

A Street-Drug Elimination Initiative: The Law Enforcement Perspective

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Abstract:

Purpose– The purpose of this study is to elucidate the elements, developmental stages, and operational steps of an open-air drug market intervention employed in two North Carolina communities in an effort to produce a model that can be duplicated by other law enforcement agencies.

Design/methodology/approach– A systematic and practitioner-informed analysis of the steps and stages of the initiative is presented here. Law enforcement partners at the command and operational levels collectively contributed their voices to the synthesis of this model. Through purposive sampling, 13 key law enforcement stakeholders from the two police departments in North Carolina participated in semi-structured interviews conducted by a member of the research team. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to extract participants' perceptions and recommendations regarding the intervention.

Findings– Based on analyses of the interviews, the street-drug elimination strategy has been synthesized into several major steps. This paper elucidates the elements, developmental stages, and operational steps of the intervention.

Research limitations/implications– This paper underscores important ingredients of the intervention and presents a model for other police departments to implement. Further examination of the strategy is necessary including research on improving the intervention, clarifying the factors that moderate the strategy's effectiveness, explicating the roles and perceptions of non-law enforcement partners and examining the continued impact of the initiative.

Originality/value– The paper illustrates that this intervention has shown promise in reducing drug and violent crime associated with open-air drug markets and the research is of value to other police agencies that desire to implement this intervention.

Article:

INTRODUCTION

The community destruction wrought by open-air drug markets has impacted inner city and urban areas worldwide. Drug markets that operate in public spaces are clearly toxic to neighborhoods (Weisburd and Mazerolle, 2000; Wilson and Kelling, 1982) because of the “direct nexus between drug dealing and violence” (Hunt *et al.*, 2008, p. 396). Indeed, the association between drugs markets, drug trafficking, and violent crime is well established (Aitken *et al.*, 2002; Braga *et al.*, 1999; Goldstein *et al.*, 1992; Weisburd and Mazerolle, 2000). Not only are market participants themselves at risk but the deleterious community impacts are numerous as well (Harocopos and Hough, 2005, p. 3):

[...] traffic congestion, noise (from traffic and people), disorderly conduct, begging, loitering, vandalism, drug use and littering (discarded drug paraphernalia), criminal damage to property, prostitution, robbery, residential and commercial burglary, theft from motor vehicles, fencing stolen goods, weapons offences, assaults, and homicides.

The social disorder that reigns in and around the illegal drug market subsequently impacts residents' quality of life.

Strategies for addressing open-air drug markets

There has been a range of strategies to combat the negative effects of open-air drug markets. Harocopos and Hough (2005) organized responses into multiple categories. First, drug enforcement approaches include policing in a highly visible manner, enforcing the law intensively, buy-busts, intelligence-driven investigative work, confiscating drugs, arresting drug buyers, and warning potential buyers. Examples of community responses include community-led anti-drug initiatives or an intelligence gathering local hotline. Harocopos and Hough outline several civil remedies for responding to drug markets that include encouraging active engagement of local place managers (e.g. landlords, local businesses, and housing authorities), utilizing nuisance abatement laws, issuing Drug Offender Restraining Orders, notifying mortgage holders of drug related problems at their properties, enforcing regulatory codes, and seizing and forfeiting assets related to drug dealing. A fourth category is modifying the physical environment, which includes reclaiming public areas, installing and monitoring surveillance cameras, altering access routes and restricting parking, changing public pay phones, and securing vacant buildings. Finally, rather than focusing on supply, it is possible to use demand reduction strategies, primarily providing drug treatment and prevention opportunities.

Each of these strategies can be effective, but are less effective solely on their own. At the outset of their text, for example, Harocopos and Hough (2005, p. 2) wrote: “Simply arresting market participants will have little impact in reducing the size of the market or the amount of drugs consumed”. Traditional short-term interdiction efforts often yield short-term results as the market responds by changing their playbook (Curtis and Wendel, 2007). Actors in the market have been shown to be able to modify their strategies to respond to law enforcement suppression efforts (Abele, 2004). Multi-dimensional efforts, that feature combinations of civil, enforcement, community, and environmental elements – what some have termed an “eclectic approach” (Hough and Edmunds, 1999) – hold much more promise (e.g. Green, 1995; Weisburd and Green, 1995).

A more recent review of drug law enforcement evaluations by Mazerolle *et al.* (2007) used five categories to classify 132 unique intervention evaluations. Since the review encompassed all drug interventions – not just street-level drug interventions – the array of interventions ranged from international/national interventions to those enacted by a single law enforcement unit. The same authors (Mazerolle *et al.*, 2006), however, conducted a meta-analysis of street-level drug law enforcement, collapsing 14 included studies by their intervention approach: community-wide policing, problem-oriented/partnership approaches, hotspots policing, and unfocused law enforcement efforts. Central to providing context to the current study, the Mazerolle *et al.* (2006, p. 427) concluded that:

[...] the evidence uncovered in our study suggests that multi-agency partnerships, as well as community-wide partnership policing, are likely to be more productive approaches to reducing drug problems than law enforcement only tactics focused on hotspots. That is, our meta-analytical review of drug law enforcement suggests that community-wide policing efforts that utilize partnerships and build better police-citizen relationships are likely to be a more effective approach to tackling drug problems in a community than simply an enforcement-only approach to policing drug hotspots.

