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# THE NEIGHBORHOOD EFFECTS OF STREET-LEVEL DRUG ENFORCEMENT

— Tactical Narcotics Teams in New York —

An Evaluation of TNT  
by the Vera Institute of Justice

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## Preface

*"Life without this sort of examination is not worth living" — Socrates*

Police departments learn from experience: their own experience and the experience of other departments. If they do not do so, the communities they serve suffer, and the extraordinary resources entrusted to them — both financial and moral — are wasted. Sometimes, nothing more than the ordinary scrutiny of careful managers is required to tease useful lessons from the variations a police department introduces to its basic approach to a problem. Other times, rigorous research is called for. In these pages, the New York City Police Department's Tactical Narcotics Team (TNT) is subjected to rigorous, external research inquiry. We believe that the results deserve attention from the many urban police managers who are struggling to apply police resources effectively against curbside drug markets — particularly the crack markets that have sprung up across the country that resemble those targeted by TNT.

But anyone who has subjected his personal or professional life to rigorous examination knows that the examined life has its risks. In this case, the Department risked criticism, by exposing to public scrutiny the wide variety of views that are ordinarily obscured by the Department's corporate posture, and by permitting such an important effort to be subjected to measurement and external analysis. Similarly, the researchers put at risk the relationships of trust on which they depend for access to the information and activity which, when examined, permit them to contribute knowledge to the field. And they exposed to professional critique any shortcomings in their research design and their implementation of it.

In our view, the New York City Police Department, its managers, and its extraordinarily dedicated officers performed admirably. The researchers did too. But for some readers, the research findings will confirm a prejudice that police initiatives — even ones as massive and thoughtfully designed as TNT — cannot make much difference. Others may find here evidence to support a prejudice that researchers cannot recognize success when they see it. For us, whatever the shortcomings of TNT or of the research design, and whatever the implementation difficulties that both encountered, the pages of this report constitute an important addition to the store of useful knowledge. They hold implications for how the NYPD ought to go about the business of stripping control of drug-infested neighborhoods from the crack dealers and returning the streets to the use and control of law-abiding residents. And they hold implications for the host of other American jurisdictions trying to do the same thing.

The researchers' bottom line is that TNT generated a large number of highly prosecutable arrests, seized a lot of cocaine and a lot of money, and disrupted the drug markets at most locations where buy-and-bust actions were mounted. But these effects were usually short-lived, and the community was neither sufficiently involved in nor knowledgeable enough about the crackdown for the effects to endure when

TNT moved on to the next target area. What intrigues us is not so much the bottom line — the Police Department has been learning all along about TNT's implementation problems and the difficulty of making lasting impact through short-term enforcement crackdowns. What intrigues us about this report is the detail — the specific reasons given by community residents and police officers to support their views about TNT's strengths and weaknesses, the specific ways that street dealers and crack users responded to TNT's presence, the displacement of crack sales and crack use to indoor locations and the new problems (including new public health problems) that resulted.

Perhaps the most challenging research finding is the extent to which the ordinary residents, who form the core of the community in the TNT target areas studied, were simply unaware that a massive undercover police crackdown was underway in their midst. That is challenging because, although buy-and-bust crackdowns clearly disrupt curbside drug markets and quickly reduce the volume of transactions at targeted locations, they are *undercover* operations and, as such, they remain largely invisible to residents. Yet residents of such neighborhoods need to see that something dramatic is being done, so they can overcome their fear and organize to resist return of the market after TNT moves on. Equally intriguing is the finding that, although most community leaders and residents interviewed by the researchers did not believe TNT could have enduring effects on local drug markets, they supported it and wanted it back. The demand that something be done about the crack problem on this city's streets — even if it does not solve the problem — is at least as deeply rooted as the crack market itself.

The researchers' recommendations in Chapter Six — that TNT's tactics be married to the Department's growing capacity for precinct-based community policing and problem-solving — offer but one way for the department to incorporate the findings into its evolving approach to street-level drug enforcement. There are others, and the Department will consider all of them with care.

For a retiring Police Commissioner, this document is part of the record he leaves for his successors in this city, and for his colleagues elsewhere who are engaged in the difficult business of policing major cities in times of great stress. For the Director of the Vera Institute, it is a contribution to the field of police research, and to the City of New York and its Police Department. Both of us are proud of the NYPD for subjecting TNT to research inquiry, and proud of Commissioner Ben Ward, who oversaw the creation of TNT and pressed for this research to be done. We hope the example stimulates other departments to do the same, so that New York can learn from their experience in return.

Lee P. Brown, *Commissioner of the New York City Police Department*  
Michael E. Smith, *President of the Vera Institute of Justice*  
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## Chapter One

# NEIGHBORHOOD EFFECTS OF STREET-LEVEL DRUG ENFORCEMENT: RESEARCH ON THE NYPD'S TACTICAL NARCOTICS TEAMS

### I. Introduction

The advent of crack cocaine markets in American cities in the mid-1980s sparked a nationwide renewal of interest in street-level narcotics enforcement by police. During the 1970s and early 1980s, street-level enforcement was widely viewed as ineffective or inefficient, and efforts were directed at higher levels of drug distribution networks. But neither federal efforts to interdict drugs, before they enter the United States, nor assaults by local police and prosecutors on domestic distribution networks prevented the rapid growth of curbside crack markets on the streets of American cities. As a burgeoning crack trade contributed significantly to a decline of public order and to a deteriorating quality of life in inner-city neighborhoods, local police departments across the country began redirecting their strategic attention — and their resources — to heavy enforcement action against the street-level tier of drug distribution networks.

One of the most fully elaborated street-level drug enforcement efforts of this kind was the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Tactical Narcotics Teams (TNT). TNT was designed as a mobile, "concentrated overlay" of plain-clothes and undercover narcotics officers, deployed to supplement normal police activity in identified target areas for about 90 days. TNT's intensive buy-and-bust intervention was expected to disrupt and reduce drug activity at targeted locations, so that a community's own capacity to preserve order and quality of life would be sufficiently restored for the gains to endure after TNT moved on to the next target area. (TNT's structure, its undercover "buy-and-bust" tactics, and the methods established to try to integrate TNT with the efforts of other city agencies and with the community itself are detailed in Chapter Three.)

Thus, TNT's ability to achieve its objectives depends as much on changing community perceptions, attitudes and behavior as it does on eliminating or disrupting drug markets on the streets at targeted locations.

According to NYPD reports on TNT, the three-pronged approach involves "saturating the target area with law enforcement operations, eliminating quality of life conditions which give rise to drug trafficking and use, and encouraging community participation" (NYPD, 1989: 1). Although it was always intended that TNT rely heavily on undercover buy-and-bust arrests, to remove sellers from targeted locations or to drive them away, the NYPD's design for TNT draws upon the tools of problem-solving and community policing as well. First, an Anti-Drug Abuse Task Force, coordinated by an individual seconded from the Mayor's personal staff, was formed to facilitate inter-agency enforcement efforts in the TNT target areas — both to help disrupt drug market locations and, by addressing other problems

communities face in heavy drug-trafficking areas, to provide additional evidence that “something is being done” about the deteriorated quality of life in the vicinity of active curbside drug markets. Second, the Department's effort to involve members of the community directly in the TNT initiative was a core component of the design:

... the TNT concept emphasizes community participation at the local level. Each team reaches out to local leaders and community organizations to develop working partnerships to fight drugs. Elected officials, religious groups, civic associations and other community organizations are all asked to join the effort because the support for TNT provided by the community has proven to be invaluable. (NYPD, 1989: 1)

New York City's deployment of TNTs brought a new level of strategic complexity to street-level narcotics enforcement. As such, it attracted considerable national attention — and its successes and shortcomings are likely to have a substantial influence on the evolution of drug enforcement strategies in the United States.

## II. The Rationale for Street-Level Drug Enforcement

Mark Moore's study of heroin enforcement (1977) described the movement away from street-level enforcement strategies in the 1970s, which occurred for several reasons: a recognition of the high corruption hazard it poses to officers on the streets; a growing awareness that emphasis on “numbers” might produce illegal arrests; and a perception that targeting the “wrong level of distribution” was inefficient. Moore reported that, in New York City in the early 1970s, the volume of drug arrests dropped markedly (though the charge level of the arrests increased) as a result of the NYPD's shift away from enforcement at the retail level toward investigation and arrest of higher-level drug dealers. Moore pointed to a possible problem in this shift away from enforcement at the lower levels of drug distribution systems — a possibility that became quite real when crack markets appeared a little more than fifteen years later:

It is possible that street-level dealers can now afford to behave very aggressively because neither the Narcotics Division nor the Patrol Bureau is paying very much attention to them (1977: 198).

In recent years, in New York City and elsewhere, renewed interest in strategies that focus police resources on the street-level tier of drug distribution has in part been animated by the idea, advanced by Moore in 1977, that disruption of established “copping areas” might be particularly effective in dissuading new users from entering the markets. In a similarly influential but more recent paper, Kleiman (1988) argued that the benefits of street enforcement campaigns might “outlast the drives themselves” in some locations, by increasing the difficulties of connecting buyers and sellers — the “hassles” or non-financial costs associated with buying drugs. Based on his study of an effective street-level heroin enforcement drive in Lynn, Massachusetts, Kleiman argued that retail enforcement can reduce drug consumption and non-drug crime in the area of a drug marketplace, and reduce the

community's perceptions of disorder in the area and improve police-community relations as well.

Support for such a strategy also came from studies of the NYPD's own efforts to control heroin trafficking on the Lower East Side of Manhattan (Mulgrav, 1985; Zimmer, 1987). Operation Pressure Point, a highly publicized and relatively long-term concentration of uniformed officers in that target area, is recognized as having reduced curbside drug dealing and ancillary crime in the vicinity:

Operation Pressure Point has removed drug dealers and addicts from the streets. Pedestrians no longer have to push through hoards of dealers and addicts to enter and exit their apartment buildings. Not only have the crowds disappeared, but the number of double-parked cars and out-of-state cars associated with drug-dealing has diminished (Mulgrav, 1985: 7).

Both Mulgrav and Zimmer recognized that the success of concentrated enforcement on the streets of the Lower East Side depended, at least to some extent, on the on-going gentrification of that area. Zimmer pointed out that the parts of the Operation Pressure Point target area that were not being actively reclaimed by middle-class settlers did not fare as well, and she suggested that similar enforcement efforts might be less effective in multi-problem poverty areas.

Some observers of Operation Pressure Point noted that the street-level enforcement campaign, which required a heavy commitment of police resources to a relatively small area, was difficult to stop once the community appreciated the benefits of its presence. Others cautioned that, even if similar enforcement drives could be mounted throughout the city, they might not be as effective when targeted on markets for drugs other than heroin:

[W]ith street-level as with high-level enforcement, heroin is far more susceptible to the effects of increased pressure than is marijuana or cocaine. Again, a major reason is sheer size: measured by numbers of regular dealers, the heroin market is perhaps a fourth the size of the cocaine market . . . . (Reuter and Kleiman, 1986: 329).

There is, in fact, little empirical evidence about the efficacy of street-level enforcement drives aimed at drugs other than heroin. Some theorists are skeptical about the potential of such efforts to have any effect on the large numbers of users and sellers of cocaine and, by extension, crack (Kleiman, 1988; Reuter and Kleiman, 1986).

In short, when the NYPD was devising TNT, little was known about how local markets for drugs other than heroin respond to heavy enforcement drives at the retail level: would the marketplaces spring back after enforcement efforts were relaxed and, if they do, how soon; would drug selling and buying on the streets be displaced to existing alternative marketplaces or to as-yet undeveloped locations; would new entrants into these drug markets be deterred by visible enforcement and, if so, would the existing local markets shrink?

Recently, Kleiman has questioned the plausibility of traditional retail-level enforcement efforts in areas where the drug market is ubiquitous:

Enforcement will not easily drive the herds of drug dealers from such green pastures. Suppressing drug dealing with arrests and punishments, if the drug in question enjoys a mass market, is likely to swallow enforcement resources — police, prosecutors, courtroom and prison time — in great, greedy gulps. (Kleiman, 1992: 15).

Despite the doubts, theorists have also suggested potential benefits of focusing enforcement on street-level markets. Williams and Hawkins (1989) suggest that increasing the certainty of apprehension through concentrated enforcement might strengthen the belief that “others condemn the act”:

[B]ecause individuals perceive a high likelihood of arrest, they may also perceive that their close associates will strongly disapprove of their involvement in criminal activity, which prevents them from engaging in crime. While this sequence would not be indicative of a deterrent effect (as usually defined), it would show that legal sanctions play a significant role in the crime control process by maintaining the social disapproval of crime (p. 559).

Their argument suggests that street-level enforcement drives that are responsive to the specific demands of community residents might reinforce perceptions that the community condemns drug sale and use, and might therefore have an indirect influence on local drug markets.

Sherman (1990) argues that police crackdowns (focused on a variety of problems, including drugs) have residual effects that outlast the initiatives. He suggests that crackdowns might be more effective if they were “limited in duration and rotated across different targets” (p. 1). Others argue that the “ideal focused crackdown” has the capacity to stabilize a given drug trafficking area, permitting local police and concerned community groups to handle post-crackdown maintenance efforts while new “crackdowns” are mounted at other market locations. (Kleiman and Smith, 1990). This approach was built into the TNT design, which calls for a 90-day TNT enforcement period in a target area, to be followed by a maintenance period handled by precinct personnel while TNT moves on to another target area, although TNT would return to previous target areas as street-level drug markets re-emerge there.

The design of TNT has roots in policy discussions, such as these, about the value of street-level drug enforcement. But in important respects — the type of drug targeted, the kinds of communities selected, the emphasis on inter-agency effort and community involvement — it reaches beyond the design and experience of most previous street-level drug enforcement campaigns.

### III. The TNT Approach to Street-Level Drug Enforcement

The TNT approach is based on the hypothesis that street-level enforcement can alleviate specific neighborhood problems in targeted areas — problems that block effective community organization and self-defense — whether or not it directly reduces the aggregate volume of drug consumption and sale. For this reason, the NYPD has been particularly eager to learn about the effects of TNT on community residents — on their levels of fear, their willingness to organize themselves to combat resurgence of the drug trade, the extent to which TNT makes them feel free to walk neighborhood streets, and their attitudes toward police.

To the extent that TNT represents a conscious acknowledgment of the need to marry police action with community resources and commitment, it can be seen as an outgrowth of the philosophies behind both community-oriented policing (McElroy, Cosgrove and Sadd, 1992; Kelling and Moore, 1988; NYPD, 1987; Moore and Kelling, 1983; Trojanowicz, 1983; Police Foundation, 1981) and problem-solving policing (Goldstein, 1990; Eck and Spelman, 1987; Spelman and Eck, 1987; Goldstein, 1979). The potential value (and the difficulty) of marrying traditional retail-level drug enforcement tactics to the problem-solving and community policing techniques that have emerged in recent years is nicely summarized by Kleiman:

Organizing police to increase enforcement response quickly as market activity grows, to maintain that increased effort long enough to ensure that the market is dead and not merely dormant, and then to move on to the next area of concentration poses a massive operational, organizational, and even political challenge for police management. . . .

Conditions other than the pressure of drug law enforcement can make a given area more or less vulnerable to retail dealing, and some of them can be deliberately manipulated. Abandoned buildings used for dealing can be boarded up or torn down. Overgrown vegetation in parks and vacant lots that provides cover for drug sales can be cut back. Streets can be rerouted and parking regulations tightened or more vigorously enforced to inconvenience drug buyers. Building owners who allow their properties to be used for dealing can be threatened with confiscation, and tenants who use their apartments or allow them to be used as dealing locations can be threatened with eviction. Drug-dealing premises can be closed down on the basis of a wide variety of legal powers wielded by local governments, including health, fire, and safety regulation and the authority to abate public nuisances. In publicly owned apartments, physical structures, the presence of doorkeepers, and tenant selection policies designed to exclude drug dealers can all make a difference.

The hostility of neighbors to dealing activity is also a potential resource. That hostility can be expressed quietly in telephone calls conveying information about dealing activity to a designated "hot line," or openly in demonstrations at known dealing locations and shouted warnings to potential drug buyers and sellers that their activities are under observation. Police can help elicit such activity, shape their own tactics to take advantage of the information provided, and where necessary protect community anti-drug activists against dealers.

For a wide variety of crimes, the police have found that conventional police work — focused on making prosecutable arrests — is not the most effective means of crime control. Using police resources to generate crime resistance within neighborhoods can produce much greater results. As a political issue, this idea of “community policing” is sometimes vulgarized into simply the restoration of foot patrols: the famous “cop on the beat.” Its actual strategies are much more complicated. Community policing involves not only active engagement of citizens in police decision-making processes but also tapping the resources of other public agencies to deal with crime-creating situations. (Kleiman, 1992: 144-145)

As later sections of this report reveal, the relationship between TNT and community policing is more evident in the underlying rationales for mounting the initiative than in its design or implementation. For example, TNT operates in areas where the Department's Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP) has already been established. CPOP officers are responsible for patrolling individual beats; initiating contacts with individual citizens, merchants and community groups; gathering information on perceived problems within their beats; and designing innovative responses to those problems. (See McElroy, Cosgrove and Sadd, 1992; Farrell, 1988; Weisburd and McElroy, 1988; Weisburd, McElroy and Hardyman, 1988). Yet TNT was not designed or implemented to take particular advantage of CPOP's presence, personnel, local knowledge or community contacts. And TNT's enforcement activities tend to be fairly uniform across areas, unlike community policing, in which specific strategies are expected to vary from area to area and from problem to problem. Nevertheless, TNT does share an underlying theoretical orientation with community policing — recognition that disorder and incivility are strongly linked to the fear of crime, and that escalating fear can reduce participation in community activities and lead to further erosion of the quality of life and greater vulnerability to street-level drug markets (Moore and Trojanowicz, 1988; Skogan, 1986; Wilson and Kelling, 1982).

In practice, TNT emphasizes traditional enforcement, through buy-and-bust undercover arrests. Although TNT's design suggests the need to identify and address wider community problems, TNT seems not to have mounted the kind of intensive effort necessary to promote interaction between the police and the community. Nevertheless, TNT is designed to improve the image of the police in the community by demonstrating the Department's responsiveness to the community's concern that something be done about blatant street drug markets, and TNT target area residents have been actively encouraged to participate in programs through which citizens pass on information about local drug markets to the police. (See Chapters Three and Five.)

But TNT's design — particularly the battery of inter-agency agreements to attack entrenched drug locations in TNT target areas — does draw directly on techniques now associated with problem-solving policing (Goldstein, 1990; Hartmann, 1988; Kelling and Moore, 1988; Moore and Trojanowicz, 1988):

The means [of problem-solving policing] . . . include diagnosing underlying problems which give rise to crime (rather than identifying offenders) and mobilizing the community and government agencies to act on problems (rather than arresting and prosecuting offenders). Reliance on these means naturally encourages geographic decentralization and dependence on resourceful generalist patrol officers, rather than on the centralized functional specialist units (Moore and Trojanowicz, 1988: 8).

By drawing upon the civil powers of a variety of licensing authorities to help it fight chronic street-level drug markets, TNT relies upon a central tool of the problem-solving approach. Yet, unlike the type of problem-solving policing described above, the locus of TNT's problem-solving initiatives is not with officers charged with addressing the full range of a community's concerns, but with a more centralized management team. Furthermore, TNT's heavy emphasis on arrest and prosecution — while drawing on the Department's historical strengths and generating the arrests that many in the community want — can be seen as a departure from the problem-solving approach.

But to the extent that TNT shares the underlying philosophies of these models of policing, it also shares their goals and an expectation that, by reducing the level of fear and disorder in a community, the cycle of escalating disorder and criminality might be reversed (Skogan, 1986; Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Although there is some evidence that efforts of this type can reduce the levels of fear within a community (Pate *et al.*, 1986; Trojanowicz, 1983; Police Foundation, 1981), there is little evidence yet — and some skepticism — about their prospects for reversing the cycle of decline by reducing fear (Reiss, 1983). The mechanisms through which such a reversal might occur are poorly understood:

[K]nowing that a neighborhood with a high level of disorder also has a high level of fear tells us very little about whether a program to reduce fear can do so by reducing disorder. We must begin to document 1) that a program can reduce levels of disorder and 2) that these changes in disorder are associated with changes in fear level (Rosenbaum, 1988:381).

Findings emerging from other research on drug crackdowns in urban settings, funded by the National Institute of Justice, point up the difficulties of mounting conventional drug crackdowns that are sufficiently intense to affect perceptions of disorder within target neighborhoods. (Worden and Bynum, forthcoming). But other recent research suggests that combining street-level drug enforcement campaigns with community-oriented policing techniques (door-to-door contacts, neighborhood substations, foot patrols) may have more impact on perceived quality of life, attitudes toward the police and levels of fear in target communities than conventional drug crackdowns alone (Uchida *et al.*, 1990 and 1992; also Hayeslip, 1991).

#### IV. The Vera Institute's Research on TNT

In the summer of 1989, with support from the National Institute of Justice, New York City, the Ford Foundation and the Daniel & Florence Guggenheim Foundation, the Vera Institute of Justice launched a two-year study of the neighborhood-level effects of TNT. Because TNT is grounded in the recognition that quality-of-life problems and drug trafficking overlap, Vera's research focuses on the extent to which a complex enforcement strategy such as TNT can reduce disorderly conditions, reduce the street crime that often springs up around drug marketplaces, reduce fear of crime among community residents, increase their use of community amenities (*e.g.*, streets and parks), improve attitudes toward police, and help the community "regain control" of its streets.

Of course, it was not inevitable that TNT would achieve these benefits, or achieve them to the same degree in each of the many different neighborhoods targeted since its inception in the spring of 1988. And it was possible that TNT would create new problems. The Vera research was designed to explore these possibilities as well.

For example, policy makers and researchers alike have voiced concern that street-level enforcement campaigns may merely displace drug traffic to adjacent areas. TNT officials have countered by arguing that, in some areas, the movement of drug sellers is inherently constrained by their dependence on established turf. This line of reasoning suggests that TNT might displace drug *buyers* to adjacent areas, but that concentrated police pressure on a curbside drug location ought to make purchasing more difficult — and less visible to and disruptive of the surrounding community. Displacement analyses are difficult to conduct. Researchers have considered various types of displacement — crime increasing in a contiguous area (Press, 1971); crime shifting to different times (Schnelle *et al.*, 1977); and increases in crimes of a different type (Chaiken *et al.*, 1974). Such analyses, however, rely upon crime-report data and are more appropriate to studying property crime than to documenting patterns of drug trafficking. The Vera researchers therefore approached this question by direct observation on the streets of TNT target areas, and by systematic interviewing of buyers and sellers about what they actually did when confronted by TNT.

Vera's research employed a longitudinal design in two Brooklyn South neighborhoods which were targets for TNT and, for comparison, in a third neighborhood whose drug market had won it designation as a likely future TNT site (Hillsman *et al.*, 1989).<sup>1</sup> By documenting conditions and drug markets in these communities during the 90 days *before* TNT entered a target area, information was

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<sup>1</sup> These neighborhoods are discussed in much further detail in Chapter Two. They are located in the 70th, 67th and 71st precincts in the Brooklyn South Police Borough. They are part of the areas in central Brooklyn known as Flatbush, East Flatbush and South Crown Heights. (*See* Appendix B.)



developed on the patterns of sale and use in the local drug markets, and on the associated community attitudes, behavior, and perceptions. These data provide a baseline for interpreting the data collected *during* and *after* TNT in each of the two study precincts where it was deployed during the research period.

The specific data collection techniques employed by the Vera researchers include: a multi-wave household survey of community residents; an analysis of statistical records; and a variety of qualitative research techniques, including street ethnography (focused on drug users and sellers), in-depth panel interviews (focused on community leaders, but including “ordinary residents”), and interviews with and observations of the police themselves. (See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of research methods.)

The household survey was designed to explore a number of significant issues about a target community's perceptions, attitudes and behavior before and after TNT deployment. The presence of TNT was expected to have direct effects on those who lived or worked in the target areas; in addition, because TNT was expected to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in the target area, it was also expected to have indirect effects on residents' perceptions, attitudes and behavior.

The researchers collected statistical record data to document community conditions, the volume and type of TNT activities, and the influence of TNT on ancillary criminal activity in the target areas. Vera's research interviews with TNT officers and other police officials, along with Vera's field observations of their activities in the target areas, were designed to provide a detailed picture of how TNT operated there, how it interacted with other units of the Department and other agencies of government, and how it worked with community groups. These interviews and observations also permit description of the impact TNT officers believed their activities had. Finally, by establishing a continuous presence on the streets of the study neighborhoods, Vera's field ethnographers sought to provide a rich record of observations and interviews about the nature of the drug markets and street conditions that characterize these neighborhoods, and how they changed over time.

## V. Content of this Report

This report presents the findings of Vera's research on the neighborhood-level effects of TNT. It attempts to replay for readers a variety of “voices” within the TNT target areas — ordinary residents, community leaders, individuals working in local businesses, street-level drug distributors and users, officers working in local precincts and TNT officers themselves. (Appendix A details the methods employed by the four components of this research — the household surveys, the panel interviews, the process analysis and the ethnography — and the implications for the research design of several important departures from the TNT implementation plan in Brooklyn South.)

Chapter Two examines the characteristics of the three research areas — demographics, levels of crime, physical and social characteristics, degrees of community organization, and structure of drug markets.

The review of TNT implementation and impact begins in Chapter Three, which examines the nature and context of the intervention itself and the perceptions of NYPD personnel (both inside and outside TNT); it also presents data about the criminal justice system outcomes of TNT arrests, and about the impact of TNT on the drug markets targeted and on ancillary crime and quality of life in target areas. Chapter Four explores the perceptions and adaptations of drug sellers and drug users on the streets of the two precincts where TNT was deployed during the research period and in the comparison precinct. Chapter Five reviews findings, from the household survey and panel interviews, about TNT's effects on residents' quality of life, levels of fear, use of public amenities, and view of the police. Finally, Chapter Six summarizes the findings, reviews the policy implications, and offers some recommendations.

## Chapter Two

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TNT RESEARCH AREAS AND THE DRUG MARKETS FOUND THERE

#### I. Introduction

This chapter presents detailed descriptions of the three research areas. The descriptions are constructed from several data sources: official data describing the demographic characteristics of residents and the levels of poverty, home ownership and crime in the study precincts; Vera ethnographers' observation of the physical characteristics of residential and commercial areas in the precincts, and of the drug markets in the TNT target areas selected for research; and data from panel interviews on the extent of community organization there.

#### A. Selecting the Research Areas

The NYPD assigned its first TNT, in March 1988, to a drug-plagued area (an ethnically mixed, low-rise residential and commercial neighborhood) in the borough of Queens. During the following year, the Department added TNT to three more patrol boroughs (the Bronx, Manhattan North and Brooklyn North). By the end of 1989, TNTs were operating throughout the city.

The Brooklyn South TNT was scheduled to begin operations in September 1989, just after Vera's research was to start. Because it was important that the research be carried out in a part of the city where TNT was relatively new (to provide at least three potential target areas in which TNT had not yet been implemented), Brooklyn South was a logical site for the work.

The selection of Brooklyn South was fortuitous for other reasons. First, this part of New York City is more like other urban jurisdictions in the United States than some of the other patrol boroughs, and results of a study of TNT in Brooklyn South could more likely be generalized to other urban settings than a similar study in either Manhattan or the South Bronx. Second, because the Vera Institute had previously conducted extensive field work in several Brooklyn South neighborhoods, research staff were familiar with the area and had contacts in the neighborhoods likely to be targeted for TNT.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vera's pilot research on New York's Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP) was carried out in the Brooklyn South's 72nd Precinct — Sunset Park (Farrell 1988; Weisburd and McElroy, 1988; Weisburd, McElroy and Hardyman, 1988; *see also*, McElroy *et. al*, 1992). The Institute conducted its five-year study of employment and crime patterns among Brooklyn youth in three nearby neighborhoods (Sullivan, 1989, 1984, 1983). Vera's senior ethnographer on the TNT research worked on the employment and crime study, and has conducted ethnographic research in Brooklyn South and other parts of Brooklyn for more than a decade.

The Department, which had identified a number of likely TNT target areas in Brooklyn South, indicated to Vera researchers the four that were likely to be selected first. Because the researchers needed a pre-TNT period in each research area, to collect baseline data, the Department's first TNT deployment in Brooklyn South (in the 72nd Precinct) was not selected for study.<sup>3</sup> So that the research design could be implemented, the NYPD agreed to select the next two Brooklyn South TNT sites from the remaining three precincts that the Department had previously identified as priority targets — the 67th, 70th and 71st Precincts. The first two precincts selected for TNT would become experimental sites; the third precinct, which would not be selected as a TNT site during the research period (although it was expected to become a TNT site thereafter), would serve as the comparison area.

According to Brooklyn South TNT commanders, the Patrol Borough Commander selected and prioritized precincts for TNT intervention, in consultation with the Narcotics Division and Precinct commanders, after reviewing the volume of narcotics arrests and complaints and of unusual incidents (e.g., drug-related shootings) in the precincts under consideration. But other, external events had some influence as well. For example, when the 70th Precinct was chosen as a site for a separate, state-funded anti-drug initiative, spearheaded by the Lieutenant Governor,<sup>4</sup> political leaders in the 70th Precinct argued effectively that bringing TNT to the area would enhance the Lieutenant Governor's initiative which, in turn, would enhance the impact of TNT.

Vera's researchers did not treat the entire TNT target areas in these precincts as research sites. Tighter boundaries were drawn, within the TNT target areas, to create areas for intensive study. This permitted research to be focused on small, specific areas of drug market activity, within the overall TNT target area (e.g., particular streets, intersections, sets of buildings, or other "hot spots"). A tighter focus was given to the research than was given to TNT itself, because the techniques being used to study TNT's neighborhood-level effects — household surveys, ethnography, and panel interviews with key informants — could fail to detect real

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, when Vera began its research on the Brooklyn South TNT Unit's operations, early in December 1989, the unit had been operating for three months in the 72nd Precinct (Sunset Park), a location known for an extensive heroin market catering to outside purchasers.

<sup>4</sup> The Anti-Drug Abuse Council's (ADAC) Community Demonstration Projects were established in four sites (three in New York City and one upstate) to test the efficacy of community-based anti-drug initiatives designed to coordinate law enforcement, treatment, education and other community organizations. Flatbush became the site of an ADAC demonstration project whose goals included "turning the community into active drug fighters and empowering them for a long-term leadership role, and proving that the state, the cities and the neighborhoods can work together effectively." (From a Memorandum dated December 11, 1989, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, State of New York.)

effects of the intervention if they were cast too broadly and not focused on areas where effects were most likely to be evident.

With the cooperation of precinct and TNT personnel, the researchers selected research areas by identifying concentrations of “hot spots,” within the TNT target areas, that were likely to be the focus of heavy police activity. One research area, embracing a sufficient number of households to support the community survey methodology, was selected in each target precinct. These research areas were: the northeast end of the 70th Precinct in Flatbush, the northwest side of the 67th Precinct in East Flatbush and the northwest corner of the 71st Precinct in South Crown Heights. (See Appendix B maps.) The 70th and 67th precincts provided the experimental areas, and the 71st Precinct provided the comparison area. Because of departures in these precincts from the original Brooklyn South TNT implementation plan, which are discussed below, the areas covered by Vera's ethnography and panel interviews were permitted to expand, outward from the initially delimited research areas, within the surrounding TNT target areas.

