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DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES OF THE STREET-LEVEL DRUG TRADE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the short-term battle being conducted by street-level drug suppression units in two cities, Minneapolis (MN) and Kansas City (MO). It details features of point-of-sale drug markets that have not been widely explored in the research literature to date, and illuminates an aspect of the crack trade not yet widely discussed: the resilience and adaptability of drug dealers to street-level interdiction tactics.¹

Data were gathered in two separate phases of participant observation. The Minneapolis operations were observed over a three-year period, while the author was serving as on-site Director for the Crime Control Institute (CCI) during the RECAP and Hot Spots of Crime experiments. A specialty unit charged with problem-solving at addresses which produced

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*the most calls for police service, RECAP dealt with every one of the drug markets described below. Drug markets figured prominently among the Hot Spots of Crime.*²

Kansas City data were gathered through a week of participant observation and open-ended interviews with officers of the Kansas City Police Department's Street Narcotics Unit (SNU) in the summer of 1990, as part of the DRAGNET project conducted by CCI and the KCPD. The names for the typologies (Club, Speakeasy, and the supplemental strategies) were coined for the DRAGNET report, and are terms of my invention. The terms "snitch," "unwitting," "UC," "buy-bust," and "reverse sting" are all current in the working police vocabularies.

INTRODUCTION

While the national debate over the drug crisis focuses on long term goals - weighing the presumed effectiveness of suppression against the presumed effectiveness of treatment and education, waging negative publicity campaigns ("Just Say No," "This is your brain..."), analyzing the success of interdiction efforts- the pernicious social effects of the problem continue to have an immediate and deleterious impact upon the nation's neighborhoods. Whether by conscious decision to proactively target small dealers, or by reactively answering the complaints of besieged neighbors, local police forces continue their attempt to slow or disrupt the street level drug trade by suppression.

Rapid expansion of the crack cocaine trade in the 1980s changed both the nature of drug markets (Johnson, Williams, Dei & Sanabria, 1990) and police policies on drug enforcement. Traditional police narcotics work (described by Manning, Skolnick, and Wilson, among others) focused on the mid- and upper-level echelons of drug trafficking networks, seeking large seizures that would "pinch off the supply pipeline" more cost-effectively than arresting minor point-of-sale dealers. Long-term undercover operations used arrests of low-level dealers as a way to "move up the ladder;" trading prosecution for an introduction to the dealers' suppliers. Prosecution targeted the persons who controlled the distribution networks, seeking to suppress the drug trade by disrupting the organizations which controlled it.

The relative ineffectiveness of those strategies against the crack cocaine industry has led to changes in police tactics of suppression and control. Some cities, including those under study here, employ a bifurcated approach. Traditional Narcotics Unit work has been supplemented by renewed focus on street-level enforcement.

In Minneapolis, the Narcotics Unit was supplemented with precinct crack teams. A Bureau of Justice Assistance grant allowed payment of

overtime to patrol officers who conducted surveillance of suspected drug markets, obtained search warrants, and executed raids. Though retaining its primary focus on the mid- and upper-level dealers, the Narcotics Unit also provided technical and logistical support for precinct crack teams and other specialty units targeting drug-selling locations.

In Kansas City, the Narcotics Unit strictly maintained a traditional undercover profile. A Street Narcotics Unit (SNU) was created to mount separate investigation and raid activities against street-level dealers. A squad of undercover officers identified sales locations, made buys, and obtained search warrants; a second squad of uniformed officers conducted raids to serve the warrants, often searching several locations in a single night. Though under common administrative command, interaction between SNU and the Narcotics Unit occurred primarily at the intelligence-sharing level.

Operationally, there are three types of drug markets-those where narcotics officers can make a buy, those where they can't, and those they haven't learned about yet. Categorization of targets is informal, serving tactical purposes rather than strategic ones. Enforcement actions tend to be target-specific and opportunity-specific. The general nature of narcotics work assignments in both Minneapolis and Kansas City is numbers-driven. Though they are aware of the shortcomings of the existing intelligence systems, the teams are overwhelmed by the need to keep up with the input reports (complaints).

BACKGROUND: POLICE ENFORCEMENT TACTICS

Police have a limited array of tactics to use against drug market operations. The ideal is the warrant-justified raid against an active drug house, one which yields large amounts of drugs, cash, weapons, and convictions. Where the selling operation does not permit raids on secured locations, "buy-busts" arrest the individual sellers who work in public areas (sidewalks, parks, streetcorners, etc.) as soon as a drug sale to an undercover officer has been completed. In some cases, the controversial "reverse sting"-in which police officers pose as drug sellers, and arrest potential buyers-is used to disrupt the demand side of the street trade.

