National Network For Safe Communities
Saving Lives, Saving Communities

DRUG MARKET INTERVENTION

The High Point Drug Market Intervention Strategy

David M. Kennedy and Sue-Lin Wong

Center for Crime Prevention and Control
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
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National Urban League

COPS
COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
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The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested nearly $14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.
- By the end of FY2011, the COPS Office has funded approximately 123,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.
- Nearly 600,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- As of 2011, the COPS Office has distributed more than 6.6 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breath of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Information Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

NATIONAL NETWORK
FOR
SAFE COMMUNITIES

The **National Network for Safe Communities** represents and supports cities around the country to apply and advance proven strategies to reduce serious violent crime and to close overt drug markets.

The National Network recognizes that both law enforcement and the community must play a critical role in addressing these problems—but that neither can do it alone. Therefore, its strategies combine the best of law enforcement and community crime prevention approaches to improve public safety dramatically.

Launched by the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York in 2009, the National Network comprises more than 50 cities actively implementing and advancing two specific strategies: the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS), first implemented as "Operation Ceasefire" in Boston in the mid-1990s, and the Drug Market Intervention (DMI), also known as the "High Point Model," after the North Carolina city that pioneered it.

More than 20 years of field experience and a substantial body of research demonstrate that these strategies:

- Reduce serious violence
- Shut down overt drug markets
- Reduce arrests and imprisonment
- Strengthen disadvantaged communities
- Use existing resources

The National Network is committed to "saving lives, saving communities" by taking its strategies to a national scale and serving the nation's most vulnerable communities. The National Network is designed to represent and support its members by raising the visibility of their work, offering them technical assistance, recognizing and helping others learn from their work and innovations, supporting peer exchange and education, and conducting research and evaluations.

Please visit www.nnscommunities.org for detailed information on the National Network's mission, strategies, research findings, media coverage, events, and membership.

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Established in 1910, the **National Urban League** is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization devoted to empowering African Americans to thrive in the economic and social mainstream. Today, the National Urban League, headquartered in New York City, spearheads the nonpartisan efforts of its more than 100 local affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia, providing direct services to more than 2 million people annually, and affecting millions more through advocacy and research.

The mission of the National Urban League is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights through attainment of a five-point Empowerment Agenda that focuses on the following:

- Economic empowerment
- Education
- Health and quality of life
- Civic engagement
- Civil rights and social justice

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PREFACE

Drug markets are the scourge of too many communities in the United States. They destroy neighborhoods, a sense of community, and the quality of life. They contribute to crime, shootings, prostitution, assaults, robbery, and have a negative effect on local businesses and on business and residential property values. Police sweeps, buy-bust operations, warrant service, and the arrests and jailing of drug dealers have not eliminated the problem. The drug dealers return, new dealers come into the neighborhood, and the drug markets are quickly back in business.

Exasperated by the problem, the High Point (North Carolina) Police Department tried a different tactic and, to the surprise of many, succeeded in eliminating the notorious West End drug market. Creating swift and certain consequences by "banking" existing drug cases; addressing racial conflict between communities and law enforcement, setting strong community and family standards against dealing; involving dealers' family members, and offering education, job training, job placement, and other social services, the police department was able to close the drug market. Buoyed by this success, the police also were able to close three other drug markets in the city using the same tactics. After studying the successes in High Point, other cities across the country have used similar strategies with similar levels of success.

The High Point strategy does not solve the drug problem, but by eliminating street drug markets, we can reduce crime, reduce racial conflict, reduce incarceration, build a sense of camaraderie among residents, and turn some dealers' lives around. The National Urban League strongly supports this program and urges cities everywhere to follow this approach.

INTRODUCTION[1]

In 2002, James Fealy, a career police officer in the Austin (Texas) Police Department, was named chief in High Point, North Carolina, a city with a population of about 95,000. Fealy had spent much of his career working narcotics and his first tour of High Point opened his eyes to the city's chronic and high level of open, overt drug activity, some of which dated back 40 years to the first heroin epidemic. He was determined to do something, but was unsure of how or what because, in his long professional experience, traditional narcotics enforcement simply did not work. In the fall of 2003, Fealy and key partners—High Point Police Department Majors Marty Sumner and Randy Tysinger, Narcotics Bureau Chief Larry Casterline, and Assistant United States Attorney Rob Lang—began working with David Kennedy to frame a different approach to the problem. (Kennedy, then of Harvard University, had been working on violent crime problems with Lang and the High Point Police Department since the mid-1990s.) The team's goal was to eliminate overt drug markets throughout the city and address the key crime problems associated with them: homicide, gun assault, sexual assault, and other serious violence; prostitution; drive-through drug buyers; and broad community quality-of-life concerns. Kennedy added a related set of issues: address racial conflict between communities and law enforcement and reduce the individual and community damage produced by traditional drug enforcement.

The operational plan addressed individual drug markets in a larger enterprise that directly engaged drug dealers and their families. The plan created clear, predictable sanctions against drug dealers; offered a range of services to help offenders; and focused family and community standards against drug dealing on known drug offenders.

The police first implemented the strategy in May 2004 against a flagrant drug market in the city's West End neighborhood and subsequently applied the strategy in three additional markets: Daniel Brooks/Washington Drive (April 2005); Southside (June 2006); and East Central (August 2007). During the 3-year implementation period, overt drug activity in High Point was almost entirely eliminated. In the original West End neighborhood, violent crime is down 57 percent 5 years later. Citywide, as the four markets were closed, overall violent crime fell 20 percent, driven by the reductions in the drug market areas.

The police department has reported seeing a diffusion of benefits, and areas surrounding the initiative neighborhoods have also quieted down. Community conditions in the targeted areas have dramatically improved, as have police/community relations and race relations in the city. Law enforcement officials, community leaders, and community members echo the achievements of the intervention. According to High Point Chief Fealy, "It produces results that are so dramatic it's almost incredible. It is sustainable. It does not produce the community harms that our traditional street-sweeping, unfocused efforts of the past have. The most important benefit of this work by the people of High Point is the reconciliation that emerges from the dialog between the minority community and the police. In a 30-year law enforcement career, I have never seen an effort like this. It's nothing short of miraculous."

Reverend James Summey, since January 2009 executive director of High Point Communities Against Violence and former pastor of the English Road Baptist Church in the West End, says the strategy gave the community a way to "confront these people who had been a terror in the community. But at the same time we embraced them, by saying at the same time, you're worth something. It's redemptive. So many times the police and the community don't see eye to eye, but on this we could. We're working together like we never have in our lives. This is the most fantastic thing I have ever seen."

The intervention has since been applied in Newburgh and Hempstead, New York; Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and Raleigh, North Carolina; Providence, Rhode Island; Rockford, Illinois; Nashville, Tennessee; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and other sites. With some variations, and lessons learned along the way, the impact of most of these operations has been very positive. Like most community-based and problem-oriented strategies, many of the basic ideas and elements of the intervention are adapted to local circumstances and, in particular places, often refined and improved. Beginning in 2008, the U.S. Department of Justice, through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, has been expanding the High Point strategy to 18 sites nationally under the Drug Market Intervention Program.

This report sketches the key themes in the High Point strategy and touches on the experience of subsequent cities that have applied it: in particular, Providence, Rhode Island, where the intervention was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the National Urban League.

Chapter 1. The Problem of "Overt" Drug Markets

In the first, and unusual, step the High Point team framed the issue not as "the drug problem" but as an "overt market" problem: a term coined for the purpose. Many community problems, including the most severe problems with violence and disorder, associated with "the drug problem" are a function of drug *markets*, and particular *forms* of drug markets, rather than with drugs as such. Overt drug markets are markets in which a stranger can readily purchase drugs on the street, in drug houses, from apartments, and the like. Typically, overt markets are located in poor, minority communities and have clearly defined geographical boundaries. Much of the crime and community damage associated with the drug problem is a function of these disorderly drug markets rather than with drug sales or use as such. These problems include the following:

- Crime hot spots created by street sales and drug houses
- Unusable public spaces, for example, sidewalks, parks, and stores
- Enabling markets for prostitutes and drive-through sex buyers
- Transients whose presence drives out long-time residents
- Reduced property values
- Failed or displaced businesses
- Eased entry into criminality for young people
- Facilitated drug use and addiction

Overt markets create strong self-sustaining dynamics. Buyers know that they can buy in a particular area and sellers know that they can sell there. Both have reason to continue in the same place even in the face of real risks. Enforcement and prevention efforts rarely shut down entire markets, which continue to provide attractive venues for new dealers and users and dealers and users returning from jail or prison. The routine experience of law enforcement is that overt markets, once established, are fiercely resistant to even heavy and sustained attention.

