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9. Drugs and Public Housing: Toward an Effective Police Response

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Introduction

Drug problems take on an added dimension in the special environment created by public housing. The 3.5 million people who live in public housing across the country are generally old or poor. Although local income requirements vary, to qualify for public housing most non-elderly public housing residents usually must be single, unemployed, and have children. In reality, this means that in the vast majority of cases the family is headed by a female and, in many cities, the families are disproportionately racial and cultural minorities.

Residents of pubic housing are highly vulnerable to crime. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD) permitted the construction of high-rise housing developments, and few were constructed with security in mind. They were often built in neighborhoods that were poor to start with and already had high crime rates. The problems this generated quickly became apparent, and by the 1980s most public housing units were in low-rise buildings of fewer than 5 stories. Only 7% of family public housing complexes are now composed of high-rise buildings (Bratt, 1986). Generally, high-

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rise public housing is reserved for the elderly and other special populations. Nationwide, slightly more than half of public housing developments are low-density, with fewer than 200 units. However, like high-rise developments, these developments were constructed with multiple access points that made it difficult to restrict unwanted visitors, and they remain concentrated in inner cities.

Crime rates in public housing developments are often high, and their community is difficult for residents to defend, especially on their own. Too many developments are plagued by drug trafficking, violent and property crime, and social disorder. This is frequently coupled with distrust of the police and other public officials, including the local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) that manage the developments. Residents often lack the capacity to defend themselves, be it against predators, gangs looking for revenge, or drug dealers engaged in turf wars or intimidation. Government, in the form of the local PHA, is the landlord, and public housing is thus an arena in which it has a particular responsibility for order maintenance and crime control. It must use its powers to ensure the health and safety of the residents.

What We Know

A number of studies have been conducted to help policymakers respond to the perception that public housing developments are centers for especially intense drug-related criminal activities. One study conducted by the RAND Corporation (Dunworth & Saiger, 1992) identified drug problems and the characteristics associated with different types of anti-drug initiatives in public housing. The study focused on five sites: Los Angeles; Philadelphia; Washington, D.C.; Phoenix; and Lexington, Kentucky.

A variety of drug control initiatives are under way in each of the five cities. For example, Phoenix has implemented a walking beat program; Los Angeles has conducted undercover investigations, social service programs, passive security measures, and police sweeps. Records of arrests and crimes over a 3-year period have been made available by each of the cities in the study.

Preliminary findings from this study suggest that rates of both drug and nondrug crime are considerably higher in public housing than in other areas. In addition, the study suggests that there are variations between the types of crimes occurring in public housing developments. Some projects may have high rates of violent crime but low rates of drug crime, or the reverse; the variation even between adjacent projects is noticeable

for violent crime. Two other evaluations, one involving problem-oriented policing in Philadelphia (Weisel, 1990), and the other community policing in a public housing neighborhood in Birmingham, Alabama, have examined methods of reducing crime in public housing (Uchida, Forst, & Annan, 1992). In the evaluation conducted in Philadelphia by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), the police initiated cleanup programs to tow abandoned cars and board up empty buildings, both of which served as drug trafficking locations; they launched two Narcotics Anonymous treatment programs for public housing residents; and they established Drug Free Zones around schools serving the targeted public housing development. Philadelphia has expanded this problem-solving approach to new neighborhoods (Weisel, 1990).

In Birmingham, an apartment was turned into a police mini-station after 11 shootings were recorded in an area during a 14-day period. The mini-station was established in one of the apartments within a local housing development, fortified by heavy wire mesh and a front door protected by iron bars. In a study of this effort, researchers found that residents perceived their neighborhood as a significantly improved place to live because of the police mini-station. Residents of the public housing community also perceived that the police were more responsive to their concerns, aided more victims, worked together with residents to solve local problems, spent more time in the neighborhood, and did a better job keeping order. Surveys indicated that 72% of the residents believed that the public housing mini-station was either somewhat effective or very effective in reducing drug-related crime (Uchida et al., 1992).

It has been argued that the involvement of the residents is a key factor in a successful crime reduction program. Kelling (1988) and others suggest that police, working in concert with local groups, can revitalize communities and help them devise their own defenses against drugs and crime. In the Fear Reduction Experiment conducted in Houston, an evaluation by the Police Foundation found that a police community organizing team, which organized an effective community group in a low-income neighborhood, scored a number of successes: They significantly reduced residents' perceptions of neighborhood social disorder, fear of personal victimization, and perceived neighborhood personal and property crime, and they increased the resident's satisfaction with police services (Pate, Wycoff, Skogan, & Sherman, 1986; Skogan, 1990b).