### **B. Notable Incidents in the Research Areas, During the Study Period**

Over the course of the study period, several incidents took place in the research precincts that were prominently featured in local and national media — a boycott of a Korean grocer by blacks; a crack-related torching of a Haitian teenager by a neighborhood bully; and drug-related shootings (known as “mushroom” shootings) that led to injury or death for innocent apartment-dwellers or passers-by who happened to be in the path of a bullet. These incidents, none of which were directly related to the TNT intervention, illuminate some important features of the research areas: the extent to which they were characterized by racial and ethnic conflict and the potential severity of drug-related crimes within them. Because community awareness of these events may have affected some of the factors examined by the TNT research (*e.g.*, fear of crime, awareness of increased police presence), the more dramatic incidents are described briefly below.

The Korean grocer incident stemmed from a confrontation on January 18, 1990, between a Haitian shopper, who was accused of shoplifting, and a store clerk who was alleged to have pushed and injured her. Shortly thereafter, organized protesters began picketing the grocery store, which is in the heart of the 70th Precinct's shopping district. The initial incident and the ensuing boycott of two Korean markets by local black residents and outside organizers (both Caribbeans and African Americans) were widely recognized as representing a serious division within this “multi-ethnic community” (*see, for example, “Groups: Boycott Split Community”, New York Newsday, June 29, 1990*).

Because the boycott was heated and because it went on for a long time, police officers from the Brooklyn South Task Force were assigned, in mid-January 1990, to monitor the area every day. This increased police presence in the research area not

only may have affected drug markets in the immediate vicinity of the boycott, but also may have increased awareness of police activity among residents throughout the area. The boycott and daily police presence did not end until March 1991.

A second incident in the target area in the 70th Precinct also received national attention. In March 1990, a 14-year-old Haitian boy, who lived in the research area, was stopped on his way to school by a local bully, held in a garage, ordered to smoke crack, and, when he refused, set on fire. The brutality of the incident, prominently featured in newspaper and television accounts, aroused considerable concern in the research area and elsewhere and may have affected levels of fear in the neighborhoods studied.

Finally, in the summer of 1990, a spate of "mushroom" shootings — some of which took place in research precincts and involved very young victims — was prominently featured in the media. These shootings were widely recognized as contributing to rising fear of crime throughout the city,<sup>5</sup> and may have influenced the levels of fear and the perceptions of the quality of life reported by research subjects in the study areas.

## II. Characteristics of the Study Precincts: Official Data Sources

The three precincts under study embrace a wide variety of residential neighborhoods, some of which are characterized by poverty and ethnic diversity and some of which are not. But the research areas within these precincts are far more homogeneous than the precincts of which each is a part.

In the research areas, most of the Caribbean and Central American nationalities are represented — speaking English, Spanish and Creole — along with a variety of Asian nationalities, African Americans and some whites.<sup>6</sup> Recent years have seen increasing spill-over, into some neighborhoods in the study precincts, of the poor from even more poverty-ridden neighborhoods in Brooklyn North. The

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, "Shot Kills Bystander: Gunfight Wounds 2 Rob Suspects," by Tom Raftery and Joel Siegel, *New York Daily News*, August 26, 1990 (an article about a shooting in the 70th Precinct). See also, "Mother of Seven Killed on Street by Stray Bullet", by Donatella Lorch, *The New York Times*, December 4, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> The New York City Department of Planning maintains data, by zip code, on neighborhoods where recent immigrants (from 1983 to 1987) have settled. Three zip codes (11203, 11225, and 11226) together cover the large majority of the TNT target areas in the 67th, 70th and 71st Precincts.

During the five-year period covered by the City Planning data, over 40,000 immigrants from a wide variety of nations (predominantly West Indian and Caribbean) settled in these three zip-code areas. The most frequent settlers in these areas were Haitian (11,741, 29%), Jamaican (9,994, 25%) and Guyanan (5,754, 14%). Immigrants from Trinidad, Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, Panama and the Dominican Republic were also relatively common in these areas.

frequency of undocumented aliens doubling up in apartments and houses in the study precincts is also notable.

### A. Population, Ethnicity, Income, and Home Ownership

The most detailed available source of data on all characteristics of residents in the three study precincts — the 1980 census — is clearly out of date, particularly for areas recognized (by City Planning officials in the Demography Unit) as magnets for immigrants throughout the 1980s. At the time of this writing, 1990 census data are available for racial distributions, but not for income or other socio-economic characteristics.

However, the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) has issued updated estimates of population and housing characteristics in New York City, based on a 1987 survey of households conducted by that agency in conjunction with the U.S. Bureau of the Census (Stegman, 1987). Despite its focus on housing, the HPD report provides useful information on income levels, by areas that, in Brooklyn at least, correspond closely to precincts and community board boundaries.<sup>7</sup>

According to 1990 Census data, the 67th Precinct, with an estimated population of 161,261, had the largest population of the three precincts studied (the 70th Precinct had 159,852; the 71st Precinct had 110,715). It also had the largest concentration of black residents (88%, compared to 78% in the 71st Precinct and 40% in the 70th).<sup>8</sup> The 70th Precinct's racial make-up differs from the other study precincts because a concentration of white residents in the southern end of the precinct makes 38% of the precinct's population white, compared to 4% white in the 67th Precinct and 11% white in the 71st.

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<sup>7</sup> A comparison between the City Planning Department data on immigrant settlement patterns and HPD-Census data on the previous residence of recent movers points to some discrepancy between these data sources. According to HPD-Census data, less than one percent of "recent movers" were from foreign countries in the 67th Precinct, an area which City Planning data show to have been home to over 14,000 new immigrants between 1983 and 1987. Although for Flatbush and Crown Heights, HPD/Census data show 7% and 8% of recent movers to be from foreign countries, these percentages are far below those of other areas in the city (Greenwich Village, 12%; Riverdale, 17%) which are not recognized as havens for recent immigrant settlement.

This discrepancy supports repeated allegations of a census undercount, particularly of undocumented foreign residents, such as those who have settled heavily in the three study areas over the past decade. This phenomenon has also been reported to Vera field workers conducting research among community residents.

<sup>8</sup> According to the HPD report, the proportion of residents who are black is higher only in central Harlem (92%) and in North Crown Heights/Prospect Heights (90%). The 67th Precinct (East Flatbush) ranks third (88%), followed by Bedford Stuyvesant (87%) and the 71st Precinct in South Crown Heights (78%).

Of the three study precincts, the 71st appears from official statistics to be the most economically disadvantaged. It has the highest proportion of resident households supported by public assistance (11%, compared to 5% in the 67th Precinct and 6% in the 70th). The 71st Precinct also has the highest proportion of households defined as below the poverty level (26%, compared to 10.5% in the 67th Precinct and 18% in the 70th). The reported median income was higher in the 67th Precinct (\$21,000) than in the 71st Precinct (\$18,300) or in the 70th (\$17,500).

According to the HPD data, the three precincts also differ somewhat in the proportion of households occupied by owners rather than renters — 14% of households in the 70th Precinct were owner-occupied, 22% in the 71st and 28% in the 67th. The quality of rental housing was rated as substantially poorer in the 71st Precinct (75% of rental units having deficiencies in maintenance and equipment — among the worst in the city) than in the 70th and 67th precincts (51% and 53% respectively).<sup>9</sup>

Within these three precincts, the relatively small TNT research areas generally are poorer, have a higher proportion of black residents and are more likely to be home to new immigrants and renters than are other parts of these precincts.<sup>10</sup> A wave of Caribbean immigrants between 1980 and 1990 raised the proportion of

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<sup>9</sup> According to this HPD report, only Bushwick in Brooklyn North and Mott Haven/Hunts Point in the Bronx had poorer-quality rental housing than did the 71st Precinct.

<sup>10</sup> Because no more recent data set is disaggregated to the level of census tracts (except in the case of racial distributions), comparisons of the three research areas with the rest of their respective precincts are based on 1980 census data. Available 1980 census tract information does not match the research areas precisely. Relevant census tracts, encompassing the research areas, are somewhat larger.

Nevertheless, the data clearly indicate that the census tracts in the research neighborhoods were generally among the least affluent in each precinct. In these census tracts, greater proportions of families were classified as below poverty (28% in the 67th; 29% in the 70th; 34% in the 71st) than in the rest of their respective precincts (19%, 18% and 22%). The median income in the census tracts roughly corresponding to the research areas also tended to be lower than the median income reported for each precinct as a whole (with the exception of two census tracts in the 71st Precinct). In the 70th and 67th precincts, census tracts corresponding to the research areas also had a smaller proportion of resident-owners (1.5% and 8%, respectively) than in the rest of the precinct (19% and 30%, respectively); the research area in the 71st Precinct did not differ from the rest of the precinct in this regard.

1990 Census data show that the proportion of black residents in two of the research areas was greater than in the rest of their respective precincts. Although this difference was relatively small in the 71st Precinct (research area, 85%; rest of the precinct, 76%), the research area in the 70th Precinct housed a substantially greater proportion of black residents in 1990 (68%) than did the rest of the precinct (33%). These data reflect the contrast between the northern end of the 70th Precinct, home to the large majority of recent immigrants, and the more affluent, and whiter, southern end of the precinct. In the 67th Precinct, however, the proportion of residents living in the research area who are black was slightly smaller than in the rest of the precinct (research area, 83%; rest of the precinct, 89%).



residents who are black from 80% to 88% in the 67th Precinct and from 33% to 40% in the 70th Precinct. In the 70th Precinct, these recent settlers were heavily concentrated in the research area increasing the contrast between the northern and southern sections of the precinct.

### **B. Crime, Drug Crime and “Dangerousness”<sup>11</sup>**

The patrol borough of Brooklyn South includes 13 precincts, stretching from Coney Island in the south (the 60th) to Sunset Park (the 72nd) in the northwest. In 1989, there was a substantially lower volume of crimes against the person in Brooklyn South than in neighboring Brooklyn North. Whereas Brooklyn North ranked first, among all patrol boroughs in the city, in the number of crime complaints involving robbery, rape and assault, and ranked second in homicide complaints, Brooklyn South ranked fifth in each (NYPD, 1989). These differences are notable, given the fact that the population of Brooklyn South is roughly twice that of Brooklyn North. But in Brooklyn South, the volume of crimes against property was substantially greater than in Brooklyn North. Brooklyn South ranked second to Queens in both burglary and grand larceny auto complaints and fourth (following Manhattan South, Queens and Manhattan North) in grand larceny complaints. In contrast, Brooklyn North ranked sixth in grand larceny complaints and fourth in burglary and grand larceny auto complaints.

The pattern of criminal complaints in Brooklyn South as a whole parallels those of the relatively affluent New York City patrol boroughs — Queens and Manhattan South. The lower volume of crimes against the person — the kinds of crimes the public fears the most — and crimes against property in Brooklyn South stands in marked contrast to the substantially more troubled patrol boroughs of the Bronx and Brooklyn North.

Yet within Brooklyn South itself, the three precincts selected for TNT research present relatively high concentrations of certain important types of crime. These precincts have the highest volume of robbery, rape, homicide and felony assault complaints among precincts in the patrol borough.<sup>12</sup> The volume of “crimes against the person” complaints was substantial in all three of the study precincts. The

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<sup>11</sup> Researchers collected detailed statistics about crime complaints and arrests in the study precincts for 1989 and 1990 from the NYPD's annual *Statistical Reports*.

<sup>12</sup> Within Brooklyn South, the 70th Precinct ranked first in the number of robbery, rape, burglary and grand larceny complaints in 1989; it ranked second in the number of assault complaints; and third in the number of homicide and grand larceny auto complaints. The 67th Precinct ranked first in the number of homicide and assault complaints, second in the number of robbery and burglary complaints and third in rape complaints. The 71st Precinct, which served as the comparison area for the research, ranked second in the number of homicide and rape complaints and third in the number of robbery and assault complaints.

volume of “crimes against property” — complaints that are often associated with areas in which valuable property is concentrated — was most notable in the 70th Precinct, the southern half of which presented the greatest concentration of relative affluence in any of the study precincts.

Ranking the precincts within the patrol borough by the *volume* of crimes obscures the relative *incidence* of them. Because the 71st Precinct has substantially fewer residents (roughly 110,000) than either the 70th Precinct or the 67th (which have roughly 160,000 each), it ranks ahead of the other two precincts in “crimes against the person” per 1,000 residents, making it marginally more “dangerous” (although it presents a somewhat smaller volume of crime complaints). The 67th Precinct, which is physically larger than the 71st, has a higher overall volume of crimes against the person, but fewer crimes per resident. Despite the differences, crime complaint data suggest that the three study precincts are more similar to each other than they are to any of the other precincts in Brooklyn South, and more “dangerous” as well.

Data from the Brooklyn South Narcotics District for 1989 help establish the relative intensity of narcotics activity in the 13 precincts. The 72nd Precinct ranked first in the number of narcotics complaints (and it was the first precinct in the borough command selected for TNT deployment); it was followed by the 70th Precinct (the second precinct selected for TNT, providing the first experimental area for this research), the 71st Precinct (the comparison area for this research), the 67th Precinct (the third TNT precinct, providing the second experimental area for this research) and the 60th Precinct (the fourth Brooklyn South precinct selected for TNT deployment).

A review of the number of narcotics arrests made in 1989 by Narcotics District personnel (i.e., members of the Narcotics Division who were not involved in TNT) helps explain why the 67th and the 60th Precinct were selected for TNT's intervention before the 71st Precinct, which ranked higher in volume of complaints. In terms of narcotics *arrests*, the top five Brooklyn South precincts in 1989 ranked as follows: the 72nd, the 70th, the 78th, the 60th and the 67th. The 71st Precinct was eighth, in terms of narcotics arrests, although it ranked higher as a source of narcotics complaints.

The official data suggest that the TNT study precincts and the research areas within them are relatively dangerous places with active drug markets. A timely *New York Magazine* article (Greenberg, September 3, 1990), ranked the relative dangerousness of all 75 precincts in the city based on a “danger-index ratio” which calculated the frequency of crimes against the person, per resident, but weighted murder and rape more heavily than robbery and assault. According to this measure, South Crown Heights (the 71st Precinct) was the 20th most dangerous in the city; East Flatbush (the 67th Precinct) was the 28th most dangerous and Flatbush (the 70th Precinct) was the 30th. All other precincts in Brooklyn South were rated as

substantially less dangerous than the three study precincts (ranging from Sunset Park, the 72nd Precinct, which was ranked 44th, to Borough Park, the 66th Precinct, which was ranked 68th).

### III. Characteristics of the Research Areas: Direct Observation

Systematic observation of the three study precincts in Brooklyn South confirmed the picture of extreme ethnic and economic heterogeneity of the area that emerged from official data sources. The housing, commercial activity and the drug market structures in the three study precincts are described below, as they appear from the direct observations of Vera's ethnographic team.

#### A. The Flatbush Research Area

The 70th Precinct contains the widest variety of housing found anywhere in Brooklyn. A large tract of exquisite private homes, many of Victorian vintage, owned by middle-class New Yorkers, lies on the western edge of the precinct. These houses are set back from the street and typically have well manicured lawns, huge shading elms or sycamores, garages, and elaborate security systems, including private security patrols. The streets here are almost always quiet. Strangers are quickly noticed by residents, who are vigilant in response to property crime in the area.

The subway bisects the 70th Precinct, providing a dramatic demarcation between blocks lined with costly houses and those to the east which contain large apartment buildings. While many apartments remain rentals, a number of buildings in this area have been converted to co-operatives and condominiums. Most of the apartment complexes are mid-rise buildings of six stories. Unlike some other relatively poor parts of Brooklyn, there are no public housing projects and few city-owned buildings.

Beginning in the early 1980s, many of the apartment buildings underwent renovation through loan programs sponsored by large banks. Observations and interviews suggest, however, that the renovations tended to deteriorate within several years of completion; some respondents claim the work was either cosmetic or done with insubstantial materials. Clearly the decay was accelerated by the overcrowding of some buildings and the sub-dividing of apartments as city migrants from other deteriorating Brooklyn neighborhoods and Caribbean immigrants continued to arrive. Whatever the reasons, many of these apartment buildings are in need of doors, elevators, fixtures, plumbing and general repair.

Residents and community leaders report that, in many instances, the renovation process of the 1980s wrested control of these buildings from their original private landlords and placed them in the hands of bank-financed corporations. According to long-time community members, this changed the nature

of the economic relationship between the renters and their landlords. The demands for timely payment of rent became more impersonal as landlord-tenant relationships became more formal and rigid. This pressure is likely to have contributed to the displacement of some residents to poorer neighborhoods, especially those on marginal or fixed incomes and public assistance who could no longer "cut a deal" with the landlord to pay when they had the money.

The vacancies created by the movement of poorer tenants from apartment buildings in the 70th Precinct during this period was accompanied by two parallel and related trends. First was a dramatic turnover in population: A high level of immigration, especially from West Indies and other Caribbean areas, is obvious to anyone living in or observing these neighborhoods over the last decade. The quickening turnover of apartment residents discouraged the formation of stable tenant or block associations, a phenomenon discussed in more detail below. Most apartment buildings do not have tenant associations; those that do exist tend to serve primarily ceremonial functions (appearing at Community Board meetings, for example) but have little influence in the building or in the neighborhood. The second trend was the conversion of rental units to condominiums. This process continued to cause conflict in the neighborhood into the research period, as evidenced by the saliency of "gentrification" issues in the questions and comments of Flatbush residents at a November 1989 meeting, where the new Anti-Drug Abuse Council's Community Demonstration Project was being introduced.

By 1988, many buildings on Ocean Avenue (a main thoroughfare lined by large apartment buildings) sported red, white and blue bunting announcing their conversion from rental to condominium. Although this process was meant, at least in part, to help stabilize the neighborhood, it reduced the pool of available rental housing in the area. As the city's real estate market began to stagnate in the late 1980s, many of these buildings had empty apartments while families elsewhere in Flatbush, including many of the new immigrants, doubled- and tripled-up to escape homelessness.

Many of the remaining rental buildings experiencing this doubling- and tripling-up of families began to deteriorate. As street-level drug markets expanded, these buildings had the most trouble with lobbies and stairwells becoming havens for crack sellers and consumers. While some abandoned buildings in the area harbored these activities, most had been bought and boarded up, making them inaccessible to the drug traffickers and the homeless. As a result, much of the street-level drug use and distribution in the precinct, and the quality of life problems associated with such markets, were found in and around the occupied residential buildings.

The 70th Precinct is the most commercially well-developed of the three study precincts. Flatbush Avenue is lined with large and small storefronts, including branches of Macy's and Woolworth's. Some of the smaller but established stores

along Flatbush Avenue have been owned by the same people for decades, but there are many new owners as well. The newer stores sell furniture, appliances, household items, and the like, and are owned by recent immigrants from Israel, Syria, Lebanon, states of the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe who work, but do not live, in the area. As elsewhere in the city, the produce markets are dominated by Koreans. While the conflicts between the Korean owners of the produce markets located on Church Avenue in the 70th Precinct and members of other ethnic groups in the area have been well documented in the press, the produce markets in this precinct are generally noted for the wide variety of foods they have available, including many West Indian fruits and vegetables which are difficult to find elsewhere.

The variety of fast food restaurants along the 70th Precinct's main commercial avenues (Flatbush and Church) also reflects the area's ethnic diversity. Along with the usual assortment of fast food chains, a wide assortment of restaurants cater to specific tastes and nationalities, including "roti shops" which cater to Trinidadians or Guyanese, and fast food restaurants featuring Jamaican "Jerk Chicken." Some area residents reported that drug distribution takes place in these establishments and that they are nothing more than a cover for drug dealing. Vera staff observation and interviews revealed that local drug sellers spend a considerable amount of time inside a few of these restaurants, but that most of these establishments are not directly used for drug trafficking.

Before crack appeared in the mid-1980s, marijuana was the primary drug sold in this neighborhood, and most of the traffic occurred in the commercial areas. For years, there was a multitude of thinly disguised shops (known locally as "gates") which did a booming business selling small amounts of marijuana. The failure to disguise the marijuana trade inside these shops made them targets for repeated visits from local police. By the early 1980s, many of the owners of these retail outlets began to invest in legitimate covers for their operations — clothing boutiques, African art stores, music shops, bodegas. Since then, many stores which sell marijuana (but not cocaine or crack) have been able to conduct business successfully with a minimum of trouble from community residents or the police. (Commercial marijuana locations are found in all three research sites and have generally been unaffected by the changes in the street-level drug markets during the last several years.)

Although several stores along commercial strips sold crack from behind the counter, for the most part crack distribution took place in the residential sections of the 70th Precinct — a pattern found in each of the three study precincts. But in each precinct, although there was some curbside crack distribution in commercial sections, it was unusual because curbside distribution was generally made more difficult there. For example, merchants along Flatbush Avenue hired a private security firm to patrol the sidewalks in front of their stores to discourage precisely this type of

activity. As a result, most of the curbside distribution near Flatbush Avenue took place on residential side streets.

While drug distribution in or around schoolyards has recently commanded a great deal of media attention, there seemed to be very little drug distribution or consumption at these locations in the three study precincts. And although the 70th Precinct abuts Prospect Park, there appeared to be very little drug distribution taking place inside or along the perimeter of the park. Some drug use could be observed, however, on benches outside the park, especially near the Parade Grounds' numerous playing fields.

### **B. The East Flatbush Research Area**

The second research area, in the 67th Precinct, lies directly to the east of the 70th Precinct. It was selected from the full 67th Precinct TNT target zone, because such a concentration of drug "hot spots" had been identified there by precinct and TNT personnel. The research area has large apartment buildings (similar to those in the 70th Precinct) along main thoroughfares in its western sections. Many of these large buildings have gone through the same processes of renovation and conversion found in the 70th Precinct and have experienced the same problems. Patterns of drug distribution and use are very similar to those found in the 70th Precinct.

Other areas in the 67th Precinct are, however, quite different. At the southern end of the precinct stands a unique private apartment complex, covering several blocks, whose apartments are rented primarily to working class minority residents, many of whom are of West Indian origin. As late as 1970, the residents of this complex were almost exclusively white, but by the early 1970s, they were almost entirely black. Many residents are working-class people still, but drug distribution and consumption on the premises plague the entire complex. The buildings are six-story structures with elevators; each block is bounded by an iron fence so that access is potentially controlled by a private security force. While the fence was originally erected to protect residents from outsiders, in recent years it has also served to protect drug distributors who work within the fences. Since access is restricted to only a few gates, distributors can see the police long before they come near. Security officers have been confounded by their inability, and that of the NYPD, to have substantial impact on drug distribution and use within the complex.

The central part of the 67th Precinct, which partially overlaps the research area, is for the most part composed of well-kept one- and two-family houses owned by members of various minority groups, many of whom are of West Indian origin including English, Spanish, French and Creole speaking people. Most of these structures are two-story brick buildings. This portion of the 67th Precinct is quite stable. Many residents have occupied their homes for 20 or 30 years and claim to know everyone on their relatively small blocks. Yet there is surprisingly little formal organization among neighborhood residents. As discussed below, some

block associations are active, but, for the most part, informal relations are the norm. While some residents use the same illegal drugs that are blatantly trafficked in other sectors of the precinct, they are neither sold nor used in as visible a manner in this residential area as in other areas of the precinct.<sup>13</sup>

Nostrand Avenue is the main commercial strip in the core research area of the 67th Precinct. While there was some curbside crack distribution along the Avenue (as there was along Flatbush Avenue in the 70th Precinct), most drug trafficking took place on the side streets, except for several storefronts on Nostrand selling marijuana.

The two other main commercial strips in the 67th Precinct, outside the initially defined research area, are Utica Avenue and Church Avenue, running perpendicular to each other. Small food stores, clothing boutiques, hairdressers and hardware stores comprise the majority of businesses on both, though Utica, south of Church, is also known for its many auto repair shops. These avenues are the site of substantial street-level drug distribution. Many sellers work in front of busy places such as the local OTB (Off-Track Betting), pizza shops and music stores, where they can reach customers while avoiding easy detection by the police.

The 67th Precinct is not well-served by public transportation. The only subway line through the area runs under Nostrand Avenue, on the western edge of the precinct. The lack of easy access to Manhattan-bound subways has given rise to a thriving gypsy cab business along Church Avenue. Many are driven by Haitians or newly arrived English-speaking West Indians. For a dollar or a subway token, riders can take one of these waiting livery cars rather than wait for a bus to the nearest subway line. As a result, Church Avenue is always crowded with jitneys, and the crush of traffic makes it and the surrounding streets extremely difficult to navigate during peak hours.

### **C. South Crown Heights — The Comparison Research Area**

The 71st Precinct lies directly north of East Flatbush and northeast of the 70th Precinct. The southern portion of the precinct contains the same type of one- and two-family houses that are found in the center of the 67th Precinct. Some blocks are lined with fine limestone houses inhabited by middle-class, often minority, professionals. This portion of the precinct is very stable, with little turnover in population, relatively low crime, and an absence of visible drug activity on the

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<sup>13</sup> Though there is lack of formal organization among the homeowners in this central section of the 67th Precinct, they do exert control over their neighborhood. Indeed, many homeowners are likely to go directly to the home of the offending party, when a problem arises, to try and solve it. As a result, the drug trafficking and use that occurs here takes place either discreetly indoors or near commercial zones where homeowners are less likely to notice these activities and attribute them to specific neighbors on their block.

streets. The southeastern section of the precinct houses several large hospitals, including Kings County, Downstate Medical Center, and Brooklyn State Hospital.

North of Empire Boulevard, the 71st Precinct changes significantly. The Western end of the precinct is bounded by the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. Adjacent to the Botanical Gardens is the Ebbetts Field Houses, a 25-story housing complex with about 5,000 residents.

The western portion of the 71st Precinct is unique because of the abundance of schools in the immediate vicinity, including Prospect Heights High School and Medgar Evers College. The streets of this section of the precinct are very busy at times, obscuring on-going street-level drug distribution. Yet the major, large-scale drug markets serving this area are not in the precinct itself, but are across Eastern Parkway in Bedford Stuyvesant.

The northeastern part of the 71st Precinct contains some of the finest houses in Brooklyn, rivaling the Victorian homes in the western part of Flatbush. While many residents are Hasidic Jews, others are upwardly mobile West Indians who have purchased houses here. This area is also home to the international headquarters of the Lubavitch Hassidim. Several blocks surrounding their headquarters are almost entirely occupied by members of the sect. They have their own security patrol and are considered by other members of neighboring communities to be confrontational toward strangers.

The precinct has very little commercial activity. Even near the Ebbetts Field Houses, there is only one supermarket to serve a large residential population. There are some stores on Nostrand Avenue; generally speaking, however, many people who live here do their shopping elsewhere.

There is much less curbside distribution of crack in the 71st Precinct than in the other two study precincts. Most street-level distribution falls within the research area — near large housing projects in the western end of the precinct. Because many crack users in this area buy their drugs in Bedford Stuyvesant, the potential for the expansion of drug markets in the 71st Precinct appears limited. Yet, there seemed to be more locations for indoor distribution and consumption in the 71st Precinct than in the other study precincts. For example, on one block in the 71st Precinct research area, where several groups of curbside distributors were identified, Vera's ethnographic team identified at least four "freakhouses" where people would go to smoke crack and engage in sex with multiple partners. Several of these "freakhouses" were served by distributors who maintained adjacent apartments.

#### **D. Crack Markets in the Three Research Areas: A Brief Description**

The primary target of TNT has been the street-level distribution of crack and, to a lesser degree, heroin and marijuana. In addition to street-level drug markets, a great deal of drug distribution and consumption in target areas takes place off the



street. This section briefly describes the variety of drug markets found in the research areas of the 70th, 71st, and 67th Precincts. To construct an overview of these markets, the ethnographic team developed contacts with street-level distributors and users, and their associates (some of whom operated in other locations).

Each of the markets described below is associated with a different pattern of distribution and consumption. Some participants were involved in more than one type of distribution. Some of the patterns described below did change, as law enforcement activity intensified during TNT's initial 90-day period.

The most prevalent and widespread form of distribution in all three precincts, but especially the 70th, is the **Freelance Nickels (five dollar vials) Market**. Freelance nickels distributors are prototypical street-level sellers. They work on their own (although they occasionally have some form of assistance). They are not usually tied to a territorial base (although they sometimes become possessive of their working turf). They are almost always consumers of the drugs they sell, are almost always short of capital to purchase larger quantities of drugs and, thus, are often unreliable with respect to the quality and availability of their supply. They must sell the drug to consumers quickly, before they consume it themselves and, therefore, they hawk their product aggressively. They are frequently homeless and without significant support networks of family or friends, are frequently either the victims or perpetrators of the violence associated with drug distribution, and are frequently involved in other crimes to acquire money (*e.g.*, zooming [selling fake drugs], robbery, theft).

Freelance nickels markets are distinguished by the rapid pace both of distribution and of consumption. These markets cater to users whose consumption patterns are unregulated and frenzied. These users typically buy only one or two vials in each transaction, and must make repeated visits to the curbside distributors. Such consumers are frequently intent "on a mission" to get high. Many of them have been socialized into consumption patterns where small purchases are the norm: fast food, "loosies" (single cigarettes sold for a dime) and the 40-ounce Midnight Dragon Malt Liquor.

Another form of street-level distribution found in all three precincts is the **Business Nickels Market**. Business nickels distributors differ from freelancers in several significant respects: (1) They represent an established organization of distributors who have well-defined roles (*e.g.*, runner, steerer, lookout, seller, security guard, and so on); (2) they tend to be territorially based, frequently combining street-level distribution with some form of indoor operation; (3) many either do not consume their own product or consume it in circumscribed ways

(e.g., smoking “wulla” joints<sup>14</sup> or going to other neighborhoods to smoke secretly); (4) their supplies are bought in bulk, ensuring consistency in both supply and quality; (5) they are less aggressive in pushing the product to consumers; and (6) they frequently have other support networks to insulate themselves from the dangers of street-level distribution.

Although business nickels markets also tend to rely on fast-paced transactions and may even have freelance nickels markets operating alongside them, they are less frenetic than typical freelance markets and are tolerated more easily in these neighborhoods. While business nickels markets often cater to many of the same consumers who frequent freelance nickels markets, they also build distinct clienteles of their own. Generally, these consumers are not compulsive users and they prefer to avoid the risks of doing business with freelancers. In this sense, business nickels markets represent a more regulated form of distribution and consumption than freelance markets.

In addition to the two types of nickels markets, Vera's ethnographic team identified as distinctly different types of local crack and cocaine markets a **Dimes/Twenties Market** (ten and/or twenty dollar denominations sold in capsules or small plastic bags); a **Powder Market** (various small denominations of cocaine powder sold to those who wished to snort, cook up freebase, or cook to inject); an **Eight-ball Market** (3.5 grams of crack or powder cocaine); a **Big Eight-ball Market** (an eighth of a kilo of crack or powder cocaine); and a **Kilo Market**.

