CRACK DISTRIBUTION AND ABUSE IN NEW YORK

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Abstract: *A major ethnographic project, conducted from 1989-1997, greatly improved the scientific understanding of crack and illicit drug distribution and markets in New York City. Staff developed procedures and outreach methodologies to access and safely conduct research among active sellers, dealers, and low-level distributors of crack, cocaine, and heroin. Nearly 300 subjects were studied on different occasions. The crack distribution business involved specific roles classified into four major groups: low-level distributors, sellers, dealers, and high-level distributors. Role proliferation helped evade police and the most serious penalties, as well as to protect sellers from competitors. The relative effectiveness of police tactics in "gaining control" of the streets in the mid-1990s, had modest impacts on the crack and drug markets. Prices of retail and wholesale units of crack and cocaine remained relatively stable for a dozen years. Inner-city youths born in the 1970s (and reaching young adulthood in the 1990s) had avoided crack smoking and injection of heroin or cocaine. However, having been reared in severely distressed households, their social capital (e.g., their family and social backgrounds plus acquired skills) was very low as they reached adulthood in the 1990s. They had low probabilities of gaining steady legal employment or welfare payments during adulthood.*

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INTRODUCTION

Although the federal funding process severely inhibited and delayed systematic research about crack abuse and sales during the 1980s (Holden, 1989), later research documented that the crack era exploded in 1984-86 in New York and around the United States. Extensive ethnographic and quantitative research enables us to describe and document continuity and shifts in the natural history of crack sellers/distributors and abusers. This chapter[1] focuses on the structure of drug markets, gendered differences in participation in drug dealing, and related factors. Existing policies regarding cocaine and crack distribution and users are addressed in the concluding section.

THEORY AND BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING "STRUCTURE" IN THE CONTEXT OF DRUG MARKETS

This research outlines the adaptability and fluidity of crack sellers and distribution systems by drawing from ethnographies lasting several years, which allowed us to document iterative changes in drug markets operating in various contexts. Drug sellers responded to changes in the drug economy as the drug of choice changed among the clientele and the pressures exerted through intensified policing (Johnson et al., 1990). Some factors involved alterations within the communities where most of these markets operate (Dunlap and Johnson 1992; Johnson et al., 1992). Other factors reflect the decreased availability of General Assistance and welfare supports, particularly in the face of spiraling demands confronting AIDS-afflicted households (Tourigny, 1998; Des Jarlais et al., 1998, 1994; Friedman et al., 1997).

Few doubt that crack markets and other drug markets have remained successful in spite of the challenges of efficient policing and lengthy sentences for crack sellers. Yet, research has paid little attention to the internal structure and functioning of drug markets in response to the range of exogenous pressures they have faced in recent years. Because the drug economy is illicit and its participants are seen as violent and (often as intentionally) deviant, analysis of its structure is difficult. This lacuna leaves us uninformed about the lifestyles and internal dynamics of those most involved in these markets; it also leaves us bereft of novel strategies that seek to minimize crack and drug use, particularly in inner cities.

Because crack sellers operate outside the law and undercover officers continually seek them out, drug selling operations must include high levels of risk. But they must also be predictable. The sellers

must know where to find cocaine or crack supplies; the clients must know where to find the sellers and also how to avoid police. The suppliers must locate street-level sellers and the clients must be able to buy somewhere. What may superficially appear to be chaos is seller response to remain flexible enough to respond quickly to threats to their market share or to their personal freedom from incarceration. Drug sellers must sustain both this predictability and this flexibility without any support from those structures — social, legal, or corporate — customarily available to legal enterprises. Drug dealers as well as social scientists can draw the analogy between corporate and drug market structures:

> If you can sell cocaine or any other type of drug, you can start your own business. It's that easy...When you're selling drugs, you learn how to do your books, you learn how to save your money, you know how to invest it, and with a business, it's the same thing. The brothers out here that have seven or eight people working for them, they are managers and businessmen, they're already entrepreneurs [Jah & Shah'Keyah, 1995:83].

Our major theoretical approach is borrowed from a more general model of disease epidemics.[2] Our analyses suggest that "crack era," rather than a "crack epidemic," most appropriately describes the historical progressions documented during this research. A *drug era* is conceptualized as a time-delimited, sociohistorical period in which a new drug or "innovative" mode of use is introduced and adopted by large numbers and proportions of persons and its use becomes institutionalized within certain segments of the population. Drug eras move through several major components: (1) Each involves a specific drug or new mode of use. (2) Each era has its own phases including *expansion, plateau, decline,* and *persistence.* (3) Mass initiation and development of regular use or abuse patterns primarily occurs among adolescents and high-risk subpopulations. (4) Drug-era "cohorts" are important because their persistent use of substances may continue throughout their lives. Several publications elaborate this model (Golub and Johnson, 1999a, 1999b, 1997, 1996, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c; Johnson and Muffler, 1997; Johnson, 1991; Johnson and Manwar, 1991; Johnson et al., 1990; also see Brunswick and Titus 1998; Inciardi and Harrison, 1998).

In the past 30 years, New York City experienced at least four major "drug eras" (Johnson and Muffler, 1997; Johnson et al., 1990), each persisting in the 1990s: (1) marijuana and psychedelic era (1960-79); (2) heroin era (1965-73); (3) cocaine powder era (1975-84); and (4) crack era (1985-88). "After-hours" cocaine-snorting settings were common in the 1970s and were transformed into "freebase par-

lors" and "base houses" during 1980-83 (Haraid, 1992a, 1992b). The popularity of crack (freebase cocaine prepared for retail sales) around 1983 spawned a very swift expansion phase (1984-86), which gave way to the plateau phase (1987-89) (see Golub and Johnson, 1999b, 1997, 1996; Johnson et al., 1992; Johnson et al., 1990, 1985; also see a summary of these drug eras in Johnson and Muffler, 1997; and Johnson et al., 1995). In Manhattan, the crack era then persisted or declined very slowly. A definite negative stigma against smoking crack emerged among street drug users. Inner-city, high-risk youths born in the 1970s (the "post-crack cohort") appear to be avoiding crack smoking and heroin injection in particular (Johnson and Golub, 2000; Johnson et al., 1998; National Institute of Justice 1999, 1997). No street youth wants to be called a "crackhead" (Furst et al., 1999, 1998; Dunlap et al., 1995; Furst and Johnson, 1995). Whatever the reasons for youthful avoidance or irregular use of cocaine/crack and heroin, current norms are so powerful that despite intensive searches, several major AIDS projects located in New York City have major difficulty locating persons under age 25 who snort heroin, and finds virtually no drug-injecting inner-city African-American youths (Friedman et al., 1998; Sifaneck, 1998; Friedman, 1997; Furst et al., 1996; Neaigus et al., 1994; Parker et al., 1988; Pearson, 1987). A major ethnographic study of heroin use (Curtis and Spunt, 1999; Hamid et al., 1999) has found almost no heroin use or injection among minority youths and young adults in New York City.

Johnson and colleagues first explicated these phases of drug markets in New York City in 1990, and documented the structural similarities evident in the mid- to late 1980s between these markets and legal businesses (Johnson et al., 1990). These, of course, have changed somewhat, as a response to intensified policing, but also to the changing profile of those available to work reliably within drug markets, and to the routinization of illegal sales work as a career. This chapter explains the current structure, which essentially reflects a great deal of continuity during the 1990s. It also documents an adaptation to some of the changing realities of drug markets operating as structured entities in the New York City of the 1990s.