The conclusions that emerge from these studies suggest that the police focus must be wider than arresting drug traffickers. Studies of public housing have shown that many programs have misdefined the solution and generalized too much between developments. The PERF study in

Philadelphia noted that effectively dealing with enduring problems, such as gang violence and drug-related crime, requires a broader perspective. Drugs and related crime problems must be tackled together. The report concludes that solving these apparently overwhelming problems requires setting reasonable goals, and argues that progress will come from the "accumulation of many small hard fought victories" (Weisel, 1990, pp. 93-94). Although community-involvement programs can work, federal funds directed at innovative programs have not been fully implemented; instead, funds have been directed at financing and perhaps enhancing current programs.

A recent evaluation conducted by the authors for the Police Foundation highlighted some of these conclusions. We examined programs in New Orleans and Denver. In both cities the goal was to reduce the availability of narcotics and reduce levels of crime and fear in public housing. As they were implemented, the programs were enforcement-oriented and employed traditional policing methods, including conducting surveillance, developing informants, arranging controlled buys leading to later warrant arrests, and making buy-bust and on-view arrests. They focused new energy and resources on a problem that otherwise was not being squarely addressed in the two cities. This chapter reviews some of the lessons suggested by this evaluation. It summarizes what we learned about effective Narcotics Enforcement in Public Housing Units (NEPHU) operations, and raises some questions about enforcement as a response to drug and crime problems in public housing.

The Denver and New Orleans Programs

Special NEPHUs were formed in Denver and New Orleans, supported by grants from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The goal of the Denver NEPHU program was to reduce the availability of narcotics in public housing areas and to reduce levels of crime and fear. Denver's NEPHU involved six full-time officers. NEPHU planned to use traditional enforcement methods: to conduct plainclothes investigations and gather intelligence that would lead to on-street arrests and searches of apartments in public housing. The Department also planned to increase levels of uniformed patrols and to maintain high visibility in the housing development areas in order to deter conventional crime. NEPHU also proposed to conduct drug awareness programs within the developments; one of their goals was to "educate citizens in . . . tenant responsibility, crime prevention, and drug identification and suppression." The unit was

to meet regularly with Tenant Councils in the developments to improve community relations, and they operated a special telephone drug hotline. They also planned to cooperate with the Denver Housing Authority and the uniformed patrol division of the Denver Police Department.

The New Orleans program also had as its goals the reduction of violent crime and narcotics dealing in public housing. The unit hoped to increase the sense of security among public housing residents, increase the risk of apprehension among potential offenders in and around the developments, and increase residents' understanding of the severity of the narcotics problem and the ability of the police to tackle it. The unit also planned to develop intelligence files on individuals and gangs engaged in narcotics trafficking in public housing developments. The unit planned to seek resident input into their program through Tenant Advisory Councils that represent each New Orleans development. They advertised a special telephone drug hotline to encourage information sharing by the community. The police department proposed to augment the deterrent impact of undercover narcotics operations in the developments by assigning special uniformed patrols to those areas.

We conducted a process evaluation in both sites. We monitored the implementation of the program and observed it in operation. Observers gathered extensive information on levels of program effort and on the activities that took place in and around the developments. We made extensive site visits and gathered quantitative indicators of the extent of program activity. In Denver we were able to field three waves of survey interviews that gathered independent information on victimization, fear of crime, attitudes toward the police, and the perceived availability of drugs. Denver also provided a great deal of archival data on recorded crimes and arrests, both for selected target developments and for their surrounding areas. In New Orleans we conducted two waves of interviews with a panel of key local informants in three developments; they were positioned to be knowledgeable about the activities and experiences of many project residents.

Some Lessons About Enforcement

NEPHU WAS NECESSARY

Both NEPHUs focused their energies on public housing. This was easier in New Orleans, for almost 12% of the city's residents live in

public housing developments. Sustaining their focus on public housing was a significant accomplishment for the NEPHUs, given the general disdain with which this sort of work was viewed by police in both cities.

In neither city were public housing developments being policed effectively before NEPHU. New Orleans's developments had not been effectively policed since the city's special Urban Squad was disbanded in the early 1980s for budgetary reasons. Other narcotics units in New Orleans avoided public housing developments because of the dangerous and unsavory conditions there and the seeming hopelessness of the task. Public housing residents appeared to them to occupy the lowest rung on the drug distribution ladder. As a result, drug and cash seizures there rarely equaled the statistical standards set in other areas. In both cities, PHA residents were frequently viewed with scorn by police officers, who perceived few signs of encouragement for their efforts in public housing areas.