Since arrests and warrants must be based upon probable cause, undercover work by officers is the preferred method of developing information and making buys. However, in both cities under study, officers made extensive use of citizen agents. The general term for a Confidential Informant (CI) is here used to indicate a law-abiding private citizen who provides information to the police. "Snitches" and "Unwittings" are informants who are less law-abiding and are either

involved in or on the fringes of the drug trade. Snitches are aware of the police officer's identity and usually have some form of established relationship with the officer(s). Unwittings introduce undercover officers to a drug supplier, unaware of the officer's police identity.

PROFILES OF POINT-OF-SALE DRUG MARKETS

The retail trade in illegal drugs has two broad divisions: Businessmen and Opportunists (referred to as "regular" and "occasional" in Reuter, MacCoun & Murphy, 1990, p. 91). Businessmen have a greater commitment to the criminal enterprise of drug-peddling and by inference should be considered more likely to use defensive strategies to thwart their business competitors and the police. Businessmen have greater access to middle levels of the distribution network and generally control larger amounts of drug stock and money.

Opportunists dabble in retail sales only episodically, as a means to secure fast money, and go out of business as soon as their meager stock is depleted. Some are themselves drug-dependent and sell only what is required to sustain their own habits.⁴ Opportunists may work as independent franchises, or may attach themselves temporarily to an established network (cf. Williams, 1989, pp. 11,37,58, and *passim*). Because police access to drug sales locations is largely haphazard and opportunity-specific, the result of "first contact" episodes at the street level, it frequently is not possible to distinguish an Opportunist's operation from that of a Businessman.

THE NATURE OF THE SELLING ORGANIZATION

Because of the potential for violence (both in the process of losing a drug stock and as a consequence of same), many Businessmen establish countermeasures to reduce their risk of penetration. The primary line of defense seems to lie in the organization of the selling operation and the schemes used to screen potential customers. For convenience, I refer to these variations as *Clubs*, *Speakeasys*, *Drive-ins*, and *Dealerships*. All of them are organizational arrangements designed to process demand inputs.

Supplemental strategies are the *Bazaar*, a variation of the Drive-In arrangement which serves a different defensive function; the *Cuckoo's Nest*, a quasi-defensive strategy which could appear in any of the guises below; and the *Rotation System*, a proactive attempt to move one step ahead of potential raiders. The supplemental strategies work across all types of the primary selling organizations.

The word "organization" applies here only to the arrangement of the sales outlet operation. Insofar as can be determined, all of the operations discussed share the characteristics of the "Vertically Controlled Selling Organization" described by Johnson et al. (1990, pp. 20-22; see also Williams, 1989, pp. 8-10) if "organization" is used to describe the relationships among the various seller roles. Holders, hand-off men, runners, lookouts, and transporters all have their counterparts in the Minneapolis and Kansas City street trades.⁵ Though "storekeepers" are somewhat more rare, the Minneapolis RECAP Unit and Fourth Precinct crack team encountered the phenomenon in their work (Buerger, 1992, pp. 51-52,332-333).

Organizational Strategies

The Club. The most stringent screening device is to sell only to known customers. This provides the lowest risk to the seller, though it also narrows the potential market dramatically. No amount of jiving or name-dropping will provide an undercover officer with access to Club locations: if you're not a member, you don't come in. Mid-level dealers almost always fit the Club organization profile (though technically speaking, mid-level dealers are not part of the street trade per se).

That does not mean that Clubs are impervious to police suppression efforts. Undercover officers (UCs) can make buys at Clubs through intermediaries, either Snitches or Unwittings, and search warrants have been successfully served on Clubs in both cities. Minneapolis officers indicated that the only way to crack a mid-level dealer was to make repeated buys (of sufficient quantity) from the dealer's subordinates, gaining the trust of the dealer and earning an invitation into the network.

The Speakeasy. Some markets require the potential customer to have a specific knowledge of the operation itself: a code-phrase must be spoken, a name mentioned, or a specific behavior pattern displayed. The behavior patterns do not seem to be complex: information from KCPD undercover officers indicates it can be no more complicated than knowing which door to go to when inquiring "is anything happening?" (the almost universal inquiry in use at the time this field research was conducted; "is there any happenings?" seemed to be a variant). However, without that critical information- which gives the seller a minimal assurance that the potential buyer has been referred to the dealer by one of the dealer's associates- any possibility of a deal is scotched.

Like its Prohibition namesake, the Speakeasy defense is more permeable than The Club. Where Clubs limit their market to a primary group profile, the Speakeasy opens itself to a larger potential market based on the network's secondary group relationships. A primary group member can unilaterally extend access to persons unknown to other group members by providing the outsiders with the equivalent of "Joe sent me"; once that information is available outside the primary group, the seller has no control over how many times it is passed on. Secondary associates almost never exercise the careful screening of a primary group member; the undercover investigator can gain access to the Speakeasy by developing Unwitting informants and through Snitches. Behavior patterns *may* be observed, and code-phrases and names overheard, but the primary route of discovery for UCs appears to be informal contacts with Snitches and Unwittings.

