
TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TYPOLOGY OF ILLEGAL DRUG MARKETS

by

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***Abstract:** Ethnographic research is particularly well suited to investigate emergent phenomena and to access and describe populations and social environments which are obscured from normal observation. Ongoing ethnographic research on Manhattan's Lower East Side combines direct observation and qualitative interviews to describe the wide variety of local retail drug markets, the social contexts in which they evolve, and how the interactions between the various markets affect drug availability, styles of distribution, patterns of use, and types of crime and violence associated with particular types of markets. By drawing a multifaceted sample, the study offers a moving picture of how trends in drug use and distribution emerge, mature, encounter difficulties, and metamorphose. The research compares and contrasts distributors who participate in markets that are differentiated according to the social and technical organization of distribution. It also documents the differential and changing sociodemographic composition of consumer groups associated with the variety of illegal drug markets and describes transformations over time in the behaviors, beliefs and norms of each category of users with regard to drug distribution and use.*

INTRODUCTION

Drug distributors, users, and the markets they form, have been the subject of a considerable amount of research in the last 30 years, but most work in this area (see e.g., Ouellet et al., 1993; Waterston, 1993; Johnson et al., 1992; Buerger, 1991; Mieczkowski, 1990; Bourgois, 1989; Fagan, 1989; Williams, 1989; Kleiman, 1988; Goldstein et al., 1984) has been largely descriptive and limited by static approaches that ignore both change in drug markets over time and variation from market to market. One prime reason has been the lack of a theoretical perspective that would enable comparisons between different markets, advance our understanding of how markets may influence each other, appreciate how drug markets are integrated into neighborhoods, or plumb the connections between types of drug markets and other social phenomena such as patterns of crime and violence. This paper addresses these shortcomings by defining a model that will allow for the comparative analysis of drug markets and suggest where the analysis of drug markets may intersect with and benefit from existing bodies of social theory.

The need for more detailed and focused information about drug markets¹ has been noted by many researchers, particularly in the last decade (Riley, 1997, Hagedorn, 1994; Kleiman and Smith, 1990; Fagan, 1989; Hayeslip, 1989; Moore, 1977), but those who call for more information are often interested in a very specific type of knowledge that is related to the narrow goals of their funding agencies or their political and/or ideological biases. For example, Kleiman and Smith (1990:71) evaluate the effects of law enforcement crackdowns on street-level drug sales, but note that the "effects [of interventions] have to be traced through the drug markets before any conclusion can be drawn about whether those effects are, on balance, beneficial." The authors acknowledge that current information about drug markets is rudimentary, at best, but like much research on illegal drugs, their primary concern is not understanding the roles that illegal drugs play in everyday life or the structure of illegal markets, but rather eliminating the "problem." By focusing their inquiry on the relative success of law enforcement (or other types of) interventions that aim to eliminate illegal drugs, many drug researchers often employ units of analysis or methods of inquiry that make it difficult to understand how illegal drugs and their markets fit in the larger social contexts in which they exist. By neglecting these wider issues, however, they ensure that drug research, however well funded, will remain isolated from the main body of social science theory and research.

In a similar vein, a recent report by the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program found that powder cocaine, crack and heroin markets "differ substantially from one another in a variety of ways, including purchase and use practices" (Riley, 1997:26). The report goes on to state that "detailed information about local drug habits and patterns would be a valuable tool for law enforcement authorities, service providers, and policy makers" (Riley, 1997:26). While the insight that drug markets vary considerably and are not monolithic entities controlled by a single criminal enterprise is not groundbreaking news, it only confirms what a plethora of ethnographic studies have documented over the past 25 years (see e.g., Maher, 1995; Waterston, 1993; Hamid, 1992; Sviridoff et al., 1992; Williams, 1989; Agar, 1973; Preble and Casey, 1969). Clearly, research that seeks to assist in the elimination of social phenomena is different from most social science that strives for greater understanding and insight. Even those who seek to eliminate the problem, however, like the ADAM researchers, have begun to acknowledge that the behavior of distributors and consumers may exhibit considerable variation depending on the types of markets in which they participate, and a better understanding of those differences may be necessary to devise effective interventions. A more comprehensive view of the phenomena is also sorely needed.

A major problem with the largely atheoretical, ahistorical and descriptive accounts, which have characterized drug research, is that comparative analysis has been virtually impossible. Researchers tend to fall into two camps in this regard: one side tends to present their actors as unique in some way, often using categories native to specific markets to describe distributors and consumers, thereby further hindering comparison with the work of others (see, e.g., Buerger, 1991; Mieczkowski, 1990). Buerger (1991:7-18) outlines several different "organizational strategies" for selling drugs, including the "Club," the "Drive-in," the "Speakeasy," the "Dealership," the "Bazaar," the "Cuckoo's Nest" and the "Rotation System." Though he gives detailed descriptions of how each of these selling strategies works, it is not clear what dimensions differentiate them from one another or whether they actually constitute qualitatively different markets, are simply variations on a theme, or are different phases of development of one market.

At the other end of the spectrum are those researchers who see all distributors and/or consumers as essentially similar, as if there were no differences between them (Johnson et al., 1992; Stephens, 1991; Preble and Casey, 1969). Without a theoretical grounding to understand which differences are important and which are simply superficial, and without addressing the characteristics of both of the sets of

actors who constitute a market — distributors and consumers — it becomes extremely difficult to understand what a particular market is really like, how it works, and how it and the actors within it might be similar to or different from others, let alone compare markets in different times, places and/or circumstances.

Descriptions of drug markets have often concentrated on either distributors or users, but seldom both. Other researchers do not focus on people at all (e.g., Rengert, 1996; Eck, 1994; Weisburd et al., 1994), but rather, use aggregate data from law enforcement sources to identify "hot spots" of drug activity to define markets. Such analyses, however, entirely discount some of the important features that differentiate drug markets, and often find that they cannot disaggregate the data in ways that permit an analysis of how markets differ from site to site.

Typically, an examination of drug markets is reduced to a discussion of the characteristics of distributors or to the more obvious or superficial aspects of their business such as whether drugs are sold inside or outdoors. While the location of sales, as will be explained below, forms a significant part of our typology, this is far from the most fundamental distinction that can be made. With the emergence of crack markets in the mid-1980s, some researchers began to focus on the relationships between distributors and consumers, and how both actors change over time. Hamid (1992) postulated that markets were the arenas where these actors and their relationships should be analyzed rather than examining the actions of disconnected distributors and consumers. By focusing on markets as locales where distinctive types of distributors and consumers meet to exchange goods, money, and create identities, the unit of analysis was shifted from individuals to relationships and socially constructed entities that clearly change over time. Focusing initially on "freelance" crack markets, Johnson and his colleagues (Johnson et al., 1992) began to identify other types of crack markets. They posited that there were two basic types of illegal drug markets: "freelance" and "business" models. While this broad division recognized that there was indeed variation in drug markets, by focusing almost exclusively on crack markets in a limited number of field sites they overlooked other market forms and markets for other drugs. Furthermore, there was yet no sense of process in these models that described how one form might evolve into another.