After NEPHU was formed, arrests in and around public housing in Denver by non-NEPHU officers dropped off precipitously. It may have been that once NEPHU was created, other units in the department followed their natural inclination, which was to avoid working in public housing. Alternately, this decline might have been attributable to the "specialized unit problem"; the creation of a specialized policing unit like NEPHU sends a message to the remainder of the department that the unit's task is no longer their problem. Denver's NEPHU was continually rebuffed when they attempted to arrange for more frequent uniformed patrols in public housing areas, even when they proposed to pay for them from grant funds. The inability of NEPHU to secure the cooperation of district commanders in increasing the level of visible patrol in Denver Housing Authority (DHA) developments was indicative of the unit's relationship with the department. Many other narcotics officers and the Narcotics Bureau's management took a derisive attitude toward NEPHU and its task. There were a number of reasons for this, including jealousy over the unit's federally financed overtime compensation, vehicles, and occasional out-of-town travel.

Unlike the experience in Denver, there was no evidence that New Orleans' NEPHU was held in disrepute. They were very aggressive and productive detectives who made more arrests per officer than any other narcotics unit in the city. However, the unit was disbanded shortly after its federal funding dried up, and its staff and equipment were absorbed by various units of the New Orleans Police Department.

The NEPHUs in both cities operated relatively independently of their departments' narcotics divisions. This was probably a good thing, although

it caused them problems in securing equipment, office space, and support from uniformed patrols. It is unlikely that their focus could have been maintained if the NEPHUs were more closely tied to citywide narcotics operations. They could easily have become paper organizations, officially charged with "concentrating" on public housing, but in reality ranging widely in search of opportunities for action elsewhere.

Our monitoring revealed that both NEPHUs conducted operations outside of public housing areas as well as in and around major public housing developments. It would have been unrealistic to insist otherwise, however. There were many good reasons for the NEPHUs to work elsewhere. Their job naturally expanded to include crack houses and dealers working in nearby neighborhoods, to scatter-site Section 8 housing as well as the developments, and to dealers and their suppliers who lived elsewhere but commuted daily into the developments. Both NEPHUs received help from other specialized units and law enforcement agencies, and the good inter-team cooperation that they needed from various SWAT, Crack, Drug Enforcement Administration, and nearby suburban jurisdictions demanded reciprocal action on their part. They did a good job when they were called upon.

FEDERAL FUNDING MADE A DIFFERENCE

In addition to encouraging their formation, federal funds made a difference in the effectiveness of these units. Confidential funds were needed to pay informants and buy drugs; the teams needed vehicles and sophisticated equipment; and the money for overtime work enabled them to focus their energies in a sustained way while compensating for the unwillingness of the cities to contribute more personnel to the NEPHU mission.

Informants were paid varying amounts, depending on the productivity of their leads and the value of the purchases that they made. This compensation was in addition to whatever arrangements they could make with regard to their initial arrest; although NEPHU in Denver made occasional use of a "revenge" informant, officers in both cities preferred to work with informants whose motives were more concrete. Virtually all of the officers we discussed the matter with (which included NEPHU members in both cities) agreed that their informants probably used the money to buy drugs themselves, but dismissed that issue as a reality of the world in which they worked. Both cities were generally strapped for cash during the evaluation period, and our informants judged it would

have been difficult for the NEPHUs (and other narcotics teams) to secure adequate funding for informant compensation without federal support. In cash-strapped New Orleans, NEPHU's confidential funds played an important role in helping them to operate effectively and to occasionally penetrate middle-level drug markets. In Denver, financial considerations undercut NEPHU's effectiveness during the summer slump of 1990 when, due to corruption and mismanagement, the grant's confidential fund ran low on money. NEPHU ranged widely in search of more lucrative non-DHA cases in order to generate more currency seizures to finance their operations. This practice was institutionalized after the close of the evaluation period, when NEPHU was reorganized and merged with other units to form a somewhat larger unit; its formal area of responsibility was expanded to include a wide band around DHA developments so that NEPHU could generate more seizure money.

It is important to note the alternative to adequately funding narcotics operations. In other cities and at other times, it has been the practice of narcotics detectives to generate informant compensation on their own, by withholding money and drugs that they seize in the course of their operations, and then using that stockpile to reward informants (Manning, 1980; Moore, 1977). This is a dangerous practice, fraught with illegalities and opportunities for corruption. Moore and others have noted the importance of adequate confidential funds, in particular, for keeping narcotics operations free from corruption and financial abuse. Units like NEPHU require considerable operating capital. They generally can be expected to recover a substantial percentage of this investment. For example, between September 1989 and October 1990, New Orleans' NEPHU seized $34,000 in currency, while spending about $13,000 of their budgeted confidential funds. However, their confidential funds were always at risk on a monthly basis, and "it takes money to make money" in narcotics operations.

