
PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING AND DRUG-MARKET LOCATIONS: THREE CASE STUDIES

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Abstract: *The problem-oriented approach to policing and the situational approach to crime prevention have much in common, both arising from the search for more effective means of crime control. They share a common perspective in being targeted at specific crime problems and locations. This paper describes three case studies of problem-oriented policing carried out by officers of the St Louis (MO) Metropolitan Police Department, each concerned with reducing crime and disorder at locations where drugs were being sold. In each case, the individual officers played a pivotal role as catalysts in stimulating actions by the community and city agencies, and in achieving reductions in crime and disorder at the problem locations. The cases suggest that at the localized level at which it operates, problem-oriented policing can achieve the kind of coordinated action which may not be so easy at a broader level of community and organizational aggregation.*

INTRODUCTION

The situational approach to crime prevention and the problem-oriented approach to policing have much in common. Not surprisingly, there has been considerable cross-fertilization as the two approaches have developed: "...in fact, the basic principles behind situational crime prevention seem applicable to most problems confronted by the police" (Eck and Spelman, 1987:54). Both draw upon a similar "action-research" paradigm (Clarke, 1992) and conception of the "preventive process" (Eckblom, 1988). Broadly, this concept enjoins the police to scan their working environ-

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ments in order to: (1) identify particular and persistent problems, concentrations or "hot spots" of criminal and disorderly behavior; (2) analyze these problems, identifying possible causes and opportunities for intervention; (3) formulate appropriate responses, often in concert with others, which would seek to solve, reduce or better manage the problems: and (4) assess the results, providing feedback on how the responses have worked and how they might be improved (Eck and Spelman, 1987). This paper describes three case studies of problem-oriented policing in residential locations to illustrate some of the affinities between it and situations! crime prevention, and their potential for addressing problems of crime and disorder, particularly those associated with drug dealing.

Situational Prevention and Problem-Oriented Policing

The similarity between situational crime prevention and problem-oriented policing is not surprising since each has grown out of a widespread awareness—starting in the mid- 1970s—of the limited effectiveness of the incapacitative, deterrent and rehabilitative effects of the criminal justice system. The approaches have somewhat different origins and diversity of purpose, but they share a common interest in improving the effectiveness of the police in the control of crime (Moore, 1992; Sherman, 1992). There are, however, certain differences between the approaches. Clarke (1992) notes that situational prevention is more of a general set of methods and techniques for reducing crime, while problem-oriented policing is, citing Goldstein (1990), primarily an approach to police reform. At one level, both approaches can be seen as broad "philosophies" about how crime control might be organized. But they also refer to specific actions which can be taken, by the police or others, to prevent crime and disorder. It is at this level of specificity that the convergence of concerns between situational crime prevention and problem-oriented policing becomes readily apparent.

In a relatively early discussion, Morris and Heal (1981) identified the problem of implementation as a key issue which delineated specific crime problem-solving activities from more general community-oriented approaches by police or other agencies. They advocated "situational policing," that is, the application of situational crime prevention by the police (see also Hope and Clarke, 1981), as a method not only of applying effective techniques in the prevention of crime but as a more effective way of ensuring the commitment and responsibility of relevant community inter-

ests in joint crime prevention activity. One weakness of the more general concept of community policing may be that it assumes that every member of the community has an equal willingness and capacity to take responsibility for tackling crime problems, and that some sort of "natural" preventive process can be readily unlocked through improved police-community relations (Engstad and Evans, 1980). Yet the experience of implementing localized crime prevention measures or programs has often been disappointing in that the assumption of community consensus, or coordination amongst local agencies, has not been supported or has been insufficient by itself to reduce crime. Often, it turns out to be far less easy than is supposed to mobilize communities (Skogan, 1988), get different agencies to work together (Sampson et al., 1988), encourage them to think creatively or ensure that they will do what they promise (Hope, 1986).

In contrast, where both problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention have been applied at a local level, documented cases so far suggest that the approach has been effective in reducing crime, coordinating the activities of citizens and agencies, and applying preventive measures in a creative way (Clarke, 1992; Eck and Spelman, 1987). Thus, notwithstanding the importance of problem orientation as a philosophy of organizational change (Goldstein, 1990), attention should also be focused on problem orientation as practical police work. That is, upon how individual police officers—working on specific problems with limited resources at a local level—might implement effective crime reduction strategies, despite the impediments to action which attend preventive efforts at a broader level of community or organizational aggregation.

Studying Problem-Oriented Police Work

The sequence of actions and events in a piece of problem-oriented police work may be lengthy and complicated. How then can we extract salient features from these cases so that they can contribute to an eventually more systematic knowledge base about process and effectiveness (Sherman, 1992)? Goldstein (1990) provides an "inventory of actions," culled from previous examples of good practices in crime prevention and policing, which police officers might take in problem-oriented police work. While incorporating elements of current police practice, this inventory also extends the range of alternative courses of action which may become recognized aspects of problem-oriented police work. This inventory includes:

- concentration on high-call locations
- connecting with other government and private agencies
- use of mediation and negotiation skills
- use of information
- mobilizing/collaborating with the community
- using other forms and agencies of control
- opportunity reduction in the physical environment
- more discriminate use of powers and procedures
- using civil law to control public nuisances, offensive behavior and conditions contributing to crime.

One way of describing actual pieces of problem-oriented police work might be to assess the extent to which they offer examples of the above inventory of actions, along with descriptions of how exactly these different types of actions were applied. This is one of the approaches taken in the present study. In particular, attention is paid to whether such actions were feasible in practice, and whether the examples produced novel or interesting examples of these different types of problem-solving action.

A second way of looking at the process of problem solving in the case studies is to see them as sequences of implementation. Recounting what happened in a piece of problem-solving activity can be confusing. In part this stems from the fact that we have a poor understanding of the process of coordinated preventive action, and what causes problems and failures of implementation (Laycock, forthcoming; Hope, 1086). Saville (1902) has proposed a framework for understanding the implementation of crime prevention measures. For the purposes of this discussion, two features of this framework are useful. First, there is the normative role played by the police implementers. Given the problems of achieving consensus and coordination in preventive work, what role does the problem-oriented police officer play in creating a consensus or normative agreement amongst the parties involved so that action can keep going? That is, how central are the actions of the individual officer to the outcome of the activities?