Several researchers have suggested that distribution inevitably evolves in complexity over time (Dorn et al., 1992; Hamid, 1992; Johnson et al., 1992; Reuter, 1985) and that a progressively more complex sequence of styles is discernible. Some have even postulated a "developmental cycle" of drug eras (Hamid, 1992; Johnson et al.,

1992) suggesting that the drugs themselves have agency and that the human beings who move them from place to place are mere automatons at the service of a "higher power." Rengert (1996:73-85), for example, employs a unidimensional categorization — four "phases" in the evolution of distribution "locations" — "mutual societies," "periodic markets," "fixed site neighborhood sales," and "drug marts" — to describe the evolution of markets. Reuter (1985) compared illegal enterprises with their counterparts in the noncriminalized economy and noted a number of important differences, including the structural constraints that limited the growth potential of illegal enterprises. His description of illegal businesses suggested, but did not explicitly describe, a developmental sequence of increasing organizational complexity. The researchers who came closest to accurately describing an entire range of drug distribution styles, from the least to the most complex, were Dorn et al. (1992), who described the evolution of drug distribution in England since the 1960s. Although the authors acknowledged complexity by noting that distribution styles can vary from simple "trading charities" to large corporate-like structures, their presentation of the data was somewhat confusing in that they made little effort to distinguish markets for different types of drugs nor to discuss how markets for various drugs may interact. Thus, though the various distributors and/or consumers they describe may share some important characteristics, the markets to which they belong may be quite dissimilar. More troubling yet is the implicit assumption that the progression of distribution styles is inherently unidirectional: in their view, the 1960s were a time when distribution styles were simple (and, by implication, nicer), but since then everything has gotten more sophisticated (and rougher). Despite this nostalgic perspective, which somewhat detracts from their argument, the authors made a significant contribution to the development of a typology of distribution styles.

Using ethnographic data collected in several neighborhoods, the analysis presented in this paper will describe the structure of illegal retail drug markets that exist in New York City, and will discuss the evolution of drug markets in neighborhood settings. By comparing data from different neighborhoods and markets found within them, we have described and analyzed the evolution of various styles, types, levels and methods of drug distribution. While we realize that markets are formed by at least two parties² — distributors and consumers — this paper will focus primarily on distributors and the structure of distribution.

METHODS

This ethnographic research combines direct observation and qualitative interviews in order to describe the range of retail drug markets in New York City, and the social and neighborhood contexts in which they evolve. The research was conducted under the auspices of two Federal grants: "Heroin in the 21st Century," funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse; and the "Lower East Side Trafficking Project," funded by the National Institute of Justice. Fieldwork involving heroin users and distributors began in June 1996, as a five-year ethnographic investigation into heroin markets in New York City. At the end of the third year of research, the project staff had interviewed and conducted extensive field observation of 227 heroin users and 146 heroin distributors. Of the total sample of 373 research subjects, 151 were white, 138 were Latino, 75 were African American,³ 2 were Asian, and 7 of unknown ethnicity. Research concentrated in major heroin markets located on the Lower East Side, Harlem and the Washington Heights sections of Manhattan, and the Bushwick and Williamsburg neighborhoods of Brooklyn, although other areas of New York City have also been included. The Lower East Side Trafficking Project began as an outcome of observing so many poly-drug users and distributors, especially on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The authors applied for and received a grant from the National Institute of Justice for an ethnographic study which began in March 1999 of drug markets and their interactions. All quotations not otherwise attributed are drawn from these two research projects and, unless otherwise noted, were chosen as typical or representative of the attitudes and opinions of our sample. By drawing a multifaceted inter- and intra-market sample, the research offers a moving picture of how trends in drug distribution and use emerge, mature, encounter difficulties, and metamorphose.

Study participants were recruited in the "natural settings" of use and distribution. The researchers also relied heavily on persons they knew from previous research projects, and employed "chains of referral" and "snowball" sampling techniques (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) to expand the sample of more than 400 drug distributors and users.

In addition to background information, which recorded age, gender, race/ethnicity, and state and/or country of origin, the researchers probed at length, repeatedly and in varied settings, such topical areas as: the reasons for initiating distribution, the distributors' ambitions and outlooks, attitudes and relations towards others in the trade or towards drug users, methods and beliefs about avoiding arrest, harm, losses or violence, accounting methods, actual records of

the individual drug business, expenditures, assets and reinvestments. A life history of each distributor and user was obtained, in which such issues as early childhood upbringing, marriage and family life, educational and employment achievements, and the career in criminality and drug distribution were pursued.

Ethnography is often employed to describe populations and social environments that are hidden from normal observation (see, e.g., Lambert, 1990; Weppner, 1977), and it is indispensable when exploring emergent phenomena, such as innovations in distribution or new drug use trends. Ethnographic fieldwork requires extended work in the naturalistic settings in which topics are investigated; a principal strength of ethnography rests on the physical presence of researchers who use their privileged positions at activities and events to "test" the accuracy and truthfulness of what they hear and see. In this study, investigations were made in places of drug use and distribution, the homes of study participants, their kin and others, in the neighborhood, at school, in clubs, near clinics and treatment centers, and many other locales.

General observations by researchers gauged the extent and diversity of drugs found in the neighborhoods through key informants and participant observation in such locales as homes, raves, nightclubs, drug-selling bodegas, and other "copping" (buying) areas, shooting galleries, places selling paraphernalia, coffee bars, abandoned buildings, empty lots, needle exchange programs and drug treatment programs. General observations were also attentive to the daily routines of drug distributors and users and included such items as how they earned and spent money (both legally and illegally), their participation in criminal pursuits, violent disputes, sports and leisure, family-centered tasks and enjoyments, child care, medical treatment, social services contacts, courting and sexual relations, intergenerational contacts, education and training.

Ethnographic methodologies are uniquely capable of addressing the complex dynamics of drug markets and permit the constant refinement of theory through field-based observations. To learn about how drug users and distributors perceive their social world, wherever possible, conversations and interviews were tape-recorded and afterwards transcribed (Spradley, 1979). In fieldnotes and logs, the ethnographers continuously compiled interview summaries and developed incrementally more comprehensive descriptions of the various drug markets and their participants. The combination of direct observation and ethnographic interviews served as a built in cross-check of information and helped synthesize multiple viewpoints, heavily contextualizing each phenomenon to facilitate arrival at an holistic and accurate rendering of reality (Bernard, 1994).