METHODOLOGY

When this project began in 1989, very little was known about crack use/abuse, and even less about crack selling and distribution. Staff successfully implemented an ethnography of crack sellers and their distribution behaviors, including their use of crack and other drugs. The primary assumption underlying this qualitative method-

ology holds that the best and most important source of information about phenomena involves asking those who are most intimately involved in it. Thus, persons who routinely engage in crack use and sales are anticipated to have unique points of view and perspectives. Indeed, the illegality of their behavior implies the need to hide or conceal it from others, especially from police and public officials and from those — including family members — in alliance with conventional society.

Ethnography is a primary approach in several social sciences (see Miles and Huberman, 1994; Fetterman, 1989; Emerson, 1988; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; among others for the rationale and purpose of ethnographic research). The method relies upon three major data collection emphases: (1) locating and establishing good rapport with key informants or participants, who discuss in their own words their ways of thinking about the phenomena of interest; (2) directly observing the person, setting, and phenomena of interest, and recording impressions in written field notes; and (3) conducting in-depth, usually tape-recorded, interviews, raising topics and asking questions that leave respondents free to formulate their own answers. Transcribed interviews constitute the primary documents for data analysis. While difficult to code quantitatively,[3] the resulting respondent narratives and field notes offer descriptions containing participants' words and their meaning systems, contextualized by the researcher's direct observations and impressions.

The project staff successfully developed procedures and outreach methodologies to access and safely conduct research (Pequegnat et al., 1995; Williams et al., 1992; Dunlap et al., 1990) among active sellers, dealers, and low-level distributors of crack, cocaine, and heroin. Because of the severe criminal penalties involved with selling crack, ethnographic staff needed to locate, gain introdxictions to, and, most importantly, establish trust and build rapport among street selling networks. They needed to obtain informed consent from persons in various distribution roles. Respondents often introduced other sellers and higher-level dealers (Dunlap and Johnson, 1999), and field workers identified and established relationships with potential subjects. Despite some interest in the financial reward given for completed interviews, that the project would result in "a book" was a powerful inducement. Many, especially street-level crack sellers and low-level distributors, were eager to talk about themselves, their accomplishments, and travails.

Gaining access to crack dealers and higher level operatives proved much more difficult. The higher these individuals are in the drug distribution hierarchy, the more progressively reclusive they become, carefully shielding themselves behind a hierarchy of operatives. Once

a research relationship is successfully established and an initial interview is completed (Dunlap and Johnson, 1999), however, many adopt mentor-like attitudes toward the naive academic or ethnographer. Eager to explain dramatic events or drug procedure, they sometimes bristled if spoken details were inadequately noted or explored. Some urged researchers to turn on the tape recorder or to write something down. At other times, aware of the sensitivity of their responses, they asked that the tape recorder be turned off or that specific remarks be omitted from the transcript.

Ethics of Ethnographic Research

In establishing their presence as bona fide researchers, ethnographers must build substantial rapport, carefully explain the purpose of the research, provide assurances of protection and safety, and obtain informed consent from participants. Ethnographers also need to establish a zone of personal safety (Williams et al., 1992; Williams, 1991, 1989, 1978) early on, and to maintain neutrality.

Key Subjects

Crack distributors recruited for this study [Table 1] probably reflect the larger population distributing crack. Over a third are women, over two-thirds are African American and West Indian, and only a small proportion is white. Most are in their 30s or 40s, and have sold drugs for many years.

By the completion of data collection in September 1996, project staff had documented over 1,500 persons at various crack and drug dealing scenes across New York City. Staff had interviewed 296 persons in depth; over 100 were interviewed repeatedly over several years. Approximately 800 transcripts for the 296 focal subjects and for staff meetings and roughly 1,050 separate ethnographer and paraprofessional field notes, total 75,000 pages of text. Representing about 135 million words, this constitutes one of the largest qualitative data sets ever compiled in this field. Many variations in distribution roles and activities were systematically recorded. Participant classifications reflect their level in the drug dealing hierarchy as: (1) dealer (n=36), (2) retail seller (n=65), (3) low level distributor (n=108), (4) distribution role difficult to classify (n=36), and (5) abuser, not distributor (n=41).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Crack Seller Subjects With One or More Ethnographic Interviews

	N	Percent
All subjects with one in-depth interview	296	
Gender	296	
Male	187	63.2
Female	109	36.6
Ethnicity	296	
African American	230	77.7
Hispanic	49	16.6
White	17	5.7
Age at first interview	268	
Under 25	47	17.5
25-39	54	20.1
30-40	109	40.7
Over 40	58	21.6
Year of initial interview	296	
1989-90	68	23.0
1991-92	79	26.7
1993	5	1.7
1994	48	16.2
1995	59	19.9
1996	37	12.5
Borough of primary activity	296	
Manhattan	219	74.0
Bronx	17	5.7
Brooklyn	55	18.6
Queens/Staten Island	5	1.7

All ethnographic data are compiled into a powerful hypertext program, Folio VIEWS, which contains textual data organized for instant retrieval. Many categories of concern, such as addiction, dyads, reciprocity, support, and so on, are concepts that are not used often by crack-selling subjects. However, "in textual data, the search is ... for meaning of the text that involves the choice of analytic perspectives" (Manwar et al., 1994:288). The hypertext program supports the systematic matching of the requirement of scientific abstractions (the researcher's perspective) with participants' descriptions of behavior and purpose.

This chapter's first author also directs the Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program in Manhattan. The National Institute of Justice funds the data collection to document trends in patterns of illicit drug use among arrestees in 24 cities.[4] DUF-Manhattan[5] datasets provide a

major *quantitative* database with very large samples quite representative of Manhattan arrestees. About 1,400 subjects a year provide trend data across years and birth cohorts, and considerable precision about rates of drug use, both self-reported and detected via urinary sis (Golub and Johnson, 1997; Chaiken and Chaiken, 1993; Lewis et al., 1992). Primary analyses of trends (1987-1997) and cohort changes in drug use patterns allowed us supplementary contextualization of ethnographic data obtained in this study.[6]

THE CRACK DISTRIBUTION BUSINESS

The major focus of this research project was to improve scientific understanding of how persons sell crack, interact with others to maintain their business, deal with police and competition, and to understand crack markets. Staff have extensively documented that the vast majority of respondents engaged in crack selling were raised in severely distressed households of the inner city (Johnson et al., 1998; Maher, 1997; Dunlap et al., 1997; Dunlap et al., 1996; Maher et al., 1996; Dunlap, 1995, 1993, 1992). Similar findings characterized inner-city Detroit (Tourigny, 1998). Their career "choices" and their major life changes largely result from, and are coextensive with, their background and the disturbed family systems in which they were raised and/or currently reside.[7] Persons who grew up in severely distressed households learned strategies that leave them ill-equipped for conventional society. Children who were reared in settings where they often observed adults engaging in fights and occasionally injuring each other, were also systematically trained to fight and defend themselves (Baskin and Sommers, 1998; Johnson et al., 1998; Dunlap et al., 1996; Maher et al., 1996). Most learned to curse, be loud, aggressive and defensive in interpersonal situations.