The Drive-In. A Drive-In serves a theoretically unlimited clientele, using intermediate sales personnel to insulate the primary sellers from the buyers. A prospective buyer places an order with the intermediary but never enters the supplying house.

There are two basic variations in this category. The first employs a version of the "carhop." An order is placed on the street, whereupon the intermediary travels from buyer to seller and back, conveying drugs one way and money the other.⁶ Only at the point of exchange is the intermediary linked to both the cash and the money at the same time. In slow periods, this protects the entire operation from loss if the police appear to shake down the outside employees, but it is too cumbersome to be profitable in high-volume times.

The second type, the "curbside" variation, is far more appropriate for the high-volume times. Outside employees act as holders of small amounts of drugs, selling directly to drive-through or walk-up customers in series until they run out of drugs. When that happens, another employee takes over while the first seller repairs to the holding location to turn in the money collected, and to replenish his stock (compare Johnson et al., 1990, p. 21).

The small amounts, known as "body weight" or "body carry," are an important defensive strategy. In many states, the criminal charges for possession of controlled drug are a graduated scale, depending upon the quantum of drugs. Large amounts of drugs carry a presumption of "possession with intent to distribute" which is normally a felony charge. By carrying an amount that can plausibly be claimed is for personal use rather than for sale or distribution, street-side sellers reduce their legal jeopardy if arrested in a buy-bust. In jurisdictions where many low-level drug arrests clog the system, they may escape prosecution altogether, taking advantage of prosecutorial triage decisions.

Drive-Ins are frequently (but not necessarily) identifiable by large numbers of people milling about on the street, a profile shared with Bazaars and sometimes Dealerships. The presence of individual young men standing or walking to and fro on street corners is one of the universal signs that a drug market is open (recognized by buyers and police officers alike). However, a single corner lookout, or a man or woman sitting on a porch, may serve as a carhop as easily as an individual in a milling throng.

Drive-ins are particularly effective at apartment buildings, since once the intermediary enters the building, an observer cannot see where they exchange the money for the drugs. Search warrants must be apartment-specific, so the dealer's capital investment is protected from raid activity. The intermediary does not hold any drugs for more than the brief transit period between the seller and the buyer: even if arrested in a buy-bust, the loss is small and the intermediary's legal jeopardy minimal.

The Dealership is similar to the Drive-In except that the intermediary negotiates the sale with the prospective buyer outside the distribution house then brings the buyer in to complete the deal with a higher-up. The intermediary handles neither the cash nor the drugs but may do some preliminary screening of the buyer such as confirming that they have the money with them (whether this is routinely or haphazardly done could not be determined through the interview structure). The critical distinction between the Drive-In and the Dealership is the location of the actual sale. At a Drive-In, the transaction takes place outside in the public space, but Dealership transactions are completed indoors.

It is not clear why a Dealership operation would be used instead of a Drive-In. Dealership operations are less vulnerable than Drive-Ins to buy-bust tactics but place the primary seller (and the drug and cash capital) at greater risk. The primary seller has the opportunity to override the intermediary's decision to sell to the prospective buyer but only after the holding location and the primary seller's identity have been revealed to the buyer. The Dealership method can be quickly upgraded to a Speakeasy style, but conversation with the Kansas City UCs suggests that many Dealership operations can be found. (None of the information provided by officers in either city indicated that either the type or the quantity of drugs being sought or sold dictates the use of a Dealership style of operation.)

Williams's description of the New York City cocaine market suggests that new employees may undergo "probationary periods" before being accepted as a full-fledged member of an operation. During that time they are entrusted with small amounts of drugs and/or specific, limited assignments. They are evaluated on how well they handle the assign-

ments, how promptly they return to the dealer with the money obtained from sales, and other critical issues (Williams, 1989, p. 32; see also Johnson et al., 1990, p. 21). A Dealership operation may be a way for an established dealer to test new recruits. It is also possible that a Dealership may simply be a quasi-defensive mechanism used by Opportunists who know they should protect their stash, but have no idea how to do so effectively.

Similarly, whether Dealerships depend for protection upon frequent changes of location in a Rotation System (see below) is not clear. That, and the possibility that it is more frequently employed by Opportunists than by Businessmen, remain open questions for research.