Second. Saville (1092) draws attention to the importance of describing the particular "social ecology" of the problem location. Problem-solving policing often entails action that is oriented to specific places; situational crime prevention is often predicated on altering the conditions in specific situations. In order to generalize from individual cases, it may be necessary to understand how particular configurations of circumstances and interests give rise to crime problems in some places but not others.

Theoretical developments in routine activity theory (Felson, 1992) and in environmental criminology (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1992) may lead to the development of general theories about the causes and distribution of criminogenic situations (Eck, 1992). But in the meantime, a consideration of the interlocking processes which sustain problems in particular locations may be a useful first step in terms of description (cf. Hope, 1986).

Policing Drug Sales Locations

The three case studies discussed here report actions aimed at specific addresses associated with the sale of drugs. The focus of the actions, however, was on the general problems of crime and disorder which the drug activity generated, as defined primarily by the frequency of calls for police service at those locations, rather than by the specific interdiction of drug sales. Alongside the proliferation of drug use itself, the operation of drug markets in residential neighborhoods constitutes a substantial threat to their respective social orders (Skogan, 1990). While a variety of police operations aimed at controlling street-level drug trafficking—including "buy-bust" and "sting" operations, intelligence gathering, intensive patrolling, and community contact—have been studied recently, with some promising results (Uchida et al., 1992; Police Executive Research Forum, 1991), these tactics are aimed primarily at disrupting the drug trade. In contrast, the examples reported here are more concerned with the reduction of the disorder which the drug sales activity poses for the neighborhoods (Skogan, 1990).

Goldstein's (1990) inventory of problem-solving actions and Clarke's (1992) typology of situational prevention techniques present general approaches which might be applied to many different kinds of crime problems and contexts. Conner and Burns (1991) propose a set of strategies and tactics which might be pursued to eradicate the specific problems of "flagrant" drug markets in residential neighborhoods. These include: confronting drug customers and dealers by marches and patrols; cleaning up the neighborhood by removing trash, etc., and by enforcing city codes; denying drug dealers and customers access to space by abolishing locations through property seizures; denying access through street closures and barriers; and removing the sense of impunity in street drug markets through "zero-tolerance" police patrols and drug-free-zone signs. In looking at the case studies, it will be seen that while the form of problem-solv-

ing police activity follows Goldstein's (1990) and Clarke's (1992) approaches, the substantive content of the initiatives conforms closely to Conner and Burns' (1991) recommendations.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Describing The Process

The three case studies described here comprise part of a study of an initiative, "Community Oriented Problem Solving" (COPS), launched in June 1991 by the St. Louis (MO) Metropolitan Police Department. Although teams of patrol officers serving three city neighborhoods were selected to carry out problem solving, it was made clear from the start that other officers from other districts could also initiate problem-solving activities; indeed. Case Study 3 was carried out by officers from the department's Mobile Reserve. The officers were given rudimentary training in problem solving and, unlike some other problem-solving initiatives, were not detached from their normal duties and were still expected to respond to calls for service.

The three cases were amongst the first tackled by the officers. Both the incremental nature of problem solving, and lulls and peaks in the officers' other responsibilities, generally resulted in actions being spread over a period of months. For the sake of comparative consistency and inclusiveness, the period of problem-solving activity in each case is considered to extend from June 1991 to February 1992.

The research (carried out during the summer of 1992) consisted, first, of a search within the department for nominations of candidate case studies, from which the three examples reported here were selected, followed by intensive interviews with the officers involved, and with other relevant parties, and site visits to problem locations. The basic approach adopted in the research was to develop narratives of the sequence of events which took place in each of a number of cases of problem-oriented police work, carried out by individuals or informal groups of police officers, utilizing the frameworks for describing action which have been noted above.

Measuring Impact

An effort was made to assess the impact of the problem-solving examples on levels of crime and disorder at the problem locations. The

data consisted of calls for police service to the problem site and environs logged by the department's Computer Aided Dispatching System (CADS). Call data were aggregated into three-month periods from June 1, 1990 to August 31, 1992. This period covered: (i) a twelve-month period prior to any special police activity at the problem location (June 1990-May 1991); (ii) a nine-month period spanning the actions taken at each of the problem locations (June 1991-February 1992); and (iii) a six-month follow-up period after the cessation of intensive problem-solving activities (March-August 1992).

Interpretation of the trend in calls at problem sites is not without difficulty. In the first place, data recorded by the police measure three different processes: real changes in criminal and disorderly activity; changes in the public's propensity to call the police; and changes in police activity. A successful problem-solving initiative is likely to trigger changes in all these processes but, unfortunately, in opposite directions (Schneider, 1986). For instance, while the initiative may bring about reductions in the level of criminal activity in an area, it may also involve an increase in recorded police activity at the problem location, and, by boosting community confidence, trigger an increase in the public's propensity to call the police. Since more criminal or disorderly behavior probably occurs at problem locations than is recorded in police data systems, any increase in police activity or public propensity to call the police may mask reductions in the underlying rate of crime and disorder.

Nevertheless, it is possible that this effect may be more acute in the short run. First, because public confidence (and an increased propensity to report) more likely may be raised at the initiation of a project, especially if police activity is seen to have been stimulated by community concern, and, second, because police initiatives often start with a "ground-clearing" exercise of crime attack (Sherman, 1992). Thus, it might be hypothesized that calls for service would increase in the early stages of an initiative but decline thereafter as the public's increased propensity to call stabilizes, crime attack subsides and the real effect shows through.

The second difficulty in interpreting service call trends at problem sites is that not much can be elucidated from a disaggregation of trends amongst the different types of calls for service. While the police department allows radio dispatchers and responding officers about 175 different codes for calls, in practice about half the total calls to the problem locations were classified under just one code—"disturbance." Moreover, the remainder of calls were classified under a wider range of other types, and only about

10% of calls on average resulted in the police recording the incident as a crime. In other words, a combination of the vagueness with which the incident is reported by the caller, the minor or ambiguous nature of many of the incidents and a reluctance on the part of dispatchers to define incidents in such a way as to limit police action, all result in imprecise definitions of calls. In large part, the vagueness of call definition reflects and supports the operation of police discretion on the streets (Manning, 1092). Unfortunately, changes in the mix of calls may be just as likely to reflect changes in officers' discretion as any real change in the nature of incidents at the problem location. Indeed, as described below, one of the cases involved officers reviving a battery of neglected offense classifications as part of a zero-tolerance enforcement strategy. Consequently, only trends in the total number of calls have been studied here.