Enacting a multi-dimensional, partnership-based strategy

To combat open-air drug markets, two North Carolina communities have employed a data-driven, focused deterrence strategy designed to close drug markets and reduce drug-related violence. Based on a strategy developed by David Kennedy of the Center for Crime Control and Prevention at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the initiatives have received extensive local and national attention (CBS Evening News, 2006; Kennedy, 2009; Schoofs, 2006). These initiatives have developed out of the focused deterrence or “pulling levers” framework (Kennedy, 1997). The drug market elimination strategy uses crime-mapping information to target drug dealers, drug suppliers, and street-level drug sales that impact community safety in a clearly defined neighborhood. Building on a statistical and mapping foundation (Hunt *et al.*, 2008), extensive intelligence is gathered both on networks of individuals involved in the local drug market and individual patterns of criminal behavior (Fealy *et al.*, 2006). To the usual menu of targeted enforcement and service provision, however, the strategy adds on a process of direct engagement between law enforcement and the community with respect to the norms and narratives on each side, and then utilizes new norms and understandings in intervening with offender networks (Sumner *et al.*, 2005). The principal actors, in their application for the 2006 Herman Goldstein Award, summarized their drug market elimination strategy thusly:

An operational plan was developed that addressed individual geographic drug markets as “beachheads” in a larger citywide enterprise that directly engaged drug dealers and their families; created (but rarely employed) clear, predictable sanctions; offered a range of services and help; and, especially, mobilized community and even offender standards about right and wrong. Over the two-year course of implementation, overt drug markets in High Point were eliminated, directly and sustainably. No outside or additional resources were employed. There was no apparent displacement, and clear diffusion of benefits (Fealy *et al.*, p. 1).

Understanding the operational dynamics

Preliminary process evaluations of the initiatives were conducted (as Project Safe Neighborhoods research initiatives) as they unfolded in both High Point (Frabutt *et al.*, 2004) and Winston-Salem (Harvey, 2005). In addition, Kennedy (2009) has authored a text that delineates the full theoretical approach to the intervention with several applied examples. However, a systematic, retrospective, and practitioner-informed analysis of the operational steps and developmental stages of the initiative has not been conducted. Moreover, law enforcement partners at the command and operational level have not collectively contributed their voices to the synthesis of a replicable, operational model. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to elucidate the elements, developmental stages, and operational steps of the street-drug intervention.

METHOD

This exploratory study is one component of a larger research project designed to explore the street drug initiative from the perspective of law enforcement personnel, key community stakeholders, neighborhood residents, and street drug offenders. In addition, while the initial intervention sites exhibited marked declines in both drug and violent crime, those data are likewise beyond the scope of the current investigation (see Hunt *et al.*, 2008)[1]. At the time of the interviews, High Point, a city of 97,796 had conducted four interventions in neighborhoods ranging in size from 142 to 167 acres (population range = 1,039-1,350). Winston-Salem (population 196,990) had conducted the intervention in one neighborhood, which was 159 acres inhabited by 1,699 residents. Drug markets – in both locations – were characterized by “chronic street-corner dealing, crack houses, prostitution, and drive-through drug buyers” (Kennedy, 2009, p. 144).

In total, 13 key law enforcement stakeholders from the Winston-Salem Police Department and the High Point Police Department participated in semi-structured interviews that were conducted by a member of the research team. A purposive sampling approach was used to understand the initiative from various perspectives and from different levels within the organization. As this study was grounded within an action research approach that sought to uncover the internal operational dynamics of the initiative, it was by design an insider-informed approach. Even though the stakeholders were clearly insiders, they were selected because of their involvement, not their advocacy toward the initiative. Indeed, the interview questions were open-ended and sought to elicit both positive and negative perceptions of the strategy and its implementation.

The final sample included five members of the departments' command staff (including both chiefs of police), two captains, one lieutenant, three detectives, and two line officers. Of the 13 officers, 12 were male and 1 was female; five were African American and eight were Caucasian. Years of police service ranged from five to 31 years, with an average of 22 years.

The interview protocol is available in the Appendix. The protocol was developed and finalized based on earlier action research interviews conducted in real time during the emergence of the initiative in 2004 (Frabutt *et al.*, 2004). It was refined through two research meetings between the academic partners and law enforcement representatives from each police department. The final protocol includes questions to elicit data on history and development of the initiative, the

participants' role in the initiative, operational dynamics of the initiative, and insights and perceptions on program impact and improvement.

The interviewer met individually with the stakeholders at their respective department. Individual interviews typically lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. With the participants' consent, interviews were audio recorded. The verbatim recordings of the sessions were stored electronically in a secure format and were reviewed by the entire research team. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were summarized for subsequent thematic analysis. A summary transcript of the interview was provided to each interviewee for their review. Participants clarified missing information and checked for accuracy of the evaluation team's summary. The revised interview summary was then used in all subsequent analyses. The summaries were analyzed to elicit participants' understandings, insights, and recommendations regarding the street drug intervention.