Supplemental Strategies

The Bazaar is a true open-air drug market, one which works at high volume. Numerous intermediaries flood an area (usually a block), each holding a small number of drug packages. They make contact with the buyers, negotiate the sale, and exchange the drugs for money in full public view. At the conclusion of each sale, or when his supply is exhausted, the selling intermediary enters a nearby distribution house, turns over the money, and stocks up with a new supply of drugs. Operationally, the Bazaar is identical to the Drive-In "curbside" profile; what distinguishes the two is the number of participants and to some extent the geographic area utilized.

The normal profile of a Bazaar transaction is a customer coming in to the area, usually by car, making a quick buy and leaving the area. Theoretically, the potential buyer has the opportunity to select the person with whom they will deal. However, street sellers often initiate contact fairly aggressively, even to the point of accosting all traffic that moves through the area, whether the driver is there for the purposes of buying drugs or is simply in transit to another location. The Bazaar also allows for competitive bidding, at least nominally. No direct evidence currently exists that such dickering actually takes place, though Minneapolis experiences indicate that distribution networks may overlap in a Bazaar. Whether there is a set price structure to which the intermediaries must adhere, like vendors at a ballpark, or whether they can try to charge what the market will bear (taking advantage of the timid and the ignorant; see, e.g., Williams 1989, p. 124) also is not known at this time.

The Bazaar provides an excellent defense against police raids for several reasons. First, it is practically impossible to sneak up on a Bazaar with so many eyes and ears acting as lookouts. Second, there is a maximum amount of confusion as the participants scatter upon

arrival of the police thus reducing the risk to each individual (*if* they scatter; see re: "Crack Alley," below). The Bazaar structure makes it difficult for an officer to return, identify, and grab the original seller in individual buy-bust operations/ Third, the delay time while police officers make their way through the throng gives the fortified holding houses a chance to flush any drug evidence down the toilet (and perhaps even to exit the building safely ahead of the raiding team's entry, thus avoiding arrest, loss of the drugs, and seizure of personal effects). Most police raiding teams are outnumbered by the Bazaar's participants, and budget limitations severely curtail the amount of street-sweep pressures that can be brought to bear by the police.

The same considerations theoretically defeat the possibility of raids by competitors, at least during the hours of business. The warning system would be effective against known predators who would have to come in force to counter the large and unknown number of confederates available to defend a supplying location. Our knowledge of the nature and extent of competitive raids is almost nil at this stage, seen indirectly through the casualty rates of shootings and knifings. Presumably the operators of a sales operation are at greatest risk from the competition either just before their retail operations begin (when the greatest amount of saleable drugs are present) or after they cease (when the largest amount of cash is available). Transportation also represents a weak point, but here, too, we have few sources of information about the nature of the operations.

At one Bazaar outlet in Kansas City, direct observation by the UCs confirmed the presence of a major operation, with between 50 and 75 bodies in the street. The UCs agreed that attempting street buys would be futile and probably dangerous. An informal strategy session suggested that the most viable option would be to use several raiding squads entering the area simultaneously from both ends of the street and from between the houses to perform street sweeps. The intent of those sweeps would be to drive the dealers back into Speakeasy or Dealership operations vulnerable to SNU's normal tactics. (Those resources were not available at the time, and the team was forced to turn its attention to other targets.)

The Cuckoo's Nest is the use of an abandoned, temporarily vacant, or on-loan premises for retail drug sales. The Cuckoo's Nest is a method by which retail space is acquired rather than a strategy by which drugs are sold. Almost any of the above-described operations can be run out of a Cuckoo's Nest. It is theoretically available to both Businessmen (as a defensive strategy) and Opportunists (as a low-overhead retail location), though the degree to which it is employed by members of either group is unknown at this time (Williams [1989, p. 53] refers to the New York City equivalent as "piggy-backing").

Vacant buildings and vacant apartments are readily available through simple burglary methods. The seller is free of most forms of interference and internal surveillance. Since no one has legitimate business at the location, particularly after dark, drug customers represent the primary traffic. The seller can exercise almost complete control over the physical premises, including fortifications and surveillance for police activity. The seller also controls the access points to a greater degree than is possible in a location with concurrent legitimate traffic. In the event of a raid, there is a minimal loss of capital, and none of the seller's or agents' personal property is at risk of seizure and forfeiture.

A variation on the use of vacant buildings is the takeover of occupied premises, usually while the rightful occupant is absent (on vacation, in hospital, or deceased). On occasion, members of the resident family who have connections with the drug trade simply begin retail operations from the home, over the objections of the other family members living there. In Minneapolis, immigrating gang members from other cities have been known to use an agent - usually a single woman with an impeccable rental history - to secure an apartment. Once established in the apartment, the agent opens it to the arriving gang members who use it as a headquarters and sometimes as a retail outlet (Buerger, 1992, pp. 214-217).