In each of the cases studied, actions were focused mostly around a specific address which seemed to be a source of problems. A third area of difficulty in interpreting service call trends concerns the nature of change in calls at individual problem locations. In fact, little is known at present about the rate and velocity of change in crime at hot-spots and high-call locations. It seems likely, however, that change may be volatile and rapid (Pease, forthcoming), particularly since problems at small-scale locales may be the responsibility of only a handful of people, and may be susceptible to changes in individual rates of criminal behavior or to the alteration of other conditions peculiar to that place. A focus on high-call locations in particular will exacerbate "selection-regression" effects in trend data, in view of the purely statistical probability that trends from an extremely high starting point will exhibit reductions rather than increases, irrespective of what is done there. This problem arises whenever the selection of a locale for some kind of intervention is contingent on a high rate of crime or calls, which it is by definition in problem-oriented policing.

Simple analysis of trends in disorder at individual problem locations will not, therefore, suffice. Accordingly, call data were collected at three levels of aggregation: (i) calls to the specific address of the problem location; (ii) calls to other addresses in the street block containing the problem location; and (iii) calls to other individual street blocks and intersections in the surrounding area (this data was only available for the period June 1990 to May 1992). The latter consisted of locations falling within an approximately rectangular area of about 0.3 square miles, centered on the problem location. This data was defined using the police department's LANDTRACK mapping system.

Comparisons were made, first, between the trends in calls at the problem location and other addresses on the block; and, second, of trends in the host block, relative to change occurring in levels of calls at all the other blocks and intersections in the surrounding areas. These comparisons were intended to reveal three possible effects of the police activity: (i) the direct prevention effect on the level of calls to the problem address; (ii) the indirect effect of police activity on levels of calls to the block, whether in terms of displacing disorder or of diffusing the benefits of the preventive action to addresses not directly targeted (Clarke, 1992); and (iii) the effect of police activity on the block relative to change occurring in the surrounding neighborhood.

With regard to the latter comparison, Bursik (1986) has argued that in seeking to measure unique change at a specific location in comparison with change occurring at other locations—i.e., the unique effect of the police activity at the problem location—it is necessary to discount, first, the general level of calls at the targeted location (as noted above, the previous level has a probabilistic influence on the present level and needs to be taken into account); and, second, the general trend in calls experienced by all locations. A measure suitable for this purpose is the "residual change score" (Bohrnstedt, 1969). This is obtained by regressing calls across all the locations at time t on calls at time $t-1$. The residual score for any particular location indicates the level of "exceptional" change occurring there. This analysis measures change at problem locations which is "unexpected," given both its own previous level of calls and the average trend in calls at other locations. When standardized (by the standard error of the residual scores from the regression), positive values indicate that the location has experienced a greater number of calls than expected; negative values, a less than expected number of calls, i.e., a reductive effect of the activity. As such, this analysis may go some way toward overcoming, if not entirely solving, the problems of evaluation caused by the purposive selection of specific high-crime locations for intervention.

THE CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

The Ecology of the Problem

The first problem address was located in a relatively stable, racially integrated neighborhood, with over 65% of residential buildings owner

occupied. The neighborhood was also served by the City's Operation ConServ (concentrated services) Program. Under this program, a ConServ Officer working out of City Hall was assigned to a designated neighborhood. Working with local residents, the officer sought to coordinate three neighborhood-based programs: (i) concentrated and coordinated delivery of city services: (ii) neighborhood planning (i.e.. community involvement in the city planning process): and (iii) housing development (through a non-profit Community Housing Corporation).

Within this stable neighborhood there were certain "sub-areas" of deterioration. These were mainly multi-family buildings in close proximity to owner occupied single- and two-family residences. The multi-unit buildings were usually owned by non-residents. According to the local Community Housing Association, the owners appeared to depreciate their standards for maintenance and general appearance. The buildings generally had ongoing code violations, and the owners did the bare minimum to avoid condemnation of the unit. Often the owner would pay fines to the city's environmental court rather than repair the building to city code requirements. This type of strategy was more concerned with immediate cash flow than long-term stability and the appreciation of property values.

The block in which the problem address was located had been identified as one of these sub-areas. Additionally, during the period June through November 1990, there were 108 calls for service to the problem location. During this period, the block ranked sixth in terms of calls for service out of the 225 blocks and intersections within an area of approximately 0.3 square miles surrounding the block. In addition to this high number of calls, the block was well known as a street drug market, with a high volume of trade being serviced in the street from a number of dwellings in the four-unit apartment buildings within the block which acted as drug (crack cocaine) distribution centers. The police were frequently called to disturbances on the block. At the outset of the project, the police were unclear as to who the dealers were and from which premises they were operating.

In general, the problem location was a pocket of deterioration and disorder in an otherwise fairly orderly neighborhood where a vacuum of control had been created by the inattention of absentee landlords. Into this vacuum drug dealers and would-be offenders had moved, either as legitimate tenants themselves or as their associates (or perhaps intimidators). The police were well aware of the problem location from their own experiences and from contacts established with the community organization. The community organization had targeted the block as one of

particular concern, and, as noted above, the city's ConServ Officer, along with the Community Housing Corporation, had targeted the location for housing action. The initiation of COPS prompted the designated officers, as a group, to look around for a candidate for action. Led by one of the COPS supervisory sergeants, the problem location became one of the first projects in the pilot COPS initiative in the neighborhood.