The **Dimes Market** and **Twenties Market** represent a much more regulated form of distribution and consumption than nickels markets. Although dimes and twenties (sometimes known as “jumbos”) are often sold by street-level distributors, these denominations are more frequently sold by indoor distributors with relatively stable locations (primarily storefronts and apartments) and established, stable clientele. The one major exception (discussed later) is found in a private apartment complex in the 67th Precinct, where street-level distributors sell dimes of crack exclusively.

**Powder Markets** were found in all three precincts and cater to a fairly exclusive, but diverse clientele. The primary consumers of powder cocaine in these precincts had been initiated into freebasing before the crack era. Many of them enjoyed the various rituals of “cooking-up” the freebase themselves or did not trust the purity of crack sold on the street. (They often claimed that it was laced with impure chemicals, thought to have undesirable side effects, or was diluted with inert chemicals that made the crack less powerful than home-cooked freebase.) Other consumers of cocaine powder included snorters and cocaine injectors. Snorters, who constituted a small minority of

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<sup>14</sup> Crack mixed into a marijuana cigarette.

users in both precincts, were relatively likely to be working people; powder distributors who catered to them tended to operate during late afternoon and early evening hours, often near subway stations and bus and taxi routes.

**Eight-ball Markets** nearly always operated in indoor locations, although one eight-ball distributor worked curbside occasionally. There were actually two types of eight-ball markets identified: (1) those that catered to binge users and controlled users, who typically made a single visit to the distributor on any given day, and (2) those that served as the immediate suppliers to street-level distributors. Generally, these two types of eight-ball operation did not intersect. Distributors who catered to a more controlled-use clientele avoided contact with street-level distributors who were likely to draw unwanted attention by making repeated nightly visits to resupply themselves. Beyond this neat dichotomy of the eight-ball market, the ethnographic team observed at least one instance of the dichotomy collapsing as a result, in part, of TNT operations. One 70th Precinct store initially sold relatively large amounts (at least \$300) of crack or cocaine only to loyal, established customers. Fluctuation in the wholesale price of cocaine during the research period, combined with the unsettling presence of TNT, drove many street-level distributors in the 70th Precinct to look for new sources of supply. One street-level distributor learned about this store from a friend of a relative at an apartment where many former street-level consumers had congregated to smoke crack and avoid TNT. Following that session, introductions were made at the store. After a few visits, he became a regular customer. This blurring of the boundaries between distinct markets seems to have been, in part, a response to pressures brought on by the presence of TNT.

Even though the ethnographic team detected the existence of **Big Eight-ball** and **Kilo Markets** in all three precincts, they were extremely difficult to penetrate. It would have required much more groundwork, over a longer research period, to gain access to these circles. Since the target of the TNT was principally street-level drug distribution, the ethnographic team made little effort to collect data on these markets.

#### IV. Community Organization in the Research Areas

Organized community support can properly be viewed as an important component of TNT itself — the Police Department did not launch the program with the expectation that TNT *alone* could rid a community of heavy street-level drug dealing and the ancillary crime it generates. Rather, the Department hoped that TNT could reduce the level of fear and restore a target community's own capacity to preserve order and quality of life, so that gains from TNT's 90-day enforcement period could be preserved. Therefore, one of the key questions asked of panel interview respondents concerned the level of community organization in the three research areas.

Data from the in-depth panel interviews indicate that the three areas differed in their levels of formal community organization (neighborhood, block and tenant associations).<sup>15</sup> Respondents in the 71st Precinct research area, for example, were able to identify many more *active* community groups than those in the 70th and 67th precincts.<sup>16</sup> In the 71st Precinct TNT target area, nearly every block had an active block association.

The greater concentration of community organizations (including a neighborhood association) in the 71st Precinct research area may have been related to the greater proportion of stable homeowners there.<sup>17</sup> Community organizers in the 70th and 67th precincts argued that renters, as a group, were particularly difficult to organize because, according to one long-time community organizer, “they are most often transient and thus feel they have limited interests in the condition of the community.” And, as respondents in all three research areas argued, apartment dwellers are primarily concerned with issues affecting their buildings (such as timely repairs, cleanliness, security, and rent hikes) and rarely participate in block associations; while, in contrast, homeowners tend to focus their attention on broader community issues.

Unfortunately, according to the majority of respondents, most block associations had very few regularly attending members. Respondents who were active in block or tenant associations in the research areas said that only 10 to 15 members could be counted on to attend monthly meetings. For example, one respondent from the 71st Precinct, a member of a block association and an officer on the neighborhood association board, said:

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<sup>15</sup> There is apparently no *reliable* source of official data on the number of tenant and block associations in the TNT target areas. Requests for lists for such organizations, directed to community boards and local elected officials in the study precincts, were either denied or went unacknowledged. One indication of the lack of organization in the research areas was provided by lists of community organizations obtained from precinct CPOP officers. These lists proved to be of little help because few of the listed associations were located in the research areas.

<sup>16</sup> “Active” refers to neighborhood, block and tenant associations that meet on a regularly scheduled basis throughout the year and that have an identifiable leadership.

<sup>17</sup> A large portion of the 71st Precinct research area, unlike the 67th and 70th Precinct areas, is served by a neighborhood association that has at least four public meetings per year. According to an executive at the neighborhood association, the organization currently has 500 members. “That’s not a great number,” she said, “because we have over 50,000 residents.”

This neighborhood association provided researchers with a list of block associations in the 71st Precinct research site that proved useful for purposes of both the panel interview and household survey phases of the study. It was the only reliable list of organizations obtained by Vera researchers in any of study precincts. Also, Vera researchers made five presentations to block associations, church groups and a neighborhood association, which resulted in increased response rates for the household survey and panel interviews.

Block associations, tenant associations, I would say that there are 25 in the [research] area. I'm including the church groups in that and the merchants association. These groups exist, but I'm saying that maybe five or ten people would show up for a meeting for each of those groups. On our block there is a group of about 12 people who have met regularly since 1970. . . . Now, there are 60 houses on this block and there are at least five people in each house, so there are at least 300 people on the block. Out of those, 12 people will get out and do something.

Although the 71st Precinct had a relatively large number of block and tenant associations, respondents made it clear that these associations rarely, if ever, interacted to work toward solutions to *community* problems such as drug trafficking. Just one block south of the 71st Precinct research area, for example, a neighborhood association flourishes in an historic district, composed almost exclusively of one-family limestone townhouses, that is home to many black and white middle-class professionals. There is also a neighborhood association in the research area (just across the street), which is not part of the historic area and in which most residents are middle- or working-class black families, many of whom rent rooms or floors of their more modest homes to make ends meet. Interviews with respondents revealed that the two groups believed that they had few, if any, interests in common. Residents in the research area argued that crime was not as big a threat in the more "exclusive" area because residents there paid \$225-\$250 per year to hire private security police to patrol their neighborhood. Respondents from both areas said the two neighborhood groups had never come together to discuss common problems. This situation is certainly not unique to the research areas but it does point to a lack of a concerted *community* problem-solving effort. One resident from the northern end of the 71st Precinct research site, a block association president for over a decade, reflected a consensus when he said:

I think that people in this community are concerned — to a point. If crime is occurring on their block then they are very concerned. If it is not on their block they say, "Well, I don't have to deal with that. It's not here, it's two blocks down." Then they will not bother with it. It's a non-issue. So people are concerned when they are directly affected. . . . I tried years ago to get the various block associations together to discuss this very issue of partnerships, but it didn't work. There was a lack of interest.

In contrast, respondents in the 70th Precinct were able to identify only one active tenant association in the research area — it covered five separate buildings in and near the research area.<sup>18</sup> In addition, a merchants association had organized

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<sup>18</sup> One community organizer from the 70th Precinct was also able to identify three tenant associations that were active only when a "crisis" arose. To put this number in perspective, the 70th Precinct research area consisted of more than 4,500 housing units which were mapped by Vera staff for inclusion in the household survey component of the research.

business people in the 70th Precinct, and their association offered educational and referral services to local residents. One respondent, a Community Board member, told interviewers that there was an abundance of block and tenant associations in the research area, but all other respondents in the area itself rejected that assertion. An executive officer from the local merchants association, who had recently attempted to compile a list of all tenant and block associations in the area, argued: "Everyone [*i.e.*, the Community Board] says that there are all of these tenant and block associations in this area, but it's all bullshit! There's almost nothing here."

The 67th Precinct research area was, by all accounts, the most poorly organized. A neighborhood federation executive who spent most of his time for the previous four years attempting to organize tenants in the 67th Precinct research area could identify only two tenant associations as "really active" (*i.e.*, meeting regularly). The only reason that they were active at all, he said, was that the buildings were about to go co-op and the tenants were frightened by their lack of knowledge of the co-op process — they were organizing around this single issue. Again, Vera interviewers were told that tenants only organize "in times of crisis."

Given the paucity of community organization, it is not surprising that none of the panel respondents characterized their community as "tightly knit." Rather, the majority of respondents perceived their communities as sorely lacking in solidarity. This was even true in the 71st Precinct, by far the best organized of the three research precincts.

Respondents in all three research areas cited three major reasons for the lack of community organization and solidarity: (1) ethnic conflict; (2) fear; and (3) a transient immigrant population (a significant proportion of which, according to respondents, was undocumented).<sup>19</sup>

Caribbean and African-American respondents in the study precincts sometimes expressed negative feelings about one another, and most community leaders confirmed the rift between these groups. Most of these comments focused on perceived cultural norms and values and, especially, economic competition. For example, a 37-year-old African-American woman in the 67th Precinct research area said:

I don't want to sound prejudiced, but we have a lot of foreigners [Caribbeans] here. Now, I'm an American black — born and bred American. We have a lot of Jamaicans, Haitians and West Indians in this community and they are not civilized. They are not Americanized, alright? This is prejudiced but it's the way that I feel and I pray that I shouldn't feel this way, but I think that there are too many of them here.

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<sup>19</sup> Another reason given for the lack of organization, primarily offered by respondents in the 71st Precinct, was the conflicting interests of tenants and homeowners.

The area is overcrowded because of them, for one thing. My apartment is three rooms and my daughter and myself live here. But if one of them [Caribbean] lived here, three families would survive here. Many of them are illegal. . . . This building has forty units and I think there are only seven Americans left.

I think it's the culture that causes the friction between them and us. . . . I speak to a lot of my friends and we all seem to share the same feelings. Number one, the Caribbeans feel that they're much better than American blacks. They feel that they are so much smarter than American blacks. They will come over and get housing and jobs that we have been here all our lives and we cannot obtain them. That causes tension — it causes friction. They will come in and accept a job paying \$3.60 an hour and they will work and survive on that. A young American black man will say, "3.50 an hour! I ain't workin' in anybody's meat market for that!" Or they would say, "I'm not gonna be a porter!" You know, they need porters in the hospitals but it's, "I'm not cleaning up behind nobody!" But they [Caribbeans] will come over and they will jump at that job and then you see as the years progress sooner or later they become managers or supervisors in those businesses. But American blacks don't have that mentality that tells you that if you work at it, if you stay with it long enough, it will pay off for you. So we are weaker in that sense than they are. This causes tension between us.

Many African-American respondents argued that Caribbean immigrants (especially the "undocumented" among them) undermined the political and economic interests of the African-American community by taking low-paying jobs and refusing to participate in local community organizations. Similarly, Caribbean respondents observed that economic competition and cultural differences served to distance Caribbeans from the African-American community. A Haitian community organizer from the 67th Precinct thought that many Caribbean immigrants did not respect African Americans because:

. . . we came here and we started seeing, like when you walk into a store, African Americans always working as a porter, always working the lowest type of job. So people say, "What's wrong with them?" People will always tell you, "Well, the only thing they do is go on welfare." . . . I started in the private sector . . . someone told me why they hired me. He said, "Because you are from the Caribbean. If you were African American they would not hire you here." If you're African American they put you in dead-end jobs like the mail room or being a clerk and you never get anywhere. People know that we respect people . . . many African Americans like to take off on Monday and Friday and they don't come to work on time and they're always late and things like that. But for us, we came here for a purpose — just come in here and make money. Work hard and then buy a house somewhere on Long Island.

This problem of organization goes beyond the reported rift between the Caribbean and African-American populations. Caribbean respondents argued that the Caribbean and West Indian populations are themselves divided by cultural differences that keep them from organizing multi-ethnic coalitions among themselves. A Haitian community activist in the 67th Precinct argued that

Caribbeans were “the most difficult people to organize” because of the cultural differences separating them.<sup>20</sup> One community activist in the 70th Precinct explained:

[Caribbean and West Indian] cultures are not completely harmonious by any means. There is incredible competition between them the Haitians, Jamaicans and Trinidadians. It seems that Caribbean business associations don't include Haitians, who always seem to have their own group. There are also Vietnamese and the Chinese in the neighborhood, who cannot seem to relate to one another at all. So it's not just the Caribbean population but the Asians as well.

Perceptions like these divide the black community in Flatbush. They also have important implications for TNT's effectiveness because they are likely to prevent some neighborhoods targeted by TNT from organizing around any issue, including drug trafficking and crime.

Fear of drug-traffickers (especially in the 70th and 67th precincts) clearly hampers efforts to organize around the drug issue. Respondents in all three research areas observed that drug dealers would often attend anti-drug rallies or tenant association meetings in an effort to intimidate residents. A neighborhood association in the 71st Precinct, for example, established a drug “task force,” composed of volunteers, to identify drug locations and dealers for the police.<sup>21</sup> The fear of being identified by drug dealers was so great that the association did not deal with the drug issue during public meetings:

Crime — we don't deal publicly with drugs. That's very restricted. We have a set group of people that are part of our drug task force but we don't discuss drugs at the public meetings for obvious reasons. I mean, we don't want to be talking, you know, identifying people with the task force, among a large group of people because you don't know who's at the meeting. We have the public meetings but we don't deal with any type of drug problems at the public meetings. So the task force meetings are restricted — we don't let anyone else come to those meetings. No one on the task force wants anyone to know. We don't want anyone to know we meet once a month to talk about drug-related activities . . . we identify specific

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<sup>20</sup> The assertion that the various Caribbean and West Indian ethnic groups were “the most difficult to organize” was independently confirmed by four community/tenant organizers working exclusively in the 70th and 67th precincts. Three of these community organizers were themselves Caribbean or West Indian and one an African American. In addition, many other respondents active in community associations argued that the various Caribbean ethnic groups were reluctant to participate in tenant or block associations.

<sup>21</sup> The community meetings held by the police department to introduce the TNT operation always include a discussion of the “Drugbusters” hotline. The hotline is the public's closest link with the operation and allows community volunteers to supply the police with information regarding drug locations and drug dealers. Unfortunately, relatively few people seem to volunteer and use the line. (See Chapter Three.)



locations we have been watching and we identify people and we give that information to the police. So if people want to talk about drugs at the public meeting, we tell them that we have a phone number for Brooklyn South which is a narcotics number. We tell them we are not the police.

In addition to a fear of drug traffickers, respondents also argued that many people from Caribbean communities, especially undocumented immigrants, fear and distrust the police. A Haitian community organizer in the 67th Precinct observed:

The Haitian population here . . . are afraid of the police. Like, for instance, in Haiti they remember that whenever you're dealing with the police, they remember Papa Doc and the death squads. They associate all police with this. Right now one of our major problems around here is extortion, protection rackets. They like to prey on the Haitian merchants because they don't speak English and the racketeers know that they will not report it to the police. They do not like to report crimes to the authorities. This is also why I have such a hard time getting Haitian tenants to go to court with me. They think the government is going to take their picture and punish them — that sort of thing. They really do not understand the American system and that's why on many occasions I have to go to the local Haitian radio station and explain all this to them and tell them, "No, these are not things you should be afraid of. You need to fight for your rights."

So great was this fear of the authorities that community organizers advised Vera's household survey field staff to introduce themselves and the TNT research project to Caribbean respondents by first explaining that they were not from the New York City government, not from the police, and not from the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

A significant number of community leaders and organizers argued that undocumented aliens in Flatbush were fearful of any community involvement that might expose them to official scrutiny. Illegal aliens living two or three families to an apartment without the knowledge of landlords, one community organizer observed, are unlikely to join tenants' associations. The Mayor's office has estimated that 100,000 New Yorkers are living doubled- or tripled-up in city apartments (Schumer, *The New York Times*, February 27, 1990). It is very likely that many of these are undocumented immigrants, according to Flatbush community organizers. Both African-American and Caribbean respondents argued that the principal immigrant populations in these areas rarely get involved in community activities like block or tenant associations. An executive from a merchants association in the 70th Precinct believed that it was extremely difficult to keep tenant and block associations alive because:

. . . immigrants come into these buildings and they just don't understand the concept of a tenant association. They don't have such stuff in their native cultures. Their real desire is to work hard and get their kids into decent schools and then get the hell out of here.

Similarly, a thirty-year resident of the 71st Precinct research area argued that the primary reason for the decline in membership and activities in his block association is the lack of involvement on the part of recently arrived Caribbean immigrants:

. . . they don't feel as though they want to join the existing organizations in the community like the block associations. That's one major reason why our block association isn't functioning the way it did years ago when it was first started. Because of the influx of Caribbean people. I don't know why they don't want to join the organization on the block here. We from the block association have talked to them about it, yes, and well, they just don't want to bother. They never say why or anything like that, they just don't participate. I've also talked to them personally, door-to-door, and given them meeting notices . . . they just don't come out.

These data raise important questions about the potential for community involvement in the TNT effort, at least in neighborhoods like these. The data also raise questions about TNT's potential to help such communities "reclaim their streets" — if the process of reclamation depends upon community involvement. Of course, where formal community organization does exist, it is not unreasonable to argue that TNT could *stimulate* greater participation by residents through working a reduction of fear in the community. Unfortunately, the research areas in which TNT was deployed during the research period (the 70th and 67th Precincts) were too poorly organized to begin with for such an effect to be very likely.<sup>22</sup>

## V. Summary

In summary, although there are a number of differences among the research areas, they are far more similar to each other than they are to other areas in Brooklyn South. All three communities are home to vigorous, similarly structured street-level crack markets, although street-level drug trafficking is not as concentrated or visible in the 71st Precinct as in the other two. All three are characterized by similar levels of crime and fear of crime. All three study sites are predominantly black and heavily Caribbean. Although all three precincts contain sections of well-maintained, single-family residences, housing middle-class and working-class families, the areas of research focus are generally not characterized by a high degree of community organization, partly because of the great ethnic

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<sup>22</sup> It should be remembered that these observations apply to the TNT research areas only. It is likely that other areas of the precinct in which "hot spots" were also targeted for TNT were better organized: Interviews in the 70th Precinct, for example, indicate that the residential areas occupied by middle-class home owners just south and west of the research area were better organized than the TNT research site.

diversity within them. Although they are not among the poorest or most troubled areas of the city, they all struggle on a daily basis with substantial levels of violence, crime and disorder.



## Chapter Three

### TNT ACTIVITY IN THE STUDY PRECINCTS: OPERATIONS AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

#### I. Introduction

At community meetings, TNT officials frequently described the program's "three-pronged" approach: buy-and-bust enforcement, community involvement, and concerted inter-agency action. Each component was described as strengthening TNT's ability to reduce the intensity of drug traffic on the streets of target areas and, thereby, to improve the quality of life there.

This chapter describes the way these dimensions of TNT were implemented in the research areas of the two experimental precincts. Statistical and qualitative data on TNT's impact on drug markets and on ancillary crime are presented as well, as are data on the criminal justice system outcomes of TNT arrests, the extent to which community residents in target areas got involved in TNT, and the problems that were selected for inter-agency attack. In addition, this chapter examines interaction between TNT and other units of the Police Department during TNT's implementation in these areas, and the perceptions of various Department personnel about TNT's effectiveness.

The chapter begins by putting Brooklyn South's TNT in context — placing TNT within the structure of narcotics enforcement in the NYPD, and describing some important deviations from the Brooklyn South TNT implementation plan, when TNT was implemented in the study precincts.

#### II. The Context of Implementation in the Study Precincts

##### A. The Departmental Context

Since 1989, Tactical Narcotics Teams have become a permanent component of the Narcotics Borough Commands, within the NYPD's Organized Crime Control Bureau (OCCB), in each of the seven NYPD patrol boroughs. Each Narcotics Borough Command includes a Narcotics District, which deploys squads of experienced narcotics investigators. A Borough Command's Tactical Narcotics Team uses buy-and-bust as its primary enforcement tool, while Narcotics District teams are assigned to the various precincts, to investigate of local trafficking organizations and, through undercover purchase of larger quantities of drugs at identified indoor locations and on the street, to arrest somewhat higher-level dealers. Although Narcotics District personnel conduct major investigations, long-term investigations of high-level drug distributors are frequently the province of NYPD joint task forces involving either the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

More recently, NITRO Units (Narcotics Investigation Tracking Recidivist Offenders), which maintain an extensive, computerized data base on narcotics offenders, began operating in some Borough Commands — NITRO was introduced in Brooklyn South at about the time this research began. NITRO units are designed to help the Narcotics Districts develop major cases, by targeting individuals with prior narcotics convictions who have been arrested on drug charges and who might agree to become confidential informants. TNT was required to provide information to the NITRO Unit about all drug arrests and the defendants involved, to help develop higher-level investigations by the Narcotics District.

Finally, many (but not all) precincts have Street Narcotics Enforcement Units (SNEU), which consist of uniformed officers trained in surveillance techniques, who make narcotics arrests of sellers and purchasers at market locations they place under observation. Although SNEU represents the principal precinct-based narcotics enforcement capacity, precinct-based Community Patrol Officers frequently address narcotics conditions, identified as priority problems within their beats, and sometimes arrest buyers and sellers.

The introduction of TNT required a substantial commitment of new personnel to the Narcotics Division. By 1990, the more than 700 men and women assigned to TNT made up nearly 40% of the Narcotics Division and accounted for nearly two-thirds of the Division's narcotics arrests in that year.<sup>23</sup>

The commitment of such substantial personnel resources to street-level narcotics enforcement was controversial both inside and outside of the Department. Media observers raised issues about the productivity of TNT. An editorial in the *Daily News* ("Stick with TNT", May 7, 1990) incorrectly asserted that "... TNT cops make up 40% of the 1,700 in the narcotics division [but] contribute a lower percentage of drug busts". A report issued by the Manhattan District Attorney's office shortly thereafter praised the productivity of the unit, arguing that TNT personnel constituted approximately one-third of the Narcotics Division but produced half of that division's narcotics arrests ("D.A. Makes Dynamite Pitch to

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<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, NYPD Office of Management, Analysis and Planning. In 1990, TNT Units made over 24,000 arrests — over 15,000 of them at the felony level. TNT was responsible for a greater proportion of Narcotics Division's misdemeanor arrests (67%) than felony arrests (58%). Reductions in the number of officers assigned to TNT in 1991, discussed below, reduced the volume of TNT arrests. By the end of 1991, TNT staff (both uniformed and civilian) had been reduced from over 700 to approximately 500. In 1991, TNT units made over 16,600 arrests (a 30% reduction), roughly three-quarters of which (12,538) were at the felony level. (See "Drug Arrests Fall as Police Shift Gears," *New York Daily News*, January 30, 1992.)

Save TNT," *New York Post*, May 23, 1990).<sup>24</sup> But that same article implied that resources had been allocated to TNT at the expense of "regular patrols."

This latter concern was echoed by many Police Department personnel, interviewed for this TNT research, who were not part of TNT. Precinct commanders and officers complained that personnel shortages in the precincts were a consequence of TNT and impaired their ability to address emerging precinct conditions and respond to calls for service. This colored their assessment of TNT's value.

The introduction of TNT, coupled with a general expansion of Narcotics Division personnel in recent years, did reflect the Department's increasing commitment to street-level drug enforcement. Between 1985 and 1990, the number of felony narcotics arrests more than doubled, although the proportion of arrests made by the Narcotics Division itself did not fluctuate substantially.<sup>25</sup> The dramatic increase in felony narcotics arrests from 1985 through 1989 appears Department-wide and, although precinct officers frequently complain about their inability to conduct routine narcotics enforcement, a substantial proportion of NYPD narcotics arrests are in fact made by precinct personnel.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The difference between the 1990 data reported above and the data reported by the Manhattan District Attorney's office reflected differences in the time period and the boroughs reported.

<sup>25</sup> The number of felony narcotics arrests in those years grew from approximately 21,000 in 1985 to a high of over 49,000 in 1989. According to NYPD *Statistical Reports*, the proportion of those arrests attributable to the Narcotics Division ranged from a low of 53% in 1985 to a high of 59% in 1987 (before TNT units were established).

<sup>26</sup> In 1990, 28% of felony drug arrests and 41% of misdemeanor drug arrests were made by precinct officers. The proportion of both felony and misdemeanor narcotics arrests effected by precinct personnel remained relatively steady between 1985 and 1990, according to data provided in NYPD *Statistical Reports*, although the *number* of felony narcotics arrests made by uniformed precinct officers increased from approximately 6,000 to over 13,500 in that time. (The number of misdemeanor narcotics arrests did not change substantially.)

There has been substantial variation over the years in the frequency of precinct-level narcotics activity. Currently, such activity is largely the province of special units (SNEU, CPOP). Officers assigned to radio motor patrol cars (RMPs) are expected to "stay on the queue to" respond to the radio dispatchers.

According to some Department personnel, the extent of precinct-based narcotics enforcement varies widely from precinct to precinct (and from year to year) not only because of variations in the extent of narcotics conditions in those precincts, but also because of variations in policy affecting them. Both uniformed officers and commanding officers involved in other Vera research projects over the past few years have reported that some precinct-level or borough-level command decisions based on concerns about corruption hazards and excessive overtime discouraged proactive narcotics enforcement in CPOP units. According to several high-ranking Department personnel interviewed for this study, *official* Department policy does not explicitly prohibit uniformed officers from making narcotics arrests, although there is a widespread belief to the contrary both inside and outside the Department. (See Chapter Five.)

## B. TNT Implementation in the Study Precincts

The intensity with which TNT was implemented differed markedly between the two experimental precincts, in large part because of higher-level Departmental decisions affecting the allocation of TNT staff. First, in December 1989, shortly before this research began, the Department established an experiment in which a component of 20 uniformed officers was assigned in Brooklyn South to supplement the TNT unit's scheduled "maintenance" effort that was to follow the three-month full enforcement period.<sup>27</sup> This TNT uniformed component began working actively in the 72nd Precinct (the first TNT precinct in Brooklyn South) shortly before the TNT unit as a whole moved to the first study precinct — the 70th Precinct — on December 5, 1989. The TNT uniformed component followed in the 70th Precinct at the end of TNT's initial enforcement period (on March 8, 1990), at which time the main TNT Unit began its work in the 67th Precinct (the second study precinct). The experimental uniformed component was disbanded, after six months of operation, at the end of the TNT enforcement period in the 67th Precinct (June 5, 1990).

Because the uniformed component operated in the first study precinct but not in the second, the intensity and duration of enforcement in the two experimental areas differed. These differences were compounded by other deviations from the original TNT implementation plan for Brooklyn South: At the time that Brooklyn South's TNT was to move to the 67th Precinct, the Department decided to retain half the unit in the 70th Precinct for six more weeks. Thus, the TNT "maintenance" period in the 70th Precinct was enhanced by the continued presence of half the TNT squad through mid-April *and* the presence of the experimental 20-officer uniformed component. Conversely, enforcement in the 67th Precinct was far less intense than expected from TNT's design, and the "maintenance" period there was far less richly resourced than in the 70th Precinct.

The third Department decision affecting implementation of TNT in Brooklyn South came on March 29th, 1990, with the assignment of roughly 20% of all TNT personnel to the Social Club Task Force, which was being expanded in response to a devastating, fatal fire in a Bronx social club. This further reduced the TNT manpower deployed in the 67th Precinct: TNT lost 29 officers from the Brooklyn South Unit to the Social Club Task Force.

Finally, before TNT arrived in the 67th Precinct, precinct personnel successfully argued that the TNT target area be expanded to include the eastern end of the precinct. This further reduced the intensity of TNT deployment in the 67th Precinct

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<sup>27</sup> A Departmental memo defined the objective of the uniformed component as providing "high visibility police presence by being assigned to short, well supervised posts in drug infested areas." The assignment of this component to the research area added an element of enforcement that is not typical of TNT units operating elsewhere in the city.



research area, located in the northwest. Not surprisingly, the incidence of arrests in the 70th Precinct research area was far greater than in the 67th Precinct research area. During the first 90 days of TNT in the 70th Precinct, nearly a quarter of TNT arrests (24%) were made in the research area of that precinct. In contrast, very little of TNT's arrest activity was centered in the 67th Precinct research area (3%).<sup>28</sup>

All of these departures from the original Brooklyn South TNT plan have implications for the research design. Vera's household surveys and ethnographic research were for the most part confined to the precincts' research areas. Research staff had anticipated that these areas would be the locus of extensive TNT enforcement activity, and that the intensity of TNT would be roughly the same in the two areas. This expected concentration of enforcement was realized in the 70th Precinct, but not in the 67th Precinct. It is reasonable to expect that residents, drug buyers, and sellers in the 67th Precinct research area — who had little opportunity to observe TNT teams in action — would be less aware of (and their behavior less influenced by) TNT than those in the 70th Precinct.

The disbanding of the 20-officer uniformed component after the “maintenance” period in the 70th Precinct, the initial deployment of only half of the TNT squad in the 67th Precinct, the transfer of Brooklyn South TNT personnel to the Social Club Task Force, and enlarging the TNT target area in the 67th Precinct all diminished the relative intensity of TNT in the second research area, not only during the first 90 days of TNT, but also during the “maintenance period” that followed.

Development of yet another Department-wide initiative in the summer of 1990 — Operation Takeback — added further complications. In response to a spate of shootings in which innocent bystanders were killed around the city (several of them infants and young children), the Department introduced Operation Takeback in a designated precinct in each of the city's seven patrol boroughs. Operation Takeback precincts were selected according to the volume of homicide and robbery complaints within them. Under Operation Takeback, 200 officers working overtime shifts (generally 4 p.m. to midnight) conducted high-visibility uniformed patrol around locations identified as “hot spots.” Operation Takeback was coupled with an explicit assignment of the entire TNT unit to provide intensive narcotics enforcement within the selected precinct. In Brooklyn South, the 67th Precinct was chosen as the first Operation Takeback precinct. As a result, the TNT unit returned to the 67th Precinct in mid-August, only two months after it left. Thus, during the period when the researchers anticipated reduced TNT activity and reduced police presence, the 67th Precinct experienced an increase. Although the follow-up household

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<sup>28</sup> A review of TNT activity reports (lists of locations targeted by the team) reveals that there were a substantial number of buy *attempts* at identified drug locations in the research area (in the early weeks of the initiative), but that most did not lead to arrest.

survey interviews in the 67th Precinct were postponed until after Operation Takeback, and although the net effect of all the deviations from plan in the 67th Precinct may have brought the overall experience of TNT in the research area closer to that of the 70th Precinct's, some of the research design's power was lost.