THE MODEL

While recognizing that markets are social arenas where a wide variety of activities and dramas may be played out, describing the entire range of these activities is beyond the scope of this paper. In the space remaining, we will primarily focus on describing the distinguishing characteristics of a nine-part typology of drug-distribution style⁴ that emerged from an examination of the data, and explore the reasons why and manner by which these ideal types change over time. Our typology emerges from asking two basic questions: how do you sell and with whom do you sell? The data clearly indicated that there was variation in drug distribution activities from neighborhood to neighborhood, over time in the same neighborhood, and from drug to drug in the same neighborhood. Two primary axes of differentiation were indicated by the data: the *technical organization* and the *social organization* of distribution. The technical organization of distribution refers to issues such as the physical location, policies, procedures, technology and equipment employed by distributors. The social organization of distribution refers to issues of cooperation, differential responsibility, and power and authority among distributors. These two main axes are refined and described in greater detail below.

The Technical Organization of Drug Distribution

The technical organization of distribution has traditionally commanded the most attention from drug researchers, law enforcement agencies, and the general public, perhaps because of its graphic visibility as compared with the social-organizational aspects of distribution⁵. Included as part of the technical organization of distribution are such items as the timing and sites of distribution activities, the types of materials and equipment used by distributors, and the policies and procedures adopted to ensure that distribution activities function smoothly. For the purpose of constructing different typologies of distribution, some aspects of the technical organization of distribution are more important than others. For example, distributors may vary greatly by the type of equipment they use to effect retail sales. This equipment may have law enforcement implications, but for analytic purposes, such distinctions are often of relatively little value. For this paper, the "location of sales" has been selected as the critical variable to focus on in constructing distribution typologies because it offers greater analytic power than other measures of technical organization. There are many examples in the data of different types of selling locales, but we have grouped them into three

categories: (1) street-level sales; (2) indoor sales; and (3) delivery services. These are described in greater detail below.

(1) Street-level Sales

By definition, street-level sales occur outdoors, but beyond that, they may vary greatly. Street-level markets may be characterized by blatant transactions between anonymous buyers and sellers that may engender complaints from community residents, or sales may occur between buyers and sellers who know each other intimately and who are scarcely visible to those who are not party to the transaction. The volume of these markets may be high or low. They may be dominated by buyers or sellers. They may involve a single drug or may be conducted in a one-stop-shopping style with more than one drug available. If more than one drug is available, it is significant whether one individual sells more than one drug or if different drugs are sold by different individuals.

(2) Indoor Sales

Indoor sales may take place in a wide variety of locales, including apartment or "house" connections, sales from indoor public spaces (e.g., the lobbies, stairwells or basements of residential buildings, and in abandoned buildings), sales from storefronts, bodegas (small, neighborhood grocery stores), nightclubs, after-hours clubs, bars, and raves. In addition to variations in locale, indoor sales also differ along many of the same axes that serve to further differentiate street-level markets.

(3) Delivery Sales

Delivery of drugs removes drug transactions from the streets and risky indoor venues and offers consumers the opportunity to have drugs delivered directly to home, office or other safe locations. This form of distribution, which scarcely existed ten years ago, represents a growth area of the market and, in some neighborhoods, has rapidly become the predominant form of distribution for marijuana and heroin. There are number of forms that delivery sales may take. Two common models are delivery services and beeper dealers. Delivery services employ "runners" who may travel on foot, by bicycle, car, taxi or public transportation. The deliveries are typically made to the homes or workplaces of the customer. The customer pays a premium price reflecting insulation from the risks of a street transaction, as well as for the convenience represented by home delivery. By contrast, beeper dealers wait for customers to call them on a pager. The

beeper digitally transmits a phone number enabling the dealer to return the customer's call in order to plan a meeting location, rather than lingering on street corners or in the lobbies of buildings. This practice offers a much greater degree of security for the dealer, since he/she is not forced to wait at a particular location (which may have become known to law enforcement) to meet customers. The dealer knows in advance to whom he or she will be selling and how much is wanted. Beeper dealers can avoid areas known to be "hot" (under police surveillance), and instead transact business in areas not known for narcotics activity.

Other Aspects of the Technical Organization of Drug Markets

Aside from noting the increased sophistication in weaponry that accompanied the crack boom of the 1980s, researchers have largely ignored the importance of changes in the equipment and technology used in retail drug distribution and the significance of those innovations in drug markets. For example, street-level drug markets have evolved from the use of lookouts, who shout out warnings of police presence, to the use of such sophisticated technology as cell phones and two-way radios for the same purpose: "In the summer, we had shit locked down on bikes with walkie-talkies. Wherever the cops would go, we would know, every move they made. I'm telling you, we had those niggas confused, yo" (interview, Destroyer). The rise of delivery services is a direct outcome of the widespread diffusion of sophisticated telecommunications technology such as pagers and cell phones. Delivery services also typically use computers to keep track of their often extensive lists of clients. Some forward-looking entrepreneurs have even distributed illegal drugs through the use of e-mail.

The type of drug that is sold seems, at first glance, to be an obvious criteria by which different types of markets may be distinguished. But while it is easy to differentiate between, for example, marijuana versus cocaine markets, some researchers might not differentiate between markets for different forms of cocaine. In this study, two basic forms of cocaine were identified: powdered cocaine and precooked cocaine, usually sold in the form of crack. Powdered cocaine was sold in markets that targeted three distinct types of consumers: sniffers, "freebasers," and injectors. Though it may be difficult to discern what consumers might do with powdered cocaine once they buy it, some markets were clearly organized with particular consumers and/or modes of consumption in mind. For example, those markets that existed in bars and that offered highly adulterated powdered cocaine in twenty-dollar foil packets were clearly targeting oc-

casional sniffers. It was extremely unlikely that freebasers or injectors would have been interested in purchasing that type of cocaine (given the amount of adulterant in it) or that distributors in that environment would have been interested in servicing nonsniffers since they would likely have attracted unwanted attention. In some neighborhoods, powdered cocaine markets existed along side heroin markets and targeted injectors almost exclusively.

In smokable cocaine markets, "freebase" distributors and consumers took pains to distinguish themselves from crack-market participants. Freebase markets tended to be slightly more discreet than other street-level crack or cocaine markets. The point of this apparent splitting of hairs is that, what might appear to be the same drug to researchers, may be quite different to those who participate in those markets. Distributors and consumers often perceived these items to be different substances (for example, freebasers often said that crack was not really cocaine) and they formed distinct markets based on those understandings.