Based on analyses of the 13 law enforcement stakeholder interviews and through review of previous evaluations and archival documents (Fealy *et al.*, 2006; Frabutt *et al.*, 2004; Frabutt *et al.*, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Hunt *et al.*, 2008; Hunt *et al.*, 2008; Lang *et al.*, 2007; Shelton *et al.*, 2007; Sumner *et al.*, 2005), the street-drug elimination strategy has been synthesized into several major steps. To remain as close as possible to the data, each step is illustrated via the participants' comments, insights, and observations.

FINDINGS

A useful organizational framework for the operational steps of the intervention condenses them into three distinction stages: an identification phase, a notification phase, and a resource delivery/community support phase (Hunt *et al.*, 2008; see Table I). The stages and their constituent steps are outlined in detail below.

Identification stage

Identifying the target area through crime mapping. A primary stage in the drug elimination strategy employed by High Point and Winston-Salem consists of identifying the area in which the strategy is to be implemented. According to stakeholders from both law enforcement agencies, the ideal method of identifying the target area is through the analysis of crime data and examination of crime density maps.

In choosing the area, the High Point and Winston-Salem police departments analyzed crime data for their respective cities including violent, Part I offenses, drug related crimes, drug arrests, property crimes, and calls for service acquired by each department's Crime Analysis Units through data information systems such as PISTOL (Police Information System Totally On-Line, OSSSI, Inc.). Once the appropriate crime data were examined, crime density maps and overlays were created for each city in order to distinguish where the greatest concentration of crime occurred within each municipality (see Hunt *et al.*, 2008 for a full description of the GIS methodology). According to one stakeholder, "our computer systems had grown (since earlier initiatives) to the point where we could really get greater information to help us identify the areas [where] we need to go".

Many stakeholders in High Point and Winston-Salem consider this technique of targeting the specific implementation area through the use of crime data to be advantageous. “When you identify the target area through crime mapping, you take biases and person decisions about where this program should take place out of the process.” Moreover, by choosing the target area in this manner, the decision of the police departments to intervene in a particular neighborhood is defensible to the community at large:

We decided, before we even got any results back, to make this a fair process, to make this a process where we could go to any community and initiate it, and if there was any controversy about why we picked a certain neighborhood, we were going to say this is where the data sent us.

Table 1:

Stages	Operational steps
Identification	Identifying the target area through crime mapping Engaging the community Engaging the police department internally Identification of street drug offenders Reviewing street drug incidents to refine the list
Notification	Conducting the undercover operation Establishing contact with the offender’s family Conducting the notification
Resource delivery and community support	Setting a deadline Strict enforcement Follow-up

Only one challenge, relating to this element of the overall strategy, was discussed by police department personnel in Winston-Salem. One law enforcement stakeholder stated that the only challenge with their initiative was convincing internal, department personnel that the chosen area was the best place to implement the strategy. “A lot of folks said that was too hard of a location to start with and that we would not see an impact because it was a traditional location for drugs and drug selling.” However, by choosing the area as a result of analyzing the appropriate crime data and having the data to support the department's decision, it was difficult to dispute the fact that this area should be the target implementation area. According to a stakeholder in Winston-Salem, “We didn't pick the area. The area picked itself based on the criteria we said we were going to use”.

Engaging the community. After the police department chooses the target area through crime mapping, the community, including local government and community resource agencies, as well as local community members, must be engaged in and connected to the strategy. In general, the High Point and Winston-Salem police departments engaged their respective communities, although through somewhat different avenues.

The city of High Point is in a unique situation in terms of community engagement. Since 1998, the police department and the community members have laid the groundwork for community engagement by cooperatively taking part in community responses to violent crimes, particularly homicides. High Point's existing collaboration between the community and the police department significantly supported the community commitment for the street drug elimination strategy.

Before the community's engagement was solidified for the current strategy, High Point's law enforcement officials had to be convinced that this particular strategy was in the best interest of the city. Subsequently, the police department's executive staff met with city government agencies, local and state level law enforcement agencies (probation/parole, SBI, DEA, ATF, etc), community groups, and local community members to explain the goal of the initiative and how the strategy would be arranged within the city.

Two High Point stakeholders agreed that engaging the members of the target neighborhood in the initiative was not difficult. According to one stakeholder:

They wanted to be engaged. They were anxious for something different to happen; something good to happen. So, it wasn't a case of us engaging them. It was a case of us allowing them to be engaged like they wanted to be.

Winston-Salem's community and government partners were engaged primarily through a meeting with the Police Chief and through Winston-Salem State's Center for Community Safety (a university-community partnership dedicated to violence reduction):

I think a key component was going to the Executive Council at the Center for Community Safety. We rolled out the strategy to them and that's where we got additional partners, because they loved the idea.

The Winston-Salem Police Department engaged community members within the target neighborhood through the faith community, the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem, and by personal interactions with community residents. Moreover, "once the people in the community understood what was going on, they became very receptive to the program". Prior to the community meetings, flyers were passed out in the community notifying the residents of the assemblies. The community meeting consisted of the Police Chief delivering a message explaining the strategy to the community. One stakeholder noted, "We thought we were very effective in engaging the community at the appropriate times".

Stakeholders from High Point and Winston-Salem collectively identified the faith community, in particular neighborhood ministers, as being key elements in, and necessary actors of, the strategy:

For me, what went well every time was engaging the ministers first in that [the target] neighborhood, because those ministers have some standing [within the community]. So, I think that's a good place to start.