Participation in such violence is normative and expected by everyone in the drug markets (Dunlap et al., 1996). Moreover, the self- and social-selection processes in crack distribution effectively recruit and retain the most violent drug-involved youths into distribution groups employing violence to control street sellers (Johnson et al., 1995; Waterston, 1993). Indeed, transcripts with most of the crack distribution participants extensively document high levels of violence both to themselves (e.g., multiple victimization episodes over their lifetime) and admittedly committed against others (e.g., multiple perpetration). In the absence of role models engaged in predominately conventional economic activities, they were socialized into drug market activities. This influence was exacerbated by the macro-social forces (Dunlap and Johnson, 1995; 1992) that developed and combined between the 1960s and the 1990s to *effectively exclude* very

sizable proportions (possibly a majority) of inner-city minorities from having any steady legal job or obtaining even a modest (especially above-poverty) income (Waterston, 1993).

While the careers of individual crack/drug abusers and sellers vary substantially, crack is seldom their first drug of use or sale (Johnson et al., 1995). Commonalities in pre-crack drug use and sales abound, usually including pre-crack use of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine powder, and sometimes heroin injection, as well as routine sales of marijuana and/or cocaine powder. Most crack sellers report modest to extensive experience in nondrug criminality, persist in it when not selling crack, and obtain some portion of income from such crimes, although crack sales or low-level distribution activities are much more important to their livelihood (Johnson and Muffler, 1997; Johnson et al., 1994, 1990). During the past 40 years, the illicit drug economy expanded so dramatically that it became a major occupational activity for many low-income persons, especially in inner-city neighborhoods. In the mid-1980s, because of crack sales and marketing, the drug economy underwent a further dramatic expansion. Virtually all persons who sold hard drugs (which includes a very significant proportion of all hard-drug users) engaged in selling crack (Johnson and Muffler, 1997; Johnson et al., 1994, 1990; Manwar and Johnson, 1993; Fagan, 1992). Crack selling is a highly amorphous, structurally fluid undertaking (Rouse and Johnson, 1991). While its aims are to maximize profits for dealers and distributors and to ensure access for users, its methods vary over time and across settings in response to the strategies of law enforcement and competition.

ROLE STRUCTURE IN CRACK DISTRIBUTION

Several functions or roles effectively regulate the labor inputs of crack business participants, structure their interactions, and influence the returns from engaging in illegal crack transactions. Crack distributors frequently lack a terminology to distinguish these levels, and the terminology that is used varies considerably by neighborhood and distribution group. Even without categories, however, suppliers make very clear intuitive decisions about someone's competence to successfully manage money and drugs before entrusting them with crack to sell at any level of distribution. Table 2 identifies and describes some typical functions and roles in crack distribution.

Organized according to their primary functions, we categorize specific roles into four primary groupings: (1) *low-level distributors,* (2) *sellers,* (3) *dealers,* and (4) *high-level distributors.* This loose hierarchy involves increasingly greater rewards for successful performance, as

Table 2: Roles and Functions at Various Levels of the Drug Distribution Business

Approximate Role Equivalents in Legal Markets	Roles by Common Names at Various Stages of the Drug Distribution Business	Major Functions Accomplished at this Level
Grower/ producer	Coca farmer, opium farmer, marijuana grower	Grow coca, opium, marijuana; the raw materials
Manufacturer	Collector, transporter, elaborator, chemist, drug lord	All stages for preparation of heroin, cocaine, marijuana as commonly sold
	Traffickers	
Importer	Multikilo importer, mule, airplane pilot, smuggler, trafficker, money launderer	Smuggling of large quantities of substances into the United States
Wholesale distributor	Major distributor, investor, "kilo connection"	Transportation and redistribution of multikilograms and single kilograms
	Dealers	
Regional distributor	"Pound and ounce men," "weight dealers"	Adulteration and sale of moderately expensive products
Retail store owner	House connections, suppliers, crack-house supplier	Adulteration and production of retail level dosage units ("bags," "vials," "grams") in very large numbers
Assistant manager, security chief, or accountant	"Lieutenant," "muscle men," transporter, crew boss, crack-house manager/proprietor	Supervises three or more sellers, enforces informal contracts, collects money, distributes multiple dosage units to actual sellers
	Sellers	
Store clerk, salesmen (door to door and phone)	Street drug seller, "runner," juggler, private seller	Makes actual direct sales to consumer; responsible for both money and drugs
	Low-Level Distributors	
Advertiser, security guards, leaflet distributor	Steerer, tout, cop man, lookout, holder, runner, help friend, guard, go-between	Assists in making sales, adver-tises, protects seller from police and criminals, solicits cus-tomers; handles drugs or money, but not both
Servant, temporary employee	Run shooting gallery, injec-tor (of drugs), freebaser, taster, apartment cleaner, drug bagger, fence, launder money	Provides short-term services to drug users or sellers for money or drugs; not responsible for money or drugs.

Source: Johnson et al., 1990:19.

well as increasingly greater risk of incarceration if arrested and convicted. In current legal statutes, a "sale" generally involves the exchange of money for an illegal drug. In response, sellers and dealers created various roles separating transactions of money from exchanges of drugs, to reduce their legal vulnerability to a "sale" arrest (Jacobs, 1999; Johnson and Natarajan, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991). This strategy sought to make it harder for police to detect — and especially to prove — that two geographically and temporally distinct transactions involving different persons were somehow related to the same sales transaction event. Legal statutes were then redefined so that persons performing these low-level distribution roles could be charged with sales transactions as a part of a continuing criminal enterprise. This change in the law triggered countermoves from distributors attempting to elude police attention while promoting their product. The role proliferation we describe below is thus specifically intended to evade police and to avoid the most serious penalties.

- *Low-level distributors* engage in a loose assortment of roles in which an actor is responsible for either, but never for both, drugs or money. This function populates the bottom of the crack distribution market. "Holders," "transporters," or "deliverers" handle someone else's drugs without receiving money from the receiver/buyer to whom they hand the product. Handling money only, "counters" or "guards" neither possess nor stand near illegal drugs. "Lookouts," "backups" or "muscle" handle neither money nor drugs, but help or safeguard the actual sale process. Many low-level distributors also promote ("tout") another seller's drug, help "steer" potential buyers to a seller, or "cop" drugs for buyers.
- *Retail sellers* are responsible for both money and drugs (at least temporarily). This role is the functional — if illegal — equivalent of retail clerks in stores, in that they collect money from someone (usually the final retail consumer) purchasing a commodity. Trying as best they can to hide their activities, they routinely engage in several illegal transactions a day to obtain their income. In the New York City crack markets, sellers usually purchase "bundles" of 10-25 vials (containing crack) from a dealer. The retail units are typically sold for $2-$25 (at various times and places), with the modal retail price being $5, to the crack buyer/consumer (Randolph 1995, 1996). Wide variations in styles of selling were noted.
- *Dealers* routinely purchase large "wholesale" level units of crack (e.g. ounces, grams, eight-balls, pounds), by weight or,

especially, by dollar amounts. A dealer typically buys several "eight-balls" (supposedly an eighth of an ounce of prepared crack), up to quantities totaling a couple of kilograms of cocaine. Generally, a minimum purchase (or consignment) involves several hundred dollars' worth of cocaine or crack to prepare for resale in smaller retail units sold in multiunit lots. Dealers oversee the repackaging, often after adulteration, into retail or near-retail level sales units.

- *Upper-level distributors:* Such persons, who often import cocaine from South America, purchase and/or sell multiple kilograms of cocaine. They oversee the financing, smuggling, and transport of these drugs, rarely "handling," "possessing" or "transacting in" the drugs they own. Others, who do the actual work, take on the risks of lengthy incarceration. (While this project had major difficulty gaining access to or obtaining the cooperation of such upper-level distributors, staff interviewed several persons who had worked for them in various roles (e.g., as "mules," "transporters" of wholesale amounts of cocaine, or who had "baby sat" [guarded] wholesale quantities of cocaine, etc.) (Dunlap et al., 1997).