Both units made good use of the equipment they purchased, and would have had difficulty in securing any of it without their federal grant. Undercover officers need body transmitters to allow their partners to monitor the safety of street buys. New Orleans made good use of cameras, long-range binoculars, and other gear for conducting surveillance operations and building criminal intelligence files. The officers all used sophisticated pagers to keep in contact with one another and with selected informants. Undercover operations depend on unrecognizable vehicles, which are an expensive item. Denver's NEPHU leased Japanese cars, which were not stock police issue, but by the end of the evaluation period, they felt that their vehicles were "burned" (widely recognized) in a

number of developments. New Orleans did not include vehicle leases in their grant budget, and it was only after some struggle that they got terrible cars, most of which were easily recognizable as police vehicles.

PERSONNEL POLICIES COUNTED

Several seemingly mundane but extremely important organizational considerations seemed to play an important role in the effectiveness of NEPHUs in Denver and New Orleans.

It was exceedingly difficult for Denver's NEPHU to sustain its activities because of the way in which it was organized. The officers all had accrued a great deal of vacation and sick leave before they joined the unit, and they were forced to use it during the evaluation year. Their overtime pay was limited to 25 hours per month, and they hit that limit by the middle of each month. The unit was too small to deal with the constant on-and-off-again scheduling this required, so operations were frequently canceled. The size of the unit also exacerbated its leadership and personality problems. The unit could not be subdivided so that sergeants were teamed with detectives they could work with, and so that partnerships could be formed of detectives who respected and trusted one another.

In New Orleans, on the other hand, the budget was carefully crafted so that each officer could work an extra 4 hours each day, every day. Because New Orleans police typically work a second job, this allowed the unit to focus its energies without demanding much more from the officers than they were already doing, and they could short-circuit these long days if they desired. Most delayed their vacations until after the end of the grant period, because they could make steady overtime money each week, and unlike Denver, New Orleans's NEPHU was virtually at full strength at all times. In addition, the unit's structure of a lieutenant, two sergeants, and nine detectives let officers form into working parties of various sizes. The team could easily adjust to the absence of several officers and still be at sufficient strength to conduct substantial operations, and partners and sergeants could be sorted out with the latitude that a 12-person team afforded.

NEPHU-PHA COOPERATION WAS NONEXISTENT

Although the proposals submitted by both cities envisioned close cooperation between NEPHU and local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), they did not get along well. Some of their failure to cooperate may have

reflected personality conflicts between NEPHU leaders and PHA personnel, especially in Denver. However, it is apparent that the obstacles to cooperation were multiple and complex.

Both PHAs were plagued by internal organizational problems. During the evaluation period DHA was a besieged institution. Its director was forced to resign after media investigations revealed widespread mismanagement and favoritism in hiring. The mayor replaced him with an extremely political appointee, and DHA employees were fearful and off-balance during much of 1990. One of the new acting director's actions was to abolish DHA's security operations and lay off the security director and his staff. The field managers of DHA developments often disparaged their own top administrators to NEPHU members. To work with NEPHU they sometimes had to conceal their actions from DHA's central administration. The housing authority in New Orleans faced continual charges of mismanagement, and its board was unable to find a management team that could capture control of the agency. During the evaluation period DHUD forced the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) to hire an independent management team following further revelations of managerial incompetence. That team then came under fire itself from DHUD and was in turn replaced. Corruption was endemic among HANO's highly politicized administrators.

Not surprisingly, none of this endeared PHA management to NEPHU members. In New Orleans, NEPHU members had initial problems explaining their mission to other police officers, who assumed that they worked for the Housing Authority and would not trust anything that was associated with HANO. Denver's NEPHU had continual problems scheduling meetings with DHA staff (who on key occasions failed to show up for them), and found the staff attorney uncooperative when they tried to mount an eviction program.

There were also turf problems. The executive director of HANO initially believed that NEPHU would fall under his supervision, and refused to cooperate once that mistake was clarified. The HANO board was upset when they learned that NEPHU would conduct investigations without consulting them. The security director of DHA was a former Denver police officer, but NEPHU members still found ways to dismiss his opinions and information, and believed that he did not understand "real police work."