### III. TNT Structure and Operations during the Research Period

#### A. Structure

When the research began, the structure of TNT was uniform across the patrol boroughs, except in Staten Island, where the TNT unit was much smaller. TNTs were composed of 110 officers (investigators, undercover officers and supervisors), all operating in plain-clothes. Each TNT was divided into fourteen modules. Each TNT officer in Brooklyn South was assigned to a "module" of six to nine officers, supervised by a sergeant. Each module had between two and four undercover officers. One module, designated the "car confiscation team," was to operate at locations catering to drive-up drug purchasers. These staffing patterns were affected by reallocations of TNT personnel to the Social Club Task Force.<sup>29</sup>

TNT modules were organized into three different "districts," each supervised by a lieutenant. Over the course of the research, each district comprised three to five modules, whose officers shared a common schedule (*i.e.*, days off on either Sunday and Monday, Friday and Saturday, or Saturday and Sunday).

A TNT commanding officer was a captain, aided by an administrative sergeant and sworn and civilian support staff. In month three of the research, the Brooklyn South TNT captain was transferred to Narcotics District, and a new captain appointed.

#### B. Deployment

The field deployment of TNT modules was staggered to ensure that a module was operating in the field every day. The schedule was designed to reduce the likelihood that court days arising from arrests made in the field would coincide either with days in the field ("up" days) or with scheduled days off. In general, modules spend three "down" days, either in court or catching up on paperwork, for every two "up" days when arrests were made in the target areas.

Once in the field, TNT modules relied heavily on "buy and bust" tactics, which were targeted primarily at outdoor street markets. Officers worked out of unmarked rental cars, keeping in radio contact. Undercover officers, usually operating in pairs (a purchaser and an undercover observer, known as a "ghost"), attempted to purchase drugs from street dealers at designated market locations known as "sets."

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<sup>29</sup> Following the transfer of TNT staff to the Social Club Task Force, the number of operating modules in Brooklyn South's TNT was reduced from fourteen to ten.

For enforcement days, supervisors developed a list (known as a “tac plan”), designating the order in which target sets would be visited. Occasionally, supervisors would add new sets to a day's tac plan, either because they observed narcotics activity at another location or because the tac plan's sets were inactive. Doing so could cause problems, however, because the tac plan served to help coordinate TNT activity with that of other narcotics enforcement (District teams, SNEU units) in the target areas.

When an undercover succeeded in buying drugs, he or she would leave the set and radio a description of the sellers to the module's supervisor. The supervisor would instruct the rest of the team to converge on the set and arrest the subjects identified by the undercover officer's description. When attempts to purchase drugs were unsuccessful, the undercovers would either move to another set or stay on to make arrests based on observed sales.

Across the city, the nature of TNT's designated target areas has varied, sometimes encompassing an entire precinct, sometimes a portion of a precinct or portions of more than one precinct. The length of the intervention period has also varied. Although TNTs generally have spent 90 days in each target area, in some areas the Department deemed a 60-day period sufficient and in others the period has been extended. No matter how long the enforcement period, TNTs have been expected to return to previous target areas on scheduled “maintenance days”.

### C. Staffing

In addition to administrative and supervisory personnel, TNT units include officers acting as investigators and as undercovers. For officers who have not achieved detective rank, either position serves as an “investigative track” position on the path to a “gold shield” (promotion to detective). Selection as a TNT investigator is generally acknowledged in the NYPD to involve a more competitive process than selection as a TNT undercover officer, but the TNT units depend heavily on skilled undercover officers, particularly those who can fit readily into a daunting variety of target areas, catering to drug purchasers of distinct types. Shortly before this research began, to attract more undercovers, the Department introduced a procedure that made the TNT undercover position a fast track to detective status.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Undercover officers previously needed 24 months in assignment before they could be appointed detective. Under the new procedure, undercovers could “make” detective in 20 months. Investigators, required to wait 27 months before they can be promoted to detective status, were not affected. When TNT undercovers became detectives, they frequently moved into investigative positions within TNT.

During the research period, interest in recruiting black undercover officers, who could blend into the heavily Caribbean target areas in the study precincts, was evident. Although TNT administrative staff in Brooklyn South did not maintain data on the race and gender composition of the unit, they described the overall composition of their unit as not substantially different from the police force as a whole (roughly 75% white). The researchers observed that, although the back-up officers were often white, most of the undercover officers who actually entered the targeted drug markets posing as users were black or Latino.

The race and ethnicity of TNT undercover officers was perceived by some Department personnel as a problem in the research areas. A Brooklyn South TNT supervisor, noting that TNT had made "a lot of scores" in the first few days in the 70th Precinct but then found it harder to make purchases, attributed the difficulty to the racial and ethnic composition of the undercovers. He said that "anybody can buy in the 72," but that TNT undercovers, particularly the white undercovers, were bound to have more difficulty in the 70th and 67th Precincts.

In fact, although the 70th Precinct markets did prove less vulnerable to Brooklyn South TNT's "buy and bust" tactics than the markets in 72nd Precinct, TNT staff became convinced that the 67th Precinct markets were even tougher to crack. Before they entered the 67th Precinct, TNT personnel anticipated difficulties for their undercovers trying to buy drugs in an area dominated by Caribbean drug dealers who were known to be suspicious of outside purchasers of any race. Although distribution in the 70th Precinct was also dominated by Caribbean sellers, the undercovers' difficulty was compounded in the 67th Precinct simply because the markets there were more closed to any outsiders than those in the 70th Precinct, where sellers at times hawked their wares aggressively to motorists driving through. Indeed, only 35% of recorded TNT undercover buy-and-bust attempts in the 67th Precinct were coded as successful, compared to 53% in the 70th Precinct.

#### **D. Results of TNT Operations in the Study Precincts**

1. *Arrests, and Characteristics of Those Arrested.* Given the departures from TNT's implementation plan described above, and given the different drug markets in the target areas of the two experimental precincts (described in Chapters Two and Four), it is not surprising that TNT made substantially fewer arrests during its 90 days in the 67th Precinct than during the first 90 days in the 70th Precinct (560 compared to 1,011).<sup>31</sup> Given the expansion of the TNT target area after the research area had been chosen, it is not surprising that a smaller proportion of TNT arrests in

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<sup>31</sup> After starting in the 67th Precinct, the TNT personnel left behind in the 70th Precinct made 184 more arrests. Most of these arrests were effected before TNT officially announced the end of the enhanced "maintenance" period in that precinct, at a "good-bye" meeting on April 25.

the 67th Precinct sprang from the research area there than in the 70th Precinct (25% in the 70th Precinct compared to 3% in the 67th).<sup>32</sup>

Other differences can be discerned in the arrest statistics: In the 70th Precinct, where there was a higher proportion of misdemeanor possession charges and arrests involving marijuana, a smaller proportion of TNT arrests were at the felony level (45%).<sup>33</sup> Although TNT made fewer arrests in the 67th Precinct, these arrests were more likely to involve felony charges (67%). Arrests in the 67th Precinct were more serious in other respects as well. They were more likely to be for drug sale (63%) than in the 70th Precinct (46%), and the type of drug was more frequently crack (88%) and less frequently marijuana (7%) than in the 70th Precinct (crack, 74%; marijuana, 19%).<sup>34</sup>

The characteristics of individuals arrested in the 67th Precinct resembled those arrested in the 70th Precinct in terms of gender and age (approximately 80% were male, the mean age was 29, and few were under the age of 18). But in the 67th Precinct target area, where blacks — both African American and Caribbean — are a higher proportion of residents than in the 70th Precinct target area, a substantially higher proportion of those arrested were black (93%) than in the 70th Precinct (70%).<sup>35</sup>

In both precincts, the drug locations targeted by TNT were essentially crack markets. Although the 70th Precinct markets catered somewhat more to purchasers from outside the neighborhood than did those in the 67th Precinct, in both areas the sellers and purchasers were drawn heavily from the target neighborhoods themselves. In both precincts, there were small changes, over the three-month TNT period, in the demographics of those arrested. In the 70th Precinct, there was a drop each month in the proportion who were white (21%, 18%, 13%), but this was only a

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<sup>32</sup> In this chapter, except where otherwise noted, all reported differences between precincts are significant at the .05 level or better, based on the chi square test of independence. Similarly, except where otherwise noted, all reported differences in arrest activity between the first and last months of the TNT intervention within a given precinct are significant at the .05 level or better, based on the chi square test of independence.

<sup>33</sup> See Vera's interim report on the effects of TNT in the first study precinct (the 70th) in Brooklyn South (Vera Institute, 1991) for more detailed information on TNT arrests in that target area. The proportion of felonies among the TNT arrests in the 70th Precinct was lower than in most other TNT target areas around the city, where the percentage ranged from 51% to 71%.

<sup>34</sup> Although there were substantially fewer marijuana arrests in the 67th Precinct, in both areas marijuana arrests were more likely to involve possession charges (67th, 56%; 70th, 70%) than crack arrests (67th, 33%; 70th, 48%). For both drugs, arrests for possession were less frequent in the 67th Precinct than in the 70th Precinct.

<sup>35</sup> In both precincts, younger defendants and black defendants were significantly more likely than others to face felony charges of drug sales.

trend (*i.e.*, not significant at the .05 level —  $p=.09$ ). In the 67th Precinct, there was a small but significant reduction in the proportion who were Latino (7%, 1%, 1%). In both precincts, the racial distribution of those arrested became increasingly black over the enforcement period. Taken together, the trends suggest some reduction in the frequency with which purchasers from outside the areas came into these curbside crack markets, as TNT made its pressure felt.

Over the course of the three-month intervention, the number and proportion of TNT arrests on lesser charges decreased in both precincts. The proportion of arrests at the felony level increased significantly from the first month (70th Precinct, 42%; 67th Precinct, 54%) to the third month (70th Precinct, 53%; 67th Precinct, 76%). In addition, the proportion of arrests for marijuana sale or possession dropped in both precincts, although the decrease was statistically significant only in the 67th Precinct (where it dropped from 11% of drug charges to 6%).

2. *Location of Arrests.* TNT personnel maintain data about the address at which an arrest is made and the nature of the location (front of a building, street corner, lobby). These data included codes that helped identify *indoor* arrests (lobby, apartment numbers, hallways, etc.) and *outdoor*, curbside arrests. Vera research staff used this information to determine whether given locations fell inside the formal research areas or not and to analyze the frequency with which TNT teams made arrests at identified drug “hot spots”.

Some TNT staff predicted that, over the course of each 90-day TNT enforcement period, an increasing proportion of arrests would be made at indoor locations. This prediction was based on the assumption that TNT would gradually drive drug markets indoors and that the enforcement effort would follow. This did not occur in either precinct. Overall, 16% of TNT arrests in the 70th Precinct were made at indoor locations — 19% in the first month, 16% in the second and 13% in the third. In the 67th Precinct, a higher proportion of arrests (22%) were made in indoor locations than in the 70th Precinct, but the proportion of arrests made indoors did not vary over the three-month period.

In both precincts, there were a few known drug locations to which TNT teams returned again and again. These locations produced a disproportionate number of the arrests. In the 70th Precinct, five of the 289 total arrest locations (2%) produced 15% of all arrests; in the 67th Precinct, four of 209 total locations (2%) produced 28% of all arrests. One location in the 67th Precinct yielded 52 arrests; the most productive single location in the 70th Precinct yielded 35 arrests.

3. *Time and Effort Required to Make Arrests.* Vera researchers constructed a sample of enforcement attempts, drawn from TNT line officers' Daily Activity Reports (DARs), to permit analysis of whether it became more difficult and more

time-consuming for the TNT unit to purchase drugs in the target area as the enforcement period progressed.<sup>36</sup> The researchers hypothesized that the changes in the time and effort undercover officers invest in making their purchases might not differ greatly from changes experienced by any outside purchasers. If the time and effort required to make drug purchases increased as the period progressed, it would be some evidence of a TNT effect.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, there was evidence in both precincts that TNT teams found it increasingly difficult to make drug purchases. Over the course of the three-month intervention, there was a drop in the proportion of buy attempts that could be coded as successful: in the 70th Precinct, the success rate dropped from 61% in the first month to 48% in the third month; in the 67th Precinct, the rate rose to a high of 39% in the second month and then dropped to 29% in the third month. There was also evidence that the time it took to effect a purchase increased in both precincts during the enforcement period.<sup>38</sup> By TNT's third month in the 70th Precinct, the undercovers' "search time" (the total time spent on *all* attempts divided by the number of successful

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<sup>36</sup> As there was no discrete code for trying to make an arrest, "enforcement attempt" was crudely defined as *any* enforcement action at any TNT "set." In some instances, an enforcement action may have involved little more than an undercover team driving by, to determine if any drug traffic could be observed, or asking someone at a set to steer them to a location where they might make a purchase. In other cases, the action involved extended observation of drug trafficking in an area.

<sup>37</sup> Kleiman (1992) spells out the strategic importance of "search time" in street-level drug enforcement efforts:

The search time for drugs . . . is a measure of what enforcement officials call "availability": the longer the search time, the less available the drug is. . . . The higher the search time — again, at any given money price — the lower the quantity consumed. Search time thus acts as a second sort of price that users pay for their drugs. . . .

Longer search times for retail drug purchases, like higher prices, reduce drug consumption. But long search times are free of the potential unwanted side effects of high prices [*e.g.*, increased thefts or prostitution to finance more expensive drug purchases]. Greater difficulty in buying drugs will lead to a smaller number of completed transactions, while leaving money prices unchanged. This will decrease both drug consumption and drug expenditures . . . . [A]n increase in search time . . . makes it harder to turn dollars, including illicitly earned dollars, into drugs. Because smaller expenditures for the user are also smaller revenues for the dealer, rising search times are unambiguously beneficial in controlling black-market corruption and violence as well. (112-114)

<sup>38</sup> Kleiman (1988) argues that street-level enforcement can effectively reduce the demand for drugs, at least among new users, by increasing the difficulty of finding drugs, thereby increasing the "non-financial costs" of drugs to the purchasers. From this perspective, increasing search time is itself a positive outcome of drug crackdowns. Ethnographic data on TNT in the research areas, reviewed in Chapter Four, suggest that there were few new users entering the drug markets in these target areas, even before TNT arrived.

purchases) had increased from roughly 52 minutes to 62 minutes. By TNT's third month in the 67th Precinct, the search time increased from 61 minutes to 104 minutes. Although informed local drug users may have had an easier time finding drugs than TNT undercover officers (*see* Chapter Four), and although these findings are based on a very crude measure of "search time," there is support for the hypothesis that TNT's enforcement effort did increase search time — at least for prospective purchasers who were not already regulars in the target area's drug markets.

4. *Undercover Purchases.* The drugs purchased by the TNT undercovers were variously packaged — in vials, "bundles", glassine envelopes, tins, plastic bags. Crack was typically purchased in \$5 vials ("nickels" — 43% of sampled purchases in the 70th Precinct, 60% in the 67th); \$10 vials ("dimes" — 37% in the 70th Precinct, 27% in the 67th); and \$20 packages ("twenties" — 20% in the 70th Precinct, 13% in the 67th).

Most undercover TNT purchases required \$10 or \$20, for two to four nickel vials or one or two "dimes". Sometimes, an additional dollar or two was passed to a "steerer" who facilitated the transaction. Even for regulars in these markets, it was not cost-effective to buy crack in larger quantities. The "nickels" market was less expensive per grain of crack (\$4.98/grain in the 70th Precinct, \$5.78 in the 67th) than the "dimes" market (\$6.95/grain in the 70th Precinct, \$8.06 in the 67th) or the "twenties" market (\$8.23/grain in the 70th Precinct, \$12.61 in the 67th).<sup>39</sup>

The average price per grain of crack increased over the course of the three-month TNT intervention in the 70th Precinct from month one (\$5.06/grain) to month three (\$6.64/grain), but not in the 67th Precinct. The price increase in the 70th Precinct seems to reflect wholesale cocaine price increases, noted by TNT officers, by Vera's ethnographic team and by the news media ("Cocaine Prices Rise; Police Role is Cited," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1990).

TNT's apparent lack of effect on the price of crack in the target areas is not surprising, despite the magnitude of enforcement resources focused on the markets there. As Kleiman (1992) has observed:

It is important not to overestimate the ability of enforcement to drive up the prices of drugs with established mass markets, or to underestimate the costs of trying to do so. Drug prices do influence consumption, and enforcement resources and tactics can influence drug prices. A careful consideration of the likely effects of different programs might improve the performance of the system in making drugs more expensive for their end users. Still, the observation that, a decade into an enforcement-centered "war on drugs," cocaine prices are near their all-time low point suggests the difficulty of boosting the prices of mass-market drugs. It will

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<sup>39</sup> There are 440 grains in an ounce and approximately 16 grains in a gram.



never be easy to get between millions of consumers with billions of dollars to spend and the high-level dealers willing to take risks to provide them with drugs. (143)

NYPD lab data show that approximately 95% of drugs sold to TNT undercover officers in both precincts were real — that is, they were not classified by the lab as “not a controlled substance.” The ethnographic team reported that some street dealers did try to sell “beat” drugs (*e.g.*, peanut chunks, soap) to buyers they suspected of being undercover TNT officers (*see* Chapter Four), but the lab analyses revealed no increase over time in the proportion of the drugs sold to TNT in the study precincts that were “not a controlled substance” — the incidence of “beat” drugs in these buys did not differ substantially from what the lab reported for the city as a whole.

5. *Enforcement During the Maintenance Periods.* The intensity of enforcement during the TNT maintenance periods differed between the two precincts because of resource allocation decisions made at higher levels of the Department, which are discussed earlier in this chapter. In the 70th Precinct, an experimental 20-officer uniformed TNT component was put in place, and its presence was supplemented by the continued enforcement efforts of half the TNT squad who were left in place for approximately six weeks after the rest of Brooklyn South's TNT moved on to the 67th Precinct. The experimental uniformed TNT component was dropped before the maintenance period began in the 67th Precinct. TNT “maintenance” in the 67th Precinct produced relatively few arrests until the entire TNT was reassigned back to the precinct in August 1990 in conjunction with Operation Takeback. That reassignment of TNT to the 67th Precinct signaled the end of the maintenance period there, and the beginning of a new, full enforcement period.<sup>40</sup>

The 20-officer uniformed TNT component deployed in the 70th Precinct consisted of a lieutenant, four sergeants and the 20 officers. For three months, the officers were assigned to fixed posts at known drug locations that had been the target of frequent TNT activity during the full enforcement period. During the three months they were assigned to the 70th Precinct, the uniformed officers made 124 arrests, primarily on charges of misdemeanor crack possession (*see* Appendix C for analysis of the dispositions of the arrests). Many were based on routine “stop and frisk” of individuals leaving known drug locations. According to one officer, “they give themselves away”, either through “body language” or by dropping the drugs. These uniformed TNT officers also issued a large number of traffic citations. One reported that he and his colleagues were able to identify drug sellers' and purchasers' cars, which they targeted for “selective enforcement.” During the first month and a half of the 70th Precinct maintenance period, these uniformed TNT

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<sup>40</sup> The “maintenance period” was to be a 90-day period immediately following TNT's move to its next target area.

officers were frequently pulled off their fixed posts and re-assigned to “secondary posts,” to permit plain-clothes TNT units to continue buy-and-bust operations. These reassignments diminished the visibility in the “primary” locations until all the TNT personnel left for the 67th Precinct.

Some officers assigned to the TNT modules were skeptical about the experimental uniformed component. One said: “It’s a joke. It’s a real stroke job. You have to walk the beat to know — if you stand on this corner, they’ll just deal on that corner.” But TNT Brooklyn South command staff were convinced of the value. They argued that the general deterrence provided by uniformed officers had more effect than continuing to make low-level arrests at the locations. One member of the command staff spoke at length of the various ways he thought the uniformed officers useful; his remarks were not tape recorded, but are captured as follows in a researcher’s fieldnotes:

He said the uniformed contingent provides “extra flexibility.” He reported that they had used the uniforms as backup in the past week when they executed a search warrant in the 70 and that they had found them to be very effective. He said that the uniforms not only controlled the surrounding location during the enforcement action but they added extra visibility, making the TNT activity more noticeable to the community. He is convinced of the value of the uniformed component and suggested that a quarter of the TNT enforcement staff could be composed of uniforms rather than plain-clothes investigators. He remarked that under this structure there “may be fewer arrests, but so what?” He implied that what is lost in arrest volume would be compensated for in the general deterrence provided by the uniformed visibility and the community support associated with uniformed street presence. (Fieldnotes.)

In both the 70th Precinct and the 67th Precinct, the types of arrest made during the “maintenance period” did not differ substantially from those made during the full enforcement period in terms of charges, type of drug, or characteristics of those arrested.

For example, in the 70th Precinct, during the six-week period in which half the TNT continued to operate there after the 90-day enforcement period was over, TNT made 130 arrests. For the remaining six weeks, when TNT returned to “routine maintenance” (but with the uniformed TNT component still in place), TNT made an additional 54 arrests.

6. *Seizures and Confiscations.* The TNT car confiscation team, consisting of a sergeant, an undercover officer and five or six investigators, typically went into the field two to three times a week to arrest and confiscate the vehicles of drug purchasers buying at drive-by drug locations. Members of this module reported that they usually had two or three primary locations in a target precinct. They acknowledged that some locations “dry up” before the end of 90 days of their attentions, and

one member of the module said it made sense to try to “close down” a location before it dried up, but only after it produced a sufficient number of arrests.

An undercover officer was usually stationed in an unmarked police vehicle (less recognizable than the rental cars used by TNT back-up teams) outside the target location. He would radio descriptions of vehicles and drivers observed making purchases to back-up teams stationed on surrounding blocks. The back-up teams would stop identified vehicles several blocks from the target location and search the driver and the vehicle for drugs. Module officers reported that purchasers frequently seemed aware of TNT enforcement tactics and would “eat the drugs” before stepping out of the car.

A Car Confiscation Program began in the NYPD Narcotics Division in 1986, well before the inception of TNT. The program was initially targeted at drug locations in northern Manhattan, known to cater to drive-in purchasers from other states. In one 90-day period in 1989, TNT car confiscation units operating in the five patrol boroughs seized nearly 500 cars, although the number and origin of cars seized varied considerably according to target area. For example, TNT car confiscation teams seized 177 cars in Manhattan North (72% from other states), but only 17 in Staten Island (12% from other states).

The number of cars confiscated in the study precincts of Brooklyn South is roughly in the middle of this range — 67 in the 70th Precinct and 56 in the 67th Precinct. The majority of cars seized came from Brooklyn itself. There were only a few out-of-state cars confiscated — 7 in the 70th Precinct and 5 in the 67th Precinct — reflecting the relatively local nature of the drug markets in these areas. According to one member of the TNT command staff, drug markets in Brooklyn South generally did not cater to out-of-town purchasers: “In Manhattan, anyone can come in and buy. If you were white, you said you were from the Oranges or somewhere. Here, the location makes everything different. You take bridges to get here. If you were white, why would you come all the way here to buy when you could just go to Manhattan?”

Approximately half of the cars confiscated by TNT in the 70th Precinct (35) were returned to their owners, although the owner was generally not the person arrested (29). The rest of the cars were either auctioned by the Department (2) or involved in current litigation (11) or pending litigation (19). Those that were not returned had been held by the Department for a minimum of six months when these data were supplied.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Data on the disposition of confiscated vehicles was gathered in October 1990, for the 70th Precinct only: It was expected that the pattern of disposition of cars confiscated by TNT in one study precinct would be representative of other precincts. In fact, the car disposition data for the 70th Precinct closely matches citywide data on car confiscations — approximately half of the cars confiscated by TNT are typically returned by the Department (personal communication, NYPD).

At good-bye meetings, before TNT leaves a target area, TNT commanders routinely report on the amount of money, drugs and guns seized by TNT officers during the enforcement period. In the 70th Precinct, TNT modules seized six firearms, over \$45,000, and about seven ounces of cocaine (primarily 2,870 grains of crack). In the 67th Precinct, TNT seized 13 firearms, over \$130,000, and more than 39 ounces of cocaine (both crack and powder totaling 17,286 grains). In both precincts, precinct officers confiscated substantially more firearms than TNT officers did during the TNT period (for example, an additional 77 firearms were confiscated by 67th Precinct officers).

Even though TNT made substantially fewer arrests in the 67th Precinct than in the 70th, it seized substantially more guns, drugs and money. The difference is largely attributable to a single “bust” — on a warrant served after a TNT officer followed a fleeing suspect into an apartment where guns, drugs and money were in plain sight. Everyone in the apartment was arrested and precinct officers maintained surveillance on the building until the warrant was served several hours later. This incident yielded five handguns, \$110,000 in cash and over two pounds of cocaine.

### **E. Police Perceptions of TNT, and Criminal Justice System Outcomes**

This section reviews officers' perceptions, as conveyed to the researchers, about TNT's effects on drug markets in the two study precincts. It also examines the criminal justice outcomes of TNT arrests, other measures of the “quality” of TNT's arrests, and the evidence of TNT effects on ancillary crime in target areas.

1. *Police Perceptions of TNT's Effects.* In general, TNT officers made only modest claims for the effect of TNT enforcement on drug trafficking in the study precincts. One TNT officer reflected a common view by saying: “We're chipping away at it. At best, we're chipping away at it.” Another, noting the omnipresence of drug markets in the city, described TNT's efforts as “spitting into the wind.” But many were a bit more optimistic: As one of them put it, “It would take a giant vacuum cleaner to clean it all up, but we're getting somewhere.” According to another: “It's not going to end it, that's for sure. [TNT might make the dealers] less arrogant. There are legitimate people that live in the community who are frustrated. [TNT] can't solve the problem, but to do nothing is worse.”

Brooklyn South TNT officers were confident that their efforts had reduced street-level sales in at least one area — a single block in the 70th Precinct known for catering to outside purchasers. This block was isolated from heavy concentrations of drug locations elsewhere in that TNT target area and was adjacent to the precinct's more affluent area. By making a large number of arrests on the block from the beginning of the enforcement period, the drug traffic there was visibly reduced

by the end, and community residents acknowledged TNT's success on this block. The effects extended into the maintenance period.<sup>42</sup>

Other areas were more resistant to the TNT approach. One notorious drug location in the 67th Precinct (a U-shaped apartment complex discussed in detail in the following chapter) was widely recognized within TNT as a particularly difficult target. Although undercover TNT officers were able to buy drugs from dealers operating in the courtyard of the complex, back-up teams could not enter the courtyard without being spotted by dealers and look-outs. Drug traffickers could easily disappear into a maze of apartments and basement passageways. Within TNT, this area was viewed as not "defensible space" and some residents of the complex were perceived as hostile to TNT's enforcement efforts.

Despite the difficulties TNT encountered in the 67th Precinct, the officers generally believed they had had some impact in both precincts, at least during the short term of their intervention. One officer claimed that street-sales were less "blatant" than they had been before TNT. He reported that, driving through the 70th Precinct in the past, on his way home from work, he had frequently been solicited by street dealers hawking their wares. After two months of TNT, he said he no longer saw that type of aggressive marketing to strangers. Officers reported similar changes along some of the commercial strips in the 67th Precinct.

TNT officers reported displacement of some street drug traffic to indoor locations in both precincts. Although some undercovers had on occasion been steered to a new location a few blocks away, when sellers relocated, widespread geographic displacement was not reported in either precinct. TNT staff and other Department personnel had anticipated the apparent lack of geographic displacement within these study precincts, as it was their view that drug traffic in these precincts was already flourishing in the areas that could support it. (Areas dominated by single-family private homes were far more resistant to drug-traffickers than the areas in which the local drug markets flourished and, according to the personnel interviewed, drug sellers had already staked claim to the usable territories.)

TNT staff generally believed that TNT had the capacity to "get drugs off the street" in some key locations within target areas, but not in others. Many suspected that the effects might be short-lived, and TNT officers were generally skeptical about their ability to reduce the overall volume of drug sales in target areas. Nevertheless, it was common for TNT officers to argue that the effects of TNT on local drug markets would be stronger if the courts "backed them up" more.

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<sup>42</sup> Ethnographic respondents and community leaders interviewed for the panel survey also reported substantial improvements in this area (see Chapters Four and Five).

2. *Criminal Justice Outcomes of TNT Arrests, and Costs of Processing Them.* One of the most frequently asked questions at TNT community meetings was: What happens to TNT arrests in the criminal justice system? Community residents repeatedly asked for information about outcomes, about how long it would take before cases were processed, about when more information on outcomes would be available, and about whether the district attorney's office had sufficient resources to process the TNT arrests. These questions generally reflected a larger concern about "revolving-door justice" — about individuals arrested by TNT being back on the streets in a few days. But very little information was provided in response to these questions at the community meetings observed by Vera researchers. The TNT unit itself did not systematically receive court data on their arrests, which is not at all unusual in the NYPD, nor did the unit make special efforts to secure the data. Most TNT officers and commanders interviewed were unaware of studies, produced by the city's Criminal Justice Agency (CJA), of the court outcomes of TNT and other narcotics cases.

Many TNT officers expressed even more concern about the "revolving door justice" than community residents. A number of them described a court system too "backed-up" to dispose of TNT arrests in a way that would permit TNT to be effective, and a jail system too crowded for judges to be tough enough.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, several officers remarked, in terms similar to the illustrations below, about the speed with which defendants returned to the streets:

We locked up a guy on Saturday night, and he was up again on Wednesday, and he came close to getting locked up last night. You know, a lot of these guys, you lock them up and they say: "I know the system, I'll be out before you're done with the paperwork."

You see people you just locked up walking around on the street a few days later.

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<sup>43</sup> Some commentators argued that the volume of TNT arrests was "jamming" the criminal justice system so much that other individuals arrested on serious charges were being released too quickly (e.g., "Dave [Mayor David Dinkins] May Dump TNT Cops for Being Too Good," *New York Post*, February 16, 1990). In recent years, the association between increased narcotics enforcement and increased crowding in jails, courts and prisons has been widely recognized. Although various criminal justice officials periodically complained that TNT had been implemented without sufficient regard for the system's capacity to process the arrests it produced, by 1990 the signs of excessive strain on the criminal justice system (e.g., arrest-to-arraignment time) seemed to have stabilized (Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 1990). The Bar Association report attributed this in part to a reduced number of arrests for other types of offenses. Other commentators (e.g., Belenko, 1990) point to the increased efficiency produced by specialized narcotics court parts ("N parts") that were instituted in recent years in New York City. In any case, according to some criminal justice observers, by 1990 the judicial system "was not much more clogged *with* TNT than it was before TNT" (Frankel and Freeland, 1990: 108).

But a minority of TNT officers ventured the view that the criminal justice system was actually mounting an adequate response, pointing out that many of those who returned quickly to the streets had been bailed out and still faced the possibility of jail time, or noting that some TNT arrests resulted in harsher sentences than some robbery arrests (“They’re getting locked up for two vials of crack!”). One officer summed up this minority view: “A street buy-and-bust shouldn’t be a problem in court. They plead out. Those that don’t end up going to jail for six years.”