Virtually all crack distribution participants routinely switch among the various roles, often within minutes. Across distribution careers, downward mobility is the more common trajectory. When interviewed in their late 20s or later, most crack distributors had sustained arrests or incarcerations. They also report having made "good money" as regular sellers or dealers in their adolescence or early 20s. Having since acquired a large crack habit in the 1990s and, with it, a reputation as untrustworthy with money or drugs, cocaine/crack suppliers would no longer give them crack on consignment. They were no longer able to raise funds to make wholesale purchases. Thus, most could only function as low-level distributors (Furst et al., 1998; Dunlap et al., 1997; Dunlap, 1992; Hamid, 1992a, 1992b; Johnson et al., 1992). As an aggregate result of this pat tern, the consignment system became relatively uncommon; most crack dealers would only sell wholesale amount of cocaine or crack to persons who wished to sell crack for cash purchases. Many persons who were active as crack sellers in the late 1980s became crack heads and cannot obtain funds or advances of crack to sell; while willing to sell, they are effectively excluded from such sales roles by their reputation for unreliability.

Crack Selling Organizations

Four major organized styles of crack selling emerged in New York during the decade 1986-97.

- *Freelancing:* Virtually all crack distributors preferred freelance work (where they sold alone and were responsible for both money and drugs). "Lone freelancers," although common, did not predominate in New York City.[8] The more organized competitors drove most freelance crack sellers out of the more lucrative public selling locations; police arrested and removed others. The primary long-term hindrance, however, was crack dependence among freelancers. Most heavy crack abusers failed to "keep the money straight," eventually consuming supplies they were supposed to sell. Without enough cash to buy multiple sales units from a supplier, they generally find themselves in day-laborer roles for someone else. As detailed below, some of the most effective "freelancers" are female crack sellers who sell from houses. Freelancers also made substantially better returns than did the day laborers (Caulkins et al., 1999).

- *Freelance Cooperatives:* This arrangement involves several freelance sellers collaborating in a loose cooperative in a particular location, relying on informal agreements to help each other. Each of two to 10 freelance sellers working on the same block claimed their own "spot" from which to sell drugs. Each seller became a lookout for police and a source of referral of customers to the others. Freelance sellers might lend each other money or drugs or help out in emergencies (e.g., provide bail money, pay for funerals, etc.) or jointly sponsor community block parties in order to co-opt support from nonusing citizens who might otherwise complain to police. Collectively, they discourage new distributors from establishing other selling locations on the block. But sellers individually obtain their own suppliers of crack, their own regular customers, and responsibility for both money and drugs. The number of freelance sellers can vary substantially at different times of the day. Collectives often organize their hours in "shifts" so they are not in directly competition for customers. Such freelance cooperatives were more common in the late 1980s than in the mid-1990s (Johnson et al., 1991).

- *Day laborers:* Crack distributors unable to purchase supplies of crack to sell often seek work from other crack sellers

and buyers. Usually hired for a day, they may hand out drugs ("pitch") after someone else obtains the money, or serve as a lookout. Effectively, the day laborer is paid to do as directed in a quasi-employee role. Typically, the day laborer is paid in drugs rather than cash; the rapid consumption of such returns ensures a steady and cheap labor supply.

- *Business-like crack sellers:* These individuals constitute a minority of crack distributors. They hire and pay regular salaries to a few key employees, often providing various other benefits as well. Most workers are hired as day laborers to sell crack in public and private locations, without guarantee of work on any given day, and without benefits. The project located a variety of crack-distribution crews, which tended to be organized around two distinct management practices (Curtis, 1996, 1995; Curtis and Svirdoff, 1994).

Localized crack distribution groups primarily comprise persons related to each other as family members or kin, or else they emerge out of cliques of childhood/adolescent friends. Almost all members have many years of association, trust each other, and generally work together effectively as a team of sellers. But police buy-bust tactics would often remove many or all such distributors at one time. Likewise, personal fights and jealousies often undermined group cohesion and sales work.

Businesslike crews of crack sellers were more common. Usually, one dealer hires and manages several unrelated persons paid for performing various roles, hiring the most trustworthy and effective low-level distributors from among a very large pool of persons with untrustworthy reputations. Such organized crews of crack sellers are among the few offering monetary wages to low-level distributors (the "day laborers") for performing various crack distribution roles. The dealer provides all crack sold by the crew boss and street sellers, and gains almost all the monetary returns accruing from their sales. The street manager/crew boss does not sell drugs, does not hold them when they are being sold, and is not holding money just derived from sales, making it more difficult for police to "prove" that he is the manager and part of the team.

Typically, a successful dealer hires one or more "street manager(s)" each of whom, as a "crew boss," assumes responsibility for hiring and supervising street selling groups of two to five persons. While the employer/dealer pays the crew boss regular wages or commissions, street sellers are usually hired as day laborers and

given a choice of payment in money or drugs. The crew boss provides workers with instructions "not to sell to police or undercover" and to "never take shorts" (sell at a discount). Street sellers who are arrested receive no legal representation, and are in fact often expected, after release from jail, to repay the drugs seized during their arrest. The turnover of crack sellers, who need the constant supervision of a crew boss, is substantial. Some dealers employ unrelated teams of sellers in different locations throughout the city.

Cocaine/crack distribution organizations and crack-use/sale institutions underwent considerable change during the 1980s and 1990s. Crack sales and markets have clearly dominated illegal drug markets in New York City since 1985. The predominant tactics used by crack distributors changed along with the history of the crack era, however (Lipton and Johnson, 1998; Hamid, 1992b; Johnson et al., 1992; Mieczkowski et al., 1992). During the 1970s and early 1980s, informal after-hours locations (serving alcohol after liquor stores and bars closed) drew cocaine users congregating to snort cocaine (Williams, 1978). During the period of 1981-83, many cocaine after-hours locales became freebase parlors where one could purchase and "cook up" cocaine into freebase, which was then smoked (Williams, 1989). These indoor locales were converted to crack houses and apartments in 1984-86 (Williams, 1991). During 1987-90, freelance crack sellers conducted most crack distribution in public curbside locations, and crack supermarkets abounded throughout the city (Hamid, 1992b). Since 1990, aggressive policing has reduced curbside distribution. By the mid-1990s, many sellers moved inside into *bodegas*, pool halls, laundromats, video arcades and other seemingly legitimate storefronts and apartments (Curry and Dunlap, 1996; Curtis, 1996, 1995; Curtis et al., 1995; Goldsmith, 1995). More crack sales probably occur indoors than outdoors, a change accompanied by an equally fundamental shift in the roles of sellers and low-level distributors.

With increased police pressure, fewer young crack users, and declining crack markets, many freelance sellers have not fared well. Likewise, vertically organized, relatively large crack distribution groups controlled by one or two dealers who benefit from the labor of 15 or more people are disappearing. They are specifically targeted and broken up by police. Many organized business groups, while maintaining an active street outreach to buyers, function from indoor locations. Many freelance sellers in the late 1980s, unable to maintain their freelance status in the 1990s, have joined the large pool of low-level distributors and function primarily as "middlemen" between buyers and sellers who never meet.