Other noted community participants of significance included the Housing Authority, NAACP, and the Urban League.

Although the law enforcement agencies of High Point and Winston-Salem felt they effectively engaged their respective communities, certain challenges did exist. Both police departments expressed difficulty in gaining and maintaining the engagement of the community. One High Point stakeholder stated:

It's difficult to convince people in these communities to expend energy on what they may see as a lost cause and sometimes they see their neighborhoods as a lost cause.

Moreover, one High Point stakeholder expressed that it was particularly difficult to engage community members in public housing neighborhoods, because of the transient nature of the population. In order to compensate for this barrier, resident packets were handed out to new residents informing them of the initiative:

Because, otherwise, in a year, hardly anybody would be living there that even knew what you did and you lost ground. So, we had to develop a way to educate newly arriving members of that community.

Engaging the police department internally. In addition to engaging the community, the police department itself must also be brought on board in terms of supporting the strategy. Stakeholders from the High Point and Winston-Salem police departments agree that it is important to have the buy-in of the entire department.

In High Point and Winston-Salem, the members of the police departments were engaged by their respective command staffs, through a two-fold plan. First, the department's Command Staffs attended police department roll calls, assemblies, and meetings until the elements of the strategy were explained to members of each department. One High Point stakeholder stated that the members of the department were informed about the deterrence methods employed by the strategy, what their particular role was going to be, and how every piece fits together. Winston-Salem stakeholders noted that the command staff approached the officers with the proposal that, "we've tried to combat our city's drug problem for years with no avail. It is now time to try something different". Second, High Point and Winston-Salem police officers were surveyed about the individuals recognized as being involved in the drug trade in order to enhance the process of identifying the street and upper level dealers in the intervention neighborhoods. In Winston-Salem, the undercover detectives would also send out pictures of unknown individuals identified as selling drugs to see if the other officers within the department knew whom the unidentified dealers were or had additional information on them.

Although this method of engaging the police departments seems uncomplicated, some challenges did exist within each department. One High Point stakeholder stated that engaging the police department internally was time consuming. However, most of the High Point stakeholders interviewed agreed that this step did not pose any major barriers and most individuals within the department were eager to accept the initiative:

I was not skeptical of the idea of the initiative. When you see someone who wants your help, it makes you feel good about what you do. What you sign on to do as a police officer is to protect and serve.

However, one stakeholder in High Point acknowledged that the police department should have worked harder to engage their internal personnel, and in order to be completely successful, should do so in the future:

I think that if I had to do it again, that's one portion that I would make sure we did better is that you have to bring as many [police department personnel] along with you as you can.

This sentiment was not expressed to a large extent in High Point, but did occur somewhat:

If you don't include everybody in the explanation so they understand their piece, then sometimes they aren't going to play. And that's the way cops are.

Although selling the idea of the strategy to the members of the High Point Police Department was, overall, unproblematic, the undertaking in Winston-Salem was not so straightforward. Winston-Salem stakeholders stated that a lot of pessimism by the officers occurred when the strategy was first presented to the department and it was difficult to convince a lot of the officers that the strategy was worthwhile. This difficulty was present, in part, because this particular initiative goes against certain aspects of police officer training. According to one Winston-Salem stakeholder, "I really had to transform my whole way of thinking about policing to be successful with this program".

Several aspects of engaging the police department internally emerged as being of particular importance for the Winston-Salem police department. First, it was noted that it is important to get the commitment of the command staff before attempting to engage the rest of the department. In addition, one stakeholder noted that the key is to get someone to speak to the officers who they really respect. In Winston-Salem's case, one particular individual had the most influence within the department regarding the city's drug trade because of his extensive experience in the area. Finally, it is important to take the appropriate amount of time in accomplishing this step of the strategy and sufficiently explain the initiative and what will be occurring to the officers.

Identification of street drug offenders. After the mapping process has yielded a geographic focus area bounded by defined parameters, attention shifts to identifying the actual street drug offenders within the market area. Input from major stakeholders groups (i.e. officers, probation and patrol officers, vice and narcotics officers, and community members) contributes to an initial master list of offenders. Moreover, exact locations involved with dealing are compiled.

The master list at this point may range from 30 to 50 individuals and it must undergo further refinement in order to adequately serve the mission and intent of the strategy. That is, ultimately, street level drug offenders – not individuals controlling the market and not occasional sellers/users – are those who will comprise the final list. Law enforcement stakeholders referred to this step as "doing your homework". It is imperative to focus on the individuals that are part of the problem:

Just because someone has been caught with dope or just because someone was once tagged with dealing dope does not mean they are an individual who's contributing to the problem in a given neighborhood.

Reviewing street drug incidents to refine the list. In order to move beyond a list of names and locations, a deeper level of intelligence and data mining are necessary. Therefore, at this stage law enforcement engages in a comprehensive and systematic review of drug dynamics in the target area. Efforts at this stage are in line with elements of the crime incident review process much utilized in Project Safe Neighborhoods efforts across the country (Klofas *et al.*, 2006). The guiding notion of a crime incident review is to “unpack” crime activity in a systematic manner in order to reveal linkages, associations, root causes, and common circumstances across a host of incidents. Vice/narcotics officers typically take a lead role in unpacking the offender and location information. All reports, contacts with police, and intelligence are examined through link analysis. As one stakeholder explained, a two or three inch binder is created for each individual, and “we know their entire life history.” The full reports associated with the incidents forming the original density map are re-examined with a specific focus on how the incidents are drug-related. As the drug/offender dynamic begins to emerge, an even more fine-grained level of analysis begins – determining whether or not a given individual meets the criteria for the intervention.