Drugs are found in many communities. In 2004, the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, found that high school students, whether in urban or suburban communities, use drugs at the same rate.[2] In the suburbs, however, there are no young men with guns on street corners, no drive-through buyers, and no street prostitutes. There is a clear parallel here to various forms of other illicit markets, such as prostitution. Communities seeing the encroachment of a street sex market, with streetwalkers and drive-through johns, will be up in arms; that same community is unlikely to pressure law enforcement to do something about the escort services that advertise in their yellow pages. The High Point team had no illusions that it could do something about drugs as such, but thought it reasonable to attempt to eliminate the overt markets.

Key Elements in the Strategy

Recognizing "Norms and Narratives"

The participants in framing the High Point strategy—Chief James Fealy, Major Marty Sumner, Major Randy Tysinger, U.S. Attorney Rob Lang, Narcotics Bureau Chief Larry Casterline, David Kennedy, and eventually community partners such as Reverend James Summey (High Point Communities Against Violence and, at the time, pastor of the English Road Baptist Church in High Point)—had decades of experience with drug enforcement, the communities in which overt markets present themselves, and drug dealers. Much of the central logic of the intervention was based on that experience. Central to their thinking were the ways in which police, community members, and drug dealers understand, define, and interpret what is going on in drug enforcement, drug markets, and drug dealing: what the team came to call the "norms and narratives" of the involved parties.[3] Foremost was a clear, if uncomfortable and difficult, realization of the role of race.

Overt markets are located almost entirely in poor minority neighborhoods, housing projects, and the like. Routine drug enforcement is often intrusive, with high levels of street stops, vehicle stops, and warrants served on residents, and frequently leads to high levels of arrest, conviction, probation, incarceration, and parole, especially for younger men. In some neighborhoods, a substantial majority of young men end up with criminal records and histories of incarceration or court supervision.

Communities frequently resent police practices and the unintended harm that often flows from drug enforcement: criminal records that inhibit people from finishing school, taking entry-level jobs, and pursuing higher education; the sense among young men that arrest and imprisonment are normal or even a rite of passage; parents taken away from the children and families.

In the past, the High Point Police Department and its partners carried out a great deal of street drug enforcement and warrant services, with no apparent effect on the overt markets. The routine use of intrusive enforcement measures, such as street stops, vehicle stops, and search warrants, often meant that even residents not involved in drug activity had hostile encounters with the police. Perhaps worse, as in similar neighborhoods, powerful "narratives"—accounts of and explanations for what was going on—had developed. A central feature of the High Point process was recognizing that fact and the impact those narratives had on the way communities, law enforcement, and dealers regarded the drug problem and each other. All those involved in the core team on the High Point project knew these norms and narratives from their own experience; but framing them explicitly, a role that Harvard's David Kennedy played, turned out to be extremely important.

A dominant narrative in certain communities is that drug issues and the community's experience with drug enforcement are embedded in the historic experience of minorities, especially African-Americans, in America. Drug enforcement is seen as part of an unbroken chain of deliberate oppression that began with the enforcement of slave codes and slave-catching and continued through the legal and extra-legal repression of Reconstruction, law enforcement's involvement with racist terrorists like the Ku Klux Klan, police enforcement of both the written and unwritten laws of Jim Crow, and law enforcement's attacks on civil rights activists.

The heroin epidemic of the late 1960s and crack epidemic of the late 1980s and early 1990s, which continues in force in many neighborhoods, are viewed as deliberate government actions to damage and control communities finally freed from formal legal oppression during the civil rights movement. The community feels that while there are more drugs sold and used in majority neighborhoods, law enforcement has no interest in those people or those crimes. The real money and the real benefits of the drug trade go to high-level figures outside the community. There is strong feeling that the drug trade could not exist without the acquiescence and support of the government and law enforcement, that the government actually manages the drug trade, and that the CIA invented crack and brought in it into the community. High levels of enforcement, arrest, and incarceration in minority neighborhoods are seen as a deliberate outside attack, designed as a way to incapacitate strong young minority men and provide work for law enforcement agencies and prison staff.

Conversely, a dominant narrative in law enforcement is that the affected communities have lost their fundamental social and moral standards. On this account, the community as a whole no longer stands against drugs, violence, and other crime, neither sets nor enforces standards for its young people, and takes no responsibility for itself. Rather than insisting that its young people finish school, go to work, care for their own children, and the like, the community seizes any opportunity to blame outsiders, especially the police. There is a strong feeling that the larger community is complicit in, and benefitting from, the drug trade. Drug dealers are seen as irrational, often predatory and sociopathic, and are not deterred by frequent arrest and incarceration or by high levels of homicide and other serious violence. They use violence to settle trivial personal disputes, show no empathy for the destruction they sow within their own community, and employ children as runners and lookouts. They care about nobody, including themselves.

Finally, the dominant narrative among street dealers and similar offenders is that they have no choice in what they do because of the barriers created by racist outsiders. Although Whites and other outsiders commit more serious crimes, as evidenced by Enron and Iran-Contra, poor minorities get far more intense enforcement attention.

History and current conditions have left them no options, so their dealing is justified. Drug enforcement is an act of racist oppression. Arrest, incarceration, and death are inevitable and nothing to be afraid of. "Respect" is everything, and disrespect must be met with violence.

As the narratives have shown, law enforcement, communities, and drug dealers misunderstand each other in important ways. Such systematic misunderstandings perpetuate the problems. The High Point team believed that it was crucial to make these narratives explicit and to address them across groups. If the community truly believed that the police were conspiring to flood the streets with drugs as a way of oppressing young Black men, then the community would not take a strong stand against the drugs and violence. If law enforcement truly thought the community was uncaring and corrupt, law enforcement would not see the community as a potential ally and partner. If drug dealers were seen as sociopaths, neither deterring them nor helping them would seem possible. Airing these issues and, if possible, finding some common ground, would be essential.

Shut It Down and Keep It Shut: Tipping the Dynamics in Overt Markets

Particular overt drug markets that develop over time and have strong sustaining dynamics usually are quite well defined geographically. Once they establish themselves in a particular place, buyers and sellers know that they can do business there. Law enforcement is overwhelmed, communities are intimidated by dealers and angered by ineffective and intrusive law enforcement, and the cycle continues.

Enforcement rarely reaches the whole market at once. Traditional enforcement strategies rely on large numbers of arrests of street-level dealers. They, however, are easily replaced by other low-level players, and the buyers and sellers who are arrested return to a still-thriving market. The constant but unsuccessful enforcement attention to such markets can embolden dealers and buyers, demoralize and anger residents, and make law enforcement look weak and foolish, thereby contributing to the harms and narratives described above.

Overt markets, if shut down, could reestablish themselves over time: they would not bounce back full-force, but would grow back gradually. If this process were interrupted at the very beginning—if every new "first" dealer were prevented from succeeding—it would be possible to prevent the market from returning. This could mean that dealers would stop trying to sell there, buyers would no longer bother to look there, and community confidence could be reestablished. The High Point strategy, therefore, focused on deliberately shutting the market down completely and all at once and building in a maintenance strategy designed to intervene early and prevent its reemergence.

Create Deterrence: Ensure Formal Sanctions

Low-level drug dealers tend to accrue extensive criminal histories but face low and almost completely unpredictable risks at any given moment. Research shows that dealers can average hundreds of transactions between arrests,[4] and that most drug arrests result in low-level sanctions. The prison risk per cocaine transaction, for example, has been calculated at 1:15,000.[5] Even when a dealer faces a real risk, he usually doesn't know it until he's been arrested and charged. The deterrence value of ordinary drug enforcement, therefore, probably is almost nil, even in the midst of very high levels of police activity. An effective deterrence framework should produce a meaningful sanction that is made explicitly clear to offenders so that they know they face a real risk *before* they are arrested.

Minimize Formal Sanctions

In communities with overt drug markets, high levels of arrest and incarceration are driven by drug enforcement and have become unintended sources of individual, family, and community harms. On an individual level, personal and social capital are damaged. Having been in prison reduces one's lifetime earnings by 10 to 30 percent and greatly reduces the likelihood of finishing school and gaining a higher education.[6] The stigma associated with incarceration confines offenders to groups of like offenders and creates a street culture in which getting arrested and going to prison is expected and status-enhancing.