Due to well-grounded fears of police buy-bust tactics, however, crack sellers (those responsible for both money and drugs) grew unwilling to sell to any person who was not a "regular" (or at least previously known) customer. They established new tactics (Furst et al., 1996; Goldsmith, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Johnson and Natarajan, 1995), significantly reducing the number of visible police targets (Curtis, 1996, 1995; Furst et al., 1996; Maher 1996). Sellers are rarely on the street "hawking" crack or attempting sales to any new prospective buyer. Many use cloned cellular phones to maintain contact with customers and fill orders (Natarajan et al., 1995). Steerers and touts direct buyers to apartments while middlemen complete transactions for many buyers. These alternative strategies mean that virtually all drug purchasers can make buys within a half-hour, even when they need to evade police to do so (Riley, 1998). While policing has had little measurable impact upon the availability of crack or upon crack markets, or upon consumers' ability to purchase drugs, the police strategies and tactics did effectively end the city's drug supermarkets and has substantially affected the style and social organization of distribution (Curtis and Sviridoff; 1994; Sviridoff et al., 1992).

Increased Importance of the Middleman Distribution Role

In the mid-1990s, largely as a result of policing, an important transition also occurred in the role of the "middleman." During 1994-96, intensified policing in New York increased the importance of the middleman for both sellers (concealing their identity and reducing their risk of arrest) and buyers (to complete drug purchases) in avoiding contact with the police (Furst et al., 1998). Because long-time crack abusers/buyers from the community generally "know" who, where, and how to contact regular neighborhood crack sellers, and are known to be trustworthy — and not to be undercover police — they can usually avoid middlemen. Persons seeking to purchase crack or cocaine in a new community, however, are unlikely to find anyone willing to sell them crack directly, as was the case in the late 1980s. In addition, potential buyers (often correctly suspected of being undercover police officers) will likely encounter a "middleman" often called a "cop man" or "go-between." The middleman, who has no drugs to sell directly but "knows" where to obtain crack for a fee, offers to transport money and drugs between buyers and sellers who never meet. The buyer can either give this intermediary the money in the hope that he will return with the crack or look elsewhere.

From the vantage points of the buyer and the police, the intermediary appears to be the seller. Any marked or recorded money given by an undercover officer will typically have been used to pay the drug seller. When the middleman turns over the crack, which is usually less than ordered and paid for, the undercover officer could arrest him, but typically only for a lesser charge. In short, the middleman has been able to earn a profit from both the crack seller (whom he or she protects against an undercover buy and arrest) and the buyer (who obtains the drug). The middleman thus earns money and/or drugs from both (Johnson et al., 1985).

Such intensified policing resulted in greater caution among those engaging in drug distribution in public places. Street level sellers knew the high probability of being "stopped" by police during a typical week in 1996. Thus, they carried accurate identification, had no outstanding warrants, had no illicit drugs in their possession, kept supplies well hidden, and avoided direct sales to any "new" buyer.

FEMALE CRACK DISTRIBUTION AND SEX WORK

Earlier research (Fagan, 1994a, 1994b; Inciardi et al., 1993) documented crack selling and prostitution as the primary career choices for inner-city crack-using women. This project had a substantial opportunity to carefully examine the living standards and lifestyles of crack-abusing women in New York City, including their involvement in crack and other drug sales, nondrug criminality, and sex work. During periods when they sold crack or other drugs, their involvement in prostitution was substantially lessened; conversely, when women crack users were unable to sell/help sell drugs, their reliance on sex work increased substantially.

An important disagreement existing within the literature was mirrored among project staff regarding the extent of gender equality in crack distribution business. Staff conducting fieldwork mainly in Harlem and the South Bronx focused upon women actively engaged in various crack and drug distribution roles (Dunlap et al., 1997; Dunlap and Johnson, 1996; Maher and Daly, 1996; Maher et al., 1996), but neither on their sex work activity, nor upon crack-using women who were primarily sex workers. Crack-using women studied in Harlem claimed, and were observed, to be relatively equal to male counterparts in their performance of street-level distribution roles (as sellers or low-level distributors).[9] Ethnographers conducting fieldwork among crack-abusing women in the Bush wick section of Brooklyn, where many women engaged in sex work, reported more gender and ethnic biases directed against women as distributors. Crack-using women were left with virtually no option other than sex

work, primarily because they would not be hired as day laborers by crack-selling crews (Maher, 1997; Maher et al., 1996). While the most successful female crack sellers managed house connections, the majority had intermittent involvement in crack selling and usually performed low-level distribution roles.

A few women operated "house connections" from which they sold crack to a selected clientele. These women, who usually came from relatively more stable family backgrounds (Dunlap and Johnson, 1996) were able to pay the rent, or have welfare pay the landlord directly, as well as manage a household. One female crack seller, Rachel, was using and selling crack from her apartment in the early 1990s (Dunlap and Johnson, 1996; Dunlap et al., 1994). Yet, she raised a daughter, sent her through college, and paid for the daughter's expensive wedding. Rachel avoided both arrest and dereliction. Her career evolved around shifts in drug markets from marijuana to cocaine to crack. A female in a male-dominated profession, she was a deviant among deviants. She used sales techniques common to middle-class female dealers, rather than those more typical of her inner-city location. She succeeded in these efforts primarily by avoiding collaboration with and control by male suppliers, although she usually purchased wholesale supplies from them.

Rachel catered to the "hidden" and employed crack user, avoiding the stereotypical street crack abuser (also see Hamid 1992a, for men). Her apartment was one of few places where buyers could both purchase and consume crack. Her clientele illuminates an unknown side of the crack economy — the older, better-educated, working/middle-class drug user. Rachel provided discretion and confidentiality, in an appropriate setting. She helped customers manage the effects of crack and oversee their finances so they did not spend all their money on the drug. She controlled unruly customers and avoided unwanted sexual attention. She maintained good relations with neighbors so they would not call the police. Above all else, she controlled her personal consumption, always setting aside rent money, and eating and sleeping regularly. Seemingly a middle-class woman in the inner city, she avoided arrest, even when stopped by police.

This project encountered two other female house connections, who managed but did not pay the rent for a separate apartment from which crack was sold. Project staff were not able to identify male crack sellers operating "house connections" (like Rachel's) from their own apartment. That is, males were less successful at managing an apartment-cum-crackhouse where crack is both sold and used. Several male sellers, however, either operated out of, or sold crack in households maintained — or where the rent was paid by — a girl

friend, a female relative, or the welfare system. Male sellers would frequently offer to pay female crack users for the use of their apartment for storing, cutting, or selling crack and other drugs but rarely paid in cash for that privilege, preferring to provide crack instead.

Unlike Rachel, the vast majority of female crack distributors primarily function in the lowest roles in drug distribution networks. The project carefully documented the lifestyles of female crack distributors. The vast majority of women (like a majority of men) occupied distribution roles at the bottom of the distribution hierarchy where, as "touts," "steerers," "go-betweens," "middlemen," "holders," "cooks," "lookouts," they do not simultaneously handle both money and drugs (Dunlap et al., 1997). While women distributors sometimes function as freelance sellers, they more frequently work for male dealers in street sales roles (making direct sales to retail customers), or in other low-level distribution roles.

Female crack users observed in Brooklyn experienced the discrimination against female users in sales roles shared by virtually all the crack suppliers, who are male (Maher, 1997). Least likely of the day laborer pool of crack users to be "hired" as pitchers and sales helpers by male "crew bosses" and distribution organizations, women were the first to be laid off or not subsequently rehired. While almost all women claim past "higher-level sales jobs" and "more responsible" positions in the drug sales workforce, virtually all report holding these positions when they were younger (ages 16 to 25), and before they began using crack. With few exceptions (like Rachel), however, female crack users/distributors in Brooklyn only had infrequent and/or marginal work as crack sellers/distributors. When engaged in sales, males closely supervise their activities. Often women are domi^ nated and cheated by male bosses and exposed to high levels of violence from other male sellers or managers.