Finally, there was a conflict in the eyes of many PHA employees between their mission of providing low-cost housing for the poor and the expectation that they would become involved in enforcement activities. In Denver, this was compounded by the fact that DHUD requirements

were read to require high monthly occupancy rates in order to justify DHUD rent subsidies. Development managers who were concerned about drug issues disregarded this constraint by aggressively moving against drug- and gang-involved leaseholders, but they risked higher vacancy rates as a consequence. Less dedicated managers emphasized keeping their units full, at the price of winking at lease violations. This posture may have contributed to the large variance that was observable in the frequency with which development managers complained to NEPHU about specific drug problems.

BE ALERT FOR CORRUPTION

Corruption plagues drug enforcement, for it is difficult to supervise plainclothes operations closely. Successful narcotics detectives encounter ample opportunities to steal cash and drugs from dealers, and to go into the business themselves. Corruption is fueled by frustration and cynicism among narcotics officers, who feel handcuffed by the rules of criminal procedure, who feel that they do not get the support they deserve from prosecutors and judges, and who believe that very little happens to those they arrest. They also do not get paid very much in comparison with those they pursue, and some officers inevitably are unable to resist the lure of stealing money from drug dealers, or even stealing and selling drugs themselves. NEPHU supervisors dealt with the threat of corruption by trying to recruit good officers. Supervisors monitored the dress and lifestyles of squad members, watching for gold chains and fancy shoes, and talk about new cars and expensive vacation plans. They searched squad vehicles for contraband, and in New Orleans narcotics officers were subjected to occasional urine tests.

However, corruption problems were quick to emerge in both the Housing Authorities and NEPHUs involved in this evaluation. The potential for corruption presented special problems in New Orleans, where police are poorly paid and the department has a reputation for corruption. Two NEPHU officers were transferred because of hints that they were involved in stealing money from drug dealers, and they later were indicted in federal court for selling cocaine by the kilogram. The indictments indicate they began their illegal activities in October of 1989, while they were assigned to NEPHU. The deputy executive director of HANO was indicted for cocaine trafficking shortly after our evaluation began.

The Denver department was rocked by the indictment of the lieutenant heading NEPHU, which was announced several months after the end of our evaluation period. He was accused of stealing $8,100 from confidential funds in Denver's BJA grant that were to be used to make drug purchases and pay informants. It now appears that NEPHU's shortage of confidential funds during the summer of 1990 was due to theft. The lieutenant's actions were uncovered when a new NEPHU sergeant reviewed the unit's accounts. He turned the books over to the department's Internal Affairs unit, who took their findings to the District Attorney. In a negotiated arrangement announced in July 1991, the lieutenant was allowed to retire from the department—and thus qualify for his pension—before he was formally charged; in return, he cooperated fully in the investigation.

BE PATIENT WITH POLICING

Despite their seemingly clear and limited mandate, it took a great deal of time for NEPHU operations in both cities to get off the ground. Some of the obstacles were bureaucratic. In New Orleans, there were no space or vehicles for NEPHU, so officers worked out of their own cars for almost 2 months. They repaired and painted an office that they secured in the train station, and scrounged for furniture. Few departmental administrators understood the unit's budget and what BJA would pay for. The City's Finance Office moved at a glacial pace, and it took the unit months to get a telephone. Larger purchases had to be processed through City Hall and submitted for formal bids, which meant that the more expensive items authorized in the grant were not available for almost a year. The unit obtained unmarked police cars that were in very poor condition and not very suitable for narcotics investigations. Creating the unit's infrastructure ahead of time would not only have avoided a great deal of frustration on the part of the street detectives but also saved a significant amount of grant money.

In both cities new NEPHU officers needed a great deal of training, and it took even longer for them to become effective narcotics detectives. Neither NEPHU was able to recruit experienced narcotics detectives, few of whom wanted to work in public housing. The new NEPHU officers had to learn the basics about writing search warrants, conducting interrogations, and organizing raids. They had to learn to identify many different kinds and forms of drugs, and how crime labs operated. In Denver they learned how to conduct a wiretap, and officers in both cities

took advanced weapons training. In New Orleans they studied patterns of drug trafficking, evidence handling, and safety.

However, narcotics officers still spend years learning how to write incontestable warrants; how to develop and control their informants; how to perform fruitful surveillance; how to conduct productive interrogations; and how to piece together tight, legally defensible cases. Officers in both NEPHUs took some time to develop these skills.

Some Questions About Enforcement

WHAT HAPPENED TO COMMUNITY OUTREACH?