In public housing locations the seller often is insulated from eviction, and faces minimal risk from confiscation and forfeiture, since the property lease is in someone else's name. Missouri regulations permit eviction only if the leaseholder is directly involved in the drug dealing. Minneapolis officials have attempted to amend public housing leases with "guest permissions" to allow them to move against Cuckoo's Nest operations of all kinds (including bootlegging and fencing), but the policy is under challenge (McGrath, 1987). Private landowners are also beginning to take action against Cuckoo's Nest operations where possible (Jeter, 1990).

Kansas City officers indicated that it is not unusual for a seller to take over a furnished residence upon the death of the owner, sell all the furnishings for money to buy drugs, and operate a drug market out of a stripped, vacant property. By contrast, Minneapolis officers indicated that most Cuckoo's Nest operations in that city were done with the knowledge and consent of the lawful resident. In almost all cases, some consideration changed hands as "rent," either money or drugs.

Not all Cuckoo's Nest situations are so benign, however. Minneapolis police faced three different variations of an open drug market on its south side, a movable feast that the local media dubbed "Crack Alley." In each of its incarnations, Crack Alley began with two or more Drive-in markets operating out of apartment buildings (though whether

in competition or sharing turf under the control of a higher-level dealer is unknown). Third and Fifth Precinct officers initiated aggressive buy-bust activity supplemented by undercover work to obtain search warrants for the holding apartments. Those efforts twice were successful in displacing Crack Alley, although only by a distance of several blocks (officers indicated that they recognized many of the same faces in each new Crack Alley incarnation, strongly suggesting displacement rather than suppression).

In Crack Alley's third incarnation, instead of suppressing or driving the dealers from the area, police enforcement efforts resulted in the creation of a Bazaar. The nature of the drug operations changed in that interior organization shifted to a rotation system (discussed below) to thwart the raid-oriented undercover activity, and the outdoor operations expanded to fill the entire block. Residents of the block reported that dealers simply came onto their porches and sold from there, appropriating the porches as Cuckoo's Nests. In the process, the sellers totally ignored symbolic barriers (such as fences) and responded with threats of violence to property owners' attempts to move them from porches or yards.

The Crack Alley operation not only resisted citizen interventions but also proved remarkably impervious to normal police suppression efforts. Despite heavy police presence, including numerous raids and buy-bust arrests, the Bazaar remained open. Unsubstantiated anecdotal evidence suggests that street holders hawked their wares to the crowds who gathered to watch the police raids and that sales continued unabated even when police cruisers were visible in force on the street (*contra* Johnson et al., 1990, p. 21). Crack Alley did not move until RECAP and other police officials brought enough pressure on landlords to effect evictions of the dealers; in some cases, condemnation of the buildings which housed the dealers was required.

Information from Kansas City officers suggests that similar situations exist there. Several of the UCs spoke of "holding houses" where the main stock of drugs was kept near the retail outlets but isolated from them. They also described an open-air market in one block, where anywhere from 15 to 75 villains could be out on the street at one time (depending upon the time of day) soliciting the occupants of passing cars. SNU had targeted a particular address on the block as a probable mid-level drug house, but in order to get to it, the UCs had to make their way through the crowd of street sellers. Some of those sellers were overtly "belligerent" (a special-use term, indicating aggressiveness just short of physical violence) at being turned down. The occupants of the target house were also belligerent to the UCs- no doubt suspicious of anyone claiming to be a dooper who had just walked past

75 independent sellers hawking their wares to ask for drugs at the door of a house that was not identified as a retail outlet.

The officers' supposition in this case was that the target address was the holding house for several other houses on the block, a pyramid distribution network not unlike legitimate business operations in cleaning products, plastic ware, or cosmetics. The secondary addresses, in turn, acted as staging areas for the street dealers who individually carried only a few rocks (packages of crack cocaine) on their person. When they sold their allotment they would obtain more stock from the intermediate house.

This is a classic defense profile. If street dealers were arrested, the body-weight amounts would keep their criminal charge at the misdemeanor or violation level. If a house was raided by either the police or bandits- the loss of capital would be only a fraction of the total operation (The anecdotal information was not sufficiently detailed to distinguish whether the trade fit the Drive-In or the Bazaar profile; in all likelihood, both types of operations existed concurrently).

The Rotation System. Experiences in Minneapolis indicate that the drug trade there maintains an urban equivalent of three-field rotation. A business operation will maintain three or more addresses (apartments within a single building, different buildings, or some combination of the two) and periodically shift operations from one to another. Production and sales are conducted in physically separate locations so when the police or competitors penetrate the network a limited amount of assets is lost to raids on the sales outlet. The business capital is insulated in a location unknown to the police or raiders (or untouchable in terms of probable cause for a search warrant). Williams's (1989, p. 53) discussion of "piggy-backing" suggests a similar profile, but in piggybacking the shift to a new apartment on an upper floor takes place after a ground floor apartment "takes the heat," whereas the Rotation System seeks to defeat raids by moving before the police or predatory raiders arrive.