Most crack-abusing/selling women experienced a variety of alternative living arrangements; very few had a stable conventional residence (Maher et al., 1996). Crack-abusing women are effectively "dehomed": they do not have a regular place to live, sleep, relax, bathe, eliminate, or store possessions. Because they usually found alternative, though temporary, living arrangements, however, most are not street persons. They demonstrate considerable effort and ingenuity, spending little or no money on rent, yet finding places to stay for relatively limited time periods. Almost all women came from very poor, precariously housed families, and lost the support of family or friends as a result of their crack use. Few could remain on welfare and most had no legal income during the study. The women avoided Single Room Occupancy (SRO) or "welfare" hotels and public shelters, viewing them as criminogenic and dangerous. A few "slept rough" or squatted curbside,

usually with a man. By far the most common alternative living arrangement was for women to reside for a limited period in the household of an older male who had a dependable income. Women typically provided these men with sex and drugs, and, less often, with cash, domestic service, or companionship. They also stole from or exploited the older men in various ways. A number of women lived in "freakhouses" — apartments or homes where several women entertain sexual customers and share crack or other drugs. These women avoid crack houses or shooting galleries as residential locations. These alternative living arrangements reflect the women's powerlessness and document the high levels of sexual exploitation and degradation of women in the inner-city crack culture. Among crack abusers/sellers, males were at least as likely as females to be without permanent residence. It is important to note that proportionately more males than women were clearly homeless, and slept on the streets, in abandoned buildings, and public places (Clatts and Davis, 1993). The preferred housing situation for male crack abusers/sellers was to live with, and usually have a sexual relationship with, a women who had an apartment that was often paid for by welfare. Such arrangements were typically short-term; the male was often put out or left the woman and her household within a few weeks or months. Relatively few women in the Brooklyn study area regularly generated income through theft and shoplifting, although virtually all women had done so at some time. Low-risk theft and shoplifting by female crack-abuser/distributors was infrequent, mainly because there were so few goods to steal from local establishments that local residents would then purchase from crack-using women (Maher, 1997).

Crack-abusing women are very near the bottom of the status hierarchy within the mainstream economy as well as the street-level economy. Virtually no female crack distributor held a legal job of any kind. For the most part, they are effectively excluded from the legal, mainstream economy. Many factors effectively exclude crack-abuser/distributors from the legal economy, from informal kin network supports, and even from most positions in the street-level and drug economy (Maher, 1997; Maher et al., 1996; Fagan, 1994a; Johnson and Dunlap, 1992; Johnson et al., 1990). They rarely apply for legal jobs, seldom get jobs they apply for, and hardly ever keep the rare job they get for more than a few days. Indeed, legal employment was many years in the past for most of them. Likewise, most crack-abuser/distributor women are unable to remain on welfare and/or maintain a household. Therefore, few had legal income from any source. Moreover, their situation is little better in the street-level economy. While crack-using women in Brooklyn alternate between drug distribution roles and sex work, sex work predominates because

male sexual partners frequently pressure women into it, and because of customer preferences.

The contributions of female crack abuser/distributors to the drug economy (via commercial sex work, drug distribution, and thefts) are confined to the margins by male sellers and substantially structured by customers' racial/ethnic preferences (Maher, 1997; Bourgois, 1995; Inciardi et al., 1993; Bourgois and Dunlap, 1992; Ratner, 1992). While many of the Brooklyn females occasionally engage in crack distribution when male crew bosses hired them as day laborers, the strictures and structures of street life effectively relegate most of them to the "oldest profession." The Brooklyn research shows that women's sex work effectively results from — or reflects their systematic exclusions by — the structures of the formal economy, the informal sector, and illicit drug markets. In all sectors, crack-using women have few alternatives to prostitution for generating income and/or for obtaining drugs.

Much social science research, many police accounts, male seller's accounts, and journalistic reports apply an "hypersexuality hypothesis" that effectively demonizes these women crack abusers. This convenient explanation blames the drug (e.g., crack) for women's extensive engagements in sexuality. The research (Maher, 1997) found that crack did not produce a cohort of hypersexual women primarily accepting payment in crack. Rather, they followed occupational norms for prostitution governing price, sexual acts, physical safety and bartering practices, and emphasizing sex work for money. While on occasion most women exchange in sex-for-crack or for other drugs, this is clearly against their usual practices. Yet a variety of discriminatory practices (based upon ethnicity, gender stereotypes, and family linkages) by male "dates" and by drug sellers effectively force women to accept crack/drugs or very low monetary payments for their sexual services. Indeed, women competed strenuously for "dates" paying relatively high prices. Moreover, many male crack sellers exploit crack-using women sexually and dominate them with violence when and if they complain.

Likewise, Maher's (1997) study found no evidence that these women became more liberated, more violent, or behaved "more like" their male counterparts. While many exhibit a "violent" or "crazy" public persona when distributing crack or drugs, as part of street drug culture, they are physically victimized much more often than they actually harm anyone else. Women resist male domination and exploitation as best they can. A primary form of resistance is what they call "viccing" [victimizing someone] that is, stealing money or possessions from dates, or not providing services [sex or drugs] after receiving payments. While "getting over" on dates or drug buyers

[who almost never report them to police] is a crude cultural adaptation to their own victimization, women's "viccing" is only a short-term solution raising short-term money. "Viccing" does not lead women away from the street life and continues to bind women to the oppressive structures that control their street-level sex work or occasional involvement in drug distribution (Maher, 1997).

Few female crack abusers/distributors are able to rear (or even maintain an on-going relationship) with their children. The vast majority of crack abuser/distributor women never married; most do not have a long-term, common-law relationship. Yet most have borne children. These women generally "gave" their babies to relatives in their kin networks or had their children taken by foster care/adoption (Johnson et al., 1998; Maher, 1997; Dunlap, 1995, 1992). Direct observations of crack-abusing women living with their children in household settings indicate that most lack many critical child-rearing skills (time and household management, psychological nurturing, emotional warmth and intimacy, appropriate discipline, etc.). If and when they assume responsibility for their children, they often neglect and sometimes physically punish them (Johnson et al., 1998).

Even the kin networks and female relatives who rear these children follow conduct norms likely to result in children having serious behavioral problems in adolescence and adulthood (Johnson et al., 1998; Maher, 1997). Moreover, child-rearing problems worsened across generations. In the 1990s, primary caregivers consist mainly of women born before 1945, rearing many of the children born in the 1980s and 1990s to street-involved, crack-abusing women. These kin networks will almost certainly disintegrate during the early 2000s as the older women who maintain the households and care for children die or become incapacitated (Johnson et al., 1998). Almost none of their crack and drug-abusing daughters (usually under age 50 in the 1990s) will successfully overcome their addictions in their late adulthood; fewer still will gain enough legal income to pay the rent and maintain a household in which infants and children can be raised. The results are already evident in the next generation, even as they initiate their own participation in the drug economy.