Since the 1980s there has been a great deal of interest in the role that voluntary efforts can play in dealing with drug and crime problems. The community approach to prevention emphasizes collaboration between the criminal justice system and neighborhood residents. It assumes that the police and other elements of the criminal justice system cannot effectively deal with crime on their own; rather, voluntary, organized community efforts to control crime and drug abuse must work in parallel with official programs if these goals are to be achieved within realistic budgetary constraints. Communities must learn how to defend themselves.

However, efforts by NEPHU in Denver and New Orleans to involve the community—or even the few council members representing them—in their campaign never got off the ground. One Denver officer attended a number of tenant council meetings in a particular housing development that we were monitoring closely, where he answered questions and occasionally spoke up on behalf of the program. Officers in New Orleans did even less, attending a few meetings with tenant council members at the beginning of the program. In both cities, NEPHU pointed to telephone drug hotlines as the preferred form of community input into their operations. NEPHU officers in both cities generally agreed that residents of public housing were the problem rather than a solution to it, although black officers in New Orleans expressed a great deal of compassion for the plight of children in the developments and the problems facing individual adults with whom they dealt (some of the officers lived briefly in public housing as children, but none grew up there). NEPHU members believed that PHA residents were not interested in halting the drug trade, that many of them had friends or relatives who were involved, that some found ways to profit from the trade, and that many other residents lived in terror of drug dealers.

On their side, the poor often fear the police and resent the way they exercise their authority. They may be as interested in monitoring police misconduct and pressing for police accountability as they are in increasing police presence in their community. Many residents of poor and minority neighborhoods have had antagonistic encounters with the police. The police are another of their problems; they frequently are perceived to be arrogant, brutal, racist, and corrupt. Groups representing these neighborhoods will not automatically look to the police for legitimacy and guidance in preventing drug abuse, or extend a welcome hand of cooperation if the police just appear at the door.

With survey data collected in Denver, we can explore the question of whether there is something distinctive about poor and minority residents of public housing developments that further undercuts the potential effectiveness of community outreach efforts by the police. There is reason to suspect that this may be the case. Most of the social and economic factors that are related to low levels of community participation are multiplied there, ranging from poverty and low levels of education to not having an automobile. Residents of public housing may also have extra reasons to be distrustful of the police. Officers are often suspicious and fearful of housing developments and enter only in armed groups. They do not like to patrol there, and they do not appear to be very effective at their job.

To examine the claims about the distinctively alienated character of public housing residents, we compared community commitment among residents of public housing in Denver with the responses of residents of "conventional" low-income and largely minority neighborhoods in Houston, Newark, Birmingham, Oakland, and Baltimore. The comparison was far from perfect, for these areas were policed by different forces, and the surveys were conducted at somewhat different points in time. However, we found that PHA residents in Denver were at least as committed to their community and to their neighbors. In terms of neighborhood satisfaction they stood above residents of Birmingham, Oakland, or Newark. They were at least as likely to feel a part of their community and to report that their neighbors help each other out, and they were more optimistic about the future. Denver PHA residents fell near the middle of the group in terms of their perceptions of the police.

Our data from Denver did not suggest that there were extra impediments to community outreach efforts by the police in public housing. Only 25% of residents thought the police in their area were "very fair," and less than one-third rated them as "very polite," which does not bode well for NEPHU's effort.[1] But residents of Curtis Park and Quigg Newton

did not appear to be distinctively alienated; compared with poor and minority neighborhoods elsewhere, there seemed to be a firm basis for community involvement, and at least as much support for the police.

CAN PHAS DO MORE SELF-HELP?

PHAs doubtless could do more in their role as landlord to deal with crime and drug problems. However, we observed a number of physical, financial, and organizational obstacles to their taking action that seemed to inhibit the translation of seemingly good ideas in this regard into effective programs.

One widely discussed strategy is to improve tenant management. This involves instituting policies and procedures for screening initial applicants for housing, and evicting those who later break the rules. Around the nation there has been an increasing emphasis on enforcing the terms of PHA leases, and changes in DHUD regulations have made it easier in many jurisdictions to evict tenants whose apartments have been involved in drug-related activities. However, we saw in Denver and New Orleans how difficult it can be to implement this resolve. In New Orleans, HANO officials attributed their reluctance to evict residents to the belief that public housing was their last resort before homelessness. To forestall taking action, they took a narrow legal position that only actual leaseholders who were convicted of drug offenses could be evicted. In Denver, DHA was somewhat more successful in taking action against tenants whose units were involved in drug activities, but this was due more to the resolve of individual development managers than the Authority's attorney charged with monitoring this policy. Further, the adverse reaction by a vocal faction of residents to attempts by Quigg Newton's activist manager to take the initiative against drugs in that development illustrates how intensely political this kind of management tactic can be. In the end, the manager was "booted upstairs" and out of the development, and her chief supporters among the residents fled the development in the face of threats to their life.