The market remains in the same geographical area for the convenience of customers, who generally make contact with an intermediary visible from the street in order to make a purchase. By driving through a 2- to 3-block square area, a prospective buyer will be able to spot the lookouts quickly and easily even though the distribution location has changed since his or her last visit. (The Minneapolis situations which were investigated by RECAP fit both the Drive-In and Dealership models which are structured to support such movement.) Buyer behavior also adapts to these shifts. In at least one market area on the Minneapolis north side, suburban buyers in expensive cars were observed driving down blocks slowly, holding large amounts of money out their car windows to draw out carhops or other intermediaries.

DEALER ADAPTATIONS TO POLICE PRESSURE

Dealers change their operations in response to external stimuli. Limiting the amount of drugs on the person of any given seller to "body-carry" weight is one such defense (this reduces the sellers' legal jeopardy by holding only misdemeanor-level amounts of drugs at any given time). The same tactic also reduces the loss of drug capital to robbers. Small amounts of drugs can be easily discarded at the appearance of a police patrol (although the furtive movements necessary to do so often attract the attentions of the police). In Minneapolis, street dealers walk down or around the block with prospective buyers, taking the money at one location and handing over the drugs at another to thwart surveillance. (A variation has the buyer hand over the money at one point in the walk, whereupon the seller drops or throws the packet containing the drugs to the ground for the buyer to pick up; presumably, this prevents police surveillance from observing the classic hand-to-hand exchange of money for drugs that has justified so many arrests.) Streetside employees also adapt their personal styles to diminish their loss of personal effects to forfeitures, such as ceasing to wear gold jewelry or expensive watches while selling.

A Speakeasy or Dealership operation that has been hit hard with raids may transmute itself into a Drive-In or Bazaar. Minneapolis was infested with fortified crack houses until the highly publicized raid which used a front-end loader to break through the walls of a targeted address. Several similar incidents followed. Shortly after that the bulk of the crack trade shifted to Drive-In style operations.

Ironically, police success in attacking an indoor style of marketing created a greater disturbance in the neighborhoods. In two Minneapolis cases, after RECAP and precinct patrol pressure disrupted major business operations in residential areas, Drive-In and Dealership style operations gave way to Bazaar markets. One was the Crack Alley situation described above. The other resulted when a major dealer was incapacitated. Because the location was so notorious, drive-through traffic continued even after the arrest of the dealer. His former employees and intermediaries turned opportunist, keeping the market open by selling drugs obtained from other dealers (the Bazaar dealt at such a volume that the small-time dealers could turn over their entire stock in a fairly short time). The steady influx of customers which had disturbed the neighbors during Speakeasy and Dealership operations neither ceased nor slackened but continued in a form that was even more disruptive of the peace of the neighborhoods. Honking horns and loud shouts and whistles became the means by which street-hawkers and customers communicated, even in the wee hours of the night. For a

time, overall police effectiveness was reduced because buy-busts yielded only small amounts of drugs and no deterrent (Buerger, 1992, p. 275ff).

Although the greatest threat to a drug operation is probably the competition rather than the police, the Kansas City supervisor noted that dealers move periodically just to stay ahead of the cops. "The crooks know that it takes about 24 hours for us to come back with a search warrant." By contrast, a Minneapolis supervisor indicated that their Narcotics Unit usually tried to obtain a search warrant and execute it as soon as possible. "You never know when you've just bought the last rock" (though that may indicate a higher incidence of Opportunist activity in Minneapolis since the crack cocaine trade was relatively new there).

LIFE CYCLES OF DRUG MARKETS

As the pages above indicate, there are really two different levels to be discussed concerning the active life of a drug location: when the location is *active in fact* (providing drugs to buyers) and when it is "active" in terms of being *accessible to the undercover officers*. The fact that a location may be inaccessible to undercover officers is not necessarily an indication that it has gone cold, or inactive, in fact. Because much of our current knowledge about the drug locations stems from police activity, we should assume that our information is skewed or at least inadequate.

It is difficult to distinguish a deliberate Rotation System from a concurrent system of referrals based on an informal knowledge of the drug network. Frequently, when UCs approach a target address they are told that no drugs are available there but are directed to another location said to be active. It is impossible to tell, in most cases, whether such directions indicate 1) that the operation had rotated to a new location, allowing the first one to lie fallow, though referrals to customers would seem to eviscerate the protective aspects of the Rotation System; 2) that the first location was active, but the sellers were suspicious of the UCs identity and gave him/her a false lead (UCs are able to make buys at about half of these secondary referrals); or 3) that an Opportunist's operation had exhausted its supply of drugs and was simply giving a customer the courtesy of a business referral to another independent location known to the erstwhile sellers.