Both sites reported that extremely violent, high-level dealers were not the focus of the intervention. Rather, those offenders were pursued for immediate arrest and prosecution. To make these distinctions, however, law enforcement considered multiple criteria, such as:

- Is the dealer still active?
- In the specified geographic area?
- Are they street level or mid-level?
- What is their history of and propensity for violence?
- Do they have any pending charges?
- What is their history and current status regarding probation and parole?

One stakeholder detailed the whole process, noting the convergence of law enforcement and community input to make decisions about the final list. Moreover, several stakeholders noted the critical role that the local District Attorney's Office must play at this step.

One Winston-Salem stakeholder described a multi-stage decision process. It began with detectives creating work-ups on each offender documenting their past history. The work-up included offenders' record, their past history, their past arrests, drug arrests, age, etc. Then detectives gave input on each of the offenders and then the work-ups went to the sergeant, the lieutenant, and the captain for each of them to look at it and decide if they agree or disagree about the decision made. Then, the information goes before a larger panel, which included all stakeholders giving input on this decision (police officers, substance abuse, Center for Community Safety, the faith community, District Attorney, etc.). After all the information was released, the group voted on who should be let in, who should be arrested, who has had their chance and just not taken the opportunity, and who would not take the opportunity now.

As an outcome of this stage, the agreed upon list of list of offenders is refined to include only the street dealers based on the review. By this point, several individuals would have been dropped from the original master list and a final list is approved.

Conducting the undercover investigation. There appear to be two phases to the undercover investigation:

1. surveillance to build and refine intelligence; and
2. actually engaging in undercover operations to make drug buys from offenders.

This stage and the operations therein are those that are most often thought of as standard police work. As one stakeholder commented:

Frankly, that's the easiest piece of it [the strategy]. We've been doing that for decades. That is ... our traditional tactics. That's something that we've been doing for a long, long time. We're very good at it.

Law enforcement in High Point has used informants that have agreed to testify, undercover officers that attempt to make buys in the neighborhood by driving down particular streets, and a long-term embedding of an informant that lived in the neighborhood. Drug houses are photographed. Undercover purchases are made from individuals. Each buy is video taped with audio. The bottom line was to get as much evidence as possible on film and on tape so that the investigation requires only a judge's signature to make the arrest.

Stakeholders stressed the commitment of time and resources that a quality undercover operation demands. Another cautioned:

The key to it is not to be rushed. Don't make a decision on one day's worth of video. Let's see what happens over a period of time. You can't do surveillance for one day and think you know the trade. But, if you watch it constantly for a specific period of time, roles will be identified and you will know who the movers and the shakers are.

Notification stage

Establishing contact with the offender's family. Establishing contact with and engaging the offender's family members or significant others, as well as the offenders themselves, is an important step in the drug elimination strategy. According to one High Point stakeholder, in order to make an impact on the offender and, consequently, the community's drug trade, it is critical to obtain contact with someone who has standing in the offender's life.

The High Point and Winston-Salem police departments performed this step by employing strategies similar to one another, namely by utilizing visitation teams to reach out to the family members of the notified offenders. High Point's visitation team consisted of a minister, a police detective, and a community volunteer. The message presented by the visitation team embraced the idea that, "you and/or your loved one have been identified as participating in this community's drug trade. However, we [police department, community, etc] want to offer the opportunity for you to turn your life around and stop selling drugs". Moreover, a letter from the Police Chief (see Figure 1) was presented to each notified offender. In addition, several days before the call-in, High Point police officers would call the offenders to remind them of the approaching notification.

Similarly, the Winston-Salem police department also reached out to the offenders and their family members through visitation teams consisting of a police officer, a member of the faith community, and a community member. According to one Winston-Salem stakeholder:

What made this work is it was more than just a police officer [visiting and engaging the family members]. You had people that they, the families respected; NAACP, the Urban League, the faith community. They partnered with us.

Various methods were utilized in identifying the family members of the offenders. In some instances, the police departments were able to make contact with the individual offenders who would, in turn, identify the most influential individuals in their lives. However, the task of contacting the offenders and their family members does not always occur without effort. One Winston-Salem stakeholder stated that this work requires the police department's partnership with Winston-Salem State University's Center for Community Safety. "It takes a lot of folks to reach out there and help get that done." In addition, technological data systems were also used to identify family members and significant others of the offenders. The High Point police department utilized probation and parole as one resource for gathering information such as current addresses and contact information for family members. One High Point stakeholder also stated that the names of the offenders' family members could be taken from booking logs and jail visitation lists.

One challenge noted by both High Point and Winston-Salem stakeholders was that this work is very time consuming. Not only did it take a great deal of time to identify the individuals who play a significant role in the lives of the offenders, but it was also often difficult to find the offenders and their family members at home concurrently. According to one Winston-Salem stakeholder:

[...] we spent a lot of time, several contacts, with significant family members, which was the key to getting to the offenders. It was just a matter of putting the resources and the work there (into the initiative).

