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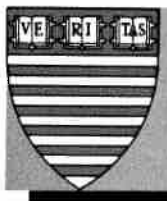

Perspectives on Policing

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The Police and Drugs

By Mark H. Moore and Mark A.R. Kleiman

Many urban communities are now besieged by illegal drugs. Fears of gang violence and muggings keep frightened residents at home. Even at home, citizens feel insecure, for drug-related break-ins and burglaries threaten. Open dealing on the street stirs the community's fears for its children.

The police sometimes seem overwhelmed. Occasionally they are outgunned. More often, they are simply overmatched by the resilience of the drug commerce. Furthermore, their potential impact is neutralized by the incapacity of the courts and penal system to mete out deserved punishments.

Urgent problems and limited resources demand managerial thought for their resolution. Thus, police executives facing the drug problem might usefully consider four strategic questions:

- What goals might reasonably be set for drug enforcement?
- What parts of the police department engage the drug problem and to what effect?
- What role can citizens and community groups usefully (and properly) play in coping with the problem?
- What basic strategies might the police department consider as alternative attacks on the problem?

The goals of drug enforcement

From a police chief's perspective, the drug problem presents distinguishable threats to community security. Most pressing is the violence associated with street-level drug dealing—

This is one in a series of reports originally developed with some of the leading figures in American policing during their periodic meetings at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The reports are published so that Americans interested in the improvement and the future of policing can share in the information and perspectives that were part of extensive debates at the School's Executive Session on Policing.

The police chiefs, mayors, scholars, and others invited to the meetings have focused on the use and promise of such strategies as community-based and problem-oriented policing. The testing and adoption of these strategies by some police agencies signal important changes in the way American policing now does business. What these changes mean for the welfare of citizens and the fulfillment of the police mission in the next decades has been at the heart of the Kennedy School meetings and this series of papers.

We hope that through these publications police officials and other policymakers who affect the course of policing will debate and challenge their beliefs just as those of us in the Executive Session have done.

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James K. Stewart
Director
National Institute of Justice
U.S. Department of Justice

Mark H. Moore
Faculty Chairman
Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

particularly crack cocaine.[1] Much of this violence involves youth gangs.[2] Often the violence spills over into the general population, leaving innocent victims in its wake. There is also the worry that the practice in armed, organized violence is spawning the next generation of organized crime.[3]

Also salient is the close link between drug use and street crime.[4] Criminal activity is known to vary directly with levels of heroin consumption.[5] Many of those arrested for robberies and burglaries use cocaine during the commission of their crimes or steal to support drug habits.[6] Among the small group of the most active and dangerous offenders, drug users are overrepresented.[7] Thus, controlling drug use (and *drug users*) opens an avenue for reducing the robberies, burglaries, and petty thefts that have long been the focus of the police.

A third problem is that drug use undermines the health, economic well-being, and social responsibility of drug users. It is hard to stay in school, hold onto a job, or care for a child when one is spending all one's money and attention on getting stoned.[8] The families and friends of drug users are also undermined as their resources are strained by obligations to care for the drug user or to assume responsibilities that the drug user has abandoned.

Fourth, drug trafficking threatens the civility of city life and undermines parenting. While parents can set rules for conduct in their own homes, the rules are hard to extend to city streets and urban classrooms where drug trafficking has become a way of life. Although these threats affect all city neighborhoods, they are perhaps worst for those in the most deprived areas. There, the capacity of the community for self-defense and the ability of parents to guide their children are not only the weakest, but also the most in need of public support and assistance.[9]

"... drug trafficking threatens the civility of city life and undermines parenting."

Fifth, the police executive knows, even before he commits his troops, that the police can accomplish little by themselves. Drug arrests and prosecutions are exceedingly difficult, owing to the absence of complaining victims and witnesses.[10] Even with these limitations, the police can make many more arrests than prosecutors can prosecute, courts can adjudicate, and prisons can hold.[11] Furthermore, drug distribution systems, held together by the prospect of drug profits, will adapt quickly rather than collapse in the face of police action.

Finally, the police executive knows from bitter experience that in committing his force to attack drug trafficking and drug use, he risks corruption and abuses of authority.[12] Informants and undercover operations—so essential to effective drug enforcement—inevitably draw police officers into close, potentially corrupting relationships with the offenders they are pledged to control. The frustrations of the task lead some officers to cynicism or desperate anger. As the police become more cynical or more angry, the dealers will be standing there with cash in their pockets, ready to make a deal. Or they will mock the police with apparent invulnerability and provoke indignant officers to plant evidence or pursue justice through other illegal means.

"As the police become more cynical or more angry, the dealers will be standing there . . . ready to make a deal."

These threats define the goals of police action against drug trafficking and use. The goals are:

(1) reduce the gang violence associated with drug trafficking and prevent the emergence of powerful organized criminal groups;

(2) control the street crimes committed by drug users;

(3) improve the health and economic and social well-being of drug users;

(4) restore the quality of life in urban communities by ending street-level drug dealing;

(5) help to prevent children from experimenting with drugs; and

(6) protect the integrity of criminal justice institutions.