There are several reasons why a previously active location may cease to be a functioning drug market:

- the previous activity may only have been temporary, the result of an opportunistic enterprise that had been voluntarily abandoned;
- the dealers in the location have been evicted or have moved voluntarily in response to market pressures (including police activity);
- the dealers still nominally live in the location but are incapacitated (hospitalized or incarcerated) for an extended period of time; or
- the location is in "fallow field" status as part of a regular rotation of the trade through several sites.

In addition, there are several reasons why a location may be inaccessible (temporarily or otherwise) to police officers:

- the location hosts a Speakeasy or Club operation, and the officers do not know the proper code or behavior,
- the location may house a mid-level distribution point which functions as a Club so far as street trade is concerned;
- the on-hand supply of drugs has been exhausted (either through sales volume or because the dealers have smoked their profits);
- the proprietor has closed up the shop to attend to other business;
- a competitor has beaten the police to the punch with an illicit robbery raid;
- the proprietors are suspicious of the particular officer, and simply choose not to sell to him or her; or
- the proprietors are "hinked up" (made nervously suspicious) by activity in the area and are

not selling to anyone as a prophylactic measure against an undefined, general threat.

In some cases, the UCs' experience will help them separate "cold" addresses from those which are merely in hiatus; other cases will remain a question mark. The internal pressure of the "full plate" of complaints will continue to drive the UCs to new locations so long-term investment of police resources in questionable locations is not feasible.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Though long-term and national policy concerns properly focus on education, prevention, and treatment goals, there probably will always be a need for short-term and local policies aimed at drug suppression. Among the local consequences of the war on drugs have been overcrowded court dockets, increased strains on police and corrections facilities, and (in the opinion of many) diminished respect for a criminal justice system unable to cope with the overwhelming numbers of low-level drug arrests.

Street-level suppression treats all arrests equally without regard to the participants' actual roles in the drug markets. Operationally, a unit charged with disrupting the street narcotics trade must target both Businessmen and Opportunists since both have a deleterious effect on the neighborhoods where they set up operations. From a tactical perspective, taking down an Opportunist may provide police investigators with information—perhaps even an informant—that can lead them farther up the chain to a Businessman or mid-level distributor who had been previously unknown or untouchable (the traditional goal of Narcotics Units). Further, to ignore Opportunists is to run a risk that they may become Businessmen. Though neutralizing Businessmen probably would have a greater long-term impact, the investigative process needed to distinguish one from another requires the long-term commitment of resources similar to that employed for mid-level dealers. In the meantime, streets and neighborhoods would remain infested with dealers.

A contributing factor to the overload condition is the fact that current systems of information are unable to distinguish Businessmen from Opportunists. Police intelligence resources are prioritized to target mid- and upper-level dealers, thereby leaving street-level suppression efforts dependent upon the haphazard, opportunity-dependent "first contact" investigations and citizen agents. Recent evidence from the Kansas City DRAGNET experiment suggests that citizen agents provide access to low-level retail outlets far more often than they do to the

pernicious high-volume drug markets simply because they are easier and less risky for the agents to approach (Sherman, 1992). The odds are good that sales locations thus identified are Opportunists' rather than Businessmen's. Opportunists presumably have a greater need of ready cash and thus much less incentive to narrow their potential market through the use of defensive strategies.

So long as the police do not distinguish between the two types of markets, street-level suppression efforts will almost inevitably flood the justice system with the most vulnerable sellers (presumably Opportunists) rather than the more dangerous Businessmen (Tunnell, 1991). Current police undercover operations at the street level are basically limited to "first contacts"- making a buy and getting out. Their experience provides no more than hints and inferences about how to distinguish the two types of drug seller for research or strategic purposes. Businessmen's retail outlets can be recognized over time but addresses shift in and out of "active" status over the short term. It is not always possible to distinguish a stable but temporarily fallow drug market from one which was a flash-in-the-pan Opportunist's outlet. Analysis is complicated by the fact that established Businessmen networks seem to move into new territory (and new addresses) periodically, blending in with the mushroom crop of Opportunist locations. Many of the defensive profiles are present when dealing with each type of dealer, because hazards of the street trade apply equally to Businessmen and Opportunists.

Regardless of what mechanism is used to try to sketch the life-cycle of drug locations, researchers and policymakers should be alert to the existence of a residual period of pseudo-market activity, a sort of mirror-image of a police crackdown's residual effect (Sherman, 1990). Police raids take place in a short period of time. A relatively few number of people, particularly customers, will be aware of the fact that a drug house has been raided and neutralized. Past customers, and those receiving directions through the Speakeasy-like referral chain, will continue to come to a drug market even after it ceases to operate (for whatever cause). For a time, the street activity around certain locations may appear almost the same as it did when the locations were active drug markets, particularly at Speakeasys, Drive-Ins, and Dealerships. The same person who sat on the porch as a lookout may continue to sit on that porch because it's too hot to remain indoors.