The reality of life in many public housing developments also makes it difficult to impose draconian tenant management policies. It is hard to monitor exactly who is living in the units, which in New Orleans are often overcrowded with long-term "guests." In addition, while tenant rosters and even our household surveys indicate that the bulk of the adults living there are single women, there appeared to be no shortage of males in and around the housing developments we monitored, in either Denver or New

Orleans. This floating population of undocumented residents makes it more difficult to affix responsibility for drug involvement in public housing. Finally, at least in New Orleans it was clear that many, and perhaps most, adults involved in the drug trade did not live in public housing at all; rather, they were commuters who returned home on their off-hours.

To deal with these problems, there have been efforts to regain control of the apartments and corridors of PHA buildings, by locking all exits to a building and conducting unannounced warrantless searches of apartments. Then, while the building remains interdicted, new security doors and fences are thrown up; guard booths are erected in the central entrance area; legal residents are photographed and given identification cards; undocumented residents are evicted; and a special pass system is put in place to ensure that outsiders cannot stay in the building past midnight. In Chicago these sweeps are proceeding methodically, building by building, through the worst of the city's public housing areas, and similar sweeps are being conducted in New York City, Washington, D.C., Charleston, and other cities.

However, sweeps assume a style of physical design that does not characterize most public housing for poor families in the United States. PHA buildings in Denver and New Orleans are more typical: They are low-rise; many apartments have separate front and back doors (particularly in Denver); and they sprawl over large areas intersected by streets and parking lots. Research by Newman and Franck (1980), a modest evaluation of an early access control experiment in Chicago's Cabrini-Green project (Chicago Department of Planning, 1978), surveys by Burby and Rohe (1989), and related research lead us to believe that one of the most significant sources of the breakdown of social control in public housing is in fact its "public" character; anyone can enter, and no one has any particular legitimacy to challenge their presence. In this light, Clean Sweep-type programs indeed speak to a real problem. However, short of creating huge, walled compounds within which poor families must live, we cannot envision how they apply to most family public housing developments.

On the other hand, the dispersed, low-rise character of the family housing that we observed (especially in Denver) provides a better fit with elements of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) theories of crime control. In addition to controlling access by nonresidents, a thoroughgoing crime prevention program would involve the physical redesign of PHA buildings to enhance their security by improving opportunities for surveillance and intervention by residents. This

could extend their watchfulness and sense of territorial ownership beyond the front door. In some cases this might involve downsizing large developments and individual high-rises in order to reduce their density, encourage a sense of community in the area, and increase the manageability of the area.

However, more fundamental problems of deterioration dominate the construction budget of most PHAs, and few contemplate demolishing or even downsizing buildings when they have long lists of applicants for the space. Afflicted with buildings that were often poorly built and have frequently been ill-maintained, it would be difficult to convince most PHAs to invest in these subtle redesign efforts. In light of their generally deteriorating character, it can easily seem more important for PHAs to respond to vandalism and disrepair in a timely fashion. Moreover, it is not clear how much effect these redesign plans might have, compared with other forces that are at work in public housing areas. Even Newman and Franck (1980) concluded that most of the explained variance in measures of tenant victimization, fear, and residential satisfaction among public housing residents was accounted for by their economic and family status, rather than management, design, or building height factors; in the end, what predominated was the fact that PHAs frequently are the source of housing of last resort for the poor.

There is evidence that the physical deconcentration of public housing can reap positive returns. Prior to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, PHAs placed almost all public housing in poor and minority neighborhoods. Since 1968 there has been legislative and judicial pressure to site this housing elsewhere, but a combination of local resistance and a dramatic decline in the rate at which new public housing has been constructed has limited the impact of this effort (Burby & Rohe, 1989). Research on both public housing placements and court-mandated moves by inner-city black families suggests that living in smaller, less dense, suburban developments or Section 8 housing leads to lower levels of victimization and fear (Burby & Rohe, 1989; Peroff, Davis, & Jones, 1979). However, given the resistance of many city and suburban communities to scatter-site public housing, it would be a bold move to pursue a deconcentration policy.