The operational question, of course, is how best to accomplish these goals. Or put somewhat differently, the question is how best to deploy police resources to produce the maximum contribution to the achievement of these goals.

Police organization and deployment

The narcotics bureau is generally considered the center of the police response to drug trafficking and use. That operational unit aims directly at the source of the problem and mounts the most sophisticated investigations against drug traffickers. It also accumulates the greatest substantive knowledge about drugs in general and in the local community.

Although the narcotics bureau is at the center of the attack, police strategists must recognize that other operating elements of the police department also confront drug trafficking and use. For example, many police departments have established specialized units to attack organized crime or criminal gangs. These units deal with narcotics trafficking because (1) the organized crime groups or gangs that are their central targets are involved in drug dealing; or (2) they have access to informants who can usefully guide narcotics investigations; or (3) they have specialized equipment that can be used in sophisticated drug investigations.

Regular patrol and investigative units also inevitably attack drug trafficking, use, and related violence. Insofar as their efforts are focused generally on street crime, and insofar as drug users commit a large portion of these crimes, patrol units and detectives wind up arresting a great many drug users. Regular patrol and investigative units also end up arresting some drug users for narcotics offenses such as illegal possession and use of drugs.[13] In most cases, the person arrested will not be on probation or parole and must be tried to be punished. In other cases, however, the drug offenses will constitute probation or parole violations that could result in immediate incarceration if the local court system took such offenses seriously.

> ***"... as drug users commit a large portion of these crimes, patrol units and detectives [arrest] many drug users."***

The patrol bureau will also be engaged in the fight against drugs as a result of calls from citizens complaining about drug dealing in specific locations. Often, in response to citizen complaints or at the initiative of the chief, special drug task forces will be formed to deal with a particularly threatening or flagrant drug market.[14] These operations draw on patrol forces as well as detective units. Typically, they last for a while and then go out of existence.

Somewhat more specialized are those units committed to drug education. Although drug education seems like a significant departure from the usual objectives and methods of policing, increasingly police departments are establishing such programs to fill a perceived void in this important demand-reducing function.[15]

The point of reviewing these different lines of attack is not only to remind enforcement strategists that a police department's overall strategy against drugs includes far more than the activities of the narcotics bureau, but also to raise an important managerial question: who in the police department will be responsible for designing, executing, and evaluating the department-wide drug control strategy? In some cases, the department will make the head of the narcotics bureau responsible for the broad strategy as well as the narrower operational tasks of the narcotics bureau itself. That has the advantage of aligning responsibility for the strategy with substantive expertise. It has the potential disadvantage of focusing too much of the organization's actions against drugs in the narcotics bureau itself, and of limiting the department's imagination about how it can and should engage the problem.

In other cases, a special staff officer might be assigned the responsibility of coordinating department-wide efforts without necessarily being given any line responsibility over the activities. This has the advantage of drawing more widely on the department's operational capabilities. It has the disadvantages of failing to establish clear operational responsibility and of requiring the collection of additional information throughout the department.

In still other cases, the chief might assume that responsibility himself. That has the advantages of elevating concern for the problem throughout the organization, of giving the department a powerful representative in dealing with other city departments and community groups, and of aligning operational responsibility with authority. It has the disadvantages of focusing the attention of the chief on only one aspect of the organization's fight against crime and disorder and of moving command further from operations.

The community's resources

Police strategists must also consider that the assets available to attack the drug problem are not limited to the money and legal powers channelled through the police department. The community itself has resources to deploy against drug trafficking and use. Indeed, without the community's own efforts at self-defense, it is hard to see how the police can possibly succeed.

> ***"... assets ... to attack the drug problem are not limited to the money and legal powers [of] the police ... The community itself has resources ..."***

The importance of community self-defense is evident in a review of the spatial distribution of drug dealing across a city. In some areas, drug dealers cannot gain a foothold.

There are too few users to make dealing profitable and too many vigilant people ready to expose and resist the enterprise. Other parts of a city seem to have yielded to the drug trade. Drug users are plentiful. Drug dealers are an influential social and economic force. Local residents and merchants have lost heart.

"... little policing sometimes produces safe communities while heavy policing sometimes fails to do so ..."

Often, these conditions bear no relationship to the distribution of police resources. The areas that are safe rarely hear a police siren. Those that have yielded to the drug trade are criss-crossed by racing patrol cars with sirens blaring. The reason that little policing sometimes produces safe communities while heavy policing sometimes fails to do so is simply that success in confronting drug trafficking depends as much (or perhaps more) on the community's self-defense than on official police effort. Where community will and capacity for self-defense are strong, a little official policing goes a long way to keep the neighborhood free of drugs. Where it is weak, even heavy doses of official policing will not get the job done.

Exactly what communities do to defend themselves varies greatly according to their character and resources.[16] Most communities start trying to control the drug problem by calling the police to complain about drug dealing. Such calls, if they come through the regular 911 dispatch system rather than a dedicated hotline, are very difficult for the police, as currently organized, to handle. They cannot be handled like robberies and burglaries, for those directly involved in the offense (and therefore able to give useful testimony) are reluctant to do so. Moreover, by the time the police arrive, the activity has ceased or moved to a new location. Because a response to these calls rarely produces a successful case, the calls tend to get shifted back and forth between the patrol division and the narcotics unit.