Conversely, the absence of extensive, stationary foot traffic in an area where a Bazaar once flourished may not mean that the drug market no longer exists there. Instead, it may indicate only that the activity pattern has shifted to a Speakeasy or Drive-In. Police observations are likely to be alert to these nuances, where citizen reports may not.

CONCLUSION

Despite the difficulties outlined above, it should be possible to focus scarce investigation and prosecution resources at the local level, directing the major efforts toward Businessmen enterprises in order to "get more bang for the buck." To do so will require a change in police information-gathering procedures at both the investigative and post-arrest stages. Debriefing of arrestees immediately after the raid would probably be the most important source of information, although Fifth Amendment questions place severe limits on the use of such information. Using civilian researchers to gather the data for intelligence rather than prosecutorial purposes raises questions of effectiveness of interrogation and of confidentiality, as well as expense. No "silver bullet" mechanism for developing reliable information exists at the present time, but the area should not be ignored. Even if constitutional questions remain, the courts may have as great an interest as the police in distinguishing Businessmen from Opportunists for sentencing purposes.

Ideally, police-generated information should be supplemented by, and coordinated with, ethnographic information developed in the neighborhoods. Drawbacks abound here too, of course, in that ethnographic researchers would be compromised if their police links were discovered. Also good ethnographic researchers are probably as scarce a resource as good undercover investigators, and not all of them will be interested in the drug trade for initial research and certainly not for a career.

Community-oriented policing, where it exists in fact, may develop enough contacts in the communities to provide information similar to that gathered by ethnographers (working from information supplied through intermediaries and associates rather than that obtained directly from the drug trade participants). However, that represents a shift from the normal police understanding of their work. Specialized training may be needed to enable officers to develop effective information sources. Any investments thus made, however, should generate positive returns, enabling the police to work smarter as well as harder.

ENDNOTES

1. I caution readers that the descriptions in this paper may be limited to a narrow time-frame. As the nature of the drug trade evolves, new police tactics will also develop, possibly relegating these descriptions to period pieces. Ideally, future research would expand

the observations of the police tactics more systematically, over a longer term, and augment those observations with ethnographic investigation of the dealer population that is the focus of police attentions.

2. My role as on-site coordinator for the Hot Spots research project brought me in contact with police department officials at all levels, including policymakers (the deputy chiefs) and the supervisors of the crack teams and the Narcotics Unit. The Minneapolis information was compiled from a variety of situations during a three-year period in which the writing of an article on drug markets was my chief concern. My assignment in Kansas City was to gather (for the Crime Control Institute) systematic data about the nature of drug markets and the police target-selection process as part of the DRAGNET project there.
3. I am aware of the point raised by Peter Manning and others that there is a technical meaning of "narcotics" within the larger spectrum of controlled substances. Strictly speaking, cocaine is not scheduled as, nor does it have the pharmacological properties of, a narcotic drug. However, "narcotics work" is the shorthand term still in vogue in the police subculture to describe all manner of drug suppression efforts. At the risk of offending my respected colleagues, I have chosen to employ usage of the term in this paper.
4. Businessmen also use drugs (see, e.g., Williams, 1989, *passim*), but are less likely to be dependent upon them and more carefully segment "business time" and "pleasure time." Williams' case history of the Cocaine Kids vividly illustrates the consequences to would-be Businessmen who do not maintain the integrity of their personal lives and succumb to The Life to the neglect of business (see also Fagan, 1989, for drugs and gangs).
5. None of my police informants indicated any establishments in either city that correspond to the after-hours clubs that Williams describes (1989, p. 93ff). Neither city has the urban density of New York. Most of the drug trade and police activity described here took place in residential neighborhoods that were a mixture of free-standing single-family or duplex woodframe homes with some four-plexes and some medium-sized apartment buildings.
6. Compare the Johnson et al. (1990, p. 21) description of "counters," "money men," and "hand-off men." The drug operations observed

during this research did not have that level of complexity. Look-outs and the outside men were frequently different roles, but "counting" and "hand-off functions were almost always combined into a single position. It may be that the collapsing of roles is a feature of the less developed Opportunist outlets or of free-lance entrepreneurs not formally attached to the stable networks. However, at least one major player in Minneapolis employed the more streamlined "carhop" version for a high volume distribution point.

7. "Return" presumes some effort is being made to protect the officer's undercover status. The structure of the Bazaar also makes it hazardous for plainclothes (not "undercover") officers to attempt a bust immediately upon making a buy.

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