The Inventory of Actions

The first action of the group was to increase the level of enforcement in the area in an attempt to disrupt the drug traffic on the block ("discriminate use of powers and procedures"¹). However, an increased presence was also used as an opportunity to carry out intensive observation and inquiries, including interviews with local residents, in an effort to find out more about the drug market network on the block ("collection and use of information"). Various other problem analyses were carried out: A video recording was made of a night's activities, and one officer compiled a map of dwellings with details—as he collected them from interviews—about who was living where and who was associating with whom, in order to find out how the drug market operated. As a result, it was discovered that there was a network of drug dealers operating out of several dwellings in different apartment buildings, some of which were used for distribution and others as "safe houses" in which to seek refuge from the police. This interrelated network of households provided a ready means of evasion and concealment for the drug dealers, and made it difficult for the police to effect arrests for possession. As a result, a number of premises were identified as a focus for the street trade.

One of the first actions taken by the team was to convene a meeting of all property owners on the block to appraise them of the problems and elicit their cooperation ("collaborating with the community"). Addresses were obtained from the city's property tax register ("use of information"). Unfortunately, the meeting was poorly attended, particularly since a number of the absentee owners failed to appear. Even though the owner of one of the problem houses did appear, she was uncooperative. Shortly thereafter, sufficient evidence was obtained to effect a search warrant at one of the units in the apartment building which became the problem focus during this case study. Only a small amount of drugs was seized, but the intention was a declaratory one of showing both the drug dealers and the local residents that the police meant business. Around this time, the district command called in the department's Street-Corner Arrest Team

(SCAT) to mount a buy-and-bust operation, but the undercover SCAT officers were unable to get the dealers to sell to them. The reason for this is unclear, but it is possible that the street market had become established with a "select" group of customers who were familiar to the dealers and amongst whom outsiders could be identified.

Meanwhile, the local neighborhood association was keen to take action against drug dealing. Their concern was highlighted by a "drive-by" shooting on the block in November 1991. The association had compiled a list of volunteers who were prepared to take part in a drug-rally/picket on the block. The COPS sergeant and his team liaised with the neighborhood association to guarantee a police presence for the rally ("collaborating with the community"), and also arranged for a local sign-making firm to provide, free of charge, a "Drug Free Zone" sign to carry at the rally ("negotiating skills"). Two rallies were held, with a good turnout. However, owing to a failure of communication, the police did not provide a protective presence for the third rally, which was intimidated by a slowly-cruising car of menacing-looking youths. Following that, though not necessarily connected, the neighborhood association entered a period of internal organizational turmoil which undermined its ability to launch any further collective action.

Action against the problem address then shifted to the neighborhood ConServ Officer, with whom the police had been in close liaison and who had been following events on the block. As noted above, it was the policy of the Community Housing Corporation and ConServ to pursue a proactive policy of code enforcement against and/or purchase of the dilapidated multi-unit buildings in the neighborhood. The ConServ Officer arranged for an exterior inspection which found numerous code violations ("use of civil law"). It was recognized, however, that the City Environmental Court procedure can be lengthy and cumbersome, with landlords allowed to seek repeated stays of execution of code violation liabilities. Recognizing the need to take speedier action, the ConServ Officer was able to persuade the owner of the problem address to sell the property to someone recommended by the Community Housing Corporation who was known to be a responsible property owner and developer. With the handover of ownership, it was also possible to secure the eviction of the tenants of one of the units who were known to be at the center of the drug trade on the block.

Impact on the Problem

Figure 1 shows the trend in calls to both the problem address and the other addresses on the block. It shows an increase in calls to the address and block coinciding with the period of problem-solving activity but subsequently declining dramatically at the problem address. However, calls to the remainder of the addresses on the block increased by 234%, arguably indicating a displacement of problems and a failure to eradicate the drug trade from the block. Two reasons were suggested for this: First, the COPS sergeant felt that the problems would not subside until the block itself had lost its reputation as a drug market: Customers would continue to be drawn to the block, and suppliers would be willing to take the risk of meeting this lucrative demand. Second, the focus of the trade had shifted to another, similar, apartment building on the block. As the ConServ Officer noted, its landlord was notorious as a problem-property owner in an adjoining neighborhood, and the problem of lax landlord control over certain properties on the block had not been cured. Thus, in this example, it would seem that the drug trade had settled into a particular "ecological niche" on the block requiring action wider than a focus on a particular problem address.