Indeed, some of the most heated arguments that the researchers had were with cocaine smokers who defined themselves as "freebasers" and who denigrated "crackheads" as people beneath contempt. When the researchers suggested that they were, in fact, smoking exactly the same substance, freebasers usually became quite animated and vigorously argued their point. Freebasers were so adamant about differences between what they smoked (which they prepare — "cook" — themselves) and what was sold as crack (which they suggested was adulterated with a wide variety of substances), that in the absence of any definitive information which attested to their essential similarity, they convinced several ethnographers that there was truth to their claim (personal communication, ethnographic team from the Natural History of Crack Distribution Project at the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc.). While pharmacologically there may be no difference between the two substances, the fact that they are perceived as being different and acted upon as such, does indeed make them different (Zinberg, 1984).

The standardization of unit sales (or lack of them) reveals much about markets for particular drugs. The manner in which drugs are packaged, including whether they are adulterated before being sold to consumers, may have a profound impact on the character of a market. For example, for the last 20 years, heroin has been uniformly sold in \$10 bags, but recent changes in market conditions have seen the appearance of \$50 bags and weight in amounts measured in grams and half grams. These sales portend a qualitative change in the once-distant relationship between sellers and buyers. Marijuana also is packaged in several ways that vary between different types of

markets. On the street or in storefronts, it tends to be sold in small plastic bags that retail for \$10 apiece. By contrast, delivery services, which tend to sell marijuana at the more expensive end of the scale, typically demand a minimum purchase of \$50.

The manner in which various drugs are adulterated may hold implications for the type of market in which distributors and users participate. For example, freelance distributors who sell powdered cocaine from bars often find that they can adulterate their product heavily with any number of diluents without incurring complaints from their clients. Users who smoke or inject cocaine know that they should avoid buying supplies in these types of markets. Heroin, methamphetamine, PCP and "rave" drugs⁶ are also susceptible to adulteration.

The Social Organization of Distribution

Three ideal types of social organization among drug distributors are presented below, that represent a conceptual sequence of increasing complexity: (1) freelance distributors; (2) socially bonded businesses; and (3) corporate-style distributors.

(1) Freelance Distributors

The defining characteristics of freelance distributors are: (1) a lack of formal hierarchy; and (2) the absence of a division of labor. Relationships between distributors are, ideally, egalitarian — no one owes anything to anyone else and every person is his own boss. For example, Red was a 19-year-old, African-American crack distributor (and user) who lived and worked a block in Flatbush, Brooklyn. As he proudly noted, his operation was strictly freelance.

My relationship with other dealers is "fuck that." Fuck them all. 'Cause I'm tryin' to get mine. You know what I'm sayin? Let me tell you something about dealing drugs. See, when you [are] selling drugs, rule number one is to be independent. See, if you a true drug seller, you don't want to owe nobody nothing. What ever you fuck up is yours.

Alliances in street-level freelance markets, the most fluid and ephemeral of the nine market-types we discuss, are made strictly on an ad hoc basis and are typically short-lived. Freelancers tend to perceive the business world in Hobbesian terms: "every man for himself." Altruism is for suckers, and good deeds are done only when there is a payoff in the immediate future. For this reason, relationships between distributors are often fragile, and undoubtedly the

source of some of the violence associated with such markets (Curtis and Sviridoff, 1994; Sviridoff et al., 1992). Street markets, potentially the most competitive (anyone can set up shop), are also the most highly policed and therefore riskiest market form. They are most likely to generate violence and have other undesirable effects on the neighborhoods where they operate. Given the often blatant and cavalier manner in which they operate, street-level freelance distributors tend to be despised by neighborhood residents, even those who are intimately involved in street-level drug markets (Curtis, 1996; Sviridoff et al., 1992). By contrast, freelance indoor and freelance delivery distributors depend for their very existence on invisibility.

Freelance distributors typically dominate drug markets that are formed whenever a new product (or innovation) is introduced to a population. Because of the need to promote the new product, freelancers are most often users as well. To avoid consuming all of their supplies, they often establish a frantic pace of distribution and aggressively hawk their product. During the cocaine-smoking era of the 1980s, because of the rate at which they smoked the substance, freelance distributors typically had difficulty accumulating money, and every day was a struggle to raise enough capital to make a purchase from a wholesaler (Hamid, 1992; Sviridoff et al., 1992). As proselytizers for new drugs, freelance distributors are particularly adept at building a client base, but they tend to be incompetent entrepreneurs. Instead of continuing to build and maintain a client base, they often pave the way for more organized distributors to move in (Hamid, 1992).

(2) Socially Bonded Businesses

The next level of organizational complexity is what is described here as a socially bonded business. These are drug-distribution enterprises that have evolved in complexity beyond the "every-man-for-himself" style characteristic of freelance distribution. They do not involve the complexity of organization and division of labor of the corporate style of distribution described below. As the name implies, organizations of this type are usually based upon extra-economic social ties — typically kinship, race, ethnicity, nationality, and/or neighborhood. Those who make up the group share some common feature (or set of features), beyond simply making money, that binds members of the group together. Charles, a crack distributor in Brooklyn, described an example of this loose-knit type of organization: "There's a posse of about eight [Jamaicans]. They don't have a name, they just get together and do business. They sell drugs together. Nobody's the head, they all have a share in the business.

They do it by shift, every week a next man gets to work." Another type would be businesses based on ideological or cultural commitments, such as Rastafarian marijuana distributors, the network of distribution of so-called "designer drugs" by "ravers," and, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the upper echelons of LSD markets (Intelligence Division, 1995) which are dominated by these types of distributors.

While freelance and corporate-style distributors are very specific and easily recognizable forms of distribution, socially bonded businesses exhibit wide variation. Some are quite egalitarian in their structure and functioning and resemble collectives of freelancers (like the Jamaicans mentioned above) while others are hierarchical and appear almost corporate-like in the way they operate. Such businesses may vary along many axes, such as degree of hierarchy, division of labor, and "bondedness"/profit orientation.

Special cases are those businesses that are based upon blood ties (see Curtis and Maher, 1992). Though often limited in size, such organizations frequently exhibit some type of division of labor by age and gender. In businesses based on kinship, young adult and juvenile members of the family will often be assigned the riskier tasks (usually, those that involve working on the street), whereas older members will be in charge of positions that require more responsibility (e.g., making purchases of product, handling money, etc.). Female members will often be assigned tasks that are tangential (though not unimportant) to the business (e.g., packaging and/or "cutting" drugs, house-sitting, etc.). Leadership of such organizations often falls to the family patriarch, though this can obviously change very quickly in the drug business. Kinship-based organizations often operate upon the principle of redistribution. Money generated by sales is often funneled to the head of the family, who in turn, pays the various members accordingly.

Family businesses, almost by definition, are interested in improving the condition of the family before catering to individual interests. A family's parochial interests may or may not benefit the larger community in which they are embedded, but given their ability and occasional need to expand to include fictive kin as members of the business, as well as their obligations to family members who may not be directly involved in the business, there may be many points at which family and community interests intersect.