Families of incarcerated individuals suffer stigma and a severe financial burden—losing both a source of income and incurring extra financial burdens with legal and extra-legal fees. Furthermore, incarceration creates a gender imbalance that has profound consequences. In highly incarcerated communities there are fewer than 62 men for every 100 women, and a majority of single-mother households.[7] Single mothers often work multiple jobs and long hours, leaving their children without parental guidance. The effects on individuals and families are felt at the community level, as well. Clear, Rose, and Ryder, examining neighborhoods in Tallahassee, Florida, found that high rates of incarceration, greater than about 1.5 percent of the total population of a neighborhood, created a tipping point and actually increased crime.[8] In high-incarceration neighborhoods—with incarceration often driven by overt drug markets—researchers estimate that, on any given day, up to 25 percent of adult males are incarcerated,[9] and in a given year, 2 percent of all residents enter prison.[10]

As has been noted, these enforcement policies poison relationships between minority communities and law enforcement. Travis (2008) states, "We have every reason to suspect that our criminal justice policies are undermining respect for the law as we witness the growth of a 'stop snitching' culture in communities of color that punishes young people who cooperate with police."[11] The use of formal sanctions in addressing drug markets should be minimized as much as possible.

Community, Family, and Peer Standards Matter

Individual morality; the views of respected family members, peers, and role models; and clear community standards are the most powerful underpinnings of good behavior. These influences are not aligned against drug dealing in troubled communities. Communities have strong feelings against drug offending and some offenders have real interests in stepping away from the street, but the "norms and narratives" keep them from being expressed clearly. The broad feeling that law enforcement is the enemy stands in the way of a clear community stand against dealing. Among networks of offenders, informal norms require individuals to act as if prison is nothing to fear, early death is inevitable, and disrespect requires violence. Community norms and narratives and offender norms and narratives matter a great deal more than those that law enforcement and other outsiders attempt to impose.

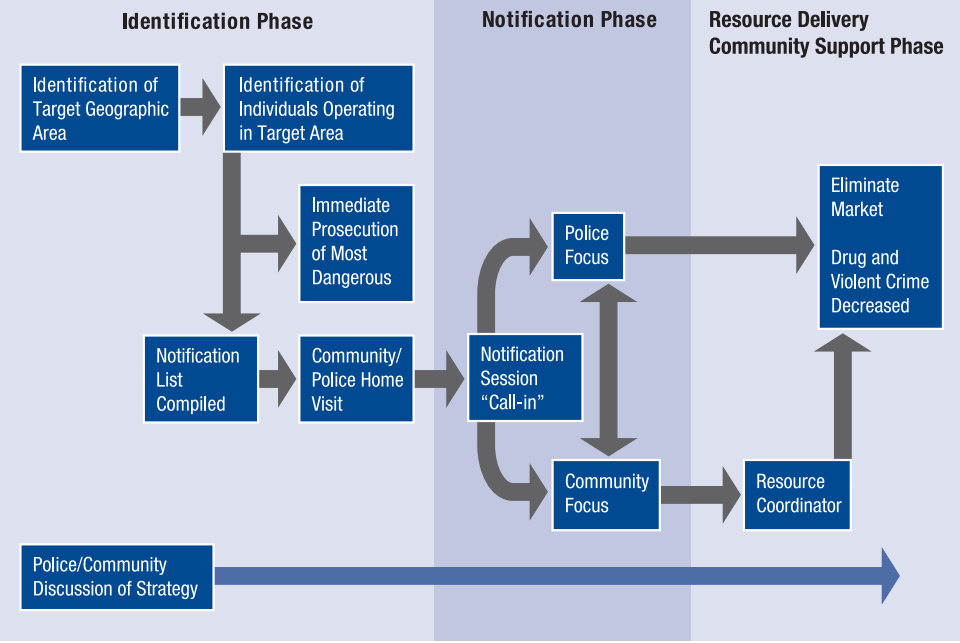
Help Matters

Drug offenders should have help to do better with their lives. This is important for at least two reasons. First, if dealers start leading legitimate lives, that will help prevent their and the community's return to drug dealing. Second, if they do not, but a legitimate offer of help has been made, they no longer have any excuse for criminality, and the offender and community narrative that justifies drug dealing has been undercut.

Chapter 2. The Drug Market Intervention

The operational High Point plan was to eliminate overt markets throughout the city by closing them permanently, one at a time (see Figure 1). The most powerful step that could be taken was for the community and the dealers' families and peers to make it very clear that selling drugs was unacceptable and must stop, and if law enforcement had to take steps, those steps represented the will of the community, not outside oppression. It was necessary first, however, to address the conflicts and misunderstandings between law enforcement and communities; reduce the concrete harms that drug enforcement caused in the community; elevate positive norms within communities and offenders; and focus those influences on dealers. It would also be necessary to provide help to dealers and perhaps to their families. If those steps failed, the police would impose meaningful and predictable criminal sanctions on the dealers.

Figure 1: Flow Model of the Intervention Strategy



Source: Prabutt, James M., M.J. Gathings, Eleazer D. Hunt, and Tamela J. Loggins. *High Point West End Initiative: Project Description, Log, and Preliminary Impact Analysis*. Greensboro, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships, July 2004.

Addressing Law Enforcement, Community, and Drug Dealer Norms and Narratives

Central to the process were two lengthy discussions led by Harvard's David Kennedy, first within law enforcement (the High Point police chief, command staff, and key members of the department), and then between law enforcement and members of the communities (recruited by Chief Fealy and the department). Fealy and his command staff continued the conversations, addressing each group's "norms and narratives," and translated those ideas from one group to the other.

The Law Enforcement Conversation

The police department, prosecutors, probation, and parole discussed the ways that law enforcement regarded the minority community and offenders. The essence of the narrative was this:

- The minority community, with exceptions, has collapsed and tolerates or embraces criminality.
- The minority community has lost any meaningful leadership or social structure.
- The minority community, therefore, cannot and would not take even readily available steps, such as finishing school and taking entry-level jobs, to participate in the mainstream.
- Dealers themselves were irrational or even sociopathic.

The law enforcement discussion introduced the idea that what appeared to be apathy, tolerance, or corruption was, in fact, the product of a community narrative that saw enforcement as racist, thus preventing the expression of a strong community stand against drugs and violence. It also introduced the idea that broad community collapse, family breakdown, and particular issues such as the unwillingness of young men to finish school and take entry-level work, were in part the unintended consequence of intense drug enforcement. The conversation explored community anger over even legitimate enforcement actions, such as stops, arrests, warrant service, and the ways in which the community saw those actions as seamless with outright illegality, such as brutality, illegal stops and searches, perjury, and sexual abuses.

Law enforcement also explored how many of the above elements resonated with particular strength in offender groups and networks. The basic narratives were even stronger; that is, law enforcement was seen as particularly racist, corrupt, abusive, and incompetent. Beyond that, street culture required offenders to take positions that individually they may not have agreed with, or agreed with as fully, such as the following:

- Jail and prison were nothing to be feared.
- Offenders act as if they would be dead by the age of 25, so nothing mattered anyway.
- Violence was a legitimate and even requisite response to disrespect.
- Criminality was the result of White oppression.
- One would be a fool to go to school and then work at entry-levels jobs.

The fact that attention from law enforcement was unpredictable and incoherent was explored. While an offender might accrue a long record of arrest and sanctions, those were rare events in a long offending history, with no rhyme or reason as to how they were applied, and with major inconsistencies across official contacts. Any given day's decision to offend, therefore, could be seen as fairly rational.

Chief Fealy played a key role in these exchanges, making it clear to the department that he was open to these ideas. In particular, he spoke of his own frustration that his enforcement work had never seemed to solve the community's drug problem. He admitted that police moved into communities, "stopped everything that moved, turned them upside down, and shook them to see if drugs fell out of their pockets." He spoke of his own shock and misery when, on completing a drug sweep in his native Austin, Texas, an elderly Black woman in the neighborhood told him that he and the police were almost as bad as the drug dealers.

