

# **Talk and Deterrence in Drug Markets**

Ph.D. Dissertation

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## Abstract

Despite a wealth of conceptual and empirical examinations, key processes occurring during each of the primary stages of deterrence remain poorly specified. Little is known about how potential offenders form their perceptions of rules or threats, and the relationship between these perceptions and fear has only received moderate attention. In addition, many questions remain regarding how offenders eliminate or reshape punishments after violating rules. In this dissertation I examine how various forms of talk shape these processes. More specifically, I investigate how gossip influences offenders' perceptions of rules or threats, how humor and threats and promises moderate the fear stemming from these perceptions, and how accounts reshape the enforcement of rules. This examination is based on qualitative data gathered from interviews with, and observations of, 33 active drug dealers operating in and around the St. Louis metropolitan area.