Other types of socially bonded businesses may also be quite sensitive to the larger needs of their "people," and this style of distribution may be less noxious to the surrounding community. For example, Rastafarian marijuana distributors in central Brooklyn were widely known for spreading their considerable wealth around neigh-

borhoods and allowing many people to make a living through economic opportunities that would not have otherwise come their way (Hamid, 1992).

In Bushwick, corporate distributors generated considerable resentment from community residents. When they began to experience difficulties from law enforcement interventions, the socially bonded businesses that were more "integrated" into the neighborhood and whose profits circulated locally, were able to thrive while the corporate-style organizations were dismantled (Curtis, 1996). Bolo, a Puerto Rican distributor who had once worked for corporate street sellers of heroin and crack in his native Bushwick, set up a network of several streetcorner "spots" selling crack. Unlike corporate owners, Bolo ran a tight-knit organization, and he cared about his workers and the neighborhood. He hired only people who lived in the area with their families and carefully scrutinized their motives for wanting to join his organization. Bolo made a conscious effort to stay away from young drug sellers who publicly announced their intention to buy fancy clothes, jewelry or expensive cars with drug profits:

Most of the fellows who work for me need the money. I mean, I'll be honest with you, I'm not going to bring a kid who just needs money to buy a pair of sneakers. I will bring a guy with me that has to support his family in one way or another. I mean, I told everybody, "nobody is here getting rich. All we are doing is surviving. If you know how to save and cut corners, you can have all the money to save."

In interviews with his street-level workers, they all voiced similar motivations for working — none sported flashing clothing, jewelry or other consumer display items that many people thought were characteristic of drug dealers. Bolo was prideful of the fact that his business "supported 25 families in the neighborhood" and he enjoyed being seen as a "godfather" by community residents who often sought his assistance, protection, or advice.

By grounding a business in family or other types of extra-economic ties, a business can often gain a competitive edge over freelancers or other organizational forms that do not enjoy such high levels of trust and cohesiveness. Law enforcement initiatives that rely on "turning" arrestees to provide information about their bosses are likely to be less successful in market places dominated by socially bound businesses, especially those based on kinship ties. At the same time, such businesses can become vehicles where labor can be deeply exploited. As drug distributors have largely moved off the streets in the 1990s, the increasing reliance of the police on "snitches" (who are routinely threatened with lengthy prison sen-

tences under the draconian Rockefeller laws) to manufacture drug arrests has had a profound impact on neighborhoods, disrupting families and pitting neighbors against each other.

(3) Corporate-style Distributors

Corporate-style distributors are the most complexly organized of our three ideal types. They are the most hierarchic and exhibit the highest degree of division of labor, and the associations between persons involved are primarily based on making money. The line distinguishing corporate-style from socially bonded businesses is often blurry because members of corporations, particularly those in positions of power and/or authority, often share similar characteristics such as ethnicity, subcultural style (hip-hop, punk, etc.) or neighborhood affiliation. They tend to share common characteristics because, like socially-bonded businesses, corporate-style distributors also risk prosecution under conspiracy and racketeering statutes (such as the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations [RICO]). Thus, employees must be greatly trusted⁷ by the organization (and employ people who share a common background represents an attempt to ensure trustworthiness) or be kept completely in the dark about the details of the business.

Variations in the technical organization of distribution are significant here. For example, corporate street-level distributors typically deal with this problem by keeping low-level workers in the dark about the operations of the organization or who is involved, and closely supervising sellers, who are provided with very limited supplies of drugs thus limiting the amount they can steal. In such instances, low-level workers in high-risk positions are often deliberately selected from groups who are unlike those who own or run the corporation. For example, several Dominican-owned businesses in Brooklyn regularly hired Puerto Ricans, African Americans and whites, but virtually no Dominicans were placed in risky, street-selling locales. One crack dealer who operated a socially bonded business contrasted his operation with the corporate sellers who dominated street-level sales several blocks away:

Troutman [Street] is the only international spot where they have Blacks, Puerto Ricans and whites, where everybody's working. Other areas they do not. The guys who run Troutman are good, but they're sloppy. So many of those guys are in prison from Troutman. Nobody with a mind [works there]. All they care is "hey, fuck the workers. As long as my money comes..." That kind of attitude.

Street-level corporations also may deal with the issue of trust and loyalty by instilling terror through the routine use of public "beat-downs," humiliations and killings, and many "enforcers" are hired expressly for this purpose. By contrast, indoor corporate distributors, such as the marijuana-selling "doors" (Lower East Side) and "herb-gates" (Brooklyn) relied more on a high degree of social cohesion based on long-standing neighborhood friendships and ethnicity (Puerto Rican on the Lower East Side and West Indian in Brooklyn).⁸ Corporate delivery services are characterized by the highest degree of trust of employees, since they are routinely "fronted" (advanced on credit) drug supplies of a thousand dollars retail value. They tend to employ only close friends of existing employees and attempt to generate camaraderie and esprit de corps among members of the organization through paying employees well, providing perks (e.g., free or discounted drug supplies for personal use), and sponsoring social functions such as Christmas parties.

Drug dealing corporations are predicated on many of the same principles as those in the legal economy. In corporate structures, sharp divisions between ownership, management and labor are common. Indeed, many junior-level managers in some drug corporations never know who "owns" the company (Curtis, 1996). This distancing of ownership from management and labor often gives rise to tremendous tensions within the organization over their competing interests. In theory, membership in the organization is defined according to seemingly "objective" criteria, and advancement is attained through merit rather than membership in a favored group. In practice, however, like corporations in the formal economy, the upper echelons of management are often reserved for family members or members of the "in" group, and there is a ceiling beyond which some employees can never expect to pass. Below, Bruce identifies the limitations to advancement within local corporate street-level distribution organizations experienced by drug-using employees.

The street workers, the guys that actually pitch the stuff, those could be all kinds of different guys. But it's highly unlikely that a guy like myself could become a manager. They have something against anyone who uses drugs even though they sell it. It's very illogical; but that's the way they are.

They have people that work Blue Bag [cocaine] that they don't even know where the hell they come from. They don't really care whose hand they put their product in as long as they can stand over them and watch them and...you know, a lot of times, guys are getting cheated. The managers charge them 5% off a bundle. Guys are workin' out there for like, you know,

\$10 off every hundred when they're supposed to get \$20. It's dog eat dog. If it was up to some of the managers, they wouldn't hire anybody because of their greed. 'Till he sees two or three cops and then he says, "hey Bruce, come here. You want to work?"

When street-level enforcement activities increased, the estrangement between ownership, management and labor was clearly seen in the increased incidence of street-level violence, as "disloyal" employees attempted to compensate for their high level of risk and meager earnings by stealing from the company and incurring violent retaliation from management in response (Curtis, 1996). Below, "G-Man" discusses why he feels justified in periodically running off with unsold product.