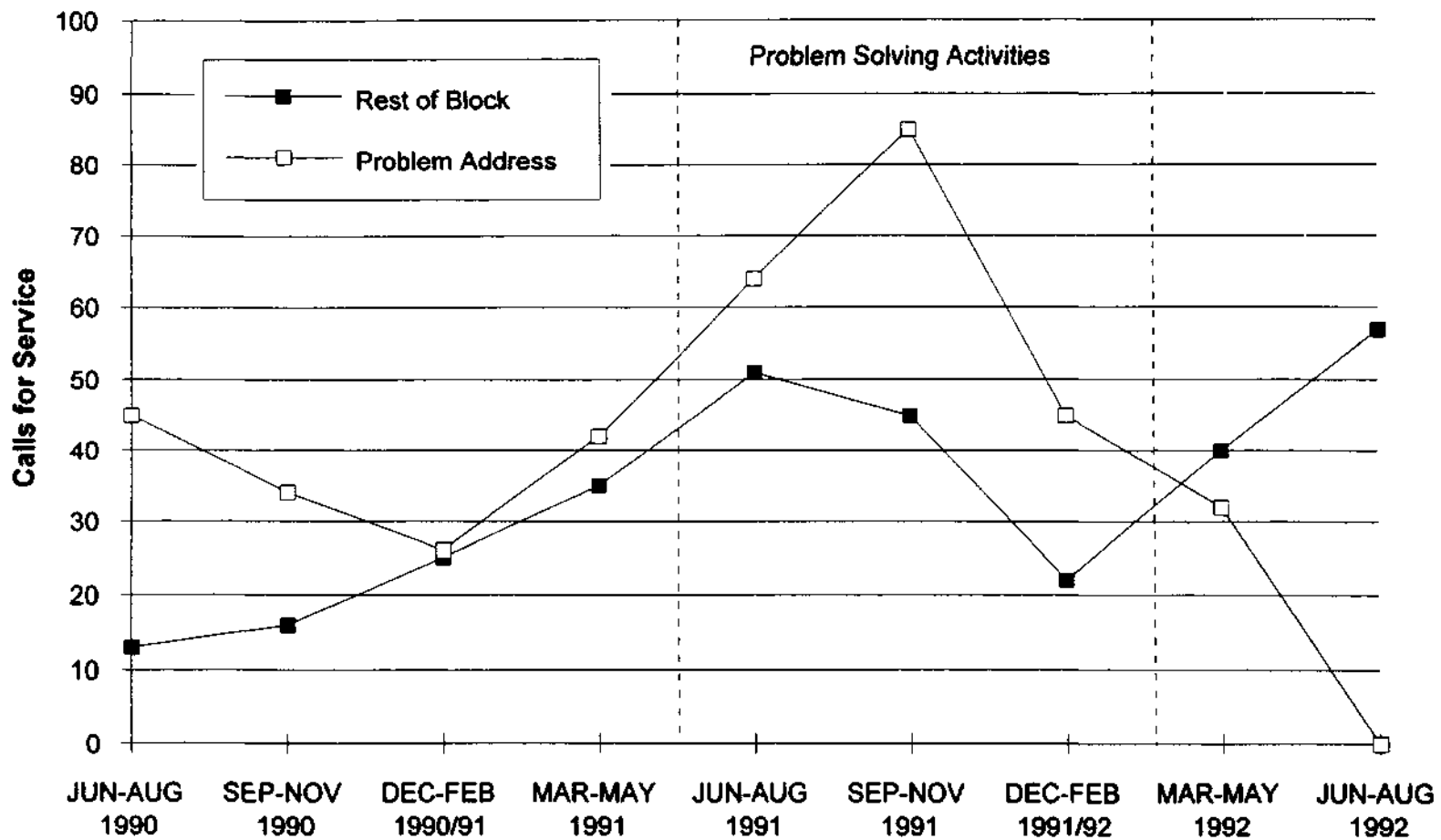
Case Study 2

The Ecology of the Problem

This problem location was located in a generally stable neighborhood with an almost exclusively African-American population (98%, according to the 1990 U.S. Census). The neighborhood had an active and influential community association. Additionally, since 1988, it had been part of the Operation ConServ program. As in the first case study, the Community Housing Corporation found that while approximately 75% of the dwellings were single-family units, there were pockets of the neighborhood consisting of multi-family units (typically, two-story four-unit apartment blocks in private rental tenure). It was here that deterioration of the building stock had occurred. Many of these apartment units were poorly maintained and often in continuing violation of city building codes for residential premises.

Parts of one of the streets in the neighborhood comprised one such deteriorated area. The block contained about six four-unit apartment buildings, and one—the problem address—in particular had become a focus of disorder problems on the block. The building had become dilapidated, and only one out of the four units was occupied. The other

Figure 1: Calls for Police Service to the Case 1 Problem Location



vacant units had rapidly deteriorated, with trash and garbage strewn around the building lot. The ConServ Officer said that the building was a constant source of complaint from neighborhood residents and had been targeted for action, primarily by having the building inspected for code violations by city officials and then attempting to force the landlord (who did not live on the premises) to clean and upgrade the property, by court order if necessary.

The block itself was the focus of a substantial amount of criminal and disorderly behavior. The block generated 143 calls for service over the six months between June and November 1990. Over this period, the block registered the highest number of calls from the 187 blocks and intersections in the surrounding area, accounting for around 5% of all the calls from this area. The block with the next highest number of calls registered less than half this level, and the average number of calls to blocks and intersections in the area was only 14 per location over the six-month period. Moreover, the problem address was associated with 62% of all calls to the block. Typical problems occurring at the address included drug dealing, disturbances, noise, people hanging out in front and various other illegal activities inside (including drug use and prostitution). Early in 1991, a 12-year-old girl had been shot dead at the premises and three persons wounded in what was said to be a drive-by shooting.

The social ecology of the problem location is thus characterized by a coincidence of environmental deterioration and disorderly behavior (Skogan, 1990). The problem location was the site of a concentration of disorder in an otherwise relatively orderly neighborhood, and, within the problem block, disorder was even more concentrated around a particular building. The dilapidation of the building, and the apparent lack of concern by the owner, presumably created a vacuum of surveillance and control around the building, making it an attractive site for drug dealing, and for criminal and disorderly behavior.

The Inventory of Actions

Close liaison existed between the community, ConServ and the police from the district-command level downward. The newly designated COPS (problem-solving) officers had attended community meetings where they were apprised of the community's concerns about the problem location. The police had also been aware of this as a major problem location in the neighborhood from their own work experience there. The ConServ Officer did suggest that, at least in the early stages of activity, she had served as

a conduit through which members felt able to pass information about the block and its problems to the police. Initially, residents had felt reluctant to talk directly with the police; later on, the police and community were able to establish their own direct links and no longer needed to rely upon her as an intermediary.

In selecting the problem block and address, the officers clearly were "concentrating on high-call locations." They were also "collaborating with the community" in taking action at a location of common concern, and, in liaising with ConServ, they were "connecting with other government agencies." One of the first actions taken was to increase police attention on the block and to raise the level of law enforcement, involving a more "discriminate use of powers and procedures." Two officers took photographs of the building exterior and interior and submitted them to the City Building Division, with a request that the building be inspected for code violations ("use of information"). The officers personally contacted the absentee landlord of the property and conveyed their concerns about the condition of the property and the behavior which it was attracting ("use of mediation and negotiating skills").

City building inspectors duly visited the problem address and officially condemned the building for occupation ("use of civil law"). Nevertheless, it was still necessary for the order to be enforced. Obstacles to speedy action in the enforcement of building code violations can often stem from the recalcitrance of landlords and the difficulties of evicting or rehousing current tenants. Again, the police appear to have played a normative role in keeping things moving. Officers contacted the Victim Services Unit in the City Attorney's Office and, through that agency's social workers, were able to relocate the remaining occupants speedily. Additionally, with the cooperation of the landlord, and facilitated by ConServ, city agencies moved in to board up and secure the building, and to clean the surroundings of litter and trash ("connecting with other agencies"). This had the consequence of "removing the opportunities for criminal activity" afforded by the building unit. In the longer term, it is hoped that the Community Housing Corporation will be able to purchase and convert the building to a two-family unit which will be offered for sale to owner-occupiers.

