization and treatment solution" posits that policy would be aimed at separating the demand and supply sides of the drug equation, with the goal of differentiating between the users and sellers of illegal drugs, for the purposes of treatment and jail, respectively. Finally, the "absolute prohibition solution" argues that enforcement and interdiction efforts should be increased. Such measures would be undertaken in the hope that by increasing efforts and funding aimed at absolute prohibition, a new type of outcome will be produced.

Of the three possible policy directions identified here, the "market solution" is likely politically impossible, because of the political opposition anticipated by those who support the absolute prohibition response. In light of the literature and empirical research presented and discussed in this thesis, the "decriminalization and treatment approach" therefore seems to be both the most reasonable and feasible policy suggestion that could be advanced.

For the Vancouver authorities to contemplate such a plan, the Montréal plan would first have to be subjected to a careful review. Secondly, adequate numbers of detoxification and treatment centers would necessarily have to be provided, so as to allow the plan to work as intended. The present study suggests that further research is needed in the area of the effects of the current rehabilitation facilities in Vancouver. While MacPherson's (2001) *"A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver"* lays out important goals, it is still not known whether or not the facilities available to achieve those goals exist and whether or not the facilities for treatment, job counseling, housing support, and the like are adequate. Further studies are needed to judge the effectiveness of the rehabilitation system.

The essential first step to the formation of an effective drug regulation and control policy for Vancouver is to rigorously separate the supply and demand sides of the drug equation. This clear policy implication is supported by both the apparent success of the Montréal program, as described by the Honourable David Kilgour, and by the findings of the present study. If this exercise can be performed and yield clear policy suggestions, it is very likely that the city of Vancouver will be able to move forward in an effective way

toward a solution to the problem that has cost Vancouver so much, in terms of lives, money and reputation, to date.

Finally, Vancouver authorities would need to review the progress made in light of the "Four Pillars" approach. The goal of enforcement under the "Four Pillars" is to re-deploy police resources in the Downtown Eastside neighborhood, with the aim of targeting criminal organizations and preventing more harm to the community. However, more may be required than just a simple re-deployment of law enforcement resources here. Given the scope of criminal activity in the Downtown Eastside, and the frequent entrance of new "players" into this market, it may be necessary to address the political questions in order to achieve a greater budgetary allowance for police work in this area.

The review of the literature and the statistical analysis in the present research study suggests that a radically different approach must be taken to address the problems of the international drug trade and the resulting the local problems. Briefly, the research and findings of this thesis support a shift from targeting big international organizations by means of "drug busts" conducted at points of entry, to a concern for final users, the organization and function of local markets, and the local criminal gangs and individuals that serve them. This approach, if shown to produce measurable, beneficial effects in Vancouver, and in Canada as a whole, could be tailored to fit other countries with similar problems.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Conclusions

The incessant "war on drugs" has had the unintended and unexpected consequence of exacerbating the problem it was originally intended to solve. The primary objective of this thesis was to conduct exploratory research to examine the possible variables that lead to the perpetuation of the drug problem, in the hope that such research would give rise to better ways to address the problems stemming from the drug trade. Drawing upon literature of international resonance, and focusing on the drug trade problem as it has manifested in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, this study presented groundbreaking research revealing the profile of a drug trafficker.

This study unquestionably debunked certain myths about the drug problem in Vancouver, and beyond. Specifically, the media, political figures, and certain members of the public have long claimed that immigrants brought the drug problem to Vancouver, that the problem was imported from outside Canada, and that Canadian citizens are not responsible.

One of the clear findings of this study is that the vast majority of street-level drug traffickers arrested in Vancouver between 2001 and 2002 were Canadian, and not Honduran, as so many have come to believe. As well, the drug trafficker profile reveals that the majority of traffickers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside were receiving social assistance, which is again a finding that contradicts the common belief that the drug traffickers are "millionaires." Very interestingly, and with great implications, the findings also reveal that a small group of hard-core professional criminals specialize in the trade of drug trafficking.

However, some questions regarding the population involved in the drug trade remain unanswered. One important question is whether drug traffickers are drug addicts who must sell drugs to support their habit. Further research at a local and/or national level is needed to determine the answers to such questions.

The answers obtained from further research will then, very likely, influence future drug policies adopted at the provincial and/or national levels. One such area for future study was suggested in the review of the literature on the drug problem presented in Chapter Three. Specifically, close observer studies of the drug trafficker, as documented by Bourgois (1995) and Jacobs (1999) provide insight into the daily life of the street-level trafficker.

These studies may suggest further research into the Canadian situation in general and the problems of Vancouver in particular. However, both the Bourgois and the Jacobs studies highlight the difficulties confronting quantitative research efforts involving an illegal activity. For most researchers, close observer studies may be time-consuming and even personally dangerous, both of which could ultimately produce skewed or misleading results. To obtain accurate results, future research should involve studies like those conducted by Boyd, Davenport-Hines, Bourgois and others. A greater understanding of the nature and characteristics of the retail drug trafficker and trade is needed for successful future policy on drug regulation and control. Future research should focus equally on historical materials, social science research, ethnographic studies, and advocacy efforts of scientists and physicians who have an intimate knowledge of the problems involved.