Though at times I feel it wrong to step off or what have you, a lot of times it really is the manager's fault for not taking better care of the workers because the ten dollars per bundle [\$100 worth of drugs] is nothing when you're taking the big risk of getting held up, which I've done; getting shot at, which I've done; getting run over by cars; getting beaten up by cops; getting your drugs taken away by the cops and not getting arrested. They feel if you don't get arrested, then you're always responsible. What do you do when a cop just comes and takes your drugs from you and just tells you to take a walk? You know, the percentage that's given — ten dollars — is really nothing. When you go to jail they don't come and bail you out! I feel bad because at times you put your life at a risk, but I don't feel bad about stepping off with their product.

Like street-level freelancers, street-level corporate-style distributors tend to care little about the particular community in which they might be located. Corporations are about making money for the owners, not about the welfare or enrichment of employees, their families or neighborhoods. Employees and neighborhoods are interchangeable for such corporations, and most of them have several outlets where they can shift their business should one neighborhood become too "hot." This lack of commitment to the people or places where they are located often earns corporate drug businesses considerable resentment from residents of those communities. The owners of such businesses are wise to conceal their identities from all but a few trusted employees. While corporations enrich a few people at the top, their workers remain economically stagnant and the majority of dollars flow out of communities where they are generated. This pattern of not contributing to community development and/or enrichment is

often also true of corporations in the formal economy and those in the informal sector, and suggests that there are may be many lines of similarity which may be drawn between the two.

The Dynamics of Change in Drug Markets

The three ideal types of social organizations briefly described above in many ways violate the complexities that are observed in the field. While recognizing the shortcomings of typologizing, nevertheless, it is necessary to begin to lay out a set of principles — a structure — by which drug researchers can compare and contrast their findings rather than continuing to talk past each other, focusing on superficial characteristics that often serve to confuse rather than clarify.

One disadvantage to constructing typologies is that they are not conducive to describing change. Clearly though, drug markets evolve over time, and they can become more or less complex as they metamorphose. New distributors also enter the market with regularity; some use well-worn methods of selling drugs while others introduce new wrinkles to the drug business. Distributors also learn of new techniques of distribution and evasion of law enforcement from acquaintances or friends active in other drug markets: "But it only lasts for a little while, you always got to think of something new. You always got to change up. I hadda change up already. It was time. I look around, talk to different people, and I look for the next thing, how they doing it, cause I know mad people, different spots" (interview, "Destroyer").

While acknowledging that change is inevitable and that it is not unidirectional — it may lead to more or less complex forms of organization — our data led us to develop the model presented in the section that identifies a conceptual sequence of increasingly complex styles of distribution. This does not mean that styles of distribution must necessarily develop along a linear path. In fact, while many different variations are possible and have been noted in the data, several themes have been recurrent.

When a drug is newly introduced, markets are typically disorganized and dominated by freelance distributors who initiate new consumers. Freelancers are usually users of the substances they sell and they typically act as ambassadors by touting the virtues of their products. Unlike other forms of drug distribution, freelancers have the flexibility to give free samples, demonstrate how the drug is consumed, take time to explore new places and situations that enhance the drug's effect, and in general, do things that seem to contradict

the notion of "organization" and violate the precepts of capital accumulation.

Once freelancers successfully build a steady and visible consumer base, corporate distributors often begin to enter the picture. Because of the resources at their disposal, corporations find it easy to force freelancers out of the picture. By this point, freelancers have often been weakened by their poor management skills, their own use of a substance and their inability to generate enough capital to stay competitive in the market. Unlike freelancers, corporations can more easily adapt to unfavorable local conditions (especially increased scrutiny by law enforcement) by shifting personnel and resources from neighborhood to neighborhood.

As consumer demand for a drug begins to level off or recede and profits begin to stagnate, corporations find it increasingly difficult to maintain themselves. In addition, corporations that operate on the street often have the additional burden of having to respond to community opposition as a result of the disrespectful ways in which they sometimes conduct business. And, of course, because of their large size, they become the primary targets of law enforcement efforts. When street-level markets begin to recede, socially bonded businesses, which are much more discreet and generally less driven by sheer profit margins, begin to assert themselves as the dominant forces among distributors in a market place.

Socially bonded business also evolve in complexity over time. For example, family businesses are often begun by groups of siblings and/or cousins who are all approximately the same age. At first, their organization may exhibit many features that are characteristic of freelancers, i.e., egalitarianism, no division of labor, etc. Over time, however, a division of labor will likely emerge as the strengths and weaknesses of different family members become apparent. With a division of labor will also likely develop a sense of hierarchy since some jobs will be more important than others. At the other end of the organizational spectrum, some family businesses become too large to include just family members and the inclusion of fictive kin will begin to stretch the concept of family business to its limit.

Clearly, the technical and social organization of distribution change over time, but what explains such change? Conventional wisdom asserts that variation in the intensity and style of policing are a primary force that shapes drug markets. Given the New York City Police Department's assault on drug distribution in minority neighborhoods and the casualties generated in the "war on drugs," it would be surprising indeed if there were not a substantial effect. However, a number of other factors are significant as well. Consumer preferences shape markets as decisively as policing. Drug distribu-

tors are also victims of predatory crime both by rivals and those who realize dealers are unlikely to report robberies. Capital and labor market flows in the noncriminalized economy also affect drug markets, both directly and by shaping the neighborhood settings in which distribution takes place. Finally, all the other factors that shape neighborhoods also affect drug markets: class, ethnicity, residential and other land use patterns, etc. Of course, none of these factors exists in isolation; they are all constantly interacting in complex and multifarious ways. Drug markets affect neighborhoods, which, in turn, affects policing, which affects drug markets.

THE MODEL APPLIED: CHANGES IN MARIJUANA MARKETS ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE, 1983-99

In the remaining space, we will present a truncated version of the model as it is applied to marijuana markets on the Lower East Side of Manhattan between 1983 and 1999 (See Table 1). A "thick description" of the model would describe the various examples in far greater detail and would more fully explore the impact of the range of external factors (e.g., population change, gentrification, policing, etc.) on the evolution of markets.

The Lower East Side is compact, centrally located in Manhattan and characterized by great cultural and economic diversity. It is densely populated with aging Eastern European immigrants, yuppie stockbrokers, dreadlocked squatter punks and Latino families. Since the late 1970s, the area has been subject to considerable gentrification; it was one of the few remaining areas in Manhattan (south of Harlem) where the poor and working-class lived, and was thus available for further development as real estate values began to rise in the early 1980s. The East Village area of the Lower East Side has become a major center of recreational activity over the last 20 years and bars, cafes, dance and rock clubs line the streets and avenues.