When citizens cannot command police attention through telephone calls, they do what they can to defend themselves individually. They stay in their houses, buy locks and shutters, and fret about their children. This, of course, makes their neighborhoods more vulnerable to the drug users and dealers.

Sometimes citizens take more aggressive action against drug dealers. They harass drug users and sellers at some risk to themselves. They demonstrate against drug dealing in their neighborhoods to rally others to their cause. They invite groups such as the Guardian Angels or the Nation of Islam to help them regain the upper hand against the dealers.[17] On some occasions, they burn down crack houses.[18]

From the perspective of effectively controlling drug trafficking and use, the police must be enthusiastic about direct citizen action against drug dealing. Such efforts extend the reach of social control over more terrain and longer periods of time than the police could sustain by themselves.

On the other hand, direct citizen action poses new problems for the police. Citizens who directly confront drug dealers and users might be attacked and injured. If this occurs, the failure of the police to protect the community becomes manifest. Fearful of this result and solicitous of the welfare of citizens, the police often advise citizens not to take direct action against dealers and, instead, to leave enforcement to the police.

Another risk is that sharp conflict between drug dealers and citizens escalates into large-scale violence. Part of this risk is that the rights of citizens who are suspected by the community of being drug dealers and users will be abused; that is, they will be beaten, their property taken, their freedom of movement and expression limited. Although such threats are rarely taken as seriously as the physical threats to citizen activists, there comes a point when direct citizen action becomes vigilantism, and when the police, as officers of the law and defenders of the Constitution, must defend the rights of suspected drug dealers against mob hostility.

Finally, the police have an interest in maintaining their position as independent experts in controlling crime problems and as the principal suppliers of security services to the communities they police. To a degree, this can be understood as nothing more than an expression of professional pride and bureaucratic self-interest. But, insofar as the community prefers the restraint, expertise, and professionalism of policing to the risks of direct citizen action, the desire of the police to retain most of the responsibility and initiative for crime control is consistent with the public interest as well as their parochial interests.

"... the police must find a way of accommodating, regulating, and using citizen indignation ..."

While such concerns about the consequences of community action against drugs are entirely appropriate, they cannot lead to the simple conclusion that the police should suppress all such action. They particularly cannot justify this conclusion in a situation where the police have nothing else to provide to the communities that feel outraged and frightened. Instead, the police must find a way of accommodating, regulating, and using citizen indignation to help them manage the drug problem.

A crucial first step in managing the potential partnership with the community is to learn how to diagnose the community's capacity for self-defense. This diagnosis begins with a community's own attitudes and practices regarding drug use.

Although it is discouraging, an enforcement strategist must recognize that parts of communities are interested in continuing and facilitating drug use.[19] They include at least the users and the dealers. They may also include people who make accommodations with drug dealing, such as those who run shooting galleries, landlords who milk the economic value of deteriorating properties by renting to drug users who are indifferent to their living arrangements, and local merchants or police who earn money from drug dealers to provide safe havens for drug dealing.

Others in the community do not profit from drug dealing, but nonetheless have stopped fighting it. This group includes ordinary people who no longer use local parks and streets because they are intimidated by drug dealers and users. It could also include local police officers who conclude that dealing with the local drug trade is like shovelling sand against the tide and turn their attention to less frustrating problems.

> ***"... behind the shuttered windows ... and in the apartments off the streets, many citizens are outraged and afraid..."***

Nevertheless, however widespread support for drug use seems to be, every community also contains some significant elements opposed to at least some aspects of drug use. This is particularly hard to keep in mind when the public face of the community—what is occurring on its streets and public places of business—seems openly tolerant. The reality is, however, that behind the shuttered windows of local merchants and in the apartments off the streets, many citizens are outraged and afraid of the drug use in the community. What outrages them may not be the same things that outrage the police or violate the laws, but there is some level of opposition to drug use. That opposition is the asset that needs to be assessed and mobilized.

In thinking about how the police and citizens might reclaim territory from drug trafficking and use, police strategists must anticipate a special problem in helping neighborhoods make transitions from one condition to another. A community that has had a long tradition of being clean may find it relatively easy to maintain its tradition.[20] Such a community is likely to discover a drug problem early because the community is vigilant and the drug problem sticks out. It is likely to respond quickly and aggressively because the problem is both outrageous and small. Drug dealers and users, confirming their prior expectation that the community is inhospitable, will go somewhere else. The probe will be quickly routed.

> ***"It may be more effective to organize and support citizen patrols than to chase the drug dealers from one block to another."***

A community that has had a long tradition of being tolerant of drug dealing has the opposite problem. It may have difficulty in changing its image and condition to one of intolerance. Changes in the level of drug dealing may be difficult to notice because it is so commonplace. The response to a campaign against drugs may be ambivalent because of active opposition by some elements of the community and a sense of despair and futility among the others. Even if an attack is successfully mounted, the dealers and users may view it as a temporary state of affairs. Thus, sustained efforts will not necessarily discourage the dealers and the users.