The literature review on the drug problem presented in Chapter Three clearly shows that the drug problem is not new, but one that has developed progressively over time. For example, Le Dain found that a large number of studies on the use and distribution of marijuana exist, dating back to a British commission of enquiry undertaken in 1893; all were, more or less, without effect.

The economic model of international drug trade is based on very high profit margins achieved by the international trafficker. According to the economic model, low manufacturing costs in third world countries that export drugs, and high retail prices paid on the street of the countries that import the drugs, make drug trafficking profitable and nearly impossible to decimate, provided current laws continue to exist. As a number of studies reveal, a large segment of the population in the countries that import illegal drugs have experienced some type of drug use. The future markets to be enjoyed by international traffickers, therefore, seem assured until fundamental changes are made. The policy implications set out here, therefore, are advanced with these problems in mind.

Three major drug policy recommendations were identified from the policy recommendations outlined in the World Economic Forum and the Montréal Plan for drug remediation and control described by the Honourable David Kilgour. The policy recommendations were: (1) the "market" solution, (2) the "decriminalization and treatment" solution, and (3) the "absolute prohibition" solution. The present drug policy in place is, of course, the "absolute prohibition" solution. The most promising policy recommendation is the "decriminalization and treatment" solution policy, as it has the

best chance of effecting positive change, likely with the least amount of criticism from the proponents of the "absolute prohibition" solution to the problem.

The objectives and methods of the decriminalization and treatment policy are entirely consistent with the city of Vancouver's "Four Pillars" approach to drug treatment and drug control. The policy decriminalizes drug use, but still considers drug trafficking a criminal offence. However, for this policy to succeed, police resources need to be re-directed from current activities involving regulation and control towards those that promise a more likely solution to the drug problem on a long-term basis.

APPENDIX

Data Collection Instrument

Number:_____

Police File Number:_____

Year Arrested: 2001____ 2002____

Age at Time of Arrest:_____

Year of Birth:_____

Offender's Gender: Male__ Female__

Address:
- Downtown Eastside____
- City of Vancouver____
- Other____
- No fixed Address____

Drugs Trafficked:
- Cocaine____
- Heroin____
- Marihuana____
- Cocaine and heroin____
- Cocaine and marihuana____
- Methamphetamine____
- Other____

Country of Birth:_____

Status in Canada:
- Citizen____
- Landed immigrant____
- Refugee____
- Seeking deportation____
- To be deported____
- Previously deported____
- No record____

Repeat Arrest in Time Frame: Yes____ No____

Previous Criminal Record:
- No____
- Yes - Unrelated offence____
- Yes - Drug offence____

Court Order at Time of Arrest: Yes____ No____

Welfare Recipient: Yes____ No____

First Conviction Offence:_____

Year of First Conviction:_____

Age at First Conviction:_____

Sentence for First Conviction:
- No Convictions____
- Non-Carceral Sentence____
- Carceral Sentence____
- Order Terminated/Absol.
- Disch./Stay____

Second Conviction Offence:_____

Year of Second Conviction:_____

Sentence for Second Conviction:
- No Convictions____
- Non-Carceral Sentence____
- Carceral Sentence____
- Order Terminated/Absol.
- Disch./Stay____

Third Conviction Offence:_____

Year of Third Conviction:_____

Sentence for Third Conviction:
- No Convictions____
- Non-Carceral Sentence____
- Carceral Sentence____
- Order Terminated/Absol.
- Disch./Stay____

Fourth Conviction Offence:_____

Year of Fourth Conviction:_____

Sentence for Fourth Conviction:
- No Convictions____
- Non-Carceral Sentence____
- Carceral Sentence____
- Order Terminated/Absol.
- Disch./Stay____

Fifth Conviction Offence:_____

Year of Fifth Conviction:_____

Sentence for Fifth Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol. Disch./Stay

Sixth Conviction Offence:_____

Year of Sixth Conviction:_____

Sentence for Sixth Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol. Disch./Stay____

Seventh Conviction
Offence:_____

Year of Seventh Conviction:_____

Sentence for Seventh Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol. Disch./Stay____

Eighth Conviction
Offence:_____

Year of Eighth Conviction:_____

Sentence for Eighth Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol. Disch./Stay____

Ninth Conviction
Offence:_____

Year of Ninth Conviction:_____

Sentence for Ninth Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol. Disch./Stay____

Tenth Conviction
Offence:_____

Year of Tenth Conviction:_____

Sentence for Tenth Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol.
Disch./Stay____

Over Ten Convictions:
11 to 15____
16 to 20____
21 to 25____
26 to 30____
31 or more____

Year of First Drug Conviction:_____

Age at First Drug Conviction:_____

Sentence for First Drug Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol.
Disch./Stay____

Year of First Trafficking Conviction:_____

Age at First Trafficking Conviction:_____

Sentence for First Trafficking Conviction:
No Convictions____
Non-Carceral Sentence____
Carceral Sentence____
Order Terminated/Absol.
Disch./Stay____

Total Trafficking Convictions:_____

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