The area also continues* to be a center of extralegal recreation. The entire spectrum of illegal drugs are to be found in this area: marijuana, heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, prescription drugs, psychedelics and the newer, so-called designer drugs, such as Ecstasy (MDMA) and Special K (ketamine) are all available. In addition to a wide variety of illicit substances being available, many different styles of drug distribution flourish in this heterogeneous environment: "house connections" (dealers operating out of apartments), long-term, street-dealing enterprises, freelance street dealers, businesses that operate via electronic pagers and delivery services are all to be found within a few blocks of each other.

Marijuana distribution on the Lower East Side in the early 1980s occurred in a wide variety of styles of distribution. The chart below outlines the range and approximate number of marijuana distributors that existed in 1983.

**Table 1: Marijuana Markets on the Lower East Side —
1983 v. 1998**

Technical Organization of Distribution	Social Organization of Distribution					
	Freelance Distributors		Bonded Businesses		Corporations	
	1983	1998	1983	1998	1983	1998
Street-level	>25	>10	>5	None	None	None
Indoor Sales	>10	>5	>5	None	>5	None
Delivery Services	None	>10	2	>2	2	>10

Street sales (primarily by freelancers) were common, most often made using small manila envelopes containing \$5 and \$10 quantities ("nickels" and "dimes," respectively). Most street dealers were African American and sales were concentrated in a small area (primarily East Ninth Street between First Avenue and Avenue A). Many of these distributors also sold marijuana in Washington Square Park in nearby Greenwich Village. Marijuana was also available in a number of off-street venues. The most notable (and probably the most popular among consumers) were the "doors." "We would always buy weed at these two places on my block, the 'Blue Door' and the 'Black Door.' Anyone could walk in, buy weed, it was like it was legal. We'd go there and buy a nickel during a commercial" (interview, "Dick"). The "doors" were storefront operations that made no pretense of selling legal commodities. They consisted of an empty storefront containing a teller window where consumers could purchase nickels, dimes and quarters (which purported to be quarter-ounce quantities and sold for about \$35 to \$40). Bodegas were another type of indoor locale that sold marijuana. They differed from the "doors" in that they appeared to be legitimate businesses (and indeed, to varying degrees, often were), offering various grocery items for sale, as well marijuana (and, often, other illegal drugs as well). Both the "doors" and bodegas

were often run by Latinos and were generally characterized by socially bonded and corporate forms of organization.

These public and quasi-public distribution operations were far from being the only marijuana distribution venues in the Lower East Side in the early 1980s. "House connections" and early forms of marijuana delivery also flourished at this time. "House connections" were distributors operating from indoor locations (apartments or office spaces). They generally sold only to known customers, often sold "weight" (semiwholesale and wholesale quantities, such as ounces, quarter-pounds and pounds). Many were freelancers, although several socially bonded businesses (partnership and semipartnership operations) existed. Whites and African Americans dominated this portion of the marijuana market during this period. Finally, the earliest marijuana delivery services began at this time, notably a service run by "the Pope," who at one time advertised in the *Village Voice*. Another early service would deliver marijuana to any lower Manhattan address if the caller knew that the password was "What's on the menu?" The person answering the phone would respond with a list of the day's selections and prices and would then dispatch a delivery person on a bicycle to deliver whatever was requested.

Marijuana prices and quantities available for retail sale varied by the type of distributor. Marijuana sold on the street and in the "doors" and bodegas was sold in \$5 "nickels," containing about 1-1.5 grams of marijuana or \$10 "dimes," containing about twice as much. The price per ounce price was thus about \$90 to \$140. Marijuana purchased from house dealers or by delivery varied more widely in price, from approximately \$50 per ounce (for average quality known as "mersh" or "schwag") to a high of \$200 (for extremely high quality such as "Thai stick" or "skunkweed").

Marijuana markets have changed a great deal since the early 1980s. Population change, gentrification and the war on drugs are three prominent factors that have played major roles in propelling marijuana delivery services to the dominant market position that they have enjoyed since the mid-1990s. Street-level markets continue to exist, albeit smaller and slightly shifted in location (now primarily on First Avenue between St. Mark's Place and East Ninth Street). Since the "nickel" bag is obsolete on the Lower East Side, street markets now deal exclusively in "dimes," reflecting the inflation in marijuana prices -since the early 1980s. The "doors" and bodega operations are long gone, casualties of more intensive policing, beginning with Operation Pressure Point in 1983 (Zimmer, 1985), and the ongoing gentrification of the neighborhood (Marcuse, 1986). House dealers continue to operate, but they are far fewer, almost totally devoted to wholesale deals, and very reluctant to take on new custom-

ers. The remaining former house dealers (those who did not make the transition to quantity sales to a strictly limited clientele) tend to operate on a quasi-delivery basis.

The Lower East Side marijuana market is currently dominated by large corporate-style delivery services, that deliver throughout Manhattan. At least 20 such operations exist today, typically offering to deliver, generally within a two-hour wait, \$50 quantities of different types of marijuana. Prices have also increased greatly. Delivery services charge their customers for service and insulation from the risks of street purchases. Per-ounce prices from one delivery service were \$200 ("low"), \$350 ("mid") and \$560 ("high"). The current "high" is not nearly as good as \$200 weed" in the early 1980s.

CONCLUSION:
The Developmental Cycle of
Communities/Neighborhoods and the Embeddedness of
Drug Markets within Them

The typology outlined in this paper provides a framework for systematically describing drug distribution activities, which allows and facilitates comparative analysis. One important lesson that emerged from the comparison of data from different neighborhoods was that the developmental trajectories of drug distribution and consumption varied considerably from neighborhood to neighborhood. Neighborhoods are complex, multidimensional entities where structural constraints and microfactors intersect to form culturally diverse social fabrics, and their study is a strength of ethnographic research. As the crucible where orientations, outlooks, behaviors, and lifestyles are forged and refined, neighborhoods and communities are critical to examine (Arensberg and Kimball, 1965). There are several excellent examples of how ethnographic methods and techniques can be employed to generate and integrate multiple sources of data to provide a comparative framework for understanding the similarities and differences between neighborhoods (Sullivan, 1989; Moore, 1978).

The substantial variation in our data suggests that changes in the manner in which drugs are sold and consumed are not an outcome of a "natural" progression of distribution styles or a "developmental cycle of drug use," but rather, highly dependent on their interaction with a complex array of factors, with each neighborhood having a unique configuration. To understand how drug distribution and consumption vary, it is first necessary to understand how they are integrated (or not) into a specific setting. In adopting such a perspective, the apparent mystery of why, for example, law enforcement interven-

tions are not more uniformly successful, can be more easily understood.