In confronting drug trafficking and use, then, the task of a police department is often to find a way to prime the community's own capacities for self-defense so that police efforts may be effectively leveraged through community self-help. This involves learning enough about the community to know the sources of support for drug dealing and use in the neighborhoods and the potential opposition. It also means finding ways to reach out to those people in the community who are hostile to drug dealing and to strengthen their hand in dealing with the problem. For example, it may be as important to organize community meetings as to make it easier for individuals to call the police over the phone. It may be more effective to organize and support citizen patrols than to chase the drug dealers from one block to another. It may be more effective to organize groups of parents, educators, and youth leaders to resist drug dealing in and around schools than to increase arrests of drug dealers by 20 percent. In short, drug enforcement may be as much a *political* struggle to get neighborhoods to oppose drug use in small, informal ways every day as it is a technical law enforcement problem that can be solved by more resources or more sophisticated investigations.

Alternative strategies

Police departments rely on many different activities to deal with the drug problem. They conduct sophisticated investigations of trafficking networks. They mount buy and bust

operations to suppress open drug dealing. They arrest robbers and burglars who also happen to be drug users. They arrest drug users for illegal possession. They conduct drug education programs in schools.

Most departments do all of these things to some degree. In this sense, departments generally have "comprehensive" approaches to the problem. Departments differ, however, in the overall level of activities they sustain and in the relative emphasis they give to each. Some place greater emphasis on sophisticated investigations, while others stress "user accountability." Departments may also differ in terms of how much thought they have given to deciding on their most important objectives, and in terms of the relationship between the overall objectives and the distribution of the activities.

> ***"'expressive law enforcement' . . . is what police departments know how to do—namely, enforce the law."***

To help police executives think about how to confront the narcotics problem, we describe seven alternative strategies. The strategies are different from activities not only because they typically involve bundles of activities, but also because each strategy is built upon its own assumption of why the effort is appropriate and valuable to pursue.

Expressive law enforcement: maximum arrests for narcotics offenses

The most common narcotics enforcement strategy could be described as "expressive law enforcement." This differs from other strategies in that it takes all the activities in which the department is engaged and increases them by a factor of two or three. If a city's drug problem is getting worse, the response is simply to increase the resources devoted to the problem. The operational task is to increase the total number of narcotics arrests. The narcotics bureau is expanded and driven to higher levels of productivity. Special task forces are created to deal with brazen street dealing. The patrol force is equipped and encouraged to make more drug arrests. There is much to commend this strategy. First, it is a straightforward approach that citizens, politicians, and police officers understand. It relies on common sense for its justification. It avoids the trap of being too cute, subtle, or sophisticated.

Second, it is what police departments know how to do—namely, enforce the law. It does not make them responsible for outcomes that they cannot control or for activities that they do not do well.

Third, to the extent that the courts and corrections system do their part, the strategy may succeed in bringing drug trafficking and use under control through the mechanisms of incapacitation and deterrence.

Fourth, the all-out, direct attack on the problem sustains and animates a general social norm hostile to drug use. That emboldens and strengthens the hand of those within the community opposed to drug use.

This strategy also has weaknesses. First, it does not admit that police resources, even when multiplied, may not control the problem. It ignores whether the rest of the system can deliver deserved punishments; disregards the scale and resilience of the drug markets; and fails to establish any benchmarks for success other than the promise of a valiant effort to increase arrests.

Second, this strategy rarely examines its impact on the community's own capacities for self-defense. There is a plausible argument that a strong police commitment to aggressive narcotics law enforcement will strengthen the community's resolve to deal with the problem. Under the expressive enforcement strategy, however, no organizational means are created to build community opposition to drugs. Without such efforts, there is the risk that the police action will weaken rather than strengthen community efforts by suggesting that the community has no role to play. Even worse, unilaterally designed and executed drug enforcement efforts may alienate communities from the police rather than build effective partnerships to control drugs.[21] In short, there is the risk that the expressive law enforcement strategy, effective as it may be in its own terms, will fail to develop, and may even inhibit, the development of the self-defense capacities of the communities that must, in the long run, be the route to success.

> ***". . . the impact . . . would be greater if it could reach the source of the problem, the criminal entrepreneur . . ."***

Mr. Big: Emphasis on high-level distributors

A second common strategy to deal with drug trafficking and use is the "Mr. Big" strategy. Its principal operational objective is to reach high levels of the drug distribution systems. The primary tactics are sophisticated investigative procedures using wiretaps, informants, and undercover activities. Often these investigations also depend on "loose" money to purchase evidence and information. The "story" that makes this a plausibly effective attack on the problem is

that the immobilization of high-level traffickers will produce larger and more permanent results on the drug trafficking networks than arrests of lower-level, easily replaced figures.

Again, there is much to commend this strategy. It is common sense that the impact of drug enforcement would be greater if it could reach the source of the problem, the criminal entrepreneur whose energy, intelligence, greed, and ruthlessness animate and sustain the drug trade. This seems particularly true if enforcement and punishment capacity is limited, and must therefore be focused on high-priority targets.

> ***"There may be almost as many potential Mr. Bigs as there are street-level dealers. There may also be a great deal of turnover . . ."***

It also seems more just to focus society's efforts on those who are becoming rich and powerful through the trade rather than on those lower-level figures. While lower-level dealers are hardly blameless, they are arguably less culpable and less deserving of punishment than the high-level traffickers who are the focus of the Mr. Big strategy.