The Community Conversation

In talking with the community, David Kennedy presented his understanding of the core public narrative around drug enforcement—that it was a seamless, deliberate extension of past racial oppression—and his personal conviction that while drug enforcement was ugly and unintentionally damaging to the community, it was, in his words, "a train wreck, not a conspiracy." He engaged community members in discussing the fact that their public silence was read by law enforcement, other outsiders, and drug dealers as apathy, tolerance, or support for the drug trade and its associated harms. He stressed certain core points:

- No community could flourish without setting clear standards of right and wrong.
- Neither law enforcement nor anybody else could set those standards from the outside.
- If community standards were clearly opposed to drug dealing, then law enforcement might be able to step back and heavy enforcement might not be necessary.

Community members generally responded frankly that this was true, frequently saying that their own parents would never have tolerated such behavior and that the community today needed to return to those kinds of attitudes. Those in law enforcement who had written off the community as disintegrated, complicit, and even corrupt appeared shocked by what they heard. Chief Fealy, again, took a key role in these conversations, saying that he knew from his own experience that drug enforcement was ineffective and often heavy-handed and intrusive, that minority communities were policed in different ways than majority communities, that his inability to deal with the drug problem had been a persistent disappointment to him during his career, and that he was eager to work with the community to try something different. Community members, in turn, frequently appeared shocked by what he said.

Drug Dealers and Street Culture

Both law enforcement and communities needed help in understanding that low-level drug activity was frequently a product more of informal peer and "street" dynamics than of sensible economic calculation or organized criminal enterprise. The cycle of repeated arrests followed by returns to jail and prison may not mean that a young man is self-destructive or irrational; it may simply mean that he's running with other young men who constantly maintain that they fear neither prison nor death, regardless of what they actually believe privately. Myths and misunderstandings had to be addressed. Some community members, for example, believed that nonexistent gang leadership would not allow dealers to stop, or that low-level dealers routinely make vast sums of money in a short time. In these conversations, experienced police officers and members of the community who were very close to the streets were of enormous value, and were able to say from direct experience and exposure what the street drug trade and street life were really like and that reality often had no relation to the images held by others.

The Beginning of Reconciliation

The conversations between law enforcement and the community went surprisingly easy. For the most part, they articulated what both community and law enforcement routinely said in private. By dealing with the misunderstandings and mythologies, the participants in the conversations recognized that both sides were contributing to the terrible outcomes on the street. "The community was deeply angry at law enforcement and felt that we were incompetent or doing deliberate harm," says Chief Fealy. "We did not see community opposition to drugs and violence. We did not credit at all that dealers were rational and reachable, as events have clearly proven."

These initial conversations led to a basic agreement to move forward. As the strategy evolved and started to take shape, the process continued both inside and outside the department, with Chief Fealy and Major Sumner meeting with the High Point Police Department narcotics squad and, eventually, the entire patrol force (through a series of roll-call briefings) to explain and get reactions to the evolving operation. They also held a series of community meetings in the West End neighborhood once the drug market there was selected for the initial intervention.

Identifying and Selecting an Initial Drug Market

Chief Fealy and Major Sumner felt strongly that the target market should be chosen for its levels of drug-related and violent crime. To mount the operation in a particular place, they wanted to be insulated from both community and political pressure and from community concern about stereotyping and stigma. "If somebody said, 'why are you picking on my neighborhood,' or somebody else said, 'why didn't you come to my neighborhood,' we wanted to be able to show it was objective and not prejudiced or based on politics," said Major Sumner.

In doing so, the High Point Police Department identified the major overt markets in the following way:

- Mapped drug arrests, calls for service, and field contacts; and Part I, weapons, sexual, and prostitution offenses
- Reviewed serious crimes within hot spots for a drug connection
- Analyzed information from patrol officers, vice/narcotics investigators, informants, and crime tip lines

An important additional factor for selecting the first drug market was the presence of a strong community network, without which implementation would have been difficult.

Through this methodology, the department identified the West End, Daniel Brooks/Washington Drive, and Southside neighborhoods as major overt markets (later analysis added the Greater East Central neighborhood). The West End and Southside areas consist of largely rental housing; Daniel Brooks is entirely public housing. The West End was selected for the initial operation after analysis showed that the small hot spot area had generated roughly 10 percent of High Point's violent crime for more than a decade. The West End also had a strong community network, High Point Communities Against Violence, a community group of ministers, service providers, health care workers, nonprofits, educators, and elected officials, led by Reverend James Summey, at the time, also pastor of the English Road Baptist Church in the West End. (Many of the other sites have made similar decisions, choosing, when faced with otherwise roughly equivalent choices, to begin with the stronger set of community partners.)

Careful Identification of All Dealers

Disrupting the entire market and intervening simultaneously with all dealers in the market was seen as crucial to "tipping" the market to a closed condition and addressing the small-group/network dynamics that supported offending. The idea was to identify all street-level dealers. Mid- and upper-level dealers supplied drugs to street dealers in various quantities but, as Major Sumner explained, "…mid-level and above dealers will not retail the product themselves, so by taking out the street dealers you disrupt the market."[12] To develop the list, vice/narcotics detectives did the following:

- Surveyed patrol officers, probation officers, street narcotics officers, and community members
- Reviewed every arrest report, incident report, and field interview associated with possible dealers
- Reviewed all known associates
- Checked suspects' current activities
- Generated an initial list

"We have found that it [the list] begins large, but it was repeatedly trimmed as it turned out that dealers once active in the area no longer were, or were not actually dealing, or were in prison," say Major Sumner.

Even in communities with severe drug market problems, only a small number of offenders drive the problem. In High Point, too, the process uncovered a very small number of active dealers. The West End turned out to have only 16 active dealers; the Daniel Brooks public housing project also had 16; the third site, the Southside neighborhood, had 26; and the most recent site, Greater East Central, had 32. "We'd been doing sweeps in the West End every month for years, and I thought there were hundreds of dealers there," says Major Sumner. "When it turned out to be 16, that's when it became manageable. I thought, we can do this." This basic pattern—considerably fewer dealers than commonly thought—has generally been consistent across project sites. When the Winston-Salem (North Carolina) Police Department first replicated the High Point strategy in a public housing project in the Cleveland neighborhood, it believed that the area was swamped with drug dealers. Careful police work identified 31. "There were a lot of people hanging around, and a lot of users and just people in the mix, but not many actual dealers," says Winston-Salem Chief of Police Pat Norris.

Creating Deterrence: "Banking" Cases

It was relatively easy to create meaningful formal deterrence around the identified dealers. For each drug market, police used ordinary investigative techniques to make cases against each dealer. Undercover officers or confidential informants made buys using digital audio and video surveillance equipment. Volume dealers or violent offenders (those with records of violent or gun crimes, or who were otherwise known to be violent), or those facing a probation or parole revocation or an upcoming court date, were arrested and prosecuted. The cases for low-level dealers without a history of violence were "banked;" that is, taken to the point where a warrant could be signed, and held there. This permitted law enforcement to tell dealers, at a time of their choosing, that if they continued dealing they would be arrested immediately and without further investigation, but if they stopped dealing, nothing need happen to them. It put police and prosecutors, in effect, in the position of being the dealers' probation officers. The chance that something meaningful would happen to them if they continued dealing was no longer 1:15,000 but roughly 1:1 and they knew it. Four dealers were arrested in the West End at the outset and 12 faced banked cases.

Not surprisingly, many in law enforcement find this step—not arresting someone they could arrest—difficult, and sometimes impossible, to accept. In High Point and the subsequent sites, police and prosecutors have come to see it as not only acceptable but, in fact, preferable.

One reason is that they believe that more of the usual way of doing things will not give different results. "I've been in narcotics enforcement my whole career," says Chief Fealy. "It's never worked." In the normal course of events, when low-level dealers, to their surprise, were arrested, they were bonded out and returned to the streets where they would be free to continue dealing. It is a common belief among police that their dealing often increases at this point because they have to make up for lost profits and pay legal bills. Most cases would be pleaded piecemeal during the next year or so to probation, which would keep them on the street, or to relatively minor jail or prison terms. They would receive little supervision while on the street or on probation, and little or none when serving their jail or prison terms. The apparently tough step of arrest and prosecution was next to meaningless and was clearly better understood by the dealers themselves.

Banking the cases, on the other hand, meant that the dealers knew to a certainty *ahead of time* that they faced whatever inconvenience, expense, and formal penalties their arrests would precipitate. With the charge hanging over their heads, they faced the consequences not just for the single drug transaction (or few drug transactions) for which they could be arrested at the moment, but for *all* transactions they might contemplate while the charge was banked. Although they were on the street, they were *not* free to continue dealing unless they wanted to risk the very high chance of activating their cases. Most, as it turned out, did not, thereby making a mockery of the street bravado of not caring about the police or prison. It was easy to posture when it was too late to do anything about it, but much harder when there was a clear choice. As backward as it seemed, banking the case was greatly more onerous than pursuing it.