YOUNG RELUCTANTLY ENGAGE IN DRUG SALES, BUT WITH LIMITED SUCCESS

Inner-city youths and young adults in the 1990s see both sides of crack selling; the (rarely actualized) promise of 'easy money' sharply contrasts with the downward spiral of those caught by the criminal justice system or by their own addiction. They also observe violence

and death in the drug trade, witness cheating by sellers, experience stiff competition among sellers, and recognize the high probability of crack and heroin addiction. Distribution roles in crack and other drug markets are well known and easy-to-access by inner-city youths. For many, drug distribution roles appear to be the only available economic option. Yet, these youths are apprehensive. Selling requires a wide range of skills they lack, including the "heart" and the "street smarts" to recognize undercover police (Jacobs, 1999, 1996a, 1996b,), manage to possess and use guns (Taylor et al., 1999), and to deal with competition.

Although research staff located some persons who function as mentors to younger sellers, few youths have someone to show them how to sell effectively while avoiding police. Youths who begin engaging in drug sales often are quickly arrested. Additionally, drug markets may be crowded with older, experienced crack users who undercut retail prices for a "hit." Partly as a result, sales roles are less open to newcomers, and youths find financial success in drug selling increasingly improbable. Higher-level managers perceived the few youths who themselves used crack as extremely unreliable. Thus, many high-risk youths currently appear reluctant to sell crack or other hard drugs, and to fare poorly if they do so (Furst et al., 1999).

With the probabilities of arrest and incarceration high, many young adults in the younger generations have made a reasoned choice to not sell crack (Golub and Johnson 1999b; Johnson, 1997). They choose not to sell drugs they do not use. Youths do not want to sell to "crack heads" or "junkies" whom they despise, for dealers and crew bosses eager to exploit them, while having to dodge police trying to arrest them. Yet without available jobs or welfare support, many young adults who would prefer to avoid drug sales find that such illicit distribution is the only economic activity available to them. Their participation in crack distribution is typically a sporadic and intermittent way to earn some limited income. Women of this generation often engage in prostitution for the same reasons.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research project sought to increase scientific understanding of the phenomena of crack selling and distribution. The significance of the findings permeates the more than 40 existing and the many forthcoming publications from this research project. The authors offer only a brief overview of the most important public policy implications flowing from this research. The main conclusions emerging from this project remain fundamentally negative. Extensive invest-

ment in crime control has not had — and probably never will have — important measurable impacts upon drug use patterns, drug selling patterns, or prices of illicit drugs in the nation's inner cities. It remains an open question whether, in fact, intensified policing has had any significant impact on drug use, or whether the greater influence has been to shift the locations of illegal drug transactions. Fewer drug supermarkets may reduce street violence (Johnson et al., 2000) and in other ways alter the negative impact of drug dealing upon inner cities. This is not the same, however, as arguing that policing is directly effective in stopping the distribution and consumption of crack and illegal drugs.

Markets for heroin, cocaine, and crack will be very extensive and enforcement costs will continue to increase as distributors adapt their strategies in response to those of police. Ethnographic and governmental evidence (Caulkins et al., 1999; Caulkins, 1997; Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA], 1996) show that retail prices of these drugs have declined or remained consistent over a decade. Moreover, cocaine purities are as high as they were a decade ago, at the height of the crack era. Indeed, all of the extensive ethnographic observations and quantitative evidence (Riley, 1998) suggest that regular customers and occasional buyers alike have little difficulty obtaining heroin, crack, or cocaine whenever they have the funds. The variety of crack sellers, the diversity of sellers' marketing strategies, the purchasing pattern of their clientele, and user/seller tactics effectively conceal illegal drug sales from police (Jacobs, 1999; Maher, 1996; Johnson and Natarajan, 1995; Johnson et al., 1993).

The overwhelming majority of all illegal transactions thus occur without detection by law enforcement, much less arrest and/or incarceration. Yet the federal government remains committed to spending several billion additional dollars each year to support drug interdiction, crop eradication, arrests of and expansion of prison cells for retail drug sellers (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999). These efforts will continue despite excellent evidence (Caulkins, 1997; DEA, 1996) that such investments have not substantially influenced the quantity, quality or prices of illicit drugs in America, and are unlikely to do so in future decades.

In response to intensified police enforcement efforts, crack distributors have moved their activities indoors, making it more difficult for police to observe transactions, identify and document specifically which persons were involved in what distribution roles, or make buy-bust arrests that stand up in court. Improvements in police suppression of illicit drug sales in public places will undoubtedly continue, as will the much larger number of transactions occurring in private. In short, illicit sales and distribution of crack, cocaine, heroin, and

marijuana (Sifaneck, 1997, 1996; Sifaneck and Kaplan, 1997, 1995; Sifaneck and Small, 1997) will remain a major occupational activity for a few hundred thousand New Yorkers for years to come, despite the improved efficiency of the police department and continued efforts of political leaders to suppress the business.

Several major public policy initiatives have contributed to, and are likely to further destabilize, the already dismal prospects for the crack-using and selling generation. Major policy changes in the nation's social welfare system are being implemented at about the same time under different legislation, administered by a variety of federal, state and local agencies. These policies are certain to have important negative impacts upon crack distributors/users and the members of the youth generations in the next dozen years.

Several key provisions in the welfare legislation of 1996 are designed to specifically preclude users of illicit drugs from various types of income transfer payments. Title I legislatively mandates that persons convicted of a drug felony be specifically excluded from receiving welfare support during their lifetime. Probably a million low-income Americans have been convicted of a drug-related felony, and could be denied welfare benefits. Exclusion of drug felons from welfare benefits could become as automatic as police "field checks" of persons stopped in the community. Although this legislation gives each state the opportunity to "opt out" of some preclusions, few states have done so to date; indeed, states may and do, impose more stringent conditions upon drug users. Another, separate, piece of legislation removes "addiction" as an eligible disability category for receiving Social Security Insurance (SSI) and food stamps. SSI has been the steadiest and largest cash amount of transfer income available to the small minority of drug abusers who have received it.

The welfare legislation passed in 1996 will likely remove the primary (and often only) legal income supporting the households in which the children of, and crack abuser/sellers themselves, reside for varied periods. The advent of the 1996 welfare legislation, limiting welfare payments to an individual person to a maximum of five years, will further aggravate the already dismal situation confronting drug abusers and those with whom they live. Women who occasionally used crack or illicit drugs in the mid-1990s, and who receive welfare and maintain low-income households, are very likely to lose their welfare benefits and households after the turn of the century. Lacking the required skills for legal jobs, a sizable number may enter the street-level economy, as potential competitors in the already competitive street-level sex work and low-level drug distribution markets.

While few members of the post-crack generation have ever married or established a modestly long-term (over one-year), common-law

relationship, most men have sired, and most women have borne, one or more children before their mid-twenties. Even when the identity of a child's biological father is known, he rarely provides — nor is he able to provide — economic support and is seldom involved in that child's rearing. Yet, the long-term future may also involve the loss of welfare payments that directly pays for housing units where most members of the youth generation now live. The older women (now generally in their 50s, 60s or 70s) who maintain the households, and where the welfare system directly pays rent to the landlord, may be removed from the welfare rolls within the next five years. Moreover, these older women are likely to die or become incapacitated or otherwise unable to meet the complex demands of raising young children with meager resources, in the next decade.[10] Few of their daughters and younger relatives — many with adult careers as drug abusers and sellers — can maintain rental payments, manage what welfare/foster care support may be available, or as they become older, rear their own grandchildren.