In fact, research by the Criminal Justice Agency shows that New York City courts have, in recent years, treated felony narcotics cases with a seriousness that is remarkable when the results are compared to most TNT officers’ expectations (Belenko *et al.*, 1990).<sup>44</sup> Although there was a small drop in the proportion of custodial sentences meted out for felony drug convictions between 1986 and 1988, sentencing in felony drug cases since 1983 has been getting increasingly severe — more so than in non-drug felonies. Belenko attributes this, at least in part, to the evidentiary strength of arrests generated by undercover “buy and bust” — the primary tactic employed by TNT. Belenko’s research reveals that approximately two-thirds of narcotics felonies were sent to Supreme Court for disposition, compared to a little over a third (37%) of non-drug felonies. In the Supreme Court, drug felonies were somewhat more likely to end in conviction (95%) than non-drug felonies (87%), although defendants arrested on narcotics charges and convicted in Supreme Court were somewhat less likely to receive custodial sentences (59%) than defendants who were convicted in Supreme Court after arrest on non-drug charges (66%).

CJA research that focused explicitly on the processing of TNT arrests confirms these patterns (Solomon, 1989). Although there was some variation by borough in the processing of TNT arrests, nearly two-thirds of TNT felony arrest cases were transferred to Supreme Court (ranging from 58% to 66% for various TNT target areas); over 90% of these cases led to conviction; and a substantial proportion of defendants whose cases were convicted in Supreme Court received incarcerative sentences (*e.g.*, 72% in Queens).

To determine whether the court processing of Brooklyn South TNT cases was comparable, Vera researchers gathered court disposition data from CJA on TNT arrests in the 70th Precinct, the first study precinct (*see* Appendix C for a complete review of case outcomes). Because the 70th Precinct produced a higher proportion of misdemeanor arrests than did other TNT target areas, it is not surprising that a higher *overall* proportion of arrests were disposed in Criminal Court. But

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<sup>44</sup> As Belenko points out, the most common crack-related charge, B-felony sale, “carries the same penal law severity as armed robbery, first degree rape, and first degree manslaughter” (1990: 4). Typically, TNT arrests for B-felony crack sales involve two to four vials of crack — a \$10 or \$20 purchase.

dispositions in TNT felony narcotics arrests from the 70th Precinct closely parallel the dispositions of felony narcotics arrests made by other TNT units: 58% of arraigned TNT felony arrests were transferred to Supreme Court; 94% of the cases no longer pending in Supreme Court ended in conviction (there were outstanding warrants in 23 of these cases at the time of data collection); and 90% of those sentenced in Supreme Court were incarcerated (jail, 48%; prison, 43%). These data about the disposition of TNT arrests point to consistency in the processing of felony narcotics arrests across boroughs. In recent years, felony narcotics cases have been treated very seriously in New York City. New York State's predicate felony statute (PL 70.06), which specifies prison terms upon felony conviction for individuals previously sentenced on felony charges, makes prison sentences mandatory in a substantial number of drug felony cases.

The complaint so frequently voiced by Brooklyn South's TNT officers — that the failure of the criminal justice system to “back up” TNT arrests diminished its effect on drug markets — cannot be dismissed entirely, but it is not well supported by these data. The ability of the criminal justice system to absorb TNT arrests without apparent reduction in conviction rates and sentence severity is in part the result of some very substantial financial investments made by the city for just that purpose.<sup>45</sup> The *Message of the Mayor*, accompanying New York City's budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1990, noted that \$110 million had been added to the budgets of the Department of Correction and other agencies affected by TNT operations in the middle of the 1989 fiscal year and, in anticipation of an expansion of TNT in the coming fiscal year, committed substantially more new funds to non-police criminal justice agencies than to the Police Department itself:

Of the 153,766 total felony arrests in 1988, there were 43,953 dangerous drug felony arrests accounting for over 28 percent of the total. In comparison, there were 20,927 arrests for dangerous drug felonies in 1985 which was 18.5 percent of total felony arrests. Not only have the number of felony drug arrests increased significantly in the last few years (a 110% increase from 1985 to 1988), but the type of drug arrests has changed markedly. For instance, there were 13,601 total arrests for the cocaine derivative crack in 1987 (felonies and misdemeanors). In 1988, this

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<sup>45</sup> The costs of street-level enforcement strategies can be enormous. As Kleiman (1992) observes:

The great problem with low-level enforcement directed at drugs with established mass markets is sheer scale. Making retail-level drug arrests is relatively easy; there is perhaps no other police activity so “productive” as measured in arrests per officer-hour. But productivity for police is workload for prosecutors and courts, and a crowding crisis for the prisons and jails. A diligent retail-level enforcement program can all too easily bring the rest of the criminal justice system to a screeching halt, or (to avoid that) be virtually nullified by the failure of that system to enforce substantial punishment on the dealers arrested. (138)



figure jumped to 38,600, a 184% increase (felony crack arrests rose from 7,784 in 1987 to 22,213 in 1988, a 185% increase). . . .

Drug arrests will continue to grow in 1990 as a result of a major City-wide enforcement initiative . . . . Starting on November 15, 1988, the City initiated a full expansion of the Tactical Narcotics Team (TNT) concept . . . . Funding has been provided for five additional TNT units, each consisting of 117 police officers . . . . The full operation of TNT City-wide will result in a projected total [increase] of 21,000 narcotics arrests in Fiscal Year 1990. (Dickstein, 1989: 117)

After the investments called for in the budget were made, the city's Office of Management and Budget calculated the operating costs of TNT for the year as follows:<sup>46</sup>

Police	\$32,573,000
Corrections	21,221,000
District Attorneys	3,186,000
Legal Aid	2,765,000
Intermediate Sanctions Programs	1,750,000
Probation	935,000
Criminal Justice Agency	525,000
	<u>\$62,995,000</u>

3. *Quantity vs. Quality: Departmental Assessments of TNT. The "Numbers."* Some Department personnel not assigned to TNT but interviewed for this research characterized TNT as "a numbers operation" — that is, a unit that does not address problems strategically but generates a volume of arrests that satisfies productivity criteria. They viewed the TNT units as more concerned with quantity than quality. One precinct officer illustrated the point by saying TNT arrested "junkies" — low-level user-dealers who were employed by the "real" dealers, who did not sell on the street and were not affected by TNT enforcement actions. Another contended that TNT was less interested in eliminating an underlying condition (*e.g.*, an indoor drug location; a known supplier) than in generating statistics; he went on to imply that TNT officers might resent the "closing down" of locations, where little could be gained from further buy-and-bust action if it would "hurt the numbers."<sup>47</sup>

Given the difficulties any police agency faces, when trying to implement a strategy that requires the development of operationally effective relationships with

<sup>46</sup> Personal communication from the Office of Management and Budget.

<sup>47</sup> The potential validity of this argument is illustrated by the perspective of some officers assigned to the TNT car confiscation module, which relied on continuing market activity at known drive-by locations to generate arrests of drug purchasers whose vehicles could be seized.

the community and with other government agencies,<sup>48</sup> it should not be surprising that an emphasis on "the numbers" emerged in the implementation of TNT. As Kleiman (1992) has observed: "Making retail-level drug arrests is relatively easy; there is perhaps no other police activity so 'productive' as measured in arrests per officer-hour." (138)

Other NYPD personnel argued that TNT's focus on "numbers" was entirely appropriate, because "the numbers are taken from real problem areas," because street-level arrests are visible to community residents in problem areas, and because TNT's high volume of arrests at recognized drug "hot spots" is a strategically sound way to respond to the community's demand that something be done.

Criticism of TNT as a "numbers operation" was rare within the TNT unit itself, although one TNT investigator complained that "... the numbers are all that's important", pointing out that modules were being held accountable to produce them. (TNT modules routinely put in longer days if the "numbers" weren't high enough. TNT supervisors reviewed the "numbers" regularly, and some complained about working in the 67th Precinct because "... the numbers just aren't there".) But most TNT personnel simply approved of a focus on volume of arrests as the most important contribution TNT could make to attacking the curbside drug markets.

**Arrest quality.** According to one TNT supervisor, the "only valid criticism" of TNT would be if the unit was "not producing good-quality felony arrests." By "good quality" he meant arrests of sufficient evidentiary strength to be readily "convictable." Even non-TNT Departmental personnel acknowledged the relative evidentiary strength of TNT buy-and-bust cases. In contrast to narcotics arrests based on observation, TNT arrests generally were bolstered by a documented drug purchase, routine verification of the identity of suspects by undercover officers, recovery of marked purchase money and, in many instances, supplementary arrests of users who had purchased drugs from the arrested dealer. TNT staff frequently pointed out that precinct personnel did not have the capacity to make arrests of comparable quality.

Nevertheless, in discussions of arrest quality, TNT officers often implied that major cases (by which they meant arrests of major dealers) were of higher "quality" than typical street-level buy-and-busts. The excitement generated within the TNT unit by the unanticipated apprehension of a major dealer, the occasional serving of a warrant on an identified indoor location, or an on-going investigation of a commercial establishment dealing in relatively large quantities of cocaine bespoke an implicit consensus that higher-level cases were superior in "quality." But the Brooklyn South TNT got involved in such cases only occasionally during the course of this research. Although some of the TNT arrests may have led, through the

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<sup>48</sup> See McElroy, *et. al*, 1992.

NITRO unit, to major cases for Narcotics District personnel to pursue, that process was invisible to members of the TNT unit.

When speaking of arrest “quality” to the researchers, TNT personnel did not make much reference to the impact of particular arrests on the community or its quality of life. An exception was a supervisor who argued that misdemeanor marijuana arrests, at locations that were genuine community problems, could be just as important as felony arrests for crack sales at less strategically important locations. But arrest quality was more typically defined in terms of evidentiary strength, charge seriousness (felonies rather than misdemeanors) and the volume of drugs and property confiscated. The seriousness of the court's response to TNT felony arrests, although not widely recognized within TNT, suggests that the unit got the evidentiary strength it valued.

**Allegations of police abuse.** Another theme emerging from the researchers' interviews with Department personnel was their hope that the relatively intense supervision afforded by TNT's command structure would reduce the risk of officer corruption and abuse. Department personnel often articulated the view that precinct-based narcotics enforcement is prone to corruption or allegations of corruption (*e.g.*, accepting bribes for non-enforcement, confiscation of drugs or money for personal gain) and other abuses (illegal search, planting drugs or “flaking”, unnecessary use of force). They believed that TNT, because it is a centralized narcotics detail not permanently stationed in any particular precinct, and because it provides high levels of dedicated supervision and tight fiscal controls, could avoid such problems. These hopes and expectations may have been shaken by reports of brutality and over-zealous enforcement in the Brooklyn North TNT unit in the spring of 1991, after the conclusion of Vera's research period.<sup>49</sup> The allegations against TNT personnel in Brooklyn North involved illegal search and seizure and unnecessary force to restrain arrested suspects, rather than allegations of corruption.

The Vera researchers did not attempt to compare the relative likelihood of TNT officers becoming the subject of complaints of these types to the likelihood of such complaints in other assignments,<sup>50</sup> because they did not expect a substantial number of complaints would be filed against TNT officers. CCRB data show that officers working in most centralized special units (with the exception of Highway

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, “Cop Beatings Ignored,” by David Kocieniewski, *New York Newsday*, May 13, 1991, p. 8. More recent media accounts have focused on allegations that TNT units in both Brooklyn South and Brooklyn North falsified evidence to obtain search warrants (see “Chief Warns of Corruption in Drug Unit,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> In New York City, complaints alleging corruption are the province of the NYPD's Internal Affairs Division, the IAD. Complaints of other types (allegations of force, abuse, discourtesy or ethnic slur) are the province of the Civilian Complaint Review Board, the CCRB.

and Traffic) are less likely to receive civilian complaints than officers assigned to patrol (Sviridoff and McElroy, 1988). TNT command staff, who routinely receive a record of any CCRB complaint filed against an officer in their command, reported that TNT officers working in Brooklyn South received very few civilian complaints during the research period. One complaint, filed against an officer working in the 67th Precinct, was defined as retaliatory in nature.<sup>51</sup> A few other civilian complaints that arose during the research were described as stemming from mistaken identifications during enforcement activities that led subsequently to voided arrests. For example, an undercover officer in the 67th Precinct reported having purchased drugs from a black female in a gray Chrysler. The investigative teams found and arrested a 15-year-old girl, sitting in a gray Chrysler, and asked the undercovers to drive by and confirm the identification of the suspect. The undercover officers reported that the girl was not the seller and the investigators voided the arrest. While they were doing so, the girl's mother and uncle came out of their apartment building and got into an altercation with TNT staff about the arrest. They not only filed a civilian complaint alleging wrongful arrest, they also filed a civil suit alleging that TNT officers relied on racial profiling to conduct narcotics enforcement.

Following this incident, a captain from the investigative branch of the CCRB came to a TNT training session in Brooklyn South to address concerns within the unit about such complaints. He encouraged TNT staff to continue to document all enforcement actions by filing the proper forms (e.g., voiding arrests, documenting all "stop and frisk" activity) and keeping records of civilian encounters in their memo books. One TNT officer worried that TNT enforcement activities might put the unit's officers at unusual risk of receiving complaints of unnecessary force, saying that TNT investigators routinely push suspects against walls to be frisked: "We're TNT. 'Push and shove' [a CCRB code for an allegation of unnecessary force] is what we do," he said. The CCRB representative replied by assuring the TNT staff that CCRB investigators recognized that force was necessary in some types of enforcement and by re-emphasizing the need for proper documentation of "stop and frisk" activity.

The researchers also gathered information about IAD complaints filed against members of the unit, because these complaints are not routinely reported to TNT supervisors and, therefore, could not be discussed with them. Complaints that arose from off-duty incidents were excluded (e.g., an alleged assault against a family member) as were complaints arising from enforcement activity in precincts not the subject of this research (e.g., the 60th Precinct). Between December 5, 1989 and

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<sup>51</sup> It is recognized within the CCRB that officers assigned to narcotics details are relatively likely to be targets of civilian complaints, some of which are believed to be retaliatory complaints filed by disgruntled drug dealers. Yet this practice is believed to affect precinct personnel (e.g., SNEU or CPOP officers, who become known to drug traffickers) more than it affects officers assigned to the Narcotics Division (McElroy, Cosgrove and Sadd, 1990).

September 5, 1990 (the originally scheduled termination date of the enforcement period in the study precincts), four IAD complaints were filed against TNT officers in Brooklyn South, involving enforcement activity in a study precinct or unidentified precinct. These complaints included three allegations of larceny (typically, money missing after an arrest) and one allegation that an officer had protected a dealer. Two complaints were disposed as unsubstantiated, one complaint was still open at the time of data collection, and one complaint was disposed as substantiated, although it was classified by IAD staff as involving a “personal grudge.”

The researchers' observation of the activity in the TNT modules did reveal one aspect of TNT enforcement that might be expected to produce allegations of abuse of authority — the search for drugs to bolster the evidentiary strength of criminal cases involving felony narcotics sales. According to Departmental procedure, officers are entitled to pat down suspects to search for a weapon, but they are not entitled to search for drugs until an arrest has been made, even given probable cause to believe that drugs have been sold or purchased; officers are not entitled to search suspects' pockets for drugs until the suspects have been arrested. In some instances, however, TNT officers appeared to take short cuts, searching for drugs (*e.g.*, empty suspects' pockets) while they were frisking them for weapons.

In sum, data on CCRB and IAD complaints filed against TNT officers in Brooklyn South do not suggest a high volume or particular pattern of complaints alleging abusive behavior.

4. *Ancillary Crime.* Many proponents of TNT expected intensive street-level enforcement not only to reduce drug sales, but also to reduce the volume of predatory street crime in the vicinity of the targeted markets. The rationale for this hypothesis has several parts: A substantial amount of predatory street crime can be directly linked to the time and place of drug trafficking; some users are known to finance drug purchases by robbery, larceny, prostitution and other income-generating crimes; and turf disputes can get fatal. It seems to follow that reducing the volume of drug sales at a market location should bring reductions in the ancillary street crime. Even if the market were not much constrained by TNT enforcement activity, it might be thought likely that the publicized presence of large numbers of additional police at identified drug locations would deter other types of crime there. And, because street drug sellers do commit other crimes, it might be anticipated that arresting some of them on drug charges would make their former turf safer.

In the study precincts, police personnel confirmed that a disproportionate volume of almost all types of crime (robberies, assaults, homicides) occurred in the TNT target areas and were concentrated near drug markets there. (The exception was domestic burglary, which tends to be concentrated in more affluent areas of these precincts.) To test the hypothesis that TNT would reduce ancillary crime, the

researchers collected data on homicide, robbery, burglary and felonious assault complaints — for the TNT experimental precincts, the comparison precinct, and the Brooklyn South patrol borough as a whole. For the 67th and 70th precincts, data were collected forward from the date the TNT enforcement period began, through the fourth month after it ended; in addition, these data were collected for the two years prior to the start of the TNT period. For the comparison precinct (the 71st) and for the patrol borough as a whole, data were collected for the period spanning the data-collection periods for both the 67th precinct and the 70th precinct. (For precise dates, *see* Appendix D.)

To find any “TNT effects” on ancillary crime, these data were subjected to two types of analysis. The first, apparently commonsensical approach was to compare the number of each type of crime reported during the TNT period with the number reported in the same months of the previous year. The second, more precise approach was an “interrupted time series analysis.” Both analyses used crime complaint data for the whole TNT precinct, not just the TNT target areas. Had data been available for the smaller TNT target areas or, even better, for “hot spots” within them, any effect TNT had on ancillary crime might have been easier to spot.<sup>52</sup>

The first approach is similar to the analyses routinely employed by the NYPD and other departments; it allows one to see at a glance the percent of increase or decrease, from one period to another, in a specific crime in a particular area. This method, however, does not control for effects of random or other types of fluctuations. What appears to be an reduction or an increase may be no more than the kind of statistical “noise” that should be filtered out before a judgment is made. Interrupted time series analysis allows one to assess whether an observed change is more likely to be the result of an intervention (*e.g.*, TNT) or is more likely due to seasonal variation, random fluctuations, or some other type of change. Because of its sophistication, however, the results of such analysis are more difficult to present and more difficult for the non-technical reader to interpret. Therefore, both sets of analyses are presented and discussed in Appendix D.

The importance of using the more sophisticated statistical approach, the time series analysis, is underscored in this case by the different results the two types of analysis produce. The time series analyses indicated that the TNT intervention had no statistically significant effects on ancillary crime in either the 67th or the 70th precinct — despite the apparent TNT effects seen, in Appendix D, from comparisons of the percentage change in complaints for particular types of crime in the 67th or 70th precinct (during the three months TNT was there) with the same statistics for either the comparison precinct (the 71st) or the patrol borough as a whole.

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<sup>52</sup> The reasons for this approach, and the potential bias associated with it, are discussed more fully in Appendix D.

For example, burglary complaints in the 67th precinct were 12.3% lower during the TNT intervention than in the same period in the previous year, while for the Brooklyn South patrol borough as a whole, burglary complaints were 18% higher during that period than a year earlier. That looks like a “TNT effect.” But there is a telling lack of consistency in these comparisons, across types of crime complaints and across precincts. For example: Burglary complaints were down during the TNT period in the 70th precinct too — 4.6% lower than for the same period the previous year — but burglary complaints for the patrol borough as a whole were down 4.9% for the comparable months, suggesting no “TNT effect.”

These two periods (December 1989 through February 1990 for TNT in the 70th precinct, and March through May 1990 for TNT in the 67th) followed one another without a break, yet Brooklyn South showed an 18% increase in burglaries for the one three-month period and a 4.9% decrease for the other. Whatever caused such large fluctuations in Brooklyn South cannot be discerned from the data, and confound any attempt to gauge TNT's effect by making simple comparisons with crime rates in comparable periods of the preceding year.

The time series analysis, on the other hand, permits assessment of an intervention's effects after factoring in the effects of random or seasonal variation. The bottom line is that, despite the high number of TNT arrests (particularly in the 70th precinct), the time series analysis do not suggest that TNT reduced ancillary street crime.<sup>53</sup>

#### IV. Involving the Community

##### A. Community Meetings

When TNT enters a new target area, an introductory public meeting is convened, featuring high-ranking Department personnel, local TNT staff, precinct commanders, community leaders and local politicians, and representatives of agencies included in the City Anti-Drug Task Force that was assembled for TNT.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The time series analysis is presented in some detail in Appendix D. It should be noted that the data used in both sets of analyses were crime complaints for the precincts as a whole, and not just for the TNT target areas. The reasons for this approach and the potential bias associated with it are discussed more fully in Appendix D.

<sup>54</sup> In addition to the Police Department and the Office of the Mayor, the following New York City agencies were formally members of the consortium formed for TNT: the Department of Buildings; the Department of Consumer Affairs; the Department of Correction; the Office of the Coordinator of Criminal Justice (the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety after January, 1990); the Board of Education; the Department of Finance; the Department of General Services (Division of Real Property); the Department of Health; the Housing Authority; the Housing Authority Police Department; the Department of Housing Preservation and Development; the Department of Juvenile Justice; the Law Department (Corporation Counsel); the Office of Midtown Enforcement; the Department of Parks and Recreation; the Department of Probation; the Department of Sanitation; the

*footnote continued*

These community meetings are designed to use TNT's imminent arrival both to convey to those living and working in the area some understanding of TNT operations, and to generate community enthusiasm, support and cooperation. At the meetings, the most obvious effort to engage residents in making TNT a success is to solicit their direct enrollment with the citywide "Drugbusters" hotline, which was established to make it easy for citizens to provide confidential tips to the police about the drug traffic they observe. Registered "Drugbusters" can also call in, using a personal identification number, to find out what the police did in response to information they provide.

TNT holds a second community meeting after it has been in a target area for about two months, to elicit community feedback and to generate more support for TNT operations. A final community meeting is held at the end of a TNT enforcement period to tell the community what has been accomplished (*e.g.*, the number and types of arrests, the number of cars confiscated, the volume of drugs and money seized). TNT commanders and officers said that they were, in general, pleased with the reception they got at the community meetings in Brooklyn South. At the good-bye meeting in the 70th Precinct, TNT's plain-clothes officers were treated to a standing ovation.

TNT community meetings in the 70th Precinct were generally well-attended (the neighborhood newspaper, *Flatbush Life*, estimated the audiences between 200 and 350, which corresponds to what the researchers observed). Community meetings in the 67th Precinct, on the other hand, were sparsely attended; the audiences numbered less than 20, the majority of whom were agency and public officials. Although all the community meetings in the 70th Precinct were held at night, to increase the likelihood that working residents would attend, only one of the three 67th Precinct meetings was held at night and changing to a nighttime meeting did not increase the audience. Residents of the 67th Precinct seemed less aware of TNT, less interested in it, or both.

Although it was easy to see that the 70th Precinct meetings were racially mixed, the researchers could not by observation determine *where* in the precinct those in attendance resided. Some community leaders residing in the relatively affluent southern portion of the precinct were easily identified, but it was not clear whether residents of the less-affluent northern sector — the target for most of TNT's enforcement efforts in the precinct — were present in substantial numbers.

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*footnote continued...*

Department of Social Services (Human Resources Administration); the Taxi and Limousine Commission; the Department of Transportation; and the Youth Bureau.



## B. Getting and Using Information about Drug Traffic from the Community

In addition to the effort to enroll residents as Drugbusters directly at TNT community meetings, Drugbuster posters were placed in commercial establishments and precinct personnel recruited as well. Between the beginning of the Drugbusters hotline in October 1988 and the start of the research in December 1989, a substantial number of 70th Precinct residents had already enrolled (261). There were fewer Drugbusters enrolled in the other study precincts (57 in the 67th Precinct, and 22 in the 71st). By the end of December 1990, the number of Drugbusters had grown in all three precincts, but the growth was much greater in the 71st Precinct (192 new Drugbusters, an 873% increase), which was the comparison precinct in which TNT was not deployed during the period. The 70th Precinct enrolled 107 new Drugbusters (a 41% increase) and the 67th Precinct enrolled 27 (a 47% increase).

Because Drugbuster enrollment was greatest in the study precinct where TNT was *not* deployed, the increases appear unrelated to the community meetings or other elements of the TNT initiative. In fact, during the period TNT operated in the 70th Precinct, only eight additional Drugbusters were recruited — a 2% increase — and most of the growth occurred well after TNT left the precinct. During the TNT enforcement period, Drugbusters called in only four tips from the 70th Precinct, for an annualized rate of 16/year (no different from the rate of 15/year over the preceding year). In the 67th Precinct, *every* precinct resident who enrolled in Drugbusters during the calendar year signed up during the TNT period, but there were only 27 enrolled. 67th Precinct Drugbusters called in only two tips during the three-month TNT enforcement period. The researchers were told that some of 70th Precinct Drugbuster tips, received during the TNT period in that precinct, led to investigations; but it is clear that residents in the study precincts were not inspired to use the Drugbuster hotline to help shape TNT deployment in the target areas.

Of course, residents of the study precincts could and did call Brooklyn South TNT headquarters directly to pass along information about local drug trafficking. These complaints were officially recorded and passed on to the Narcotics District. Although the researchers did not routinely review the log book in which these telephone messages were recorded, they did examine the first two months of messages (December 5, 1989 through February 13, 1990) to get a sense of the information typically conveyed. During this two-month period, 14 complaints were called in to Brooklyn South TNT headquarters about drug trafficking in the 70th Precinct. Most were anonymous. Generally, they concerned drug sales at indoor locations, and sometimes a dealer's name or an apartment number was supplied. Two of the callers offered to let narcotics officers use their apartments for observation.

Only one Drugbuster tip, from the 67th Precinct, led to a TNT arrest in the study precincts. Overall, the volume of information about drug markets reported by residents of the study precincts to the Drugbusters hotline or to TNT headquarters

was disappointing for an initiative that for strategic reasons sought to engage the community in the enforcement effort.

In interviews, TNT command staff repeatedly spoke of the importance of community residents serving as the “eyes and ears” of the Department, but some TNT officers did concede that community residents who were not buyers or sellers themselves were not likely to be primary sources of the information TNT could use. One officer pointed out that the information target area residents could provide on narcotics locations was not likely to be *new* information to TNT;<sup>55</sup> in his view, TNT would be more likely to value additional detail on the identity of sellers or the type of drugs sold. Another officer noted that tips from the community lost value quickly: “By the time the complaints are processed by One Police Plaza, typed and broken down, and sent to the Borough and then to the precinct, they're pretty stale.”

### C. Other Efforts to Engage the Community

Although TNT command staff met with a community board representative on one occasion to discuss specific drug locations in a target area, direct interaction between TNT command staff and community leaders was infrequent. TNT did attempt to make community residents aware of its presence in the target areas by publicizing its accomplishments in local newspapers. *Flatbush Life*, for example, prominently featured articles about TNT community meetings in both study precincts. At one community meeting, a local resident volunteered to help TNT with this kind of outreach:

I run a small newsletter, and there are 10 or 15 groups in the community like mine who would love to circulate flyers or posters or notices about TNT and the phone numbers to call. We would be willing to distribute materials. Do you have anything like this?

The household survey data, reported in Chapter Five, suggest that outreach through the media generally, and through the local press, did more than the community meetings to spread the word about TNT, but that it did not get very much information about the initiative to TNT target area residents.

Of course, TNT did not depend entirely on community meetings, media, and word of mouth to inform the community of its presence and its operations: Residents of the target areas were expected to notice TNT in action. Without doubt, the drug sellers and users in those areas did — TNT officers believed they were only too aware:

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<sup>55</sup> When TNT enters a target area, precinct captains and Narcotics District personnel compile a detailed list of street-level drug trafficking locations. During the enforcement period, TNT officers revise their working list of narcotics locations, based on their own experience in the area and on informal exchanges of information with other TNT personnel, District personnel and precinct officers.

They definitely know we're there. They know our cars.

Once they see two white guys drive by in a car. that's it, they shut down.

[If they don't recognize us yet], in a little while they definitely will. Like in the 72, it was the same as riding in a blue and white.<sup>56</sup>

So that those not involved in the drug markets might become at least as aware of TNT as the sellers and users, command staff frequently reminded the plain-clothes back-up teams to wear jackets that visibly identified them as members of TNT: "People doing seizures should wear TNT jackets and [have their] badges displayed. It's important that the community sees us." The officers themselves tended to skepticism about this. As one officer put it, residents who were aware of TNT's presence knew about it through the press and community announcements, "not because of our T-shirts". But some officers ruminated about the tension between TNT's undercover buy-and-bust tactics (noting that community residents "don't notice a plainclothes operation") and its strategic need for the community to be aware of TNT's accomplishments and to be encouraged by them to organize and "reclaim their streets." The following extract from a researcher's fieldnotes illustrates the point:

One officer said that most community residents did not see TNT at work. He thought that they "stayed behind closed doors" and were not often in a position to see TNT arrests. Another officer reported on a community meeting. He said that no one at the meeting had seen TNT working in an area where TNT had been quite active: "A lot of people just don't see TNT." (Fieldnotes)

One TNT officer, concerned that TNT's effort to make the community aware of its presence might compromise safety, put a different twist on the point:

It's not undercover. That's ridiculous. . . . They give the community a blow-by-blow of everything we do. . . . They'll [the dealers] know when we're gone. They'll [TNT commanders] put out a press release, just like they did when we came here.

When researchers observed enforcement actions, they saw passers-by stop and watch when a TNT arrest occurred on the street, but the researchers could also see that there was not always a way for the passers-by to know the nature of the police activity they were watching. Similarly, when the TNT car confiscation module team stopped traffic during search and arrest proceedings, it was impossible for other motorists and even passing pedestrians not to notice: Passers-by occasionally waved to the officers — and occasionally found less helpful ways to acknowledge the presence of plain-clothes officers in back-up unit cars (e.g., "Look,

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<sup>56</sup> This belief was confirmed by the ethnographic researchers, who found that the dealers and regular users in target areas were very familiar with the rental cars used by TNT back-up units and with the way those cars would be positioned around a target location.

baby, you got the police waiting for you"). But even the activity of the car confiscation module was not obviously *TNT* activity to those who saw it.

These problems did not beset the 20-officer uniformed *TNT* component assigned to the 70th Precinct, as an experiment, during the "maintenance" period following the 90-day *TNT* enforcement period. These officers, whose roles were explicitly "high-visibility," had no doubts about the value of being seen, and being seen as *TNT*: As one of them told the researchers, "I want them to see *TNT* on my lapel."

When residents did recognize that *TNT* was active in their neighborhood, they would sometimes let the officers know they were appreciated. One such exchange was recorded in a researcher's fieldnotes:

Yo, what's up with this? Y'all are here every day now.

What do you mean what's up with it? We're *TNT*. We're here every day. Believe it or not, someone is out selling drugs every day. Amazing.

Well, I wish y'all luck. (Fieldnotes)

But the fieldnotes also describe an incident involving a confrontation between relatives of a suspect, who resided in the target area, and *TNT* officers making the arrest:

The officers' cars are parked and they are locking up a black woman in her mid- to late thirties. She is very upset. She keeps yelling: "I didn't do nothing! All I did was use the telephone!" There is a broad range of reactions from the crowd. One woman is saying: "Child, go call your grandmother, go call your grandmother down." Apparently she is addressing the arrested woman's son, who appears to be in his early teens. "That's my son right there. Oh no!" shouts the arrested woman.