Banking the cases also greatly changed the underlying moral calculus. It was a graphic, concrete way to show the community, dealers, and their families that the view they had of law enforcement as conspiring to harm the community and control young Black men is wrong. It recognized the fact, and the community concern, that arrest and conviction does permanent harm to a dealer's future, should he later want to change. "We've come to see the damage it can do," says Marty Sumner. "I tell them, I don't want to turn you into a felon."

Identifying Influentials

Following on the core premise that dealers would stop selling drugs when people around them made it clear they should, the hope was to enlist those close to the offenders—parents, grandparents, guardians, older members of the communities, ministers, ex-offenders—to create and reinforce positive norms and expectations. There was a great deal of concern in High Point about whether it would be possible to identify and mobilize what the team came to call "influentials." Would persons close to the dealer stand for the right things? Would they accuse the police of setting up or profiling the dealer? Were they supportive of, and profiting from, the dealing? For the most part, these concerns turned out to be unfounded. When told that their son or daughter or grandchild or friend was in serious trouble but could get help, such persons usually rallied.

The influentials were identified in what was, in effect, a parallel investigative phase of the initiative. Most were identified through the dealers' arrest records, which included a standard question at booking about arrestees' relatives; by probation officers, who often knew given dealers and their families and associates, or through jail records, such as visitor lists. One or several influentials were identified for each dealer—primarily mothers and grandmothers.

Organizing Services

Agencies, volunteer groups, and others that could provide social services and assistance in core areas such as education, housing, employment, food and clothing, drug and alcohol treatment, transportation, and the like were identified and Chief Fealy chaired a meeting to explain the initiative and recruit their assistance. Resources were reprogrammed primarily from existing efforts to support the drug market initiative; federal Weed and Seed funds were used to hire a resource coordinator to work closely with dealers and their families (this has since been made a permanent, city-funded position). High Point Communities Against Violence committed to ensuring that basic needs were met—most commonly employment, housing, transportation, and help enrolling in GED programs. For the initial intervention in the West End, High Point City Manager Strib Boynton underscored the city's commitment by offering city jobs to offenders who could pass a drug test.

Home Visits

In late April and early May 2004, a team consisting of a High Point police officer, a service provider, and Reverend Summey visited the homes of the 12 identified dealers and their influentials, sometimes repeatedly. They were told that the police had made undercover buys from the dealer; that probable cause existed for an arrest; and that an opportunity to avoid prosecution and an offer of assistance would be discussed at an upcoming meeting that family members and others were encouraged to attend. The offenders received a letter from Chief Fealy inviting them to the meeting with a promise that no one would be arrested that night. Most of these visits went surprisingly well, given the concerns the team had about whether the influentials would be receptive to the plan. One mother angrily rejected the overture and told her son not to trust the police or go to the meeting; he showed up anyway on his own.

Shutting the Market Down: The Call-In

The key operational moment in the strategy was the call-in at which law enforcement, community members, and service providers delivered a unified message to dealers in the company of their influentials. The West End call-in was held at 6:00 p.m. on May 18, 2004 at High Point police headquarters.

Nine of the 12 dealers came to the meeting, most of them accompanied by their influentials. The call-in began with community members and social service providers saying clearly that the dealers were valued as people and that the community was eager to help them, but that what they were doing was illegal, destructive, and wrong, that the community was sick and tired of it, and that they had to stop.

"We get your victims. And let me tell you, it's not pretty what you're doing to people in our community. You don't tell them, when you sell them that crack, that their teeth are going to rot out. You don't tell them that they might end up dead. We see them. We see their pain. We feel their pain. And you guys need to stop killing people," said Becky Yates of Caring Services, a drug and alcohol recovery agency.

"They have given you an opportunity to turn your life around, and certainly we are here, that if we can assist you in doing that, then that's what we are willing to do, whatever that is," said Bobby Johnson, a community volunteer. "But you have been targeted. And yes, we are tired of it. And yes, if I have to point my finger, I have no problem in doing that."

From law enforcement, the dealers heard an uncompromising message: "You could be in jail tonight, we don't want to do that, we want to help you succeed, but you are out of the drug business." Blown-up surveillance photos of drug locations lined the walls; four chairs held pictures of the dangerous offenders arrested as part of the operation. Law enforcement officers told them they had to stop and encouraged them to get the help that they needed. On a table was a case file for each dealer, with the offender's name clearly visible on the spine. "I assigned a detective for each one of you that were identified, and these cases here represent what these detectives have already done on your behalf," Major Sumner told the group. "Now I'm going to go ahead and tell you this, this is it's a little different tonight. We've already bought drugs from most people we called in.

Let that sink in. We've already bought. Most of you could be arrested tonight. But we already told you, we don't want to arrest you. That's not why you're here." If they chose not to stop, law enforcement officials had all that they needed to prosecute them. It would not be business as usual. "I can promise you, with the 7,000 felonies and over 100,000 misdemeanors we prosecute every year in Guilford County, I can't remember every single name," said Stuart Albright, Guilford County District Attorney. "But I can remember y'all's name. I got every one of y'all on a list, all ten, eleven of y'all here. And every one of my assistants has your name. And if they don't prosecute you—if you show up in their courtroom, show back up in the system—and they don't prosecute you as aggressively as they can, I'll fire them. Their job's on the line. And you've got to know that."

Law enforcement's willingness *not* to act on existing cases seemed to make a profound impression on the dealers' families and other community members. Dealers' mothers and grandmothers cheered both the community's and law enforcement's messages. Dealers were given an opportunity to meet the service provider coordinator to assess their various needs. Most dealers signed up for services the same day. The next morning the coordinator got a call from a dealer previously unknown to law enforcement asking if he, too, could participate.

The call-ins have been electrifying events, with police officers moved profoundly, drug dealers testifying to their gratitude for a second chance, community figures speaking of both accountability and redemption, and family members speaking strongly and plainly to their children. "As hard as it was to believe that drug dealers would change their behavior," says Chief Fealy, "we now find it harder to understand how they would not."

Impact

Closing the Markets

Today, almost no overt drug activity remains in High Point, and the quality of life in the affected neighborhoods has improved dramatically. "Most important, these changes are almost entirely self-sustaining," says Chief Fealy. "We continue to work in these neighborhoods, but an active community consensus now stands against drug dealing."

The West End overt drug market vanished literally overnight. In little more than a month prior to the call-in, narcotics officers made multiple purchases from 11 people at 17 locations in West End. Several weeks after the intervention, two informants tried to make buys in 16 locations and were unable to make even one purchase. Street corner and drug house activity, drive-through buyers, and prostitutes were simply not in evidence. The character of the neighborhood changed immediately, with residents going outside again, children playing, people taking care of their properties, and a multitude of other signs of transformation. Particularly satisfying was that for the first time large numbers of local children attended one church's summer program: the kids said that their mothers had told them it was now safe to walk to church. Street and narcotics officers soon picked up a clear sense from offenders across High Point that the West End had become a "no-go" zone for drug dealers.

The same outcomes were seen in subsequent interventions in Daniel Brooks, Southside, and East Central. During a 12-week period before the intervention, informants made 24 buys at 8 locations in Daniel Brooks. Two weeks after the intervention, 15 attempts during a 2-week period resulted in 2 purchases. In the Southside, 51 street buys were made at 29 locations. In each market, undercover officers and informants were able to make buys every time they tried. Following the call-ins, focusing on both these and other locations, the High Point Police Department was unable to make a single buy. Informants attempted to make buys in the West End and Daniel Brooks several times a week for 3 months, without success. Informants now spot-check these neighborhoods once a month. The West End drug market has been closed for more than 5 years and Daniel Brooks for more than 4 years.

No displacement has been evident. Of the 18 dealers notified in the first two initiatives only four have been arrested for dealing, three in their initial areas and one elsewhere. No other hot spots have emerged; rather, High Point has improved overall after each call-in.