Impact on the Problem

Figure 2 shows the trend in calls to the problem address and other addresses on the block. Calls to the problem address declined from 88 for the six months between June and December 1990 to three for the six

months of April to August 1092; for the same periods, calls to the remainder of the block declined by 70%. Unlike Case 1 (see Figure 1), the trend in calls shows little sign of displacement of problems from the problem address to other addresses in the block. Again, there was a marked increase in calls to the problem location during the period of problem-solving activity, followed by a marked decline. Thus, the various activities do seem to have had a clear impact on their targeted high-call location.

Case Study 3

The Social Etiology of the Problem

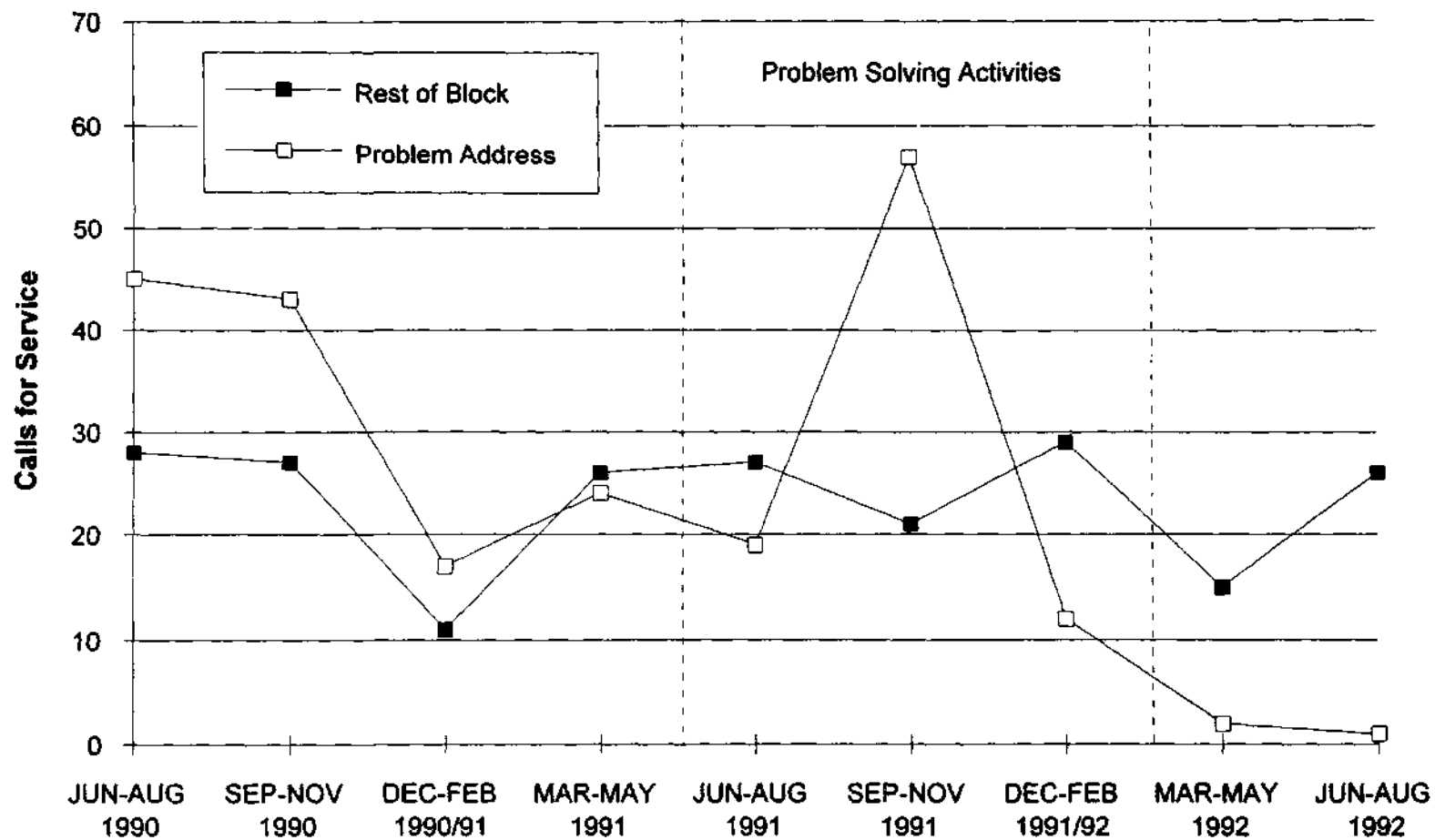
The block was situated in a relatively poor and predominantly African-American neighborhood. The block generated around 89 calls between June and November 1990 and was amongst the top 10% of call locations within the surrounding area. The source of problems was attributed to about three or four dwellings on the block which were the focus of drug-dealing activity. This part of the city has experienced major population decline over the past decade, and the block also had a number of vacant and insecure buildings which also provided opportunities for people to congregate in order to sell, purchase and use drugs.

The commander of the police department's Mobile Reserve, in consultation with his superiors, had decided to initiate a problem-solving approach amongst his officers. Customarily, the Mobile Reserve had been used to reinforce districts which were temporarily short-staffed, and to support directed policing initiatives. Recently, they had come to focus on street-level enforcement activities against drug dealing, and it was thought that a problem-solving approach would increase the reserve's target effectiveness. The commander had also agreed to accept referrals of problems from the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO), an umbrella organization for various affiliated block units and residents' groups across the city. This particular block was nominated by SLACO for action, and two Mobile Reserve officers were detailed to attend a block unit meeting.

Inventory of Responses

The officers attended a block unit meeting with residents where they asked about the major problems in their neighborhood ("collaborating with the community"). As the officers noted in a written report:

Figure 2: Calls for Police Service to the Case 2 Problem Location



The major problem which most of the people agreed on was a house that was being used for the sole purpose of selling illegal drugs. This house was owned by an elderly man who had been arrested numerous times in the past for drugs, but had never gone to trial. The Circuit Attorney's Office advised us that due to the man's age, they did not feel a jury would convict him. The residents further complained that as this house was being used to sell dope, there were always numerous subjects standing in front of the house and walking up and down the street creating disturbances. The other problems concerning the residents were the vacant buildings and vacant lots that were strewn with trash and garbage. The residents were afraid that their children would injure themselves by playing on these vacant properties [St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, 1991].