Finally, the Mr. Big strategy is consistent with the development of professionalism within police departments. The strategy challenges the departments to develop their investigative and intelligence capabilities.

There are reasons to worry about the overall effectiveness of the Mr. Big strategy, however. First, it is not clear that current investigative techniques are powerful enough to reach Mr. Big. The time, resources, and luck needed to arrest him are much greater than those needed to reach intermediate targets; therefore, the admittedly greater impact of arresting Mr. Big may turn out not to be worth the special effort.

A related point concerns overestimating the significance of Mr. Big. There may be almost as many potential Mr. Bigs as there are street-level dealers. There may also be a great deal of turnover in the ranks of drug entrepreneurs. The implication is that the value associated with arresting any given Mr. Big in terms of supply reduction impact may be much less than is usually considered. A further implication is that no one may know who Mr. Big is. Or, if we knew who he was 6 months ago, the situation may now be different. Thus, the greater difficulty of arresting Mr. Big may not be offset by any larger, long-term impact.

The final point is organizational. While it is true that the Mr. Big strategy will challenge the police to develop professionalism in dealing with drug traffickers and thus increase the overall capabilities of the narcotics bureau, it is also true that this particular focus may lead to the atrophy of narcotics enforcement efforts in other parts of the agency. Other units may decide to leave drug enforcement to the narcotics bureau.

Gang strategies

Among the most urgent and oppressive aspects of the current drug problem is the violence of gangs engaged in street-level drug distribution. Some of these groups, like the various "Crip" and "Blood" factions now spreading out from Los Angeles, are formed from traditional youth gangs of the type once romanticized in "West Side Story."[22] Others, like the "posses" of New York's Jamaican neighborhoods, simply began gang life as drug-dealing organizations.[23]

Although violence has always been a feature of drug trafficking, to many observers the current level of violence seems unprecedented. As *The New York Times* reported:

> Older drug rings, wary of drawing police attention, generally avoided conspicuous violence. New York's new gangs, like similar groups in Los Angeles and Washington, are composed mainly of undisciplined teen-agers and youths in their early twenties. They engage in gun battles on the street and have been known to execute customers for not leaving a crack den quickly enough.[24]

Indeed, these gangs are held responsible for significant increases in homicide rates in the cities in which they operate.[25] They use violence not only to discipline their own employees and to intimidate and rob their competitors but also to intimidate individual citizens and groups of citizens who resist their intrusion.[26]

> ***"[These gangs] use violence not only to discipline their own employees and to intimidate and rob their competitors but also to intimidate individual citizens . . ."***

Exactly how the police can best deal with this aspect of the drug problem remains uncertain. One approach is to view drug gangs as similar to the youth gangs of the past and to use the same strategies that proved effective in the past.[27] That older strategy was designed primarily to reduce intergang violence, to prevent the extortion of neighborhood citizens and merchants by the gangs and to minimize the seriousness of the crimes committed by gang members. It was not designed to eliminate the gangs, although some efforts were made to turn them to legitimate and constructive

activities. It depended for its success on such activities as establishing liaison with the gangs to communicate police expectations and aggressive police action against gang members, their clubhouses, and their activities when the gangs stepped out of line.

Such a strategy does not seem suitable for dealing with the new drug gangs, however. After all, the old gangs were viewed as threatening to society principally through their violence towards one another. Thus, it was possible for the police to make an accommodation: the gangs could remain intact so long as they refrained from violence. No such accommodation seems appropriate with the drug gangs—particularly not with those that are making places for drug distribution through intimidation of local citizens and merchants. Such conduct requires a sterner response.

> ***"What seems to be needed . . . once the gangs have been wounded is the willingness of citizens to resist gang intimidation . . ."***

A second approach is to view the drug gangs as organized criminal enterprises and to use all of the techniques that have been developed to deal with more traditional organized crime. These include: (1) the development of informants through criminal prosecutions, payments, and witness protection programs; (2) heavy reliance on electronic surveillance and long-term undercover investigations; and (3) the use of special statutes that create criminal liabilities for conspiracy, extortion, or engaging in criminal enterprises.

Such tactics work. They can, if executed consistently, destroy the capacities of organized criminal enterprises.[28] However, such efforts are also time-consuming and expensive. Perhaps these elaborate efforts are not required to deal with the relatively unsophisticated street-level drug gangs. Indeed, in the past, relatively superficial undercover approaches seem to have been successful,[29] as were large-scale sweeps targeted on gang members. What seems to be needed to make police efforts succeed once the gangs have been wounded is the willingness of citizens to resist gang intimidation after the police return to ordinary operations.