Violent Crime and Drug Crime

Violent crime and drug crime have dropped dramatically in the West End. In examining the larger West End neighborhood, the High Point Police Department found that in the first 100 days after the intervention there was a 75 percent decrease in violent crime. Small absolute numbers make for large percentage shifts, particularly for short comparison periods, but 5 years after the intervention, the reductions in violent crime, defined as murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, prostitution, sex offenses, and weapons, appear to have stabilized at about 57 percent. Most important, no homicides, rapes, or gun assaults have been reported in the West End since the intervention, and gunshot calls for service have dropped by more than 50 percent.

Drug crime is similarly down in the West End area and has shifted from dealing offenses to minor possession, paraphernalia, and the like. Four years after the intervention, reductions in drug crime are apparently stable at about 26 percent.

With much enthusiasm about their success in the West End, the High Point Police Department took the initiative to the neighborhood of South Side in June 2006. Within the first 100 days after the notification both violent crime and drug crime dropped dramatically; 50 percent and 29 percent, respectively. The South Side initiative has been in place for roughly 2 years and within the first year violent crime has dropped 30 percent, and during the 2-year period, violent crime has decreased at an average rate of 16 percent. Additionally, drug crime decreased by 39 percent during the first year after notification. The second year, though, saw a 15 percent increase in drug crimes, driven by a police focus on persistent street prostitution problems, with offenses shifting from dealing to minor possession. Drug dealing offenses after the intervention fell 52 percent.

In August 2007, High Point applied the initiative to the Greater East Central neighborhood, which is far larger at 615 acres than the West End (165 acres), Daniel Brooks (167 acres), and South Side (160 acres). Within the first 100 days, violent crime dropped 27 percent; 300 days after the intervention, the reduction in violent crime remained steady at 23 percent. Drug crime dropped 42 percent within the first 100 days and has remained at that level 300 days after the intervention.

Interestingly, statistics for violent crime and drug crime in the Daniel Brooks housing project are not as positive. At the end of the first year, violent crimes increased by 45 percent, but decreased by 8 percent at the end of the second year, while the third year saw an increase of 18 percent, averaging out to an increase of 23.5 percent during the 3 years. Drug crime also followed a similar trend. At the end of the first year after the intervention, drug crimes increased by 27 percent followed by a decline of 14 percent in the second year. This downward trend continued until the end of the third year, with the start of the fourth year showing a 4 percent increase in drug crimes. This apparently occurred for two reasons. A careful investigation of the data showed that the violent crime reported in Daniel Brooks tended to be primarily domestic, on which this intervention was unlikely to have great impact. Historically, estranged relationships with the community and a low level of discretionary drug enforcement in Daniel Brooks meant that there was little reported drug crime before the intervention, something that the High Point Police Department knows to be inaccurate; since the intervention reporting seems to have increased. Tellingly, shortly after the Daniel Brooks market was shut down, community volunteer Bobby Johnson took a walk through the area to have a look; and, apparently taking him for a drug buyer, residents chased him out.

Researchers from High Point University surveyed Daniel Brooks residents 9 months after the intervention. Of 88 respondents, 85 percent were familiar with the initiative and 42 percent said drug dealing and use were substantially reduced.[13] While the survey showed a number of areas where improvement was needed, "the majority of respondents had nothing but praise for police efforts. When asked to identify the biggest criticism they had with how the police do their jobs, 30 percent instead spoke very favorably or simply indicated they had no concerns."[14] The High Point Police Department received a letter of appreciation during the Daniel Brooks initiative: "To All of High Point Finest, I would like to thank you all for the wonderful job that you are doing around the Daniel Brook area and beyond. I would like to say thank you for checking on our home when we are on vacation. I'm praying for you all. Thank you."

Dealers' Outcomes

Seventy-five dealers were called in from the four sites: 10 from West End, 8 from Daniel Brooks, 28 from Southside, and 29 from Greater East Central. Forty-four have reoffended, 20 for drug-related crimes. Banked charges were activated for 17 individuals. Overall recidivism among dealers called in is running at about half the North Carolina state average.[15]

For the most part, dealers still in the community have not turned their lives around. Of the 31 individuals who have not reoffended, only one has been able to maintain steady employment. "The greatest hurdle is in teaching and helping them relearn what it is to lead a normal life. It is in learning and relearning how to relate to these individuals. I honestly feel like, its being 25 points down with a minute to go to save the game," said Reverend Summey. Many who got jobs quickly lost them; others have simply largely dropped out of sight, although the police department believes that most are still in and around High Point.

A key lesson has been that even when the notified drug dealers do not do well, the drug markets do not reemerge. Even when the dealers commit new crimes, they are doing so more or less individually, not in the collective, public, concentrated, and intense manner they were before. The new crimes do not lead to a new overt market or new crime hot spot.

Maintenance

Keeping the former drug market area closed is as important as closing it in the first place. In the immediate aftermath of the West End call-in, beat officers, vice/narcotics detectives, and street narcotics officers watched relentlessly for dealers to emerge in the target area, stopped them, and "marketed" this back to notified dealers, their families, and the community. If someone tried to sell, he was told to stop and, for the most part, that was sufficient. Overtime officers who were assigned to the target areas for 6 weeks had very little to do and were withdrawn with no ill effects. Regular patrol officers developed a permanent strategy that included maintaining systematic contact with notified offenders, their families, and the community.

All sites report that the areas are more or less recognized as off-limits by drug dealers. The clear community standards are largely responsible for keeping neighborhoods free of dealing. "I say, they got their outrage back," says Major Sumner. All of the areas require at least some attention, however, and several clear lessons have emerged from the experience.

First and foremost, law enforcement needs to realize that the core intent of the intervention is to protect the community from the harms caused by overt drug markets. In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, for example, police officials reported that over time they came to focus not on the Cleveland area and whether it was free of drugs, but on whether the notified drug dealers were doing well, getting work, and staying out of trouble. Drug dealing crept back in and was not addressed effectively. The area is better than before, but is not as it should be, and the Winston-Salem Police Department will repeat the operation.

Another lesson learned is that ordinary enforcement approaches, even when effective in traditional terms, may not fit the needs of this strategy. "We realized that when we saw something, or got a complaint, we had to do something visible right away," says Major Sumner. If someone called about a drug house in one of the market areas, it might take a month to do undercover work, set up a warrant, and serve it. That process was of necessity a secret, but residents thought that nothing was being done, and felt that law enforcement's promises had been empty. The High Point Police Department, therefore, made sure that something clearly visible was done immediately. Often it was at a relatively low level but still effective, such as talking to the dealer or, if appropriate, the landlord, or parking officers in their vehicles outside the location. If more serious enforcement action was necessary, it was made a top priority, no matter how minor the actual dealing. The department changed the way it managed informants so that cases involving dealers in the target areas were rewarded instead of cases involving large quantities of drugs. The overall intent was to make it clear on the streets that these were, and would remain, no-go areas.

It was also critical that both community members and other dealers are informed of enforcement actions. The intended deterrent effect will not occur if nobody outside law enforcement and those actually arrested know about it.

Reconciliation

The police department and key figures in the community report fundamentally different relationships between the affected communities and law enforcement. Eight months after the East Central initiative, a predominately Black neighborhood watch group held a dinner honoring the police officers and command staff and presented Chief Fealy with a letter of appreciation for getting back their community and being included in the process. Reverend Summey said that for the first time "[the initiative] brings EVERYBODY together to handle the problems. The community at large can accept this sort of joint operation because it is redeeming to human beings. The community has had feelings, for years, about 'fairness' in the justice system. Now they have the opportunity to see how it works."

The police department felt a deep shift in the willingness of residents to work with them. In 2003, for example, three young men were involved in a home-invasion homicide in the West End. An anonymous 911 caller reported the incident, but was too afraid to identify herself. After the intervention, the climate changed so dramatically that the woman came forward and not only identified herself but also testified in court. While conditions in the neighborhood were dramatically improved, within the first 100 days of the West End initiative, 911 calls for services increased by 10 percent. Community members were reclaiming their neighborhood and calling to report suspicious persons and suspicious vehicles. Within a year, 911 calls had shifted primarily to domestic violence and quality-of-life issues. In the words of Reverend Summey, "all they complained about were the damn dogs."

Chapter 3. Providence, Rhode Island

The Providence intervention was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the National Urban League.