An initial response of the officers was to arrange for the appropriate city agencies to have the trash cleared and the vacant buildings boarded up. As they further noted, "we felt that this would show the residents that something could be done immediately with one of their complaints." Unlike the other examples, where district officers had liaised with city officials via the neighborhood ConServ Officer, the program did not operate in this neighborhood. Consequently, one of these officers had used one of his rest-days to visit City Hall and, by persistent effort throughout the day, had compiled a list of appropriate contacts in the various agencies ("connecting with other government agencies"). To encourage city officials to take immediate action, the officers arranged for the department's media unit to photograph the properties, and these were submitted to the city with a request for action ("using information").

The attention of the officers then turned to the drug traffic in the street. They started with a traditional approach of high-visibility patrol in an effort to interdict drug sales ("discriminate use of powers and procedures"). Soon it became apparent that this approach was not making much headway, and it was decided to adopt a zero-tolerance enforcement policy in order to halt the flow of foot traffic in the area. The officers first warned the residents to stay off the streets at certain times, and then proceeded to stop and interview everyone walking in the area. Wanted checks were conducted, and arrests were made for outstanding bench warrants. The officers had researched every possible city ordinance that could be used and developed an arsenal which included: drinking on a public street; urinating in public; peace disturbance; blocking traffic (subjects standing in the street); and littering ("use of civil law"). Anyone committing one of

these ordinance violations was arrested and taken to police headquarters downtown to be booked (about six miles away). No summons releases were issued and arrestees had to endure the full booking procedure ("discriminant use of powers and procedures").

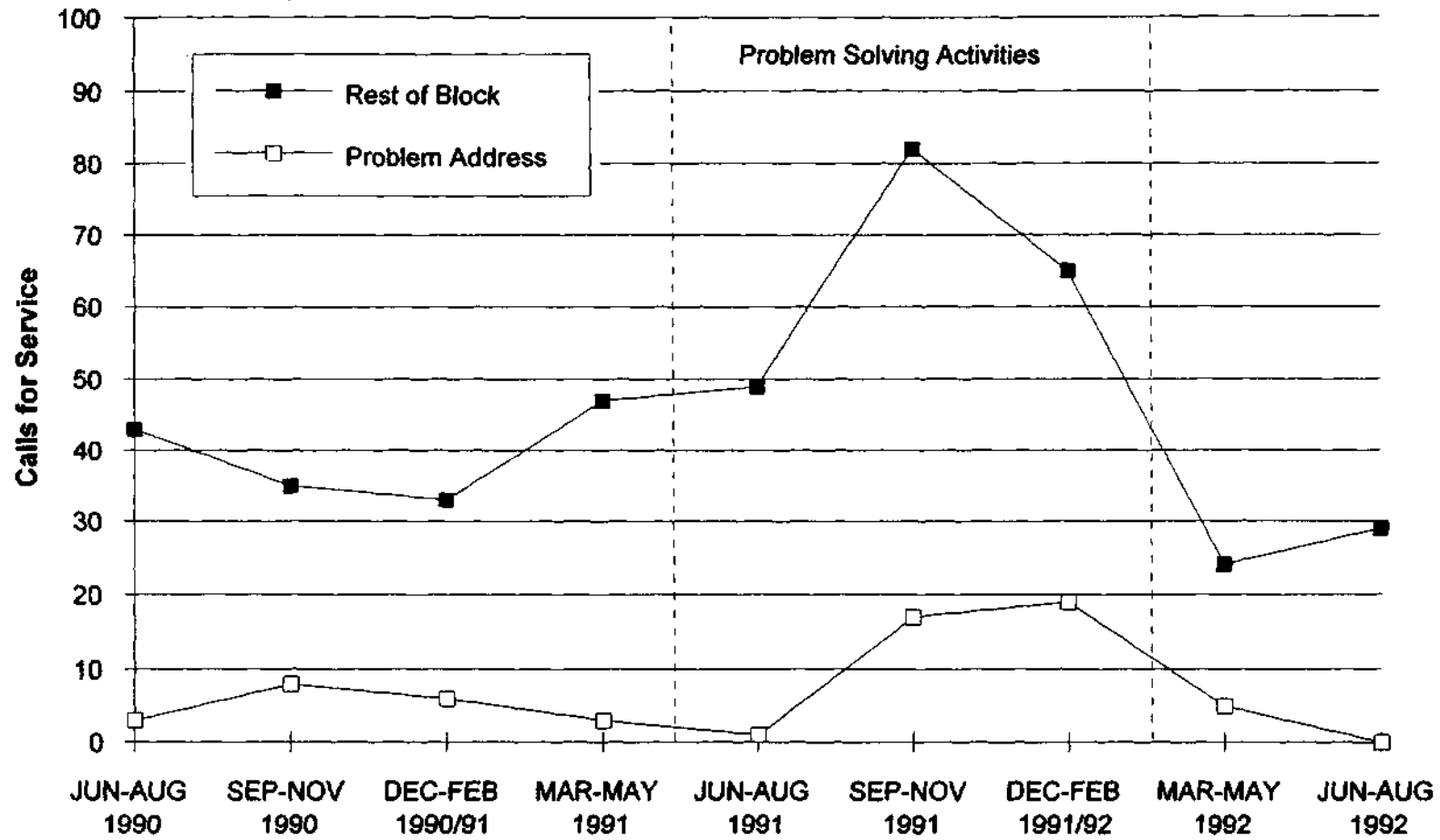
Having decided that they had halted the flow of foot traffic in the area, the officers turned their attention to the house occupied by the 72-year-old man, which became the problem address. It was thought that drug dealers had taken over his premises as a base for operations in exchange for payments and favors. A raid on the house had recently turned up around an ounce of cocaine, which made the premises liable to asset forfeiture. However, recognizing that seizure would take a long time to process, the officers found out from City Hall—via the police department's Asset Forfeiture Unit's computer link—that the elderly man had a mortgage on the property, though it could not identify the mortgagor. A little later, the officers were able to effect an arrest of the man and obtained voluntary permission to enter his house. Their purpose was to see if they could find out the name of the finance company which, by chance, they were able to do.