Citywide street-level drug enforcement

A fourth narcotics enforcement strategy, now widely discussed, can be described as "citywide, street-level drug enforcement." The principal objective is to disrupt open drug dealing by driving it back indoors, or by forcing the markets to move so frequently that buyers and sellers have difficulty finding one another. The primary tactics include buy-and-bust operations, observation sale arrests, and arrests of users who appear in the market to buy drugs.[30] The major reasons to engage in such activities include: (1) enhancing the quality of life in the communities for residents who are discomfited by the presence of drug dealers; and (2) discouraging young, experimental users from continuing to use drugs by making it harder for them to score.[31]

At first glance, the limitations and hazards of this strategy seem more apparent than its strengths. To many law enforcement professionals and commentators, the idea that one would invest the enormous amount of time and effort that continuing street-level enforcement requires for nothing more than increased inconvenience to buyers and sellers of drugs seems absurd. It hardly seems worthwhile to send the police out daily to battle street-level drug dealers to achieve nothing other than market disruptions.[32]

Second, the police know that they have nowhere near enough manpower to work at street levels across the city. Moreover, they are reluctant to begin doing this job in any particular place because they know that once they have committed police to a given area, it will be hard to withdraw them.

Third, police executives know from much prior experience that street-level narcotics enforcement is extremely vulnerable to various forms of corruption. Bribery, perjured testimony, faked evidence, and abused rights in the past have accompanied street-level narcotics enforcement. Indeed, it was partly to avoid such abuses that many police departments began concentrating on higher-level traffickers and restricted drug enforcement efforts to special units.

> ***". . . most street-level arrests [bring] several weeks in jail . . ., a bargained guilty plea, a sentence to time served, and . . . inadequately supervised probation."***

Fourth, the police know that they can arrest many more drug traffickers and users than the rest of the criminal justice system can process. If the practical value and moral vindication of arrests for drug offenses only come with successful prosecutions and suitable punishment, then street-level enforcement is undermined from the beginning, for there is no reasonable prospect for such results. The likely outcome of most street-level arrests is several weeks in jail prior to trial, a bargained guilty plea, a sentence to time served, and a long period of inadequately supervised probation.[33]

Knowing this, the police can take one of two stances: (1) they can recognize that, for narcotics offenses, the process is the only punishment that offenders are likely to receive and

choose to load into the process what they consider a reasonable level of punishment; or (2) they can grow cynical and refuse to make street-level arrests. In either case, a kind of corruption sets in. The least likely response is the only proper one: namely, to continue to maintain discipline and poise in making narcotics arrests on the street.

> ***"... young, experimental users ... have less experience with drugs, hence ... less motivation to keep searching ..."***

Against these disadvantages, the advantages of street-level enforcement seem small and speculative. The most certain and concrete is that street-level enforcement can succeed in restoring the quality of life in a community and bring a feeling of hope to the residents. It can regain, for those citizens, merchants, and parents who disapprove of drug use, a measure of control over their immediate environment. It can reassure them that they have not been abandoned in their struggles against drug dealers. It can provide a shield that protects them from the intimidating tactics of aggressive drug dealers. That is no small effect, though it might be hard to quantify.[34]

A second benefit, somewhat more speculative, is that the strategy might well succeed in discouraging experimental drug use, particularly among those teenagers who are not yet deeply involved in drugs.[35] Merely increasing the inconvenience to drug buyers may be little deterrent to experienced and committed drug users. They will have enough connections in the drug trade and enough determination to find alternative sources. This same effect may be a significant deterrent for young, experimental users, however. They have less experience with drugs, hence fewer alternative sources of supply and less motivation to keep searching when open drug markets are no longer available. It is also possible that with open drug bazaars effectively closed, parents and neighbors may feel sufficiently emboldened to exercise greater efforts at home and on the street.

A third benefit is that street-level drug enforcement has, on occasion, been effective in controlling street crimes such as robbery and burglary.[36] A crackdown on heroin markets in Lynn, Massachusetts, seems to have substantially reduced levels of robbery and burglary. Operation Pressure Point, directed at drug markets on New York's Lower East Side, also seems to have reduced robbery and burglary. A similar effort in Lawrence, Massachusetts, however, failed to produce the expected effects. This benefit must be treated as uncertain partly because of measurement problems in identifying the effect, and partly because it seems that the tactic produces this effect only under some special circumstances.[37] On the other hand, it does provide an additional reason for considering the potential value of street-level drug enforcement.

Neighborhood crackdowns

A fifth strategy that the police might consider could be called "neighborhood crackdowns." Instead of committing themselves to citywide street-level enforcement, the police might decide to leverage their resources by cracking down on drug offenses in those neighborhoods that are willing to join the police in resisting drug use. Some of these neighborhoods might be those that are just beginning to be invaded by drug dealers. Others might be those that have long been occupied, but have finally reached a stage where they are now determined to rid their area of drugs. Police resources would be attracted to these areas precisely because there is some prospect that the impact of police crackdowns would be prolonged and widened by determined citizens.

News media coverage of the drug problem, particularly the violence associated with drug dealing, suggests that society is handicapped in dealing with the drug problem by a breakdown in the police-community partnership. Wherever there is an opening in a community's self-defense, aggressive young drug dealers seem to find a niche to develop the demand for crack. Sometimes it is a park that the police do not patrol frequently enough and from which other citizens can be driven. Other times it is an abandoned house that can be turned into a shelter for both dealing and using drugs. Still other times it is an all-but-abandoned building whose owner is willing to have anyone pay the rent, and who does not notice that the new tenants arrive with no furniture or clothes, but lots of guns.