The officers quickly put her in the back of a car, not the van. The whole team drives down the block, where they attempt to transfer her to the van. The woman's son and some hangers-on follow the team down the block. The son gets in a small verbal confrontation, belligerently asking what his mother is being arrested for. The woman's grandmother shows up and asks the same questions, but more deferentially. She seems less surprised and outraged than the son. (Fieldnotes)

The *TNT* officers described this incident as an example of precisely what they did not want happening during their enforcement activity. *TNT* officers tried to avoid confrontations with relatives of suspects and were encouraged to "walk away" when they occurred.

From their observations of *TNT* enforcement action, it was apparent to the researchers that residents of the surrounding community often did notice *TNT* making arrests. But it was not clear that this evidence of *TNT*'s presence was equally apparent to all segments of the community, and the response of those watching was mixed — sometimes it was guarded, sometimes enthusiastically supportive, sometimes openly antagonistic. After all, the "community" found on the streets of

the TNT target areas consisted of local residents and merchants and even passers-by, some of whom loathed the drug markets and some of whom had more complicated feelings about it, as well as participants in the drug market under attack.

## V. TNT Inter-Agency Initiatives

As noted above, the 25-agency Anti-Drug Abuse Task Force, formed to serve the inter-agency dimension of the TNT initiative, was given considerable play at TNT community meetings. In the 70th Precinct, for example, the audience at the good-bye community meeting was given detailed information about various actions in the target area during the TNT period by agencies other than the Police Department: the number of inspections by the Department of Consumer Affairs, by the Department of Buildings and by the Fire Department; the number of summonses issued by the Taxi and Limousine Commission; the number of cars towed by the Department of Sanitation; the number of arrests made by Transit Police at local subway stations; the number of parole violators apprehended; and the location and type of clean-up activities in local parks. But it was not claimed, nor could it be, that all or even most of these were the result of the TNT initiative.

There was little evidence of day-to-day inter-agency work at the TNT module level. Officers in the TNT modules rarely spoke of this aspect of the initiative, and when asked, they did not see it as central to the TNT approach. Inter-agency work was largely the province of TNT administrative staff, including an administrative sergeant and statistical analysis officers, who coordinated inter-agency activities for Brooklyn South TNT. The TNT statistical analysis officers were expected to notify various agencies (*e.g.*, Buildings, Fire, Taxi and Limousine) about particular locations in a target area, known to be drug locations, where a non-police enforcement action might help. They also accompanied investigators from these other agencies, on scheduled inspections at these locations. It was expected that the inspections would produce summonses for administrative code violations, thereby exerting additional pressure on landlords or merchants to help close down drug market activity there. Statistical analysis officers were also responsible for maintaining a log of all referrals to other agencies, and for notifying the appropriate agencies when TNT arrested city employees (a not uncommon occurrence).

The inter-agency log book showed that Brooklyn South TNT staff participated in 35 building and fire inspections in the 70th Precinct and 16 building and fire inspections in the 67th Precinct. They also visited three car bases with a TLC inspector (two sites were jointly inspected with building and fire inspectors) and made one referral to the Department of Health in these precincts. Several of the locations inspected were associated with high levels of TNT arrest activity (52 arrests at one such location, 15 at another) or were adjacent to locations frequently targeted by TNT. But the TNT administrative staff reported that the inspections

detected few violations and resulted in few summonses. They explained that buildings in these target areas were not as “decrepit” as buildings in TNT target areas in some other parts of the city, and were less often vulnerable to citation for building or fire code violations.

The particular characteristics of the 70th and 67th precincts also help explain why there was so little joint effort between these TNT target areas and city agencies in the consortium that were much more actively engaged in other TNT target areas. Brooklyn South TNT staff pointed out that there are very few city-owned buildings in these target precincts, ruling out opportunities for involving the Department of Housing Preservation (HPD), an agency widely recognized for being very active in narcotics enforcement efforts — including TNT — in other areas. They also reported that the TNT target areas offered few opportunities to involve the Departments of Parks or Consumer Affairs.

From the researchers' interviews with precinct and administrative personnel, it became clear that many of the inter-agency activities reported at the community meetings had not been initiated by the TNT staff. For example, shortly before TNT entered the 70th Precinct, the precinct's commanding officer called the Department of Sanitation and had over 200 abandoned cars removed. These cars were included in the total number of vehicles reported towed at the TNT community meeting.

Department personnel explained that various agencies are centrally notified of new TNT target areas and instructed to concentrate enforcement activities in those areas, as well as to respond to specific referrals from TNT units. This approach was intended to encourage proactive agency inspections in a target area generally and thereby to increase the overall level of enforcement in communities where TNT is active.

Because some of the agencies recognized by Department personnel as having been very active through the inter-agency consortium in other precincts were not much involved in the study precincts, the researchers visited personnel at a few of them, to learn more about what they accomplished in TNT areas that provided more opportunities for inter-agency collaboration. For example, although HPD staff acknowledged that they controlled very few buildings in the study precincts, they were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about TNT. Before TNT moves into a new target area, HPD staff routinely notify TNT staff of all HPD buildings in that area; TNT staff, in turn, supply HPD with information about narcotics activity (and arrests of resident-dealers) in HPD buildings.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> HPD staff claimed that “quality arrests” were often more effective in ridding HPD buildings of tenants trafficking in drugs than were lengthy eviction proceedings. They estimated that from 15% to 25% of the 4,000 city-owned buildings were “infested” with drugs and that their active collaboration with TNT, and with the NYPD generally, has given a “huge boost” to their efforts to reclaim those

At the Department of Consumer Affairs, staff reported that the agency delegated staff to conduct “survey work” on a full-time basis in TNT target areas. (Normally, survey work is done in an area only one day in five.) Survey work involves door-to-door inspections of businesses in designated areas to search for infractions in licensed businesses and for active unlicensed businesses. By concentrating on an area targeted for TNT, the researchers were told, agency inspectors produced “good numbers” both for the Police Department and for the agency. Some violations led to padlock closings; some led to the formal licensing of unregulated businesses and additional revenue for the city; and some led to the elimination of quality-of-life problems in target areas (*e.g.*, too many unregulated arcade games).

The Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) was another agency recognized as having worked successfully within the TNT inter-agency consortium in other areas. TLC data for the study precincts suggest, however, that much of the TLC activity that occurred during the TNT period would have occurred anyway. TLC summons activity (routinely reported at TNT community meetings) did not peak in the target areas during TNT; it was just as high — or higher — after TNT had left, and TLC summons activity was often just as high or higher in other nearby areas. During TNT in the 70th Precinct, from December through April, TLC issued 279 summonses (the number reported at the TNT good-bye meeting). But during the same period, the TLC issued over 300 summonses in the 67th Precinct (where TNT was yet to start) and over 500 summonses in the 71st Precinct (the comparison precinct). When interviewed, TLC officials pointed out that there was an important second dimension to their work with TNT — information for the Police Department about drug and prostitution activity at “car bases” in TNT areas. This information was provided to support longer-term investigations of particular problem locations in some of the TNT sites.

In interviews with Vera researchers, some officials of these agencies reported that inter-agency work had to be reduced in light of New York City’s developing budget crisis and cutbacks in agency staff and resources. In addition, they pointed out that as the number of borough commands with TNT increased from one to seven, any cooperating agency’s ability to assign personnel would be diluted. They implied that agency personnel working on inter-agency initiatives had been spread too thin to be as effective as in the early days of TNT.

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*footnote continued...*

buildings from drug dealers. They saw benefits in the “top down” operation of the TNT inter-agency consortium, arguing that direct connections between high-ranking personnel at various agencies permit members of the consortium to cut through red tape and get things accomplished where officer-level contacts would not.

## VI. Intra-Department Activity and Assessments of TNT

Before TNT enters a target area, information is provided by precinct commanders and Narcotics District personnel about specific drug locations there. TNT modules are expected to coordinate their activity with precinct and Narcotics District units. Similarly, TNT units expected that precinct-based narcotics units (SNEU) would not operate in areas where TNT was active on any particular day. To some extent, TNT operations took precedence over most other NYPD narcotics enforcement efforts in target areas.

The researchers asked precinct personnel in the study precincts for their perceptions of TNT effects in the target areas and about the relationships between TNT and precinct units during the enforcement period. In general, precinct personnel believed that TNT had a short-term visible effect on drug markets in the local streets. They acknowledged that TNT had "hit" drug hot spots in target areas "like crazy". They believed that street dealers became more cautious during the TNT period, either moving indoors or reducing their trafficking. They reported that some "faces" of known drug traffickers had disappeared. One former hot spot was described as "practically a ghost town" during TNT enforcement.

Some precinct personnel reported that TNT had made their job easier by "opening some doors" in the community or by encouraging community residents to involve themselves in narcotics enforcement (e.g., providing more information about indoor locations, permitting CPOP officers to conduct vertical patrols in their buildings). But interviews with precinct personnel surfaced less favorable reviews as well. There was a widespread belief that the TNT intervention was too short. One officer, who supported TNT enthusiastically, summed it up: "TNT is working. It's just a shame they have to go somewhere else in three months." And many precinct personnel noted that "the drug business is still thriving". By the summer, command personnel in the 70th Precinct reported that the curbside drug traffic was back to normal: "It's like TNT was never here."

Although some precinct officers reported "good rapport" with TNT staff, others complained they had not been sufficiently involved in the TNT initiative. They believed that, if asked, they could have provided valuable information about particular drug locations, helped TNT officers discover narcotics "stash," and blocked off potential escape routes at particular hot spots. They believed that TNT officers were inevitably not sufficiently knowledgeable about the characteristics of local drug "hot spots," at least in the early days in a new target area and would have benefited from working more closely with precinct personnel.

Some of the criticism of TNT offered by precinct personnel stemmed from the fact that the 70th Precinct SNEU unit was disbanded during the TNT enforcement period and the SNEU officers were reassigned to other details. SNEU officers



believed that their unit could have supplemented TNT's efforts or could have been effectively deployed to other areas of the precinct.

In these ways, it should be noted, TNT did not really function as a "concentrated overlay" of existing narcotics enforcement, but as a temporary replacement of it. One of the precinct officers pointed to reductions he believed occurred during the TNT period, both in precinct and in Narcotics District enforcement activities in the target area.

The precinct personnel interviewed did not know very much about TNT's inter-agency consortium, though they tended to favor efforts to engage other agencies. Some CPOP officers, noting that it sometimes took them "18 phone calls" to reach the appropriate person at a city agency in an effort to help a particular problem on a beat argued that once such a contact was made, the entire CPOP unit would know whom to call in the future. For this reason, some of them thought the TNT inter-agency consortium's reliance on liaisons between TNT administrative staff and key agency personnel, while providing a useful "top down" mandate for cooperation, might have less day-to-day value over the longer term.

## VII. Summary

In spite of multiple deviations from the original TNT plan for Brooklyn South, implementation in the study precincts led to large numbers of arrests for drug sale and narcotics possession, a substantial number of car seizures and the confiscation of a considerable amount of drugs and money. In both precincts, there appeared to be a general tightening of drug markets. Over a three-month period, search time (the time it took for undercover officers to make drug purchases) increased, and there was a drop in the proportion of successful drug purchase attempts. Department personnel reported that street dealers were less in evidence and that a substantial proportion of drug trafficking had either ceased or had moved indoors during the enforcement period. But in interviews with the researchers, they generally conceded that they thought the effects of TNT on the street-level drug markets were temporary. And the TNT initiative in Brooklyn South did not appear to have had a substantial effect on other types of crime in target areas.

Although TNT personnel often argued that their impact on local drug markets was diminished by the failure of the criminal justice system to "back up" TNT arrests, review of the criminal justice outcomes of narcotics cases in recent years, and TNT arrests in particular, shows that felony drug cases had been treated with increasing severity in New York City courts, despite the increased volume of felony drug arrests generated by TNT.

The other two components of the TNT approach — engaging the community and the Anti-Drug Abuse Task Force that embraced 25 city agencies — were not implemented as fully in Brooklyn South as was buy-and-bust enforcement.

Community involvement was largely limited to three formal community meetings in each precinct, and residents were not a primary source of information for TNT operations, nor did they involve themselves in other ways to identify target locations for TNT.

Agencies in the Task Force were not called upon to inspect very many problem locations identified by TNT personnel. Department officials made the case that the inter-agency component of TNT had far more opportunity to be effective in other TNT target areas, where there are more city-owned buildings, more administrative code violations, and more parks than in the study precincts.

Although some precinct personnel praised the impact of TNT on drug markets in study precincts, others questioned the wisdom of allocating such a large portion of the Department's personnel resources to a specialized narcotics enforcement unit in the face of personnel shortages at the precinct level. Some also argued that the centralized TNT approach was not sufficiently community-oriented and did not sufficiently draw upon existing precinct resources and knowledge when attempting to close down known street-level drug markets.

## Chapter Four

### TNT's EFFECTS ON STREET-LEVEL DRUG MARKETS: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

#### I. Street-Level Sellers and Users in the Research Areas

TNT target area residents were primarily Caribbean and African-American in the three study precincts. So were the overwhelming majority of crack buyers and sellers recruited in the research areas for Vera's ethnographic study. Vera's ethnographic team did not interview any white users, and contacts were developed with only two Latino users. Though some customers came into these TNT target areas from other neighborhoods, the ethnographic samples were composed almost entirely of people who lived within the study precincts.

Contrary to the media image of New York City drug markets, drug sales and consumption on the streets of these precincts was not dominated by teenagers. Vera's ethnographic team located and spoke with several local teenagers who had sold crack at some earlier point, but by the time of this research, none had continued trafficking in any substantial way. The majority of sellers were in their twenties and thirties; a few were over forty. The ages of users spanned a broader range, but there was again a surprising absence of teenagers among users in these markets. Teenagers who did use crack tended to smoke "wulla joints" (marijuana cigarettes laced with crack) — a more controlled pattern of use than that of the prototypical "crackhead" who smokes from a "stem." Although most crack users were in their twenties and thirties, the ethnographic team was surprised at finding a substantial number of individuals over 50 being initiated into crack use: This was especially evident at indoor locations where the chance of detection by law enforcement officials was substantially less than on the street.

As might be expected from media reports about crack use, a substantial portion of the users was female. Although it was not possible to determine precisely the gender distributions among crack users in these neighborhoods, it appeared evenly split between males and females. Almost all the sellers, however, were men: In the three study precincts, Vera's ethnographic team spoke with or heard about fewer than ten female crack distributors.

The great majority of street dealers were also crack users — the ethnographic team encountered only two who were not users themselves. Of those who did use crack, the more successful had developed methods to moderate their use (only smoking "wulla joints," for example). By selling only larger amounts of crack (for which compulsive users would be hard-pressed to find the ready cash), by developing steady "clients," and by avoiding sales in known hotbeds of drug trafficking, these more successful distributors tried to avoid the compulsive users who might draw them into compulsive use themselves.

Some recent research has shown many street-level drug distributors to be active in the conventional labor market as well (Reuter *et al.*, 1990), but the great majority of crack sellers in the street markets of these TNT target areas were not. While most had been employed at one time or another, and although two of them were attending college and selling drugs on the side, only two maintained other employment now that they were selling drugs. The users were more diverse, from chronically unemployed to professionals. Roughly half the ethnographic sample of users were unemployed or under-employed — and they tended to be much more visible on the street. Those who had steady jobs to protect tended to seek more discreet opportunities for buying and consuming their drugs.

Though the majority of crack sellers and users in the research areas came from families living in the study precincts, most were no longer living with them. Many had been forced out because of their involvement with drugs, but most maintained sufficient contact with their families to keep the possibility of reintegration alive.

Many of the unemployed sellers and users were also homeless. Homelessness in these neighborhoods was much less visible than in other areas of New York City, as many of these homeless people were able to find indoor locations to stay for weeks at a time before being forced to move on. Among the homeless drug users, the women tended to support themselves with prostitution and “vic”ing (making potential “dates” their robbery victims). As prostitutes, they generally worked the streets, but as the research period progressed in the three study precincts, they increasingly found work in the “freakhouses” that began to open. There was more variety to the stratagems homeless men used to support themselves, but they usually described themselves simply as “hustlers.”

## II. Street-Level Drug Markets in the TNT Target Areas

To examine TNT's impact on drug trafficking on the streets of the study precincts, Vera's ethnographers explored the ways the drug markets as a whole responded, as well as the way individual sellers and users adapted. The various crack markets operating in the study precincts are described in some detail in Chapter Two, but by far the most significant drug market targeted by TNT in the study precincts was a *Freelance Nickels Market* that was pervasive on the streets and in the doorways of the research areas' largely residential neighborhoods. Most of the data presented below describe the impact of TNT on these markets, but information about TNT's effect on indoor markets (which do react to changes in the street markets) is presented where appropriate.

### A. New Curbside Sellers Replace Arrested Regulars

Although the number of active sellers declined at most street drug locations during TNT's deployment in the 70th and 67th precincts, the vacuum created by their arrest was partially filled by new sellers. The phenomenon was described in various ways:

The TNT threw most of the Rastas in jail. Now, there are new jacks on the block, about seven of them.

There's a lot of new faces out here dealing now. You see, the TNT busted a lot of motherfuckers. I have no idea where some of them come from. Some come from right around the area.

The TNT is arresting a lot of dealers, most of them. They go away for a long time. But everyday, somebody new is coming into the business no matter how risky it is.

In the 67th Precinct, one curbside seller complained that the appearance of several "new jacks" on the strip near the end of the TNT period had made it harder to sell her "package" of crack vials:

There's a lot of new people out here juggling now. Four new ones have been around for about two weeks. One guy can't be more than 21, one is 18, there's another guy there in his late 20's. They're all from the neighborhood, but they never juggled before.

Although this seller noted that the new sellers on her block had "never juggled before," the majority of those who filled vacancies created by TNT's arrests were already well known in the neighborhood as sellers. Many of these replacements were "recycled" sellers who had recently returned from jail, having been arrested prior to TNT's intervention, and were eager to reclaim their share of the market. Some wanted to reclaim their original "spots" and others were satisfied to take any reasonable location on the block.

At the same time as a market vacuum created by TNT arrests made room for recycled sellers to reclaim their curbside locations, it encouraged former "sideline players" to assume more prominent positions in the markets. (See, "Using Steerers" and "Zoomers," below). Even some crack smokers saw opportunities to make a quick dollar, as the less successful regular street sellers got arrested: For example, Katie,<sup>58</sup> a "binge" crack user in the 70th Precinct, who was in "the rooms" (Narcotics Anonymous) during the summer of 1990, told Vera's ethnographic team about venturing into distribution when she realized that a new shortage of curbside sellers on her block presented an opportunity for easy money:

I knew I wasn't gonna smoke no more, but I knew I wanted to make some money. I knew I was going against my fellowship, so I felt real depressed about it. I drank beer behind it. With all the police, I was scared shitless. That's why in three days I was thankful that the shit was gone. I only did it to make the \$500 that I needed to make for my car. And then, I fucked up the money. I bought clothes and these gold earrings. I want to get another ring right now. Since it was so easy, I'm thinking about doing that shit again.

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<sup>58</sup> All proper names of the respondents in the ethnographic sample are pseudonyms.

There were other former crack users who responded to TNT by beginning to sell crack on a regular basis and to develop loyal clients. Katie told the Vera ethnographers about her friend, Tanya, who was now selling crack “big time”:

Tanya used to be a crackhead, but she stopped doing drugs. Yeah, she's selling big time — getting ready to refurnish her whole apartment. She got special customers. She knows exactly which ones she will sell to, and they only come to her.

Former crack users who moved into distribution in the vacuum created by TNT's enforcement action were not the only ones to seize that moment to get into the business. The first wave of TNT arrests encouraged the entry of others, who had no history of drug distribution or use. For example, TNT arrested the head of a small crack selling organization in the 67th Precinct. The “owner” of the business used to spend his time playing dominoes on the sidewalk with his friends. The street sellers who worked for him under a consignment system would periodically return with the money and he would re-supply them with more vials. The business did not fold when TNT arrested him. As one of his workers explained:

After my supplier got busted by the TNT, his wife took the business. I can get a package from her anytime I want. Same deal. She doesn't hang out on the street though. She just drops it off. I call her at home when I'm finished. She has a regular job too. She works with my mother in a shit job.

According to this seller, the woman had known about her husband's business but had never been directly involved in it. When she decided to take it over, recognizing that the street-level market had become more hostile, she did not “hang out” as her husband had.

The apparent opportunity to make “easy money” when TNT removed regular sellers from some locations, enticed still other people who had never been involved in drug sales (including some who had never been involved with drugs in any way). But neophytes did not always succeed. The superintendent in Katie's building was a case in point. Katie (and several other crack sellers who confirmed her account) told Vera's ethnographers that this super, who had never been involved with drugs, had been given a “package to hold” by a curbside dealer who was then arrested by TNT. When the super discovered it was a cache of crack, and that its owner was in jail, he decided to sell the crack himself — but one of his first sales was to an undercover officer:

The TNT just took my super away. I didn't even know he was selling in the house. I asked, “Why are you takin' my super to jail?” I said, “He's not like that, he's a nice guy.” They said, “He ain't the Super no more, Miss.” Now the old super is back. He's a total crackhead, totally confused. They can never find him to do any work. He's always getting high — back and forth — him and his wife.

Thus, although TNT arrests reduced the number of crack sellers on the streets of the 70th and 67th precincts during its deployment in the target areas, the ethnographic team found that personnel involved at this level of crack distribution were replaced in substantial part by “recycled” former sellers, by consumers-turned-sellers, by part-time and one-shot sellers, and by neophytes.

## B. TNT Forces Adaptations by Street Dealers

1. *Varying the Hours of Sale.* The uncertainty created by TNT's presence clearly made drug buyers and sellers more cautious. In many instances, the presence of TNT discouraged curbside sellers from making any sales for extended periods. But sellers shifted their working hours to periods when they thought TNT was not likely to be around. TNT officers shifted their schedules too, to avoid a routine that the market could detect, but the buyers and sellers believed they knew when TNT was least likely to be a problem. For example, many participants in the research area crack markets felt it was safe to operate around "dinner time" — between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. They believed that TNT officers would be eating, changing shifts, or processing people who had been arrested during the afternoon. Several sellers told the ethnographic team that was why they tried to conduct a portion of their business between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Kevin, a crack seller in the 70th Precinct, adapted by working two shifts. His first shift ran from 10 a.m. to noon and his second shift ran from 4 to 6 p.m. Kevin may have been wrong about the timing of TNT activity, but he managed to work every day of the TNT period without arrest. One regular crack seller in the 67th Precinct, who was reduced to part-time selling on the street during the TNT intervention period, described the growing hardships of selling crack on the local "strip":

The TNT is here every day. Every day they rough somebody up on the street. I think today is the last day. I hope it is. The TNT caught a lot of people. Every day. But they didn't really cut down on business. They come only at certain hours.

This seller claimed that while TNT "caught a lot of people," it "didn't really cut down on business." His particular adaptation to an increasingly hostile street-level market was to move a significant portion of his business indoors (this phenomenon is discussed more fully below). Kevin noted that his steady customers adapted to his spending less time on the street and learned to look for him at times when he was likely to be around — his business was brisk during the hours he was on the street.

For most sellers, constricting the hours for selling meant fewer drug sales and less income. For example, Kevin reported his business had gone from about \$700 per day before TNT to about \$350-400 per day during the intervention period. He explained that he and his partner knew that, if they wanted to risk arrest, they could sell even more than they had prior to the arrival of TNT, but that because they were not "greedy" they sold only enough to maintain their business during the TNT period. They planned to resume the business at their previous level when TNT finally left.

Following TNT's departure from target areas, many street sellers, including Kevin, continued to sell crack but on a less than full-time schedule. First, the clients who stayed with them during TNT had adjusted to the restricted hours of operation. Second, because some of the new sellers (who moved into the vacuum created by TNT arrests and enforcement) continued to seek new business aggressively after TNT

left, some of the former full-time sellers were discouraged from trying to sell to new customers when they felt free to re-enter the market.

2. *Expanding Use of Lookout Networks.* The use of lookout networks to avoid detection by law enforcement officials predated the arrival of TNT in the three study precincts. It appeared to the ethnographic team, however, that the size and activity of those networks increased in response to TNT pressures. For example, in the 70th Precinct, a seller with a loyal clientele found his clients helping to protect him from TNT, which deepened and strengthened his relationship with them. On one occasion, while being interviewed in an ethnographer's car, he was approached by two customers warning him that TNT was "just down the street." They reported "white men sitting in cars." The seller explained that his customers probably thought he was conducting "business" in the car, and they wanted to give him time to avoid TNT. When asked why he did not respond by looking for approaching TNT officers, he replied that he didn't have to worry because he did not have crack on him.

Although lookout networks were typically composed of customers seeking to curry favor with street dealers, there was also a substantial degree of cooperation among these freelance sellers, even competitors. For example, some shared information about TNT's tactics: They reported to each other (based on their observations) that TNT drove rental cars (often with New Jersey license plates); they shared information about what the TNT back-up officers looked like on any particular day; they shared information about what the TNT "buyers" were wearing (e.g., "a Palestinian scarf wrapped around his head"); and they alerted each other when their turf was being scrutinized from nearby rooftops (a tactic, employed by SNEU units, with which they were familiar before TNT was deployed in the target areas).

In one large housing complex in the 67th Precinct, lookout networks were more formally integrated into the distribution organization and more systematically employed than at other locations in either of the study precincts. One crack user explained to Vera's ethnographers the level of organization within the complex and the reasons why TNT was less successful there than anywhere else:

When the TNT comes in, the drugs get moved around. The same quantity is out there, but the big dealers go upstairs. They'll tell the sellers to come upstairs to re-up. And if you feel shaky about dealing on this side of the projects, you'll move to the other side. If you feel shaky about the projects in general, you'll go to F\_\_\_\_\_ Park, 'cause they have a lot of lookouts. Say I'm one of the lookouts and you come to me and ask me for some crack. I'll tell you who to go to. You'll go sit next to a girl who will pass the money off to a guy. The guy will go and get the stuff, but he'll have it stashed in a tree or the bushes somewhere. They'll pick up the drugs, come back and put it on the bench. They don't hand it to you, so no one can really see a transaction being made. If the TNT comes, all they get is a little bit of drug. The dealers make sure they keep it scattered out.

The lookout networks that were more formally integrated into drug distribution organizations appeared more successful in warning sellers about the



presence of TNT. But even in areas where there was no formal organization of sellers and lookouts, the presence of TNT seemed to foster increased cooperation in the formation of early warning systems.

3. *Moving On.* Curbside sellers used still other techniques to avoid TNT. The simplest techniques was to move around — never stand in one spot long enough to be noticed. A crack user from the 67th Precinct explained:

One way the dealers avoid the TNT is by staying on the move. They don't stay stationary. Before, they used to be in one spot, but now, you can't do that or else TNT's gonna take you.

Curbside sellers who felt that staying on the move was an effective strategy for avoiding TNT found their business was transformed in several ways. Rather than staking out a finite “turf” which they would try to control, these sellers opted for a larger territory, in which they would roam and which they would allow others to use without much quibbling about exclusivity.<sup>59</sup> Several sellers in the 67th and the 70th precincts said that after any transaction on the street (even sales to well-established customers), they would immediately move to another location. Several sellers in the 70th Precinct said that after curbside transactions during the TNT period (especially sales to strangers), they would enter a building, walk through the basement to the basement of another building, and walk out the front door of that building. They noted that TNT often waited for sellers to come out of any buildings they were observed entering.

4. *Restricting Street Sales to Known Customers and Developing a Stable Clientele.* Crack sellers generally acknowledged that TNT's undercover “buyers” could be difficult to spot (though they thought it easier to spot the back-up officers). Many began restricting sales to known customers and began trying to build a stable clientele. Two sellers from the 70th Precinct talked about the dangers of selling to unknown customers.

You have to use caution now 'cause you don't know who is coming to buy drugs. They got undercovers that walk with stems! . . . It's hard, you gotta know your customers.

TNT normally be around here. They out here now. They send two or three people through on foot. You can't spot 'em. Nobody can spot 'em. You ain't got to be a drug user to look like one. You can wear some clothes that will make you look shabby.

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<sup>59</sup> In the months following the departure of TNT from the study precincts, some stationary curbside sellers became much less accommodating of “roving” sellers working in their turf than they were during the TNT period. This proved not to be a major problem, however, because so many sellers had by that time established loyal clients, and however much they might resent roving sellers, they did not react as aggressively as they might have in previous years.

Many successful sellers had already developed a loyal clientele before the arrival of TNT, and did not really need to spend long hours on the street. For example, one crack smoker in the 70th Precinct had developed a loyalty to a particular dealer who drove a Mercedes (the only crack seller on the streets of any of the three study precincts who drove a "nice" car). She would look for him every night between 6 and 9 p.m. She believed this dealer's crack was of a superior quality. She also felt that there were other dimensions to their "relationship" than simply buying a product.

I deal with a guy . . . he's the Don of Stuff over here. There might be ten dealers standing there, but if I see him, they know that's who I'm gonna get from. His customers are people he's had for years. They come look for him first. He only comes out a few hours at night . . . and you see the Mercedes, don't you. I told him that I preferred buying from him because I want to see my money. I don't want to be buying from a "nickelonian" looking worse than me. At least with him, I see my money. You know I bought that Mercedes, right? Anytime I see him with anything I say, "I bought you that, didn't I?"

This respondent and other crack smokers who did not consider themselves to be "nickelonians" (compulsive crack smokers) were contemptuous of nickelonians and of sellers who use their own product. The uncontrolled use of crack had become unpopular, even among many crack users, by the time of TNT deployment in the study precincts. Many crack smokers who thought themselves to be controlled users tried to develop relationships with reliable sellers. This made it easier for sellers to avoid erratic customers who could increase their exposure to TNT enforcement efforts.

The sellers who most successfully weathered the TNT period were those who had or quickly developed a stable clientele. Although they were at risk of being observed from a distance, they were less likely to make a direct sale to an undercover officer. For example, one seller in the 70th Precinct had worked the same block for about a year and was familiar with most of the local crack users. He was not a user himself (he preferred alcohol) and he was somewhat obese (many compulsive crack users are very thin). His abstinence distinguished him from many other dealers on the street and impressed local crack users, who felt he was not likely to dilute the product because he did not have a habit to feed. They became an increasingly loyal clientele for him. When asked about increased competition on the block because of TNT, he said that it had not really affected his business:

No, we have our own customers. Our customers know they can come to us and get something good to smoke. When they go to those guys [the new ones on the corner] they don't know what they will get.

5. *Reducing the Visibility of Street Transactions.* Sellers tried to reduce the visibility of their transactions during the TNT period. A crack user in the 67th Precinct described some of the methods the sellers used to hide their supply of crack vials without abandoning business altogether when TNT was in the area:

Another way they avoid the TNT is by stashing their vials in a mailbox, under a car, or in a telephone booth. A new way is to hide them in a bottle cap. They take the cap, crimp two vials in it and drop it on the ground. That way, it looks like garbage. When somebody comes to buy something, they tell him to drop the money on the ground. That way, the TNT can't observe any transaction.