Even though various challenges did exist during this stage for both departments, several key components of establishing contact with the offender's family also emerged. One High Point stakeholder stated that the department has begun to recognize the importance of some people in the offender's lives and has realized that the most important individuals are not always primary family members, but can also include grandmothers, aunts, ministers, etc:

It's a little bit more holistic than when we first started. And we're trying to continually evolve and make it better.

Another key element stated by both departments was the use of visitation teams to contact the offenders and their family members. As one Winston-Salem stakeholder stated:

We did the double team approach. We didn't just talk to the offender. We talked to the family members as well. And I think it really worked.

According to one High Point stakeholder:

I find this to be one of the most critical points, because if you get the family involved (and the ministers and the church are there), that is a huge deterrent. The more family you can get involved, the better.

Conducting the call-in or notification session. Notification sessions have been a key element in overall violence reduction efforts across the Middle District of North Carolina for several years, and particularly in High Point and Winston-Salem (Allen and Frabutt, 2002; Frabutt *et al.*, 2001; Gathings and Frabutt, 2005; Harvey, 2005; McDevitt *et al.*, 2006). During each assembly, the community partners present their message to the dealers first, articulating that they want the drug dealing to stop in their community and they are offering resources to the dealers to aid them in stopping the illicit behaviors. The community also makes it clear that they stand behind the police department and support them unconditionally.

Subsequently, various law enforcement partners present their message. Law enforcement's message centers on the fact that the offenders have already been identified as participating in the drug trade within the intervention neighborhood and drug dealing will stop immediately. Pictures and undercover video surveillance are put on display showing the identified offenders selling drugs or being in the presence of someone who is selling drugs. According to one Winston-Salem stakeholder, "[this] is a good way to get them to acknowledge that you really have them". Also, casebooks are created on each notified offender, which sit at the front of the room. Each casebook contains an unsigned warrant charging the dealer of the drug offenses they committed, to be brought out and signed if ever needed.

In addition to the city's local police department, supplementary law enforcement agencies from the local, state, and federal levels including, but not limited to, the Sheriff's Office, probation/parole, District Attorney's Office, ATF, SBI, and FBI, also speak to the dealers. These law enforcement entities communicate to the dealers that, in addition to the community, they also support the local police department in their efforts to eliminate the street drug markets in their community. Moreover, the law enforcement agencies of neighboring cities are present to tell the offenders they cannot start selling drugs in other cities, because each notified offender is put on watch. The call-in concludes with a final message from the community support/resource delivery component. According to one Winston-Salem stakeholder:

[...] you have to convince the offenders that you have them. But, then you have to defeat any reason they have for selling drugs and provide them support to quit selling drugs.

Stakeholders from High Point and Winston-Salem identified two aspects of the notification sessions as being key elements. First, both departments indicated that showing picture and video surveillance of the dealers engaging in drug transactions is an important part of the notification:

[...] we actually had them on video tape committing a felony. That was key when we tried to sell to them that we had the goods on them. When the dealers come in for that notification, in order for them to turn their lives around, you have got to convince them

that you've got the goods on them. And if you don't do a good job of convincing them, they're not going to listen to you.

In addition, stakeholders from both departments believe another important aspect of the call-ins is the fact that family members and significant others of the offenders were present for support.

Most of the police personnel believed that the notification sessions were executed smoothly. Nevertheless, small challenges were present for each department. Stakeholders from High Point and Winston-Salem indicated that getting the offenders to the notification was a bit of a challenge. In some instances, police personnel would physically go out into the community prior to the notification to remind the dealers of the call-in, or even go pick them up and bring them to the call-in. Another challenge present centered on the uncertainty of the conveyed messages presented to the offenders, especially in terms of the community piece. It is critical that the message presented is consistent and clearly communicated. In an effort to combat this barrier, High Point scripts who speaks, how long they are to speak, and what they are to speak about. In addition, only one representative from each community organization speaks to the group in order to combat lengthy and repetitive speeches.

Resource delivery and community support stage

Setting a deadline. The first step in eliminating open-air drug markets following the notification is setting a deadline for the offenders to quit selling drugs. Even though High Point and Winston-Salem both set a post-notification deadline, their timeline and rationales for setting the deadline as they do differ.

High Point set the zero tolerance deadline several days after the call-in occurred. According to police department stakeholders, this occurred for various reasons. One stakeholder stated that the department waited to set the zero tolerance deadline because the notification message can be a bit overwhelming to the offenders and not setting the deadline immediately gives the offenders a little time to think about the message. In addition, it gives the dealers time to go into the community and tell others about the call-in. One change implemented by the High Point police department is that the deadline is no longer used:

The impact you're going to see from the notification is immediate. They can't go back out there the next day and do anything the next two days. They're already impacted by the message. So, we don't even use the deadline anymore. When you have that notification that night we tell 'em, it's done tonight'.