Overt drug markets in Providence existed as long as anyone in the police department could remember. The city has five drug markets: Manton, Chad Brown, Cranston Street, Comstock/Taylor, and Lockwood. Residents were "prisoners in their own homes because they are afraid to let their children go out and play or to even walk to a store because they are in fear," said Deputy Chief Paul Kennedy. The violence associated with the drug markets devastated and crippled the community. "I think people had just resigned themselves to the fact that drug markets and related problems were a way of life and that we were ineffective in trying to stop it. That was reflected in the fact that people in these areas, many times, stopped calling the police because they felt we couldn't or wouldn't do anything about it," said Kennedy.

The police department's relationship with these communities was severely strained, lacked trust, and was ridden with conflict. The community believed that law enforcement was not there to prevent crime, but to arrest people. The racial makeup of those involved in the drug markets was predominantly African-American and race was a divisive, but unspoken, issue. Furthermore, the community was skeptical and did not "trust us to police ourselves," said Deputy Chief Kennedy.

In 2003, the new mayor, David N. Cicilline, appointed Dean Esserman as chief of police. Chief Esserman made many organizational and operational changes, and crime in the city declined, but the overt drug markets remained. "We did the same things over and over," said the deputy chief. "We arrested street dealers as much as possible and occasionally we would do a long-term operation where we would take down many dealers and suppliers. It didn't work because someone would always replace the people we took out."

Property values declined and streets were overrun with violence and drug dealers. No one felt safe, day or night. The negative impact of the overt drug market on the afflicted communities was reported almost daily in the Rhode Island newspapers. The police department's staff approached the Urban League of Rhode Island (ULRI) in search of possible solutions, committing themselves to provide assistance and advocacy where needed. The community feared the violence and "were afraid to complain as it did no good," said Dennis Langley, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the ULRI.[16] Additionally, the strained relationship between the community and law enforcement led the ULRI to spearhead and reprioritize its services to organize and find a viable solution. There was "no comprehensive plan to eliminate the problem; no trust by the PD in a working partnership with the community for change," said Langley."[17]

In 2005, the High Point initiative attracted the attention of the National Urban League. Janet Zobel, who had funding from the Justice Department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to work on community crime problems, approached the police chiefs and Urban League CEOs of four cities, including Providence. A meeting held near Chicago clearly showed the unspoken racial schism dividing the community and law enforcement. After a briefing by Harvard's David Kennedy on the basic intervention strategy, Deputy Chief Kennedy was astonished to hear Dennis Langley ask why the police would be interested in the approach, since "everybody knew that the reason for the drugs was so the police could put our kids in prison." Langley, in turn, was astonished to hear Deputy Chief Kennedy say frankly that nobody in law enforcement thought the war on drugs was winnable and that there was nothing the police could do to keep drugs out of the country, out of Providence, or out of the neighborhoods.

The ULRI was immediately willing to proceed; calling the framework "too good to be true",[18] the department wanted to know more. Deputy Chief Kennedy and Lieutenant Thomas Verdi, head of the narcotics unit, visited High Point, where their skepticism grew. "High Point does not look like Providence, Rhode Island. [Providence] is a much more urban setting. The crime problems are a little different," said the deputy chief. He and Chief Esserman, remained intrigued, however. In meetings with their command staff, they posed seemingly simple questions: "We know how to go out and do drug investigations. We are very good at it. We know how to do them, we know how to do them well, but why does the drug market still exist? Why do they continue to return?"

Deputy Chief Kennedy argued that "the definition of insanity is doing something over and over again, when you see the same result." The National Urban League brought David Kennedy to Providence three times during the next year for meetings with the department and community figures to brief his entire command staff and narcotics unit on the strategy. After a year, although doubt remained, the department decided to try it. "Doing something was better than being skeptical and doing nothing," said Lockwood District Commander Lieutenant George Stamatakos.

Identifying and Selecting an Initial Drug Market

Site selection began with geographic information system mapping of drug arrest, calls for service, field contacts, and Part 1 offenses. After determining the hot spots, serious offenses were reviewed for a drug connection by gathering information from patrol officers, vice/narcotics investigators, and other law enforcement personnel. The Lockwood area was selected as the target site.

Historically, the Lockwood neighborhood was part of an area known as Upper South Providence and consisted of working-class families and immigrants. In 1964, the neighborhood was divided by the construction of Interstate 95, and homes, churches, and schools were torn down. The construction of Interstate 95 and the race riots in the 1960s caused many residents to relocate to the suburbs and the neighborhood became home to Blacks and Hispanics living in public housing complexes.

Interstate 95 attracted many transient drug users to the area because it leads directly into Pine Street, which was dubbed the "crack highway." Broad Street, which borders half of the Lockwood neighborhood, is predominantly commercialized, draws much traffic, and also facilitated the overt drug market. Crossroads, a social services center for the homeless that had opened nearby, attracted low-level customers. Dealers made most of their money from the out-of-towners, people from the suburbs, and people from other states because of access to Interstate 95.

Violence was prominent. Said one resident, "The problem [in Lockwood] was five [dealers] deep on three different corners. There was a shooting in the new playground. It was so concentrated in that area that it was blatant and in your face." Another community member echoed the sentiment: prior to the initiative "it used to be bang, bang, bang.

Boys hanging all around the stores, corners, selling drugs. There was a store over here where a boy pulled a gun out on the owner. He didn't get any money. I have a lot of friends who live around here and they said they were very scared to go to the store because they never knew what was going to happen over there. People were selling drugs and the building was surrounded by that type of activity."

Careful Identification of All Dealers/Banking Cases

To gather evidence, a confidential informant was sent out every day to make drug buys. All buys were recorded using both video and audio. Vice and narcotics detectives identified the suspects through the videos with the help of patrol officers, probation officers, street narcotics officers, and informants, both on the street and in prison. The detectives prepared arrest warrants but held them short of signature for an arrest. The undercover operation lasted 9 months and moved well outside the Lockwood area. Ultimately, 33 dealers were identified in Lockwood and an additional 72 citywide. The intervention, though, remained focused on Lockwood. When it came to those who would be called in, with their cases banked, the Attorney General's office rejected anyone with a violent criminal history or a firearm charge. Of the 33 Lockwood dealers, 7 were called in.

Identifying Influentials

Lieutenant Stamatakos was charged with identifying the influentials. He, ULRI League administrator Luis Aponte (a Providence councilman hired for this project), and two ULRI caseworkers identified and visited the families of the dealers chosen for the call-in. Of the seven, Lieutenant Stamatakos's team made in-home visits to four of the identified dealers and their families. The conversations were direct and frank, telling the families that the dealers were in serious trouble and that this was their last chance, but that they had the option of choosing another path. The caseworkers explained that help was available and that they would try to assess and address all of the dealer's needs. The families of the four individuals were very supportive of, and receptive to, the message.

Others among the seven were more elusive. "Once they knew we were looking for them and that their friends got locked up, they thought it was a trick and ran away," said Lieutenant Stamatakos. Two were eventually found by narcotics detectives and, after a long talk, were convinced to attend. They were told to bring someone to the meeting with them.

Shutting the Market Down: The Call-In

Major Fitzgerald and Lieutenant Stamatakos organized the event, which was held in the public safety complex of the police department on December 6, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. All seven dealers appeared. Even the skeptical came, with the persuasion of caring family members. A half hour before the call-in, the mother of the last remaining dealer, who sat outside in her vehicle with her son, called Lieutenant Stamatakos and asked him if it was a trick. Once she was convinced of Stamatakos's sincerity, she walked her son into the call-in.

Representatives from the faith-based community, social workers, the Community Development Corporation, the Stop Wasting Abandoned Property organization, the Providence Housing Authority, the Urban League, and the vice principal of Hope High School began the call-in by telling the dealers that they were loved, but that their inexcusable actions were destroying the community. They were told that they had to take the right path and that help was available. Community members invited to express how they felt about what the individuals were doing to their community voiced their fear of violence because of drug dealing. "They were concerned for their safety. But the seven, there was no reaction. They were taking it all in. It was hard for them to hear from people that they didn't even know that they cared for them and loved them," said a case worker.

The seven were ushered into an auditorium where large photographs of the dealers who had been arrested were displayed. Representatives from the offices of the Rhode Island Attorney General, the office of the United States Attorney, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Providence Police Department talked to them while they looked at the photographs of those who were now arrested and facing federal prosecution. It was a simple but powerful message. "Those individuals who we could not work with, their pictures were on the chairs. That left an indelible mark in my mind.