By employing a typology that distinguishes between different forms of drug distribution and how they are embedded in a community, policy makers and law enforcement officials can devise interventions that are more responsive to local conditions and may earn community support rather than antagonism. For example, street-level corporate distributors who use neighborhoods simply as locales to "get money" are likely to be less integrated into those communities and are thereby more susceptible to traditional "buy and bust" tactics and more recent place-management strategies (Edmunds et al., 1996; Rengert, 1996; Eck, 1994). The notable success of the New York City Police Department in dismantling large street-level drug markets stands as testimony to this approach (Cunneen, 1999; Greene, 1999; Sviridoff et al., 1992). By continuing to employ aggressive tactics that emphasized large numbers of arrests in a market place that evolved partly in response to these tactics, police found that they had reached the point of diminishing returns. Furthermore, the very communities that had been freed from the oppressive rule of corporate-style distributors are now bearing the brunt of mass arrests that far surpass those made at the height of the crack epidemic (Fessenden and Rohde, 1999; NYPD Crime Analysis Unit, 1997).

Changes in the character of drug markets as well as shifts in the modus operandi of distributors and/or consumer preferences may well have more to do with community-level factors than it does with larger social forces (e.g., the influence of mass media) or the actions of law enforcement interventions that aim to eliminate them. While each site will undoubtedly have a different constellation of factors that exert influence on the configuration of local drug distribution and consumption, we are not suggesting that researchers return to a form of "historical particularism" (Harris, 1968:250-289) that makes it impossible to systematically compare and contrast different sites.

Clearly, drug markets are embedded in wider social environments — neighborhoods and communities — and are responsive to many noneconomic forces (see e.g., Sullivan, 1989; Arensberg and Kimball, 1965; Polanyi, 1957). This realization simply underscores that drug markets must also be understood as more than simply flows of capital or the exchange of goods and services for money. To appreciate the roles that drugs play in neighborhoods and communities, it is necessary to have a much more comprehensive view of them as commodities, symbols and tools. Drug markets also provide arenas where other social forces and dramas may manifest themselves and be played out (Bohannon and Dalton, 1965). Defined as such, markets are complex arenas of social interaction that may affect, and be

affected by, a wide variety of noneconomic factors, and a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of them requires a multilayered rendering, sensitive to changes over time, that combines social, institutional, neighborhood and individual level factors into an intelligible whole.

Markets not only reflect the supply and demand for particular drugs, they help shape them. Besides being places where commodities were bought and sold, the market places observed in this research were also arenas where the socialization of neighborhood youth took place, often superseding in importance such places as playgrounds, parks, gymnasiums, and clubs. They were also places where trends were set: in the process of buying and selling drugs, styles in clothing and music were established. Being a drug distributor was not entirely about making money, it also provided distributors with a very public forum where a persona could be molded to help achieve noneconomic ends. Drug markets were not only venues where fads and trends in clothing, music and jewelry were started, they were also arenas where interethnic rivalries were most visibly acted out.

The typology also begs the question of why distinct forms of distribution arise and flourish at specific times in particular places. To unlock this mystery, we must look beyond limiting confines of drug research and realize that illegal substances are not simply about altering consciousness or making money, but ultimately, they are rooted in, and tell us much, about political economy. For example, it is no coincidence that street-level drug supermarkets operated by corporate-style distributors have been located in blighted minority neighborhoods. These urban backwaters had long been neglected by governmental agencies (except, perhaps, law enforcement), and the vacuum created by their malign neglect allowed drug organizations to fill the void. While such organizations are certainly about making money, they are often equally concerned with building and exercising power and authority. Such developments are not unlike situations found in other places and times when governments abdicated their responsibility or ceded authority to local power brokers (Hess, 1998).

Seen through the lens of political economy, the study of drug markets may progress from being an evaluative yardstick for law enforcement officials and policymakers to making significant contributions to theory development and the wider analysis of topics like power, authority, the state and other factors that more fruitfully occupy the time of social scientists. Through the typology of drug distribution that we offer we hope to bring structure and a common taxonomic vocabulary to a field that has been characterized by a great deal of description but relatively little analysis that can be used for comparative study.



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NOTES

1. Our typology is primarily concerned with urban drug markets, because it was generated by our experiences doing ethnographic fieldwork in New York City. However, it should be applicable to drug markets in suburban and rural settings. Such markets have been little studied (see Weisheit, 1998); ethnographic research into these markets do much to broaden our understanding of the role of drugs and drug markets in American society.
2. As we discuss below, the actions of law enforcement and the community at large are also important in configuring particular drug markets.
3. While the comparatively small number of African Americans may not comport with media-derived images of heroin markets, despite vigorous efforts to locate additional African-American heroin users and distributors, we were unable to find them. For more discussion of this see Hamid et al., (1997).

4. It may also be possible to develop useful typologies of drug consumers (see Curtis et al., 1995; Hamid et al., 1997), but that, too, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, just as distribution has been poorly understood by social scientists, so too has consumption. Consumer tastes wax and wane in ways that mystify many researchers and they have only recently begun to attract their interest (see e.g., Appadurai, 1986; Douglas and Isherwood, 1981). Rather than examining the conditions and circumstances by which consumers may be differentiated, many researchers have focused on the more sensational characteristics associated with the use of particular substances (Chitwood et al., 1996; Williams, 1989.). It is necessary to begin to develop a systematic framework to describe consumers instead of examining the most visually striking characteristics shared by some users or those that violate middle class norms. Of course, there are many ways to begin differentiating between consumers. In addition to the type and amount of drug that they buy and the frequency of their purchases, they may also be distinguished by their method of consumption and the social context in which they consume drugs. An exhaustive compilation of the various types of consumers and the development of a taxonomy of drug users requires fieldwork among the many different types of drug markets that exist in a neighborhood or city. In preliminary research, we discovered that our sample of users could be subdivided into distinct groups, and that for each, there were distinct patterns of use and modes of administration. "For each of these groups, [drug use] serves as a different charter for action, and promotes a unique way of looking at the world, associating with others, or assessing one's life and one's future. ...Embedded in larger, more encompassing lifestyles, the different patterns and conventions of [drug use] are intelligible only when viewed in their context" (Hamid et al., 1997:380).

5. Perhaps because of the need for accurate intelligence in wartime, law enforcement agencies have been more attentive to the social organization of distribution than have many drug researchers. Of course, like ethnographers, undercover law enforcement agents actually experience the lived reality of drug-markets, unlike many academic criminologists (Fleisher 1998).

6. "Rave" drugs refers to newly emergent drugs (e.g., Ecstasy (MDMA) and "Special K" (ketamine)) popular among young people who frequent "raves" (dance parties featuring "techno" and "jungle" music).

7. This need for trust is, of course, precisely why the socially-bonded businesses discussed above evolve in this direction.

8 The "doors" and "herb-gates" were storefront public marijuana sellers.

9. The Lower East Side was well established as a heroin selling area by the 1930s (Terry and Pellens, 1928; Courtwright, 1982; Courtwright et al., 1989).