On the other hand, Winston-Salem's command staff set the zero tolerance deadline, immediately following the call-in. If any of the notified offenders were observed engaging in illegal behaviors after the notification, the department would immediately serve the unsigned warrants they had on each of the notified dealers. One Winston-Salem stakeholder stated that setting the deadline instantly is a key element to the initiative, because it shows the dealers and the community that the police are serious about eliminating street drug markets in the neighborhood.

Strict enforcement. A “zero tolerance” approach for drug and violent activity best describes the immediate, strict, neighborhood enforcement that follows the notification session. Patrol is

coordinated to create a high visibility of beat officers. To ensure consistent pressure, additional beat officers would be assigned in overtime (in some cases up to six weeks) in order to saturate the area. However, it is important to note that the additional overtime and manpower commitment may become a stress on personnel resources departments, a factor that emerged in Winston-Salem. Since the vice and narcotics officers that worked the undercover investigation and surveillance so exclusively will not be able to make drug buys anymore, the beat officers become the primary eyes and ears of the neighborhood. The High Point team reported that they:

[...] watched relentlessly for any dealers to emerge in the target area, stopped them, and 'marketed' this back to notified dealers, their families, and the community: somebody tried, we stopped them, and this activity isn't going to work or be tolerated (Fealy *et al.*, 2006, p. 11).

A guiding notion of this stage is immediacy, most clearly evident as an immediate response to threats in the neighborhood. Any and all Part I offenses in the target area initiate a major case review and are thoroughly examined. Drug complaints are responded to in numerous ways, which may include additional surveillance; an undercover buy; procurement of a search warrant; a consent search; personal notification of residents of the complaint location; or a visible disruption of the complaint location (i.e. posting an officer near or in front of the location). Any reports of dealing were immediately investigated and any involving an offender who was called-in results in the warrants being signed and their immediate arrest. Any such arrests are communicated to the rest of the notified offenders and their families, and to the larger community (Hunt *et al.*, 2008).

Follow-up. Perhaps a better term for this stage is "maintenance". Key stakeholders agreed that without a dedication to sustainability, this initiative would not be unlike many other failed drug strategies over the past decades. For example:

Historically, what law enforcement has done in battling violence and street level drug dealing is we would come in, we would think we've done something wonderful, and then we leave. When we go back to normal routine operations in that area, what we have basically done is turned our back and walked away thinking that what we have done will be long lasting and it has not been.

Maintenance of the initiative is best conceived as occurring on three distinct but interrelated levels: with notified offenders, within the police department, and within the community at large.

Immediate follow-up with notified offenders is key. High Point stressed the importance of helping the offenders get connected with a resource coordinator, a paid position within the City of High Point, Division of Community Development. Even with a resource coordinator in place, the most challenging aspect of resource provision for these offenders is helping them to find employment. In High Point, follow-up contact was made with offenders about one month after the notification to see if they are getting the help they need. Community members were encouraged to keep in contact with those notified through phone calls or visits. Within the police department, notified offenders are monitoring to see if they have been arrested.

Within the police department itself, consistent follow-up is built upon a foundation of systematic, routine communication. For example, High Point used a bulletin board – updated weekly – in the officer assembly room to display photos of wanted suspects. The department used mobile data terminals in police vehicles to quickly send messages between patrol units among all the units in a particular beat. A secure file drive on the city network was utilized to provide a storage space that officers could use to store relevant offender intelligence. The High Point Police Department has since developed an intranet blog for officers to exchange information and respond to one another's posts. Direct contact with mirror shift officers was initiated every few weeks. Lieutenants or officers met personally with their counterpart on the opposite shift, thereby improving the information flow and complementing that which could be shared electronically. Last, members of patrol met weekly with their Lieutenant to follow-up on neighborhood crime.

Follow-up with community members, neighbors, and residents to keep them aware of the status of the initiative and any additional drug or criminal activity in the neighborhood is another major concern. Departments produced occasional newsletters for the community containing information on arrests or local success stories. Flyers were developed and distributed with the same purpose. Officers attended community watches in the area and through such events maintained the lines of communication with residents. Community association meetings were another venue for officers and residents to keep one another abreast of suspicious or illegal activity in the geographic area. Both Winston-Salem and High Point have at times implemented this strategy in geographic areas that contained public housing communities. The dramatic resident turnover rate in public housing introduces several challenges into the follow-up phase. Law enforcement stakeholders stressed that were they to do the initiative again, they would make a concerted effort to inform new, incoming residents of the initiative and the expectations that go along with it. In sum, though, one stakeholder explained that the strategy works, but “it has to constantly be maintained. You can't ever take your hand off of it. You're always in the maintenance phase, whatever that looks like”.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The 11 steps outlined here constitute the blueprint for executing a police and community-driven drug elimination strategy. Importantly, the operational steps are described here for the first time in the voices of the law enforcement officers that have executed these initiatives. Even though there is a logical, orderly progression to the initiative's rollout and continuation, it is clear that the system is complex, multi-faceted, and dependent on external input and collaboration. First, it is complex because the strategy cannot be undertaken unilaterally; an entire department, from the command staff to the front line officers, must evince an awareness and understanding of the initiative's principles. Beyond intra-department buy-in, the strategy simply does not proceed without cultivating and developing active community engagement. Second, it is multi-faceted in that the strategy uses multiple levels of deterrence by drawing on traditional means such as threat of arrest and prosecution as well as more non-traditional deterrence levers such as family, friends, and close associates. Combined with the deterrence message is an offer of proactive change, backed up by social service supports and resources. Third, it is evident that external partners – District Attorney's office, probation and parole, and offenders' families – are each key to the process. Clearly, the strategy is responsive to calls for multi-dimensional efforts to eliminate street drug markets (Harcopos and Hough, 2005; Mazerolle *et al.*, 2006), utilizing

partners from law enforcement, the faith community, neighborhood residents, housing authorities, and offenders' own social networks.