> ***"The violence accelerates the process of intimidation. Eventually, the drug dealers operate alone."***

Once established, drug dealers send a message that draws customers and other dealers. Many citizens, finding the company no longer to their liking, begin avoiding crack-dealing locales. Citizens who resist are intimidated. Citizens' groups that complain are also threatened. Occasionally violence breaks out among customers, between dealers and customers, or between competing dealers. The violence accelerates the process of intimidation. Eventually, the drug dealers operate alone.[38]

Citizens cannot deal with these situations by themselves. They need laws and law enforcement to oppose the actions of the drug dealers and consumers and to take action against the landlords (both public and private) who allow the drug

dealers to operate in their buildings. They need the police to respond to their calls for assistance—including crackdowns designed to break the backs of the drug dealers and reclaim the territory for those not using drugs. They need the police to offer assurances that citizens who resist the drug dealers will be protected from attacks.

It is also clear, however, that the police cannot do this job alone. They have only a certain number of officers and many other duties. Drug cases are hard to make and vulnerable to legal challenges. Police can conduct special operations, but eventually they must leave neighborhoods in the hands of citizens. At that time, whether the drug dealers return or not depends a great deal on what citizens do.

If this analysis is correct, a strategy that uses police crackdowns to break the hold of drug dealing in communities that are prepared to assume some responsibility for holding onto the gains might make sense. The police could conserve resources by focusing on only a limited number of areas for relatively short periods of time. The community, working with the police, could shape a police intervention that would be most effective in helping them reclaim their streets. Each would know what would be expected of the other. The results would be the same as those anticipated in a citywide, street-level drug enforcement strategy: namely, an improved quality of life in the city, reduced experimentation with drugs among young people, and conceivably even reduced street crime in those neighborhoods that succeeded in keeping drugs out.

"The community, working with the police, could shape a police intervention that would be most effective in helping them reclaim their streets."

Just such efforts seem to lie behind the most successful cases of drug enforcement. In one particular case in Brooklyn, a neighborhood invaded by drugs managed to drive out the drug dealing by enlisting police efforts to close the buildings that were used for drug dealing, and then mounting patrols through a local branch of the Nation of Islam.[39] The police were willing to put resources on the line to go after the problem with an aggressive approach that was discussed in advance with the community. The community was prepared to try to hold onto the gains by taking disciplined action on their own that stopped well short of vigilantism. The police promised to back up the citizen groups in the future if their vigilance, now refined by prior experience, revealed a major new incursion of drug dealers.

The nature of the strategy is captured well by the testimony of two participants. The local police commander commented:

> I think the patrols are going well. We now have almost nonexistent drug activity in the locations that had been hard-core drug areas. This is a good example of what the police and the community can do together.[40]

One of the patrolling citizens also gave grudging support to the concept:

> We still believe there are problems with the police, with racism and corruption within the department. But we feel we can solve the problems together. We learned a lot of lessons during this. The price you have to pay to fight against drugs is ongoing struggle. We had to pay the price by standing in the cold and rain without pay. But the most interesting thing, I think, is that this has given people hope. Apparently, partnerships are hard and chancy enterprises, but when they succeed, they are worth a great deal.[41]

Controlling drug-using dangerous offenders

The drug strategies that have been discussed so far have been primarily focused on drug trafficking and use. They are designed to produce arrests for narcotics offenses rather than for street crimes such as robbery, burglary, and assault. This is not to say that drug enforcement strategies have no effect on these crimes. Relationships between drug use and crime are so strong that when the police affect drug trafficking and use, they probably affect street crimes as well. The effect is indirect rather than direct, however.

This suggests a drug enforcement strategy designed to achieve *crime control* rather than *drug control* objectives. Such a strategy would focus enforcement attention on those drug users who are committing large numbers of robberies and burglaries.[42] Studies show that drug users account for a large proportion of those arrested for these crimes and that they are among the most active and dangerous offenders.[43] Further, levels of criminal activity among heroin users are known to be higher when they are using heroin than when they are not.[44] It stands to reason, then, that the police might affect a significant portion of the crime problem by controlling the drug use of those active offenders who are heavily involved with drugs.

The principal operational objectives of this strategy would be: (1) to arrest and convict drug-using criminal offenders for either narcotics offenses or street crimes such as robbery and burglary; (2) to identify such offenders after arrest through a combination of criminal record searches, physical examination for needle marks, urinalysis in the jails, and interviews; and (3) to sentence these offenders to dispositions that work directly on their drug consumption such as

intensive probation with mandatory regular urinalysis or compulsory drug treatment.

> ***"... coerced abstinence, imposed as a condition of probation ... and enforced through ... mandatory urinalysis, can ... [reduce] street crime."***

The primary activities of the police department would be to continue making arrests for narcotics and street offenses, improve the records that would allow them to identify the dangerous offenders among the arrested population, and lobby for the development of urinalysis, intensive probation, and mandatory treatment capabilities. The important claim that can be made for this strategy is that it would address the primary reason that citizens worry about drugs, namely drug-related crime, and would do so more effectively, cheaply, and humanely than approaches that rely only on repeated arrests and costly jails to produce the same effects.