Finally, our experience in Denver leads us to be uncertain how much of a difference management policies can make, absent radical deconcentration or draconian management measures that are unlikely to be politically sustainable. For all of the problems in DHA's top management structure, the developments that we observed were manageable at the local level. They were well laid out and well maintained; they were small

(none had more than about 400 units) and had solid doors and visible security arrangements. Broken windows got fixed, and there were not many of them because the leaseholders had to pay for the repair. The density of the housing developments approximated that of many private residential areas of Denver, and development managers generally were aggressive in enforcing DHA rules of conduct and keeping people who were not listed on the lease out of the apartments. And in our surveys in Curtis Park and Quigg Newton, about 70% of those interviewed said it was fairly easy or very easy to find a drug apartment in their development.

CAN ENFORCEMENT WORK, ABSENT OF SYSTEM REFORM?

The effectiveness of the rest of the criminal justice system plays an important role in enhancing or limiting the impact of special drug enforcement efforts. Significant policy changes have already been made in this regard by the states, including imposing longer sentences for drug offenses, making many of those sentences mandatory, limiting early release from prison on probation, and trying to constrain plea-bargaining practices that allow accused persons seemingly to be charged with lesser offenses in return for guilty pleas. However, in many jurisdictions prosecutors are overwhelmed with cases, and the jails are so full that arrestees for nonviolent offenses cannot be held until their cases are disposed of. There is great pressure to dispose of cases involving nonviolent offenses and persons with short criminal histories with sentences short of prison, because most state prisons are also at or above their capacity as well (cf., Skogan, 1990a). For example, the latest figures available for Louisiana indicate that the state's prisons were 99% full, and that Louisiana had to let out 1,541 prisoners under emergency release provisions in order to make room for new ones. In 1988 Louisiana housed 25% of its convicted felons in local jails because there was no room for them in state institutions. Colorado did not make any emergency releases in 1987, but that state's prison population stood at 109% of its rated capacity (BJS, 1989, Table 6.4; Skogan, 1990a, Table 10.3). These factors limit the effectiveness of the "arrest-prosecute-convict" model of deterrence that underlies crackdown strategies for controlling drug markets.

Drug treatment programs are at least as overloaded as the criminal justice system. In 1987 Louisiana was utilizing 97% of the budgeted capacity of its drug treatment units (BJS, 1989, Table 6.60). The limited availability of drug treatment programs for sentenced offenders is ironic, for they have been demonstrated to be effective. Drug treatment programs

have been shown to inhibit drug use, reduce the likelihood that participants will be rearrested, and increase their ability to find and hold a job. The longer patients are involved in these programs, the more successful they are, although the programs are plagued by high dropout rates.

The enforcement end of the punishment cycle is also not inexpensive. In order to estimate how much it cost to move a typical case through the courts, our site observer in Denver followed the November 1989, NEPHU arrest of an illegal alien from Mexico. He was arrested for possession and sale of both cocaine and marijuana, tried before a jury, and found guilty on two possession and one sale (cocaine) charges; this took one full year. It cost the City and County of Denver almost $10,000 to move this case through the sentencing stage of the process, a figure that does not include the eventual cost of the accused's anticipated 5-year stay in the Colorado State Penitentiary, which certainly runs at or above the national average of about $15,000 per year.

Conclusion

Neither of the NEPHUs we monitored continued to operate in recognizable form once their BJA grants were discontinued. In New Orleans the unit was disbanded and its personnel scattered throughout the department. In Denver other units were merged into a new and larger "NEPHU," but its scope now extends far beyond DHA areas, and we suspect that its operations will refocus on other, more attractive and lucrative neighborhoods. Officers in both cities told us that it was difficult to mobilize community cooperation with NEPHU because "they've seen special programs come and go too many times before"; this proved to be an accurate prediction once again. Residents of public housing are especially poor and particularly vulnerable to exploitation, and their community is difficult to defend on their own. The government has special responsibility for protecting them, for it builds and manages the developments, decides who can live there, and plays a large role in shaping the quality of residents' daily lives. Public housing areas were being shortchanged in both Denver and New Orleans before the formation of the NEPHUs, but the national policy priorities that drive BJA made only a transitory difference in how the tremendous crime and drug problems facing PHA residents there were dealt with.[2]

Although there is a great deal of room for further research on the operation and effectiveness of NEPHUs, a closer analysis of local policy processes, which undermine the ability of government to shoulder their responsibilities effectively, also is called for.

Notes

1. In overwhelmingly white and well-off Madison, Wisconsin, by contrast, 55% of all city residents surveyed by the Police Foundation rated the police as "very fair," and 65% thought they were "very polite."

2. Almost one-quarter of those we interviewed in Denver had been victims of a burglary or attempted burglary during the 6 months preceding the first wave of interviews there. This is the highest neighborhood burglary victimization rate registered in 8 years of Police Foundation evaluation surveys of largely high-crime areas.

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