In reviewing stakeholders' comments as a whole, several perceived strengths of the strategy come to the fore. Respondents cited the fairness and equity inherent in this strategy, since it is driven by crime mapping data. Selecting the target community based on quantifiable criteria and explaining the selection methodology clearly and succinctly to citizens makes the approach eminently defensible to the broader community. Second, stakeholders commented that such a strategy allows the police department to meet the community “where they are”. That is, there was a sense that law enforcement stakeholders relinquished the notion that citizens do not care about drug-ridden communities and instead found a way to engage them as part of the solution. Third, stakeholders seemed impressed (if at times outright incredulous) with the novelty of the broad partnerships that coalesced through the strategy. Law enforcement stakeholders forged new alliances with partners – the NAACP, Urban League, and the housing authority – and united toward a common goal: eradicating illegal street drug markets.

The findings reviewed here also indicate that challenges are to be expected at each and every stage, though they are certainly not insurmountable. For example, while community engagement is core to the strategy, law enforcement readily acknowledged how time intensive and challenging it was to engage and maintain community support, especially in the public housing community. Another challenge arose in terms of “selling” the strategy itself with the respective police departments. Some stakeholders noted that it was an “uphill battle” to convince officers that a focused deterrence strategy that involved community partners and offenders' family members had real merit. Without top-down support from the command staff and some key bottom-up buy-in from respected line officers, the strategy might never successfully launch. Continuing efforts to explain the strategy via practitioner training sessions (Frabutt, 2007), National Institute of Justice workshops (Shelton *et al.*, 2007), and academic channels – like publication of peer-reviewed articles like this one – help to ameliorate initial resistance. A third challenge inherent in stakeholders' comments was the need, especially in one site, to ensure that a dedicated staff position was available – somewhere in the partnership – to fulfill the role of resource coordinator after offenders had been notified and the strict enforcement began. If maintenance is to be sustained, directed and individualized support must be accessible to the notified offenders.

This novel, police-community partnership to reduce street drug markets through focused deterrence has been successfully implemented in multiple sites. While interventions such as this one are dynamic, fluid collaborations, it is possible to discern a replicable blueprint that can serve other communities. Here the focus has been on only one partner, albeit a central one – the implementing law enforcement agencies. Attention to the many other contributing entities (e.g. the District Attorney's Office, the US Attorney, Probation and Parole, community-based violence reduction groups) is beyond the scope of this article, although efforts to catalog such important roles are underway (Harvey *et al.*, 2008). Continued inquiry into refining the strategy, elucidating the contextual factors that moderate its efficacy, documenting the roles and expectations of all partners, and monitoring its sustained impact are all warranted and much needed future research directions.

NOTES

1. Consult Hunt *et al.* (2008, pp. 404-10) and Kennedy (2009, pp. 157-9). For example, Hunt *et al.* (2008) wrote: "...more than three years after the call-in, the reduction in violent crime appears to have stabilized at a one-third decrease – an average of 36.7 percent" (p. 406). Further, "drug offenses have a similar pattern with an average decrease of 30.85 percent (p. 406).

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APPENDIX

Semi-structured interview protocol

1. Why did your department decide to pursue this particular drug market intervention strategy?
2. Describe the target geographic area (e.g. size and sociodemographic profile) of the intervention.

3. What criteria were used to choose the target area?
4. What criteria were used to determine which individual offenders would be arrested and which ones would be asked to attend the call-in?
5. Describe the available community resources, supports, and networks to support the intervention.
6. How did the community/community members become involved or engaged?
7. How well were law enforcement efforts coordinated with those of the community?
8. Describe the level of coordination among law enforcement agencies.
9. What was your role in implementing this strategy?
10. Where did your role fit within the whole chain of command responsible for implementing the strategy?
11. Here is a list of steps/stages that the High Point and Winston-Salem Police Departments have identified as part of conducting this type of intervention strategy:
 - identify the target area through crime mapping;
 - engaging the community;
 - survey of police officers;
 - identification of street drug offenders;
 - reviewing street drug incidents;
 - conducting the undercover investigation;
 - establishing contact with the offender's family;
 - conducting the “call-in” or notification session;
 - setting a deadline;
 - strict enforcement; and
 - follow-up. For each stage ...
 - What went well?
 - What would you have done differently?
 - Did any barriers exist that really challenged your efforts? If so, what were they?
12. Which elements of the strategy are the most important?
13. How would you best summarize the impact of this initiative (crime stats, neighborhood changes, etc.)?
14. What do you think the Department should do differently this time to enhance the impact of this initiative?
15. How will you know if the Department is successful in making these changes to the strategy?
16. Are there any other thoughts you would like to add about this strategy or your experience that I haven't given you the opportunity to say?