There is a reasonable amount of evidence indicating that this approach would work. In California, mandatory treatment programs for drug users are effective in controlling both crime and drug use, both while the person remains under supervision and afterwards.[45] There are also some reasons to believe that coerced abstinence, imposed as a condition of probation and parole and enforced through a system of mandatory urinalysis, can be effective in reducing street crime.[46]

The strategy would also have benefits for organizational development. It would challenge police departments to reach outside their own boundaries, and outside the boundaries of the criminal justice system, to produce the desired effects. Prosecutors, judges, and corrections officials would have to be persuaded of the merits of the strategy.[47] The drug treatment community would also have to be mobilized, their capacity expanded, and their attention focused on the objective of crime control as well as improving the health of users. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this strategy, however, is that it would require the police to consider the possibility that their primary interest in controlling drug-related street crime could be achieved more directly, surely, and inexpensively by close supervision on the street rather than by the enormously expensive process of repeated arrests, jail, and imprisonment.

The limitations of this strategy are the opposite sides of its strengths. It does little by itself to suppress drug trafficking or to discourage the spread of drug use, except insofar as it succeeds in suppressing the demand for drugs among those users brought into the network of coerced treatment. Moreover, it seems to reduce police control over the problem by forcing them to rely on cooperation with others to produce the desired effects. Finally, it does not seem like a suitable law enforcement approach to the problem. There is not enough punishment and jail to satisfy those who think that effective law enforcement by itself will be enough to deal with the problem. For these reasons, the police have generally neither adopted nor supported such strategies.

Protect and insulate the youth

A final police strategy for dealing with drugs could be built around the objective of drug abuse prevention. Instead of generally attacking drug trafficking, a police department might concentrate on trying to halt the spread of drug abuse to the next cohort of 16-year-olds. Part of this effort would consist of enforcement operations to suppress drug trafficking around and within schools. Another part might consist of police-sponsored drug education designed not only to impart information about drugs and discourage drug use, but also to create a favorable climate for police efforts to suppress drug trafficking. A third part might consist of police-sponsored efforts to create partnerships among parents, schools, and the police to define the outer limits of acceptable drug use and to establish a predictable community response to drugs.

> ***"Instead of generally attacking drug trafficking, a police department might concentrate on trying to halt the spread of drug abuse to the next cohort of 16-year-olds."***

The country now has operating experience with each of these elements. New Jersey has made a concerted effort to mount enforcement operations in and around schools to disrupt the trafficking networks that serve high school students.[48] The Los Angeles Police Department's DARE program has shown the potential of involving police in drug education programs in the schools and has been widely emulated throughout the country.[49] Massachusetts has experimented with establishing community partnerships to confront children with a consistent set of messages about drug use. None of these approaches has been systematically evaluated, however. Nor do we have any documented experience with combining the different aproaches in a concerted strategy to prevent new drug use. Thus, the potential of this strategy remains uncertain.

Conclusion

Drug trafficking, use, and associated violence challenge today's police executives to find ways of using the limited resources and capabilities of their departments to reduce the violence, halt the spread of drug use, and control drug-related crime. Moreover, they must do so while protecting the integrity of their own organizations and the legal system.

Past approaches that have relied only on police resources seem to be limited in their ability to achieve any of society's important goals in this domain. To reclaim neighborhoods now yielding to drug use, police must find ways to mobilize and use community opposition to drugs. That the opposition to drugs exists is evident in the willingness of many citizens to take direct action against drug dealers. This adds urgency to the task of thinking through a strategy that builds effective partnerships, for it suggests not only that a resource is available to the police, but also that failing to harness it effectively may compound the problem by inciting vigilantism.

It also seems clear that successful approaches to the problem will rely on enlisting the assistance of other public agencies. For dealing with drug-related crime, the urinalysis and supervisory capacities of out-patient drug treatment programs might turn out to be valuable. To prevent the spread of drugs to new cohorts of teenagers, cooperation with schools and parents is essential.

> ***"... investigative sophistication, and no small amount of force, are required to deal with ... organized crime ... and the emergent gangs ..."***

Thus, to a degree, the drug problem requires first-rate professional law enforcement. Quality arrests for drug offenses are an important part of all police strategies. Great investigative sophistication, and no small amount of force, are required to deal with the traditional organized crime groups and the emergent gangs that now dominate the trade.

Yet it is also true that drug trafficking and use represent a problem that must be addressed through remedies other than arrests and through agencies other than police. The police can play an important role in strengthening neighborhood self-defense capacities by cooperating with local demands rather than suppressing or ignoring them. They can play an important role in mobilizing parents and schools. And they might even succeed in focusing the attention of drug treatment programs on their great opportunity to reduce crime as well as achieve other purposes.

In this domain, as well as in dealing with crime and fear, the methods of problem-solving and community policing combine with the methods of professional law enforcement to produce a perspective and a set of results that neither can produce by itself.

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Mark H. Moore is the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Professor of Criminal Justice Policy and Management and faculty chair of the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Mark A.R. Kleiman is a Lecturer in Public Policy at the Kennedy School.

Editor of this series is Susan Michaelson, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

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