Other sellers stopped using “trademark” plastic vials in which they sold crack before the TNT period. Some started packaging their crack in small, sealed plastic bags that were easier to conceal. One crack user from the 67th Precinct explained:

They don't sell in capsules, they sell in plastic bags. The bags are easier to disguise because they're small. If I throw it in the grass, the cops are going to look for plastic caps. They're looking for colorful items — all plastic caps have colors on them . . . blue or black. But if it's white or clear and you throw it in the grass, it's harder for them to find because they're looking for the colors.

6. *Using Steerers.* When TNT entered a neighborhood, and sellers became more selective about customers, some flatly refused to sell to any new customer:

There's about six of us out there. If a customer comes up and it ain't right, I will say, “Yo, we ain't got nothin' now. I don't know you. We only sell to people who we really know.”

Others required new customers to purchase through known customers, referred to as “steerers.” These “steerers” acted as intermediaries, seldom receiving any compensation from sellers, but often soliciting a dollar or two from purchasers. In the study precincts, there was often no formal relationship between these intermediaries and the sellers, although in other precincts sellers are known to hire people specifically for this purpose.

Some sellers discouraged their established customers from making purchases for new customers, because they suspected that TNT might use steerers to make purchases and watch the transaction from a distance. One seller from the 67th Precinct described his fears about being caught this way:

TNT makes it hard for people. If you use coke and “stress out,” they [TNT] will come up to you and give you \$25 and say, “Go get me five caps and keep one for yourself.” When he comes to buy, the money is marked. He doesn't know it's the TNT, and we don't know that it's not for him. They see who he got it from and will then arrest him and me too.

One seller was so fearful of this tactic that he would not sell to his established customers if they tried to buy outside their normal pattern of consumption:

I know my customers. I got them on a system. For example, you might come and buy four caps. Then, for the rest of the night you buy one, one, one. If you come and say give me four, then one, one, one, and then four again, I would say, “No. Who are you buying it for?”

While curbside sellers in the study precincts were not known for formally employing “steerers,” the development of established clienteles and the presence of

TNT provided endless opportunities for customers to take on the steerer role. One crack smoker from the 70th Precinct described a somewhat shaky "steering" agreement with a new seller on the block:

Today, I'm helping a new guy get customers. He's just starting out today, so don't nobody know him. I don't know how he got his start. I just saw him come out on the block. I asked him if he had any work and he said, "No." But then we agreed, for every five customers I send, he'll give me one [vial].

Another 70th Precinct crack smoker, who acted part-time as a steerer, spoke about his relationship with several sellers:

I've been hanging out in this area about 7 months. I help the dealers out, that's how I get paid. I get paid with some drugs or some money. It depends on how I feel. If I want money, I'll take the money; if I don't want the money, I'll take the drugs. I bring them customers that I'm familiar with. For every five vials they sell, I get one. If I don't want the one, I get the five dollars. Yesterday I made about \$70.

Although use of "steerers" in the drug markets on the study precincts' streets was increasing before the TNT arrived, the ethnographic data does suggest that it accelerated under the pressure created by TNT.

7. *Zoomers*. Even though NYPD lab statistics reveal that few of the sellers arrested were actually selling "non-controlled substances" (around 5%), Vera's ethnographic evidence suggests that TNT's disruption of street-level crack markets increased the number of "zoomers" near some of the hot spots on which TNT enforcement was focused. One seller from the 70th Precinct described the increase of "zoomers" on the block shortly after the start of the TNT:

Man, they "Rex" you day and night around here.<sup>60</sup> If you don't know who you buyin' from, you in trouble. They see a stranger like you comin' and you say, "Go get it for me." Sometimes you don't see them again. Next time you see the guy, he'll say, "It wasn't me, it wasn't me." Or it might be bread crumbs you're buying, or soap, candle wax or baking soda.

Several "zoomers" from the 70th Precinct explained that by selling a substance that was not illegal, they were not likely to spend more than a few days in jail if arrested. Zoomers occupied the lowest rung on the ladder of street-level distributions, because they are viewed as compulsive users who are unable to hold onto anything real to sell. They often react with indifference to the threat of arrest. One "zoomer" actually bragged (without corroboration) that he had been arrested 27 times but had not served any significant jail time:

I'm a zoomer. I'm the king of selling zoom. I just got out of jail last week. I've been locked up 27 times for selling zooms. I made several direct sales to

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<sup>60</sup> "Rex" is a commonly used term for counterfeit drugs. One respondent explained that the term was derived from the commercial which asks, "Is it live, or is it Memorex?"

undercovers, but once it goes through the lab and the lab report comes back, it comes back peanuts, a non-controlled substance, so they have to dismiss the case.

He went on to tell Vera ethnographers that if someone wanted to make a \$100 purchase he would sell it to them regardless of who they were, including TNT officers:

If I'm hustling and somebody wants a hundred dollar piece, I don't give a fuck if it's my mother, I'm gonna sell it to 'em. It's about trying to get money.

Many sellers played dual roles — as zoomers and as sellers of genuine crack. For example, one seller from the 70th Precinct showed the ethnographic team that his two pockets were filled with different types of crack vials. In one pocket he kept real crack for people he knew, who were his regular customers (and who he could not afford to anger); in his other pocket, he kept “zoom” vials which he would sell to people he did not know.

Some sellers, arrested in the early days TNT was in their area, said they became zoomers after release from jail, primarily because they lacked any start-up capital. One of them was Red, from the 70th Precinct. As one crack smoker reported:

Red is out. . . . He don't have no product or whatever. He's zooming other people. He zoomed me the other day.

The Vera ethnographers were told by one respondent in this neighborhood how zooming infected the market during the TNT period:

When the TNT started to frequent the neighborhood the place was infested with a lot of arrogant guys, arrogant hustlers who didn't pay no attention. They came out continually and got popped. Now, a lot of them is doing time. Now, you would still find there are still one or two guys that will come out, but the place is not infested. Long ago, you could find something. Now, you see people outside and you check them, and you find that they're selling soap.

The street drug markets in the study precincts supported zoomers because TNT did not displace consumers and sellers to other “copping” areas. Even hard core “crackheads” continued to buy in the same areas, despite the threat of TNT and the knowledge that safer markets were within walking distance. One 70th Precinct compulsive crack user offered this explanation for her reluctance to go elsewhere despite the presence of zoomers on the block:

Most of the time I would cop on Katie's block. N\_\_\_\_\_ was the furthest I would go, and that would be too far because my heart would be beating too fast. [The large housing complex] was too far. I wouldn't go there. Sometimes I would go up to W\_\_\_\_\_ and P\_\_\_\_\_, but you have to make sure that what you buy is real. They have a lot of zoomers up there selling Ivory soap and stuff. They have a lot of zoomers around here too, but I know the people who are selling the real stuff. I wouldn't go to nobody else. Once, this guy had sold me something that wasn't real. I tried to stab him in his throat, so he gave me my money back. He said, “This bitch is crazy.”

The increase in zooming brought on by TNT helps explain why many respondents perceived an increase in street violence during and immediately after the TNT periods.

8. *Tactics to Weaken Evidence of Sales.* Not all curbside crack sellers had a well-developed clientele to assist them to conceal their market activities. They tried to avoid arrest in other ways. For example, most sellers were aware that TNT used marked money, and many of them would secretly pass any buy money to a partner who would change the currency at a local store:

It's not a crime to have marked money but, normally, I try not to have that in my possession because it holds less weight in court. The last time I was arrested was two weeks ago on Katie's block. This female came to me and asked me for a dime. I said, "we don't have dimes, we have nicks." She told me to give her two and she gave me a ten dollar bill. The \$10 she gave me was marked, but I had my friend across the street. Every time I make a sale to anybody I don't know, my friend on the street comes across. When we cross, I pass off the money to him. He went around to the store to change the money.

### C. Displacement of Street-Level Crack Markets

One of the most widely held assumptions about TNT is that it pushes or "displaces" drug markets from the streets of one neighborhood to another. The ethnographic team found little evidence of this in the TNT study precincts. The geographical displacement that was observed usually involved short-term moves, within small areas (*i.e.*, not beyond precinct boundaries).

For example, in the 70th Precinct, TNT may have displaced a group of Panamanian distributors — a loosely organized "partnership" of blood relatives — from a corner building where it once held a monopoly on selling crack. The group moved its business a block and a half away to a commercial strip where they would not infringe on anyone else's turf and where their activities would be disguised by the greater volume of sidewalk traffic. But their relocation seemed to have less to do with pressure from TNT than with organizational disputes and a growing resentment of their presence among residents of the corner building where they lived.<sup>61</sup> As one seller explained:

It wasn't the TNT that fucked up the Panamanians on the corner. It was a family dispute. You know, dealing cocaine . . . there's so much money involved, you takin' a risk. 'Cause once you walk in a house and see \$200,000 on a bed — you see that once a week and three men gotta divide it — somebody gonna get greedy.

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<sup>61</sup> Increasing tenant hostility toward these particular distributors grew out of several years of pent-up anger over the way in which they had conducted their business. Although the Panamanian distributors who controlled sales in this building were not the only sellers living there, the others living in the building were not affected by the tenants' squabble with the Panamanians.

In any event, the Panamanians did not move outside the TNT target area, and their displacement was from an indoor location (the lobby of the building) to an outdoor operation — a reversal of the more familiar adaptation of sellers who sought to move some of their business to indoor locations in the face of TNT.

The ethnographic team was aware of two other cases of geographic displacement during the TNT period, both in the 70th Precinct. In both instances, however, TNT's effect seems to have been indirect — the primary motivating factor was the high level of market competition that developed on the block rather than direct pressure from enforcement action. As two crack smokers noted:

There were a few guys out here from Bushwick selling. They just came through, and now they're gone. They had decent shit too. It's always the decent fuckers. . . . They probably left because they couldn't make any money.

Marky got picked up the first day of TNT, the same day as my brother. Marky now sells in Canarsie, where he lives. He's got a select clientele and a beeper. He never did so well over here because of the competition. Over here you got 50 people standing on the corner, everybody's selling.

Even though TNT's operations appear to have been a factor in the second relocation described above, the central concerns seem to have been profits and working conditions, which were at best indirectly affected by TNT.

Curbside crack sellers were asked why they did not move elsewhere when TNT arrived. Their responses underscore the fact that nearly all of them, in the research areas, were freelancers who lacked significant support networks and were afraid to work unfamiliar areas where they might intrude on someone else's territory or present an easy mark for "rip off boys" (see Chapter Two). Several freelancers from the 70th Precinct reported trying to sell drugs in neighborhoods like East New York and Brownsville, where most of them lasted only a few days before returning to Flatbush.

The Vera ethnographic team's observations and interviews suggest that TNT did not cause any significant geographic displacement of sellers or consumers in the TNT target areas of the study precincts. There was, however, a significant move toward indoor distribution and consumption. While this is a form of "displacement," it is not the type of displacement widely expected from TNT deployment — and it carried with it some new problems for residents of the buildings into which the markets moved.

#### **D. Increased Indoor Drug Trafficking**

In some cases, TNT's effort to improve quality of life by reducing street drug traffic in the target areas had the effect of moving the market off the streets and into apartments, staircases and lobbies of nearby buildings, affecting the quality of life there.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See the discussion of the level of fear among research area residents, in Chapter Five.

In the study precincts, more crack sellers and users could be found in indoor locations during the TNT period, but it is not clear that their movement indoors was entirely attributable to TNT. Many sellers and users said that they began to notice shrinkage of the outdoor crack markets around 1988. For example, one crack seller from the 67th Precinct, who had recently stopped selling on the street several blocks from a large housing complex, gave this report of how the neighborhood had calmed down over the previous several years:

People don't linger on the corners anymore. A long time ago, it used to be worse because you had some abandoned trucks out there and you used to see four to five men sitting in them smoking. It used to be wild out there. Within the past couple of years things got much better all around here. Where there are houses it is more discreet as regards to smoking. There are plenty of smokers around here, but you don't see them.

According to this seller, the surrounding street markets had, for some time, been getting increasingly hostile to sellers and consumers alike. For sellers, he explained, in addition to the threat of arrest, there were dangers of working the street — dangers that increased as formerly incarcerated sellers got released and sought to reclaim the territories they had worked in the early days of the crack market, and dangers created by the emergence of groups of non-drug using youth who victimized drug sellers and consumers. For consumers, he explained, the neighborhood atmosphere was becoming increasingly intolerant toward blatant crack users, who were seen as “weak”. (Many users reported to Vera's ethnographers incidents in which they were victimized by youths less interested in robbing them, which they sometimes did, than in brutalizing them for sport.)

Nevertheless, the crack sellers in the study precincts who weathered the TNT period most successfully were those who already had or were able to develop a relatively stable clientele and, when possible, moved all or part of their business to indoor locations. A crack user from the 67th Precinct explained the trend:

... they sell 25's and 50's. You have to go inside, but they have one or two men in front of the building so they know who's coming. They have an established clientele and have been there for about two years.

Although the movement to indoor distribution and consumption had been progressing in the 70th and 67th target precincts for some time, it was accelerated by the arrival of TNT. For example, on a block in the 70th Precinct where TNT depleted the supply of curbside sellers, drug trafficking increased in a nearby building that already housed crack distributors. Soon, several more apartments were active, even though TNT made numerous efforts to curb the sales and use at that site. A distributor and a user from the block described this effect of TNT:

I moved out of that building on Katie's block because it was crazy out there. There's a whole lot of shit going on in that apartment and on the fourth floor too. There's druggies everywhere you go — on the staircase, they're there. There's about eight dealers inside the building and outside too.



The TNT locked up about fifty people last night right from this block. They swept Red's building. That place, they never really closed it down. They got that apartment on the fourth floor that's going strong. They got three different apartments in that place goin' strong.

Other buildings on the block experienced similar problems. A nearby building began to have much more drug activity in the lobby despite a locked front door and tenants who wanted to maintain the integrity of the building. One seller sold crack from the lobby and kept the front door ajar with a small piece of wood. His cache of vials was stashed in a mailbox. A crack user and occasional seller who lived in the building complained about this to the ethnographers, but admitted there was little anyone could do since the seller using the lobby was being helped by another resident.

In the building directly across the street, sellers used the lobby and the street: A seller who worked from and lived in the building would stand outside to meet his regular customers, but he kept his drugs in his cousin's apartment to avoid being caught with anything in his possession. He would take orders, go inside to get the drugs, and make the actual transaction on the building's stoop. When asked if the building's residents were hostile to his presence, this seller spoke of the cordial relationships he had developed with them. Because he was not a crack user, he said, tenants were less likely to perceive him as a threat and allowed him to do his business. As further evidence of his level of integration into the building, he recounted several "favors" he routinely did for tenants — helping them with groceries, holding the door when their hands were full with packages, and watching their cars.

Several indoor locations active during the TNT period grew even more active after TNT's regular deployment ended. In one notorious spot in the 70th Precinct, known locally as "the hole," crack was sold daily throughout the TNT intervention period. Although many arrests were made inside the hole, new sellers moved in as fast as arrests were made. After the TNT period, the hole quickly became one of the busiest locations in the precinct. As one user noted:

The TNT came to the hole just the other day in a big armored car. They was gonna knock down the fuckin' building, but the only thing they did was cut the chain. They opened it up and didn't find nobody inside so they got pissed off and closed it back down. They settin' up to knock that old building down or get somebody to buy the building and renovate it. Which ever way it's gotta go, it's gotta go. 'Cause they have a lot of traffic in that hole — white people, everybody comes. Since the TNT came through the neighborhood, they came even more!

Another example of drug markets finding shelter during the TNT period was found at a large housing complex in the 67th Precinct. Here, the street market moved inside the grounds of the complex. Many "freelance" sellers from nearby commercial strips sought sanctuary from TNT by selling from inside the fence, although doing so risked incurring the wrath of the organization that controlled the turf. At the TNT

“good-bye meeting” in the 67th Precinct, two community representatives complained about the “crisis” at the complex. The head of security there said he really appreciated what TNT had done. He praised the job TNT did in cutting down the crack market *around* the complex. But he said that the net effect had been to drive the dealers *inside* the courtyard.

### E. Reduced Volume of Sales, and Increased Instability on the Street

The growing preference among buyers and sellers for indoor locations made the curbside markets both more competitive and unstable. For example, one seller in the 67th Precinct told the ethnographic team she would prefer to sell crack inside a local “freakhouse” if she could do so full-time. She noted that in addition to the risk of being arrested by TNT on the street, it had become increasingly difficult to make money working there.

I was out here selling since 9 a.m. It was a slow day. I started with a package of ten vials. By four o'clock, I still had about five. I was so desperate I gave up a short — I sold two for nine dollars. Two other guys were out there too, but nobody was making money.

At another site in the 67th Precinct, several sellers' views that the once lively street markets had contracted are evident in this extract from a researcher's fieldnotes:

At present, Mark says that he occasionally sells crack on Sundays. He said that he no longer deals in front of [his former spot] because there are “a lot of informers.” Most of the dealers, he said, work . . . a block away. He said that it was extremely competitive at this location. “You don't make any money here. You have to go out of state . . . Washington, Texas. That's where everybody is going.” (Fieldnotes 5/6/90)

One common but mistaken perception about crack markets operating on the streets is that the sellers make a great deal of money, drive expensive cars and wear thick gold chains. Only one of the dealers interviewed by the ethnographic team in the study precincts owned an expensive car (most did not own cars at all), and most had difficulty meeting their daily expenses (food, rent, etc.). While some sellers were unable to hold onto money because their own consumption of crack prevented capital accumulation, many of those who were not crack users had difficulty too. For example, one abstinent seller in the 70th Precinct made about \$30 a day during the TNT period. While TNT was partially responsible for a drop in his earnings (because he worked shorter hours to avoid periods of greater TNT activity), he and several other sellers on the block cited competition as the major reason profits were down. He attributed his eventual move to another neighborhood not to the risk of TNT apprehension, but to a dramatic increase in competition (*i.e.*, an increase in the number of street-level distributors without an accompanying increase in the number of consumers) during the summer of 1990.

## F. Violence

In the target precincts, TNT's disruption of street-level drug markets did lead to some violence. For example, a seller in the 70th Precinct, recently released from jail on an arrest that pre-dated TNT, was eager to reclaim his old territory, especially since TNT had arrested most of the sellers who had been working that spot for the last couple of years. In an effort to re-establish himself during the summer of 1990, he shot several competitors. On another occasion, he threatened to shoot the zoomers on the block. Another seller described the incident:

He told 'em, "Motherfucker, you runnin' away my real customers, and I can't take it no more. You either get the fuck off the block, or I'm gonna kill your ass." And people know, when Staggerlee talks, you better listen! 'Cause he will fuckin' shoot your ass!

But it was not clear to the Vera ethnographers that the level of violence in these Brooklyn South markets increased as a result of TNT. Although reports from other TNT areas suggested that, where the crack trade was flourishing rather than declining when TNT arrived, TNT's arrest of established sellers led to local turf wars. Most of the violence resulting from TNT's effects on the Brooklyn South markets observed by the Vera ethnographers arose from market uncertainty and was of the kind described above in the section on Zoomers. Violence also arose in the 67th Precinct when TNT arrests led the more highly organized distributors to hire new and less trustworthy operatives for curbside distribution. One newly hired seller (who was known to be unreliable) ran off with an organization's cache of crack vials. When the "manager" finally tracked him down, he was hiding in a local freakhouse, still smoking the dwindling supply. Out of respect for the owner of the freakhouse, retribution was meted out in the street and not in the house.

## G. Explicit Views about TNT

Whether or not they came into contact with TNT, almost all sellers and users contacted by the ethnographic team had an opinion about it. As might be expected, none of them had anything positive to say, though they did have something akin to praise for other law enforcement initiatives (see \_\_\_\_\_, below).

Despite TNT's presence, most street sellers continued to conduct business, accepting TNT as just another hazard of their occupation. In the large U-shaped apartment complex in the 67th Precinct, the higher degree of organization among the drug sellers combined with favorable ecological conditions made the drug market extremely difficult to disrupt. TNT's limitations at this site did not go unnoticed by users and sellers:

The TNT ain't doing nothing. Their showing ain't really that potent. They come in, they rush, they raid, and they leave. It's not like they come and stay. Everything is still the same and people are still selling drugs. They're just out there. They're all around. It never has slowed down; no pressure, you know. They're still out there during the day, still out there during the night.

Even though most respondents believed TNT had little impact on street-level drug distribution inside the complex, they conceded that it had some. One seller said that when TNT was inside the complex, business would come to a halt. Everyone knew, however, that TNT would soon move on to another location, and they would just wait for them to leave:

When the TNT comes out everybody, everything stops for a little while 'till they leave. They'll come for an hour or so, and then everybody comes back out.

But even at locations where TNT made many arrests and market disruption was significant, sellers and users usually would not concede that the impact was significant. Several crack users from the 70th Precinct commented on what they perceived to be the kind of low-level, no-consequence arrests resulting from TNT:

TNT is arresting the person that's gettin' high! They not really pushers and shit, they just addicts. The only reason why some of them is sellin' is because they want to maintain their high.

The TNT picked me up a couple of times. But they picked me up for bogus things — two empty caps and one time, a stem. My God, please get somebody with a whole pocket full. Once they charged me with steering and then, another time, they got me with possession. Bullshit. Bogus shit.

I was arrested four or five times by the TNT. The first time was back in January when they arrested me for a stem. I was in a building smoking with a girl and they rushed in on me. I had the stem in my hand. I spent four days in jail behind that.

The TNT arrested me in January. They were trying to say that I made a sale. They came 15 minutes after buying something. I was two blocks away from where they made the buy, but they arrested me because I fit the description. I wasn't caught with any money or drugs. They didn't come to me to buy anything, this guy didn't buy anything from me. . . . This guy and a lady, both white, jumped out of a van and put a gun in my face. "Where's the gun? Where's the junk?" They pulled down my pants in the street. They locked me up for six days, but gave me ROR. We're going to court next week.

Many sellers and consumers on the streets of the TNT target areas echoed these remarks, arguing that the majority of TNT arrests were of little consequence to the overall neighborhood drug market. In their view, the volume of TNT arrests did not matter, because there were too many neighborhood locations for TNT to cover and too large a pool of potential curbside sellers waiting for an opportunity to make money and "smoke lovely." As one seller who had recently moved *into* a TNT research area in search of livelier markets noted:

They [TNT] put a dent in the place there, but they're not puttin' a dent on the place down the corner or down the block or two blocks away or three blocks away. You can never stop it.

In addition to the belief that TNT would have little impact on their drug markets, there was a widely held perception among sellers and users in the research area that those who were arrested would soon be back — they accepted the

revolving door image. Even when many of the arrested sellers failed to reappear, the image held. One crack user in the 70th Precinct, who subscribed to the revolving door theory, saw her own brother arrested by TNT on the first night of the intervention. He was in jail for nearly three months, came out for a few days and was promptly rearrested. Several months after his second arrest, she commented:

'Cause they [TNT] make those bullshit arrests. Like with my brother and his first hit. He got arrested for a fuckin' stem. It's costing you more — you know, the taxpayers — a whole heap of damn money to take some "cling-on" off the street and feed him three squares a day. You take him through the system and he's right back on the street, so they're not makin' no impact really.

Despite durability of the revolving door image, the ethnographic team was unable to find many examples of sellers arrested by TNT who returned to sell on the streets of the research areas during the research period. (See Appendix D, where the criminal justice outcomes of TNT arrests are discussed.)

#### H. Explicit Reactions to Other Law Enforcement Initiatives

Several respondents in the 70th and 67th precincts offered comparisons between TNT and NYPD uniformed operations. In the 70th Precinct, an experimental uniformed TNT component was added, near the end of the formal TNT intervention period; in the 67th Precinct, "Operation Takeback" saturated the streets with uniformed officers during the summer of 1990. Several buyers and sellers told the Vera ethnographers that the uniformed officers were more effective than TNT in disrupting their street-level crack markets because of the uniformed officers' constant, visible presence on the street. One user, from the 67th Precinct, described the disruptive effect uniformed officers had on an early-morning drug market.

Since the foot patrol [Takeback] came around, the drug scene has changed. For instance, the morning hustle that comes from five to two has changed. People who want to buy drugs at that hour in the morning might have to wait 'till eleven o'clock to get something from someone.

Operation Takeback was launched after the TNT period: Although TNT was perceived to have had little impact at this site in three months of operation, the Takeback officers were perceived as having had a substantial effect in a matter of days.

In another instance, a group of about a dozen 67th Precinct curbside sellers were prevented from conducting business by a Takeback officer who chose to stand on their corner for nearly an hour. Not only were they prevented from doing business, they were unable to move to another location because their "packages" were stashed nearby. They feared that if they were to retrieve what was hidden nearby, the officer would spot them and they would be arrested. If they left the area with the package where it was, they knew that it would be stolen by a competitor.

Even at the large housing complex in the 67th Precinct, where nearly everyone agreed TNT was ineffective, sellers and consumers reported that the uniformed

officers had made a difference. One crack user from the complex offered this description of the difference:

A lot of times a cop will come and stand on the corner. We will respect a cop in uniform more so than the TNT. We respect the uniform cops more because we know they're there. You see, TNT is like a doubt. We don't know if someone is the TNT or not. You take a chance because they ain't in uniform, and so, you say, "Well, fuck it. If they're gonna get me, they're gonna get me."

In addition to noting TNT's reliance on uncertainty to affect market behavior, the respondents saw the anonymity of TNT officers as a net loss. Several sellers pointed out that they were familiar with some uniformed officers and precinct detectives, who came around on a regular basis. When these officers were in the area, it was difficult to conduct business, but the sellers did not perceive them entirely in negative terms. As one seller from the 70th Precinct noted:

[If] anything happens in the area — any shooting or anything that comes around — the first thing, they come to the people who they know and see everyday on the block. They try and get information from us. And if we know anything we try and assist them 'cause we don't want the cops running around harassing nobody. So we keep a good look-out for the cops on this block. If anything go on here, we out here, you know, we can tell 'em what goes on. 'Cause we don't want them harassing the block so we can't do no business. So we let them know right straight up, "Man, look, this boy — so and so — keep him off the block."

### I. Demand and Consumption

Another way Vera's ethnographers tried to assess TNT's impact on street-level drug markets in the research areas was to keep track of changing consumption patterns. This section presents some of the data collected on consumption patterns in the 70th and 67th precincts during the research period.

1. *The Leveling of Demand.* Local drug consumption patterns often wax and wane, independently of law enforcement intervention. Cocaine and crack markets peaked in the three study precincts by 1987 (Hamid, 1990; 1991a, 1991b). By the beginning of the research period, in October 1989, cocaine and crack use had been declining for about a year in these neighborhoods, as it had nationally.<sup>63</sup> None of the

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<sup>63</sup> Data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) show that cocaine-related emergency room admissions increased 360% between 1985 and 1988, and then dropped by 26% between 1988 and 1989. (See Flanagan and Maguire, 1990, and Maguire and Flanagan, 1991). Data from the national household survey conducted by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) show a sharp increase in self-reported cocaine use between 1985 and 1988, followed by a substantial decline between 1988 and 1990. This trend was evident for adolescents, occasional cocaine users, and frequent cocaine users. (White House, 1991). But other data suggest that the drop in cocaine consumption did not characterize all sub-groups. Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) data on the prevalence of drug use among arrested individuals in selected major cities show a small increase in the proportion testing positive for cocaine between 1988 and 1989 in most cities (Flanagan and Maguire, 1990). The only notable decreases were in Los Angeles and New York, where positive cocaine tests peaked in 1988. Considered together, these various data

*footnote continued*

crack users interviewed during the course of the research had begun smoking crack within the previous year, and the declining rate at which new users were entering these markets was evidenced by the paucity of teenage crack users. Many users in the target precincts appeared to have begun drifting away from crack before TNT arrived. Many had entered rehabilitation programs before the TNT period — though with only modest success. Many crack smokers who had not tried drug rehabilitation had attempted to moderate and control their use, by consuming less, in less abusive patterns. For example, several young men from the 70th Precinct who had been introduced to crack in 1987, when they began smoking through a “stem” on the street (widely recognized as the most abusive pattern of consumption), had shifted to “wulla joints” (marijuana cigarettes laced with crack or cocaine). The use of wulla joints was seen by them and other respondents as a more controlled form of crack consumption because marijuana curbs users' compulsion to keep smoking crack. One respondent offered this description of increasing peer pressure to control his use of crack:

When I first stopped smoking crack I would smoke a bag of weed with some nitro [powdered cocaine] in it. I used to think, “Damn, I should smoke a nickel.” See, but all your fellas can make you not fuck with it. ‘Cause the way niggers will look at you, they’ll say, “you’re gonna smoke fuckin’ crack man, you ain’t with it no more.” So, you just say “fuck it.”

Those whose use of crack went unabated became more cautious. Many had already begun using drugs at indoor locations rather than on the street. This reflected a dramatic shift in the tolerance of the community (including the “drug community”) of blatant or uncontrolled crack consumption — a shift that began before TNT arrived.

2. *The Disruption of Consumption Routines.* Even though the changing patterns of consumption make it especially difficult to assess TNT's impact on the overall volume of crack consumed in the research areas, it is clear that TNT had some independent effects on consumption patterns. For example, many users who continued to buy and consume drugs openly on the street were forced to delay buying and using the drugs when TNT was on the block. A crack user from the 70th Precinct commented on this disruptive aspect of TNT:

I came out about 11:30 this morning to cop something. It was kinda hot out here with the cops, you know, the TNT. They had my friend and were searching him. I was standing there watching them. He wanted to speak with me, but the cops said that they would have to search me if I wanted to speak with him, so I didn't say anything. When I came on the block, they had already stopped him. After they left, I copped my nickel and smoked it in this building.

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*footnote continued....*

suggest that the 1989 reduction in cocaine abuse may not have extended to the criminally involved, inner-city drug users in most cities. But the research of Hamid, cited above, and the ethnography conducted for this evaluation tend to confirm the DUF data that show the decline in use extending, in New York City, even to the criminally-involved subgroup.

While TNT seems not to have stopped users from getting their crack and using it, it did delay them and forced many people to seek indoor locations to use the drugs. But other increases in “search time” occurred only when TNT was actually on the block. (See discussion below.) By and large, crack users developed sufficiently close relationships with sellers in their area that they could keep track of the movements of their favorite sellers. The sellers' increased mobility (discussed above) and TNT's removal from the market of the less able among them may have made it more difficult for occasional users to locate crack, but veteran users had little difficulty. A user from the 67th Precinct summed it up:

The TNT has arrested quite a few dealers. It's a little harder to get something because everybody's kind of scared. But I can still find it easily.