The officers then contacted the finance company ("connecting with other [private] agencies"). Informally, they advised the company that the property might be liable to seizure and that it was currently in poor condition. The mortgage company was concerned that they had over-valued the property and quickly sent out an appraiser who confirmed the officers' report. The finance company also divulged that the mortgagee was about eight months in arrears in payments, and confirmed to the officers that this rendered the occupant liable to foreclosure and eviction. They were, however, reluctant to do this since the man might legally contest the action with the risk of bad publicity to the company. The officers established that the company would be prepared to pay a sum of "moving money" if the man was prepared to assign and vacate the property voluntarily. They then informed the occupant of the situation and obtained his agreement to the deal ("use of mediational/negotiating skills"). Subsequently, the man left voluntarily, and the finance company foreclosed the mortgage, took possession and boarded up the property.

Impact on the Problem

Figure 3 shows trends in calls at the problem block. It shows that the problem location was not the main site of the block's problems which, as

Figure 3: Calls for Police Service to the Case 3 Problem Location



described above, consisted of drug dealing and disorder in the street itself. Similar to the other studies, calls increased rapidly during the period of activity, reflecting the greater readiness of residents to report incidents and the officers' zero-tolerance disruption of the street drug traffic. Again, the six-month follow-up period (March to August 1992) shows a decline in calls, a reduction of 42% over the comparable period in the previous year.

Relative Impact

As noted above, an analysis was conducted in order to see whether changes in calls to the blocks in which the problem addresses were located were greater than might have been expected, given their previous level of problems relative to other blocks and intersections in the surrounding area and general changes in calls shared by all locations. Table 1 presents the standardized residual change scores for each location from four regressions analyses, each regressing calls per three-month period during and after the period of intervention on calls for equivalent periods during the previous year, before activities commenced. A score of -2.00 or less shows that the block was among only the 2.5% of blocks and intersections in the area to achieve a comparably exceptional reduction in calls (a score of 2.00 or more indicates a similar level of exceptional increase “). In line with the description of events presented here, it can be seen that in the period March through May 1992, following the cessation of activity, both Cases 1 and 2 achieved this criteria of exceptional reduction in their relative level of calls. Even the Case Study 1 block had moved into the third of locations experiencing the greatest exceptional reductions in calls. It would appear, then, that each of the problem-oriented efforts achieved an incremental reduction in calls which might not have been expected otherwise.

CONCLUSIONS

From these case studies it is possible to draw the tentative conclusion that problem-oriented policing of flagrant drug markets can bring about reductions in the level of disorder associated with them. While a definitive assessment awaits a more rigorously designed experiment or longer term follow-up (Sherman, 1992), police decision makers can conclude that a problem-oriented focus may help in controlling disorder at drug sales locations. What general lessons can be learned about the process of problem solving followed by the officers?

Table 1: "Exceptional" Change in Level of Calls to the Problem Blocks Relative to Change in Calls at Other Locations in the Surrounding Area

	STANDARDIZED RESIDUAL CHANGE SCORES		
	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Regression Analysis of Calls			
June-August 1991 on 1990	4.672	-3.68	1.045
Sept.-Nov. 1991 on 1990	9.601	0.06	7.035
Dec-Feb 1991/92 on 1990/91	3.150	2.70	5.255
March-May 1992 on 1991	1.123	-3.51	-2.282
Total number of blocks and intersections	225	187	129

Substantively, the actions taken more closely resemble those advocated by Conner and Burns (1991), which, in many respects, resemble those advocated generally by Clarke (1992) as examples of situational crime prevention. Thus, it seems likely that in following Goldstein's (1990) inventory of actions, officers will be guided toward the implementation of primarily situational crime prevention measures.

The crucial actions were those which were the responsibility of agencies other than the police, e.g.. building code enforcement or mortgage foreclosure, even though certain police strategies clearly helped, e.g.. zero tolerance or high-visibility enforcement. Problem-oriented officers played an indirect but important role as catalysts for change. Their successes appeared attributable chiefly to their mediational and negotiating skills in developing coordinated action. While other city agencies were willing to take action, and the community had given its support, it was the police department—through its officers—who were most decentralized and closest to the highly localized problems. In other words, the decentralized authority and local responsibility given to police officers (which problem-oriented policing places at the forefront of police work) puts them in a

crucial and Influential position as far as localized actions are concerned. The importance of problem-oriented police work, therefore, may be its capacity to manage and coordinate action at the local level.

As evidenced by the case studies, it is perhaps here that many of the difficulties associated with interagency collaboration disappear. It may well be that such difficulties stem primarily from organizational mismatches, which become apparent at a wider level of aggregation. Certainly, the effectiveness of the problem-oriented officers was helped where other agencies had also decentralized (e.g., the city's Operation ConServ), and where there was a range of civil law and city ordinances which could be deployed (e.g., building codes). But it is apparent that even where the city has such powers, it no longer has the resources of inspection and enforcement to cover every local violation which occurs. Yet research suggests that if these highly localized examples of disorder are not dealt with, their effects can magnify to set in motion processes which hasten the decline and deterioration of cities as a whole (Skogan, 1900). By default, the police seem to be the only agency left with an effective capacity to inspect and enforce the governance of the city at the street level. In this respect, the social ecology of city governance is an important component in such localized problem-oriented initiatives.

Finally, all the examples described here exemplify Goldstein's (1990) suggestions of the range of alternatives which can be used in problem-oriented policing. Most of the officers involved received very little formal training in applying these alternative techniques, and some received none at all. None were "experts." yet their replication of Goldstein's inventory in practice illustrates how the problem-solving approach can liberate police officers from customary "incident-driven policing" (Eck and Spelman, 1987), achieving a greater effectiveness in their work.



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NOTES

1. Phrases in double quotation marks indicate examples of conformity to Goldstein's (1900) typology of problem-oriented police actions.
2. Strictly speaking, this score indexes either an exceptional reduction or an exceptionally low rate of increase.

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