Even now, I sit back and visualize it and the message that was sent out," said Dennis Langley. Law enforcement then showed videos of the undercover buys. "The younger ones were embarrassed. Mothers started crying. It was sobering. They watched their kids deal out crack. It was a new low," said Lieutenant Stamatakos. One individual started to laugh, "but getting to know they [were] boys, it was a nervous laughter—we have to play it cool until we go down. Inside they were nervous—they got us," said a caseworker. They understood that they were given a choice to desist and get help or be arrested. The call-in "is the kind of event you wait your whole career for," said Chief Esserman.

Services

The ULRI took sole responsibility for providing essential social services to the dealers and their family. A part-time coordinator and a part-time case manager organized needed services, which included educational assistance, employment, housing, drug treatment, and other medical needs. With limited resources and no additional funds, the ULRI prioritized this initiative and reallocated existing resources. Services other than employment and education were provided directly by ULRI. Workshops were held "to develop the relationship and prove to [dealers] that we were committed just as much as they were committed."[19] The ULRI identified and received commitments from high schools, community colleges, drug abuse centers, hospitals, clergy, and the business community to provide educational and employment services.

One case manager was assigned to the seven chosen for the call-in. Initial assessment occurred at the call-in and continued for several weeks. Many services were delayed because of organizational problems and the lack of concrete commitment from service provider agencies, which perpetuated frustration, anger, and distrust among the dealers. Additionally, most dealers within the group were not employable because of their age, education, and criminal history. ULRI was not prepared for, and did not have the immediate resources, to address this. The issue was addressed in a meeting with the dealers and their families. Thereafter, weekly group meetings and biweekly individual meetings reinforced ULRI's commitment and opened a genuine dialogue with the dealers and their families. The dealers were told that they needed to take responsibility for their attitudes and lack of real effort. The dealers had "poor success in going on interviews due to their attitude and reliability," said Langley.[20] They were asked to be patient, to learn, and to put in real effort.

As a practical matter, it was not possible to anticipate the many challenges, but ULRI worked diligently to meet each challenge to the best of its ability. From this valuable experience, the ULRI crafted a set of guidelines for others involved in future drug market operations:

- Set aside adequate time for preparation including, but not limited to, making realistic assessments of resources and services available and unavailable. Plans must be made to obtain the necessary resources, whether it is to solicit additional help or to reallocate existing resources.
- Establish and document realistic commitments and goals from each service provider.
- Establish and systematically maintain information and outcome data on dealers.
- Dedicate a full-time individual to organize all services and to serve as a liaison, providing updated reports to all stakeholders.
- Dedicate on-call case managers, experienced with this population, for continuous follow-up during the first 3 to 4 months.
- Create a standardized intake instrument and protocol to assess the needs of the individuals.
- Meet with the dealers to complete a standard intake form, obtain current contact information, and make specific arrangements for follow-up.
- Establish an open and honest relationship with the offender's influentials and obtain current contact information.
- Maintain an open and honest relationship, by clearly stating what is expected (i.e., timely attendance) of the offender, at the first one-on-one meeting following the call-in. It is important not to make any promises one cannot keep. If viable, the influentials should be encouraged to become involved.
- Establish biweekly meetings to discuss the development of the individual, to address issues that arise, and to enhance the services provided.
- Provide information regarding the offender's development to collaborating law enforcement agencies.

Impact

Closing the Markets

As in High Point, the overt market in Lockwood vanished after the call-in and confidential informants were unsuccessful in making buys. "There is a very visible change. It is still going on at some level but not as visible. It is more quiet," said a community member. Another community member echoed a similar sentiment. "At first we didn't think it was going to work but it did work. I didn't know it was going to be going on until I heard it on the news. Then it got really quiet. There used to be crowds on every corner and you didn't know which way to go, but then it just stopped."

Violent Crime and Drug Crime

A year after the December 2006 intervention, calls for police service went down 58 percent, reported drug crime 70 percent, and drug calls to police 81 percent.[21] Before the call-in, many residents of the Lockwood area were afraid of retaliation by drug dealers; since then, residents have become more vocal, more comfortable, and have began letting their children play outside during the day. A housing manager in Lockwood notes, "You never saw kids playing outside. Never. And now, I have no problem renting apartments. People are coming back here and wanting to move back to the area." Police/community relations have improved dramatically. "One of the things that's so important is the relationship the police have created with the neighbors," says resident Ken Cabral. "They're recognizing the difference between the kids that are doing bad and those kids just trying to have fun in their neighborhood. I've never seen this in any community in the city of Providence."[22]

Maintenance

Since the call-in, the area of Lockwood has been more or less recognized as off-limits by drug dealers. In the immediate days after the call-in, two extra uniformed officers were assigned to the area and overtime uniformed officers were assigned to the target area for 2 weeks, after which the effort was scaled back to the 3 p.m. to 3 a.m. shift. Within a month, the Providence Police Department was able to reduce overtime and the number of officers to its original numbers. Undercover officers and confidential informants continue, weekly, to try to make buys in the area. All attempts, to date, have been unsuccessful.

More important, the community has played a key role in maintaining the neighborhood. "They actually challenge certain people that were in the neighborhood and said, 'what are you doing here?' Once we gave them their streets back, the community became a critical part in maintaining it," said Deputy Chief Kennedy.

The Dealers

Of the seven dealers who were called in, two are gainfully employed and are doing very well. Four have reoffended and one left the program. The Providence team recognizes that the success rate is low. "We have to be realistic," says Deputy Chief Kennedy. "We won't be able to save everyone. We were able to give the neighborhood back to the people, form and strengthen our relationships with the community to the point where they trust the police."

Chad Brown

On June 10, 2009, Providence held its second drug market call-in: this time it was the Chad Brown drug market. Initial results suggest that, like Lockwood, the Chad Brown drug market is gone.

Chapter 4. Conclusions

Early experiences with the High Point strategy suggest that it may be possible to close overt community drug markets and substantially reduce violent and drug-related crime, without relying primarily on intensive, intrusive law enforcement and damaging relationships between minority communities and law enforcement. It suggests that communities, law enforcement, and even drug dealers may share more common ground than seemed possible. It suggests that strong community norms against drugs and crime are hidden by the alienation of those communities from law enforcement, and that if that alienation can be addressed, those norms can emerge and play a powerful role in producing and maintaining community safety. It suggests that law enforcement that is willing to face community norms and narratives and critically consider its own norms and narratives can engage with and address that alienation. It suggests that, through the odd device of the banked case, the prospect of serious sanction can be used to produce deterrence without producing the same level of harm as traditional enforcement practices. Experience to date suggests that these gains, in our most troubled communities, can be sustained, perhaps fairly easily.

The strategy is not perfect. Its most evident weakness is the inability to demonstrate much success in helping individual drug dealers. While secondary to the central goal of eliminating the overt market, this is still a serious shortcoming, and one that is particularly troubling to some of the partners essential to the High Point intervention.

Based on the results in High Point and Providence and other cities' early experience with the drug market intervention, the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance in 2008 launched the Drug Market Intervention (DMI) initiative to replicate the strategy in nine new sites nationally. A second round in 2009 added nine more sites. The DMI distilled the process of shutting down overt markets into nine clear steps.[23]

Even where history and current practice have produced, or helped produce, profoundly damaged communities; seemed to require profoundly intrusive law enforcement practices; and led to profoundly damaged relationships between those communities and law enforcement, the High Point strategy's central lesson may be that there remains common ground and surprising reservoirs of goodwill. With courage and truth-telling on both sides, that common ground can emerge and communities, law enforcement, and even offenders can do things that otherwise seemed impossible.

Endnotes

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16. Interview with Dennis Langley, president and CEO, Urban League of Rhode Island.

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18. Ibid.

19. Interview with a caseworker.

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Overt drug markets destroy neighborhoods, contribute to crime, and have a negative effect on communities. The arrest and imprisonment of drug dealers alone has not eliminated the problem. In 2004, the High Point (North Carolina) Police Department tried a different strategy and succeeded in eliminating the city's most notorious drug markets in a little over 3 years. What became known as the "High Point Model" has since been rolled out successfully as the Drug Market Intervention (DMI) strategy in many jurisdictions around the country and continues to be advanced under the umbrella of the National Network for Safe Communities.

The High Point Drug Market Intervention Strategy tells the compelling story of designing and implementing the original intervention in High Point and describes a subsequent successful replication in Providence, Rhode Island.

This publication is part of an ongoing series by the National Network for Safe Communities about its two core crime reduction strategies: the Group Violence Reduction Strategy and the Drug Market Intervention.

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