The correctional system is the primary government "service" being systematically expanded to *include* crack and drug abusers and the post-crack generation. Various public policies and dramatic expansion in funding have been designed to "get tough" on criminals, especially sellers of crack cocaine (Johnson and Muffler, 1997; Johnson et al., 1990), including mandatory minimum sentences for the sale or possession of small amounts of crack cocaine, repeat offender sentencing, "three strikes" legislation with lifetime incarceration, elimination of early parole, and continued increases in funding for police, prosecution, and courts. Additionally, the expansion in the number of jails and prisons and the total capacity to incarcerate offenders is well documented. The growth in correctional populations has averaged 4 to 9 percent annually, so the number of jail and prison inmates has about doubled during each of the past two decades (BJS 1999). Projections of current increases suggest that approximately two million persons will be incarcerated at the end of 1999, three million by 2005 and four million persons will be in jails and prisons by year end 2010.

For every incarcerated person, approximately three others are at liberty but on parole or probation or under criminal justice supervision. The projections suggest that the total number under criminal justice supervision will increase from about 6 million in 2000 to over 10 million in 2010. The proportion of African-American males under criminal justice supervision, which increased from 25% in 1990 to 33% in 1995 (Mauer, 1995, 1990), will probably reach 50% by 2010. Although the data are not as specific, a sizable minority (about a third) of persons incarcerated and/or under criminal justice supervi-

sion will have been convicted of the possession or sale of crack, cocaine, or heroin. Likewise, an additional proportion of those convicted of other offenses (e.g., robbery, burglary, thefts) will also have sold crack or other drugs.

The beliefs and practices towards crack and cocaine among the "post-crack" cohort (those born in the 1970s) will likely change, although in unanticipated (and thus far unforeseeable) directions. Further shifts towards more use or away from crack or heroin remain critically important for policy makers. The emergent behaviors of youths reaching adulthood in the 1990s ("post-crack era" cohort) shows that cocaine use was detected in fewer than 30% of arrestees. Crack use could "bottom up" or undergo an "upswing" or "upsurge." Future research must document the long- and short-term trends in drug use and abuse.

The prognosis for the future lives of the crack and post-crack generation is exceedingly bleak. Most inner-city youths born in the 1970s and reared in severely distressed households have dismal futures. Overall, the generation born in the 1970s have generally been severely deprived during their childhood and have gained minimal conventional skills. Ethnographic evidence makes clear that sizable numbers of youths from severely distressed household may engage in crack selling. Some of those avoiding crack in late adolescence may eventually become cocaine/crack users (Golub et al., 1996). Furthermore, the very large pool of unemployed, out-of-labor force, minority youth has few options: many if not most will *never have any significant legal employment during their entire adulthood.* Except for their relatively vigorous participation in the street culture and drug economy, a sizable proportion of post-crack generation members has failed to achieve any of the key roles which American society expects of persons during their early adult years. They are thus at high risk for involvement in use and sale of heroin, marijuana, heavy alcohol intake, violent crimes, and various illegal activities. Were cocaine and crack prices to drop substantially, such youths might move into dealing roles, sell other drugs (like heroin), or become active in non-drug criminality and violence. But with heavy police enforcement efforts, virtually every high-risk youth can expected to be stopped on suspicion of something, and be arrested and booked for relatively minor charges.

Now in early adulthood, the post-crack generation is effectively excluded by their upbringing and lack of conventional skills from the legal economic system, from welfare support, and even from many illegal occupations. Their failure to obtain legal employment, much less above-poverty wages, contributes directly to another ominous condition: the near collapse of, or failure to establish, new families

and households. The only bright aspect the research found in their lives of the post-crack generation is the absence of crack smoking, and avoidance of heroin abuse and injection. Nothing else provides much hope or promise for a better future for most members of this cohort.

Moreover, the conditions existing in the families and households settings of the very poor and among drug users have steadily worsened. These persons will remain excluded from legitimate jobs, have declining or no access to welfare and income supports, and few options other than drug sales and prostitution. The recent past (1980s and 1990s) was very hard upon those living in the inner city. The future looks equally bleak for the next generation, and probably for their children and descendants in the first quarter of this new century. No magic bullet or policy has yet been discovered that prevents drug use nor criminal behavior.

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NOTES

1. This chapter summarizes central findings from information presented in a much more extensive ethnographic research project funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and conducted from 1989 to 1997. The project's numerous publications (see citations*) address a variety of focal analytic issues, review the relevant literature, summarize the methodology, provide qualitative analysis of data, typically incorporate extensive quotations from subjects, and provide relevant policy implications.

2. We acknowledge the complexity of epidemiology as a discipline (Wasserheit et al., 1991; Lowinson et al., 1997; McKeganey and Bernard,

1992). An extensive literature exists specifically about the epidemiology of drug use and abuse (Johnston et al., 1999; National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1999; Inciardi and Harrison, 1998; Preble and Casey, 1969; Rittenhouse, 1977). Few epidemiological studies, however, apply the epidemic model to the study of crack cocaine, and almost none apply it to crack selling.

3. In particular, the analyst must first determine how to best identify the concept of interest across narratives, and then develop and operationalize a meaningful coding scheme (Manwar et al., 1994). Project staff assembled a semi-quantifiable data set, coding subject demographics (gender, age, ethnicity, education), and classifying participants' levels of involvement in drug selling and violence, although this resulted in much missing data. An additional secondary analysis (Caulkins et al., 1999; Taylor et al., 1999) involves careful identification and coding of sections of transcripts conveying the pricing of retail amounts of cocaine or heroin powder by time and by place into a semi-quantitative format.

4. Chaiken and Chaiken (1993) document that the completed DUF sample is similar to the distribution of arrestees in several jurisdictions, including Manhattan. Also see NIJ (1997).

5. The DUF program was renamed the "Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring" (ADAM) program in May 1997. NIJ plans to expand this data collection effort to 75 cities by the year 2001, and to include juvenile arrestees at all sites. ADAM staff regularly compile the entire DUF data set for Manhattan (1987-1999) and make it available for statistical analysis about two months after data collection.

6. DUF-Manhattan arrestees are primarily under age 35. Over half are African-American, about 30% are Hispanic, and 14% are white. That 30% are female is a function of interviewing quotas set by the DUF program. Only about a quarter graduate from high school, while a third are high school dropouts. The most serious arrest charges are possession (13%) and sale (about 6%) of crack, cocaine, or heroin. About two thirds of DUF-Manhattan arrestees are positive for cocaine and 20% positive for opiates (most also reporting drug injection). Marijuana use increased modestly from about a sixth in 1990-91 to 30% in 1996-97. Analysis of data from all participating cities shows Manhattan arrestees as having the highest proportions positive for cocaine and heroin (Golub and Johnson 1997; Golub et al., 1996; Golub and Johnson 1999b).

7. A fundamental problem facing New York City and American society is how to develop appropriate social responses and supports for a whole generation of inner-city youths from severely distressed households and communities who have "said no" to heroin injection and crack smoking but still find integration into mainstream society impossible. From their

vantage point, they have no opportunities or supports to gain access to decent jobs or conventional roles.

8 They did so in St. Louis (Jacobs, 1999).

9. Sommers et al. (1996) and Baskin and Sommers (1998) studied incarcerated female drug sellers, many of whom claimed to have had relatively lucrative careers as dealers and sellers prior to their arrest. Crack distribution project staff could not locate a female dealer routinely purchasing as much as a kilogram of cocaine for distribution to other sellers.

10. Some of these older women may have previously worked, and /or had husbands with employment income, and may thus qualify for social security. These non-welfare sources of income, however, may not be sufficient to support multigenerational households in which some members experience the loss of welfare eligibility.