For the most part, drug markets within the study precincts drew their clientele from the surrounding community. Drive-through customers made up the majority of customers only at a few locations. The ethnographers' observations of these drive-through locations suggest that the number of drive-through customers decreased at some — but not all — of them. For example, at a 70th Precinct drive-through location — one of TNT's most visible successes in the study precincts — TNT achieved nearly complete cessation of open street trafficking: Although some of that market reappeared the following summer, the effects of the intervention were felt longer here than at other sites within the precinct, where the markets quickly surged back. Even when crack sellers did reappear at the 70th Precinct drive-through location, they were subdued by comparison to the pre-TNT period. By contrast, at another location catering to drive-through clientele, TNT worked no noticeable reduction in the number of buyers.

Some researchers (*e.g.*, Kleiman, 1988; Moore, 1977) suggest that successful street-level narcotics enforcement can reduce drug consumption if it becomes more difficult and time-consuming to purchase drugs. They speculate that increased difficulty in finding drugs might lead people to seek drug rehabilitation. Even though the ethnographers noticed some increase in “search time” when TNT was on a block, they found no evidence that the presence of TNT led people to consume *less* crack or to seek drug treatment. In at least some cases, a user's arrest and brief incarceration was followed by heavier crack use in a more abusive pattern.

Several crack users arrested by TNT used crack much more intensely after spending a few days in jail. Before her arrest, one of these users had a consumption routine which, to some degree, allowed her to plan her daily activities. After release, having been without crack for five days, she went on a ten day binge which left her with no money, no place to stay, and no clothes. Following this binge, she did seek drug treatment and stayed with it for about a month — but her decision to enter drug rehabilitation flowed from bingeing and “bottoming out,” not from any difficulty she had finding drugs. Overall, the ethnographers found little evidence of increased demand for drug treatment resulting from the difficulties TNT created for those seeking to buy crack.



Some researchers have suggested that effective street-level narcotics enforcement might raise the retail price of drugs, driving some users out of the market. (See Reuter and Kleiman on risks and prices, 1986.) The ethnographic team was especially interested in variations in the street price of drugs during the research period. Indeed, in January 1990, the price of crack increased noticeably in the study precincts, as it did in other areas of the city as well. The cause seems to have been a doubling in the wholesale price of cocaine.<sup>64</sup> Prices at the retail level remained constant — the nickel vial remained the primary unit of exchange on the street — but the amount of crack in the vials decreased. Quantity and quality varied wildly during this period and many crack smokers found themselves shopping around for the largest and best vials on the market. In many cases, inferior grades of crack were sold during this period. These phenomena did disrupt some buyer-seller relationships that had been solidifying over the previous two years. One user from the 70th Precinct spoke with dismay about the quality of crack during the “shortage” and suggested why she began shopping around much more:

That gasoline tasting crack that's out here right now, that's some horrible shit. But they have so many people out there with it. I like to stick with one guy that has some better shit than the next guy, but then his stuff turned out to be that gasoline shit too.

Although the rise in price of cocaine, combined with TNT's deployment, disrupted street-level markets in some ways, there was little visible effect upon consumer demand. If anything, these two market-disrupting factors led some crack users in the research areas to somewhat more frenzied behavior. As one crack smoker from the 70th Precinct put it:

Right now, there's a lot of people on “missions” [to get crack]. This is because the price of crack went way up. So, people are “fiending” [aching for a hit] more now than they used to be. There's more robbing people and stuff like that.

Although wholesale prices of cocaine moderated somewhat in the fall of 1990 (\$800-\$900/oz.), they did not fall to pre-1990 lows (\$600/oz.). Ethnographic data suggest that the net market adjustment drove away some marginal users, primarily those who had been expressing a desire to quit and were pushed over the edge by the rapid deterioration of the quality and quantity of crack available in the street markets.

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<sup>64</sup> There has been much speculation about the reasons for this steep increase in the price of cocaine at the wholesale level, but little convincing evidence in support. For example, Kleiman explained the price increase by suggesting that police and military operations aimed at interdiction were “now taking hold.” (*The New York Times*, June 4, 1990). However, there was no slump in South American production and little convincing evidence to support the thesis that after so many years of meager returns, interdiction was finally paying off. A more likely explanation might be this: faced with a nationwide *stagnation* of consumer demand for cocaine and crack (see, for example, *The New York Times*, December 27, 1990, and June 1, 1990), big suppliers tried to maintain profits by driving up the price of cocaine through hoarding. It was, perhaps, no coincidence that as New York City was experiencing a price hike and supply shortage, large seizures of warehoused cocaine were made at estates on Long Island.

3. *The Emergence of New Consumers and New Locations for Consumption.* One effect of TNT in the research areas was to move crack markets — both the sellers and the buyers — to indoor or more sheltered locations whenever possible. For consumers, this meant searching for apartments, lobbies, stairwells, basements and rooftops where it felt safe to smoke. Most crack users reported that it was not difficult to find such spots in the TNT research areas. Although TNT was somewhat successful in moving them off the street, it was less successful in disrupting indoor distribution and consumption. For example, when TNT raided one apartment in a 70th Precinct building where crack smokers had been congregating, the group simply and quickly pressured another user living in the building to make his apartment available as a gathering spot.

Meanwhile, other indoor locations — known as freakhouses — were opening up and attracting new, often middle-aged users with discretionary incomes. As a freakhouse operator in the 67th Precinct noted:

Not everybody who smokes is a crackhead. There are plenty of people who drive around in Rolls Royce and BMW's who smoke more than me and you. But the difference is that they don't chase it. When they smoke, they come inside and spend a hundred dollars, a thousand dollars, and they smoke.

Freakhouses generally catered to this new segment of the crack-using population and did not allow entry to compulsive users with meager amounts of money. No crack was sold on the premises, but it could usually be bought from a reliable street-level seller in the vicinity. Crack smokers who used the freakhouses would often stay for two or three days, smoking until their money ran out. The primary attraction, beyond the relative safety of the indoor location, was the combination of crack and women. As one freakhouse operator explained:

The way we run this thing around here is everybody who comes in is to sit down and smoke and freak out with the girls upstairs. When a customer comes in, he wants to have a good time with the girls and everything. I always have girls here, so when he comes through he'll spend four, five hundred dollars with me and then go.

Thus, while street-level crack markets were contracting in the target precincts, freakhouses represented an area of market growth. Freakhouses did not attract as many people as curbside markets did (or even as many as the old-style crackhouses), but freakhouse patrons spent large amounts of money and helped sustain the nearby local street-level crack markets.

### III. Drug Markets in the 71st Precinct The Comparison Area

The 71st Precinct had the same types of drug markets as the 70th and 67th precincts — predominantly freelance nickels markets — but the geographical distribution of these markets was much more restricted: the markets were smaller (*i.e.*, fewer sellers, fewer customers) and activity was not as blatant.

The 71st Precinct's drug markets were mainly in the western portion of the precinct. Much of the center and eastern portion of the precinct was composed of stable, middle class houses whose owners guarded their properties. The eastern section of the precinct was home to the international headquarters of the Lubavitch Hasidim. Tensions often ran high between the Hasidim and their Caribbean and African-American neighbors. The police patrol that area heavily, and the Hasidim have long had their own private security patrol. In this area, drug transactions on the streets were rare.

By the time the research began (October 1989), much of the drug activity in the western end of the 71st Precinct had already begun to disappear. There were already fewer places to buy crack on the street and fewer sellers working the streets. In part, this was because the area stands between two major drug-trafficking centers — the Fulton Street area of Bedford-Stuyvesant and “hot spots” of crack trafficking in the 70th Precinct. Drug sellers and consumers in the 71st Precinct were drawn to those markets as much, if not more, than to markets in their own precinct. A crack smoker from the 71st Precinct, who lives in an area where there is curbside selling, explained why he often went to Bedford-Stuyvesant in search of crack:

I don't go over by S\_\_\_\_\_ and M\_\_\_\_\_ [in the 71st]. Like I say, I'll go across Eastern Parkway — to Bedford-Stuyvesant — to get me something I can cook up. Most of the hot places I know are up in Bed-Stuy: These are mostly guys on the street, people that I've known for years. I don't have to look for anybody, they know me.

But the shrinkage of the 71st Precinct drug markets cannot be explained entirely by business being siphoned off by larger, competing markets. There was evidence of other forces at work:

You don't see as much traffic on the streets anymore. This time last year you could barely walk the streets without someone pushing something in your face. It's just more subdued, like it's dying down, it's regressing.

There's no new people dealing out here. There's less people dealing out there now. There used to be ten or fifteen people on the corner, now it's really just three. I think there's less because they started beating people and got fucked up. Half of them are dead, half of them are in jail. But really its just three now: that lady, the guy over there, and the guy that used to sell downstairs. They're the main ones that people go to. There's another girl that comes in the neighborhood, but she don't come too often.

There's not many teenagers that are getting into crack today. Sell it?! They don't want to be involved with it in any way. You may get a few that slips through the cracks, but they know what it's doing to people, so they don't get involved.

As in the 70th and 67th precincts, market decline was not uniform. By the summer of 1990; the majority of sellers on the streets of the western portion of the 71st Precinct had been squeezed into a small space in front of one building in a local housing project. Two crack smokers from the area described how several formerly discrete crack markets became consolidated in one small space:

There's one particular spot, there's a few new people selling there. Right there, there's at least ten people selling on the patio. If you walk into the building there's some more. It used to be two or three of them, but now, there's about ten of them. This has all happened in the past two or three months.

There's more guys juggling on the streets out there right now. It's because of the economy; there's no jobs. It's the same crowd, but with new people. Some of the old timers have people working for them, because, you know, he's not gonna put himself in that type of situation anymore when he can get somebody else to work there.

The ethnographic team was not in the 71st Precinct long enough to make significant inroads into this particular group of sellers who, because they were cramped into a small and vulnerable space, were more easily identified and were wary of outsiders.<sup>65</sup>

There was no evidence of displacement into 71st Precinct drug markets from the other study precincts, where TNT was deployed. Not a single informant had noticed sellers or consumers displaced from the other two precincts. Indeed, some 71st Precinct crack smokers said they had gone to buy and smoke crack in the 70th Precinct during the TNT period there.

The growth of indoor distribution and consumption locales, especially freakhouses, contributed to the shrinkage of the street drug markets in the 71st Precinct, just as it did in the other study precincts. Unlike the indoor locations that served as havens for former street users, the 71st Precinct freakhouses generally catered only to working people. Two freakhouse operators offered these comments on their clientele:

I have people who come to my house and might spend \$1,000. They won't step out of that door because they don't wanna jeopardize themselves. It all depends on what your job is. You might be a city worker. You might be a cop.

On a Friday night this house is packed. It's not only guys, women come too. We've had lawyers, cops, Con Edison, Brooklyn Union Gas . . . all kinds come here. We have no criminals coming in here. No way — we can't afford that. All the people we deal with have jobs.

The ethnographic data suggests that the movement away from street drug markets was more pronounced in the 71st Precinct than in the other two precincts. This trend in the research comparison precinct makes it even more difficult to assess the extent to which TNT caused or accelerated movement toward the indoor drug distribution and consumption and shrinkage of street markets in TNT target areas.

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<sup>65</sup> In contrast to drug market locations within the target precincts, members of the ethnographic team were never offered any crack to buy in the 71st Precinct. Because distributors at this location were so suspicious of outsiders, the ethnographic team relied on information provided by consumers who demonstrated extensive knowledge about markets in the area.

#### IV. Summary of Ethnographic Data

The drug markets operating on the streets of the three study precincts clearly contracted during the research period. There were fewer spots where users could buy drugs, and there were fewer sellers at most of the active locations. But the same market contractions were observed in the comparison precinct as in the TNT target areas: Crack was no less available during and after TNT than before, and there was no appreciable increase in “search time” for most crack users (except when TNT was visibly present at the spot where they bought).

The evidence suggests that the contraction of street drug markets in the three study precincts started well before TNT arrived in Brooklyn South. Although TNT may have hastened it, the decline was most evident in the 71st Precinct where TNT was not deployed during the research period.<sup>66</sup> This suggests that — however massive and concentrated the TNT intervention was in comparison to other police drug enforcement initiatives — these crack markets were more responsive to larger social forces (*e.g.*, trends in drug consumption, evolving community attitudes). Because the introduction of TNT to Brooklyn South coincided with a citywide contraction in street drug markets and a gradual decline in the total number of active crack users, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of TNT observed on the streets of the study precincts from the general trends. For example, it was clear that most curbside crack sellers, aware that the market was no longer attracting new users, began trying to develop a stable clientele well before the arrival of the TNT made a stable clientele more important as a defense against apprehension.

Yet TNT clearly did have effects that Vera's ethnographers could observe. The number of regular sellers on the street decreased noticeably at most outdoor locations when TNT was deployed in a target area. To some extent, arrested sellers were replaced during the TNT period by “recycled” sellers coming back to the streets after serving time on arrests made in prior periods, by consumers-turned-sellers, by part-time or one-shot sellers, and by neophytes. This kept the markets active, and the activity at most locations returned to normal once TNT left the area. As crack markets on the streets of the study precincts contracted, the instability in the markets and violence in the streets increased. New sellers fought over turf, and sellers and users fought over the quality of the crack.

Even though there were fewer sellers conducting business on the streets when TNT was deployed in an area, the targeted markets did not disappear entirely except in one location. Sellers employed a variety of techniques to adapt to TNT: They varied their business hours to avoid what they believed were the hours TNT officers were active, they created lookout networks or expanded existing ones, they moved to

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<sup>66</sup> The principal reason for the swifter contraction in the 71st Precinct was the “peripheral” status of the markets there in comparison to the more thriving street-level drug markets nearby in the 70th Precinct and Bedford-Stuyvesant.

a new spot after each transaction, they restricted sales to known customers and developed more stable clienteles, they reduced the visibility of each transaction, they made greater use of "steerers" as intermediaries, and they laundered money from buyers as often as possible.

It was widely expected that an effect of TNT would be the displacement of drug market activity from target areas to other neighborhoods. This was not observed in the study precincts, though there were examples of sellers moving to other locations within a target area to avoid TNT and some of the side effects of TNT operations. There is, however, ample evidence that TNT caused displacement of street drug markets when it was deployed in certain other precincts. For example, during the summer of 1989, Brooklyn North's TNT displaced drug traffic from the streets of the 83rd Precinct (Bushwick) to the 90th Precinct (Williamsburg). When TNT was subsequently deployed in the 90th Precincts in the Fall of 1989, the markets were almost entirely displaced back to the 83rd Precinct. (Curtis and Maher, 1992; Maher and Curtis, 1992.)

Because TNT did not displace crack markets from either the 67th Precinct or the 70th Precinct, this research cannot shed direct light on why the phenomenon has been observed in some New York City precincts and not in others. But two factors can be identified — neither of them controllable by the police — that seem to impede or contribute to displacement: the structure of an area's crack market, and the conditions of the neighborhood in which it operates. Crack markets in the study precincts were dominated by "freelance" sellers with little history of mutual or coordinated action and with little in the way of personal support systems. Freelance sellers cannot move to new locations as easily as organized distributors, such as the ones who dominated the Bushwick and Williamsburg street-level markets. The organized distributors are more likely to have multiple outlets for retail sales: If one location is closed down by police action, customers are directed to affiliates in adjacent neighborhoods.

Differences in neighborhood conditions, even within a target area, also help explain TNT's differential impact. For example, street drug markets were displaced from Williamsburg not only because of the pressure TNT exerted, but also because the surrounding community became less desirable as a place to do that kind of business when many of the abandoned buildings were sealed up or rehabilitated, empty lots were cleared, and reconstruction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway disrupted some of the drug users' favorite neighborhood haunts. In short, neighborhood revitalization was a major contributor to the dramatic decrease in drug markets on the streets of Williamsburg that began late in 1989 (Curtis and Maher, 1992; *see also*, Zimmer, 1987).

Within the research areas, there were marked differences in the impact of TNT at different locations. For example, while TNT effectively rid one block in the 70th Precinct of the curbside market that had flourished there, it hardly made a dent on the market at the large housing complex in the 67th Precinct. The differential impact of

TNT at various locations within target areas seemed to flow from conditions that either expose these street drug markets or protect them from the tactics TNT employs. On the 70th Precinct block where TNT seemed to work so well, the drug traffickers were quite exposed: This was one short block of apartment buildings, physically isolated from other drug markets and quite close to the wealthier section of the precinct. By contrast, the large housing complex in the 67th Precinct was girded by high iron fences, which sellers used to advantage: It was nearly impossible to raid the premises, as the fences delayed officers long enough for the sellers to seek refuge inside the housing complex, where the buildings' basements were connected and where many apartments were available as hiding places.

Despite the differential effects of TNT, drug sellers from all parts of the research areas exhibited quite similar perceptions, attitudes, and adaptations. Most expressed little fear of being caught by TNT. While much of this was the bravado of the street, TNT's core tactics — undercover operations for a relatively brief period — contributed to the sellers' low assessment of its potency. By contrast, they were much more respectful and fearful of uniformed officers when they were deployed to maintain a constant street presence at a market location.

The pattern of drug consumption had already begun to change in the three study precincts before the research began. Many crack users had begun to moderate their drug consumption and there were fewer new users entering these markets — remarkably few teenagers were buyers or sellers. The only new users identified during the research period were middle-aged working people with secure jobs, who shunned the street and tended to consume their drugs in the relative security of the freakhouses springing up throughout central Brooklyn.

There was little evidence that TNT made it substantially more difficult for established users to buy drugs. Although many crack users in the research areas sought drug treatment before, during and after TNT, there was nothing to suggest that they did so because TNT made it harder to find drugs or increased their “search time.” Some users withdrew from the market when the wholesale price of cocaine went up (which meant less crack in a “nickel” vial on the street) — but that appears to have been the work of national and international market forces, rather than TNT.





## Chapter Five

### COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF TNT IN THE TARGET AREAS

#### I. Introduction

The assumption is widely held — within the Police Department and outside it — that causal links exist between drug trafficking on the streets of an area and the quality-of-life problems that burden its residents: For example, curbside drug markets instill fear and inhibit residents' use of public amenities such as parks and commercial shopping areas, which deteriorate when underutilized. If TNT reduces the harm street-level drug markets do to the quality of life in a target community and reduces the fear and isolation of residents, it could free them to organize to “reclaim their streets” — a hope often expressed to the researchers, in those words, by Department personnel and by respondents in the community. In its design, TNT aims to reduce the crime and disorderly conditions characteristic of curbside drug markets both because that is desirable in itself, and because doing so should reduce the level of fear among community residents, leading them to organize themselves, to resist resurgence of the drug markets, and to continue improving their community's quality of life, after TNT moves on.

The in-depth panel interviews and the household surveys, conducted as part of this research, provide some insight into the perceptions of community leaders and residents of the TNT target areas. Their perceptions are at least as important as NYPD assessments and NYPD measurements of TNT productivity, reported in Chapter Three, precisely because TNT's impact ultimately depends as much on its indirect influence on residents' perceptions and behavior as it does on arresting drug sellers and buyers during the 90-day enforcement period.

In waves of interviews conducted with the panels of community leaders and residents, Vera researchers' questions explored five general areas:

- What were street conditions like before and after TNT? What quality-of-life and crime issues facing the community are believed to be the most pressing? Where does drug trafficking fit in?
- To what degree were residents of TNT target areas aware of its presence? Did knowledge that TNT was in the area vary by residents' status in the community?
- To what extent do those who were aware of TNT understand its goals and tactics, and to what extent do they support them?
- How effective did they believe TNT to be? How did they perceive:  
(a) TNT's impact on drug markets; (b) TNT's impact on drug-related crime; (c) the duration of any TNT impact; (d) TNT's impact on everyday behavior in the area (e.g., increased use of public amenities like parks) and on residents' level of fear, both during and after the enforcement period?
- What effect did TNT have on police-community relations?

To the extent that TNT hopes to help target area residents reclaim their streets, it needs to mobilize communities, including their existing organizations, to secure whatever gains are made during the 90 days of TNT enforcement. Thus, the panels constructed for these interviews included several types of individuals likely to be already actively involved in community life:

- 1) tenant, block, and neighborhood association leaders and members;
- 2) precinct community council members;
- 3) community board members;
- 4) owners, managers and employees of local businesses;
- 5) religious leaders;
- 6) "ordinary residents" (renters and homeowners).

As it turned out, the paucity of formal community organizations in the TNT target areas of the 70th and 67th precincts made "ordinary residents" the most important audience category for TNT; therefore, the researchers made them an important subgroup of the panels. The topics addressed in the panel interviews were also covered, at less depth, in interviews with the larger numbers of ordinary residents canvassed by the household surveys.

Observations in this chapter grounded on panel interviews are based on the researchers' analysis of 74 in-depth interviews, conducted in the 70th, 67th and 71st precincts during and after TNT's presence in the 70th and 67th precincts. These panel interview data are interpreted in light of what was learned from the household surveys.<sup>67</sup>

In each of the two precincts targeted by TNT during the research period (the 70th and the 67th precincts) the panel was interviewed twice — once when TNT was in operation in the panel's area and once after TNT had left. In the comparison precinct — the 71st Precinct — the panel was interviewed only once, at about the time of the first wave of interviews in the 70th and 67th precincts. The household survey findings come from three waves of interviews. Interviews were conducted in the two TNT-targeted precincts before TNT arrived, just after TNT left, and approximately three months after TNT left. In the comparison precinct, a first wave of pre-TNT household survey interviews was conducted at about the same time as the first wave in the targeted precincts, and a second wave (also "pre-TNT") was conducted three months later. There was a total of 732 community residents interviewed in these household surveys: 134 pre-TNT interviews, 185 post-TNT interviews, and 206 follow-up interviews in the 70th and 67th precincts; in the comparison precinct, 213 were interviewed over the two waves.

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<sup>67</sup> Appendix A describes in detail the methodologies used for the panel interview and household survey components of this research.

There was general consensus, among members of the panels and the household survey respondents, about the quality of life in their communities and about the effectiveness of TNT; the consensus tends to raise the level of confidence placed in the observations drawn from panel interviews and permits analysis of the two sets of data to be integrated in the text that follows. When differences were found between the perceptions of panelists and the perceptions of those interviewed for the household surveys, the differences are noted.

## II. Community Perceptions of Quality of Life

Before assessing TNT's impact on a target area's quality of life, it is useful to establish how much of a negative influence the people living and working there think drug trafficking has on it. When asked to define "quality of life," nearly all panel respondents, in all research areas, mentioned crime and drug trafficking in the response. The panel interviews and the household survey interviews overwhelmingly cite drugs — both as the major quality-of-life problem and as the major crime problem in these communities.<sup>68</sup> Panel respondents generally believed that drug trafficking was at the root of a wide range of violent street crimes such as armed robbery, shootings and muggings. As one tenant leader and community board member in the 70th Precinct observed:

The major crime problem right now is drugs, crack mostly, and their spinoffs. By "spinoffs" I mean the burglaries that people commit in order to support their habit — burglaries, robberies, that sort of thing.

Furthermore, most panel members reported that the overall quality of life had declined in their communities, primarily because of the sale and use of drugs. The most frequently cited example was an increase in drug-related street crime and the fear it inspires. Nearly all those interviewed felt unsafe in the research areas, particularly at night, and cited drugs and drug-related street crime as the major reasons for the fear they felt. An executive from a local merchants' association in the 70th Precinct observed:

Well, it's just scarier. There are a lot of suspicious looking people standing out on all these corners. There's a lot more muggings, a lot more people on crack, so there are a lot of desperate attempts to get quick cash. For the homeowners in the area there has been a lot of crazy thefts like stealing lawn mowers at three o'clock in the morning . . . I even heard tell of someone who stole a Toyota and was trying to sell it for \$50 on the street corner here. He was just thinking about the next purchase of crack.

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<sup>68</sup> Less pressing, but nonetheless salient quality-of-life problems were: lack of affordable housing for the lower and working classes, poor educational system, lack of job opportunities for area youth, inadequate sanitation service, and public health problems (e.g., AIDS).

We are even seeing prostitution in this area and they're even coming into the homeowner section . . . . So I'm just more fearful. I don't go out at all in this area at night. When I walk home at seven p.m., I have a can of mace in my pocket and I hold it ready to squirt in anyone's face at any moment . . . that's how afraid I am. At eight o'clock, when all the shops close, we don't own the streets anymore, the dealers run the streets. . . . We've even discovered that some of the parents won't let their kids come to our after-school programs because they are afraid for their kids' lives.

In the 70th Precinct, only three of the 15 panel members interviewed during TNT's enforcement period said they felt safe in the research area at night. These three were distinguished by long-standing community service commitments that sometimes required them to venture out at night, and they were all fearful for the safety of family and friends who might have to go into the research area at night. Only two of the nine panelists interviewed during the TNT enforcement period in the 67th Precinct said they felt safe in the research area. Four of the 17 panelists in the 71st Precinct said they felt safe in their own neighborhoods. In all three areas, however, nearly all respondents felt safe during daylight hours because, they said, drug traffickers did most of their business in the late afternoon and evening hours.<sup>69</sup>

In all three research areas, drug trafficking and crime related to it were considered the most pressing quality-of-life problems and the most important crime problems facing the communities, and respondents expressed intense support for "doing something about drugs." Given these perceptions and feelings, TNT appears well suited (at least in its design) to improving a target area's quality of life by reducing drug trafficking and related crime and thereby reducing fear and increasing residents' capacity to preserve and improve the quality of life on their own.

### **III. Levels of the Community's Awareness of TNT's Presence, Purposes, and Tactics**

Community outreach is a core element of TNT's design. To make the community aware of TNT and to mobilize its active involvement in the program, Department officials convene a kick-off public meeting with community leaders, local politicians, representatives of local agencies and area residents within the first two weeks of TNT's implementation. At the meeting, police officials announce the arrival of TNT, describe how it functions, and reach for community support of the program. Residents are encouraged to take an active participatory role by using the Drug-busters hotline, a confidential way to provide information about drug trafficking to

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<sup>69</sup> The first wave of panel interviews conducted, during TNT's presence in the 70th and 67th precincts, produced 41 interviews (15 interviews in the 70th Precinct, 9 in the 67th Precinct, and 17 in the 71st Precinct). The post-TNT panel interviews were conducted in the 70th and 67th precincts after TNT's departure, producing 17 interviews in the 70th Precinct and 16 in the 67th Precinct.

the police.<sup>70</sup> In addition, TNT managers expect that citywide and local media coverage will make TNT's presence and purposes known to the public generally.

### A. Awareness of TNT's Presence

The panel data suggest that TNT made itself fairly well known in the two target precincts. The household survey data paint a more troubling picture.

In the 70th Precinct, 12 of the 17 post-TNT panel respondents had been aware of TNT's presence during the enforcement period; in the 67th Precinct, 11 of the 16 panelists had been aware of it. As expected, few members of the comparison precinct's panel knew about TNT; when asked if they knew of any new police initiatives directed against street-level drug trafficking which they would like to see in the 71st Precinct, only five of the 17 panelists there mentioned TNT.

Panelists' awareness of TNT's presence and their understanding of its purpose and methods varied enormously and were closely linked to their status in the community. Household survey data from the 70th and 67th precincts, reflecting the knowledge and understanding of ordinary residents (as opposed to community leaders), show that few had any idea that TNT had been in their neighborhoods during the enforcement period, although many had heard of TNT. Even among panel members in those precincts, whose leadership roles made them generally more knowledgeable than those interviewed for the household survey, very few knew anything about TNT's interagency task force for problem-solving or about the maintenance period that was to follow the 90 days of enforcement by the plain-clothes TNT modules. Only two of the 15 panel members interviewed during TNT's 70th Precinct enforcement period knew about the Drugbusters hotline.

Over two-thirds (69%) of the 185 respondents in the 70th and 67th precincts' post-TNT household surveys knew that TNT existed, but far fewer were aware that TNT had been deployed in their neighborhoods.<sup>71</sup> In the 70th Precinct, only two in five (39%) of the 70 residents who said they knew about TNT answered "yes" to the question, "Are you aware of TNT in this area?"; only seven (12%) of the 57 interviewed in the 67th Precinct who knew about TNT knew it had been there.<sup>72</sup> The higher level of awareness of TNT's local deployment in the 70th Precinct is not surprising, given the presence there of the full TNT unit for the first 90 days, the

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<sup>70</sup> While Police Department personnel cited "community support" as an important variable in TNT site selection (and in TNT's chances for success), it is unclear how "community support" is defined for site-selection purposes. The research data show that, while community leaders enthusiastically supported TNT's presence in their communities, ordinary residents of the research areas did not actively contribute to the TNT effort by using the Drugbusters hotline. (See Chapter Three.)

<sup>71</sup> These interviews were conducted in the 70th Precinct between March 12 and April 18, 1990, and in the 67th Precinct between June 11 and July 13, 1990.

<sup>72</sup> This indicates a statistically significant relationship between precinct and awareness of TNT in the area,  $X^2=11.08$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $\phi=.30$ .

presence of half the unit for an additional six weeks, and the presence of the experimental 20-officer TNT uniformed component during the maintenance period. In the 67th Precinct, the deployment of only half the TNT unit at the beginning of the enforcement period and the focus of TNT enforcement activity at locations outside the research area<sup>73</sup> made TNT less visible to those interviewed for the household survey in that precinct than in the 70th Precinct.

From the panel interview data, it is apparent that local civic activists, precinct-community council members and community board members had the highest level of knowledge about TNT. By virtue of their roles, they had routinely interacted with the Police Department or the community board on a variety of issues, including police and drug markets. Panel respondents in these categories also believed that the broader community was well aware of TNT's presence and purpose because it had been so well-publicized.<sup>74</sup> For example, one knowledgeable community board member said:

TNT is the Tactical Narcotics Team and they make arrests only dealing with drugs. They do what's called "buy and bust" where they got undercover officers who make buys and then the rest of the team busts the sellers or buyers. Usually the TNTs wear jackets with their identification so you know who they are. What they'll do, for instance, they've been in this building already, is they'll roll up and dash in and pick up the dealers and users in the hallways. . . . They usually stay about three months in an area and then move on. They pick an area by looking at the crime statistics. . . .

In the panels, a second level of knowledge about TNT was found among residents and employees of local businesses, most of whom had learned of a "drug task force" through media or word of mouth, but very few of whom could specify any detail about TNT goals and tactics. When prompted during interviews, many respondents who had this kind of knowledge did not recognize the TNT acronym. One apartment building superintendent, for example, learned about TNT (which he referred to as "a special team") when one of his sons was arrested by TNT:

Well, there's some special team that comes around sometimes, I don't know the name of it, . . . and they take some of the drug dealers away who are hanging around the corner. . . . One of my sons was . . . arrested by them. They watched him buy drugs someplace and they followed him back home and they arrested him here. I've seen them arrest people, and the cops have street clothes on. They watch the people who are selling and buying drugs, and they come and take them away. . . . People in the neighborhood have told me that they have arrested guys on the corner, and one day I saw them arrest people right out in front of my building.

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<sup>73</sup> The 67th Precinct research area was created around active drug market locations in the originally designated TNT target area. Before the enforcement period began, the target area was expanded to include other parts of the precinct. See Chapter Three and Appendix A.

<sup>74</sup> Even though TNT was known to most panel members, five who were well-informed about TNT consistently referred to it as "AT&T."

The lowest level of knowledge about TNT was found among panel members who had no idea that anything like TNT had been in their neighborhood. By the end of the TNT enforcement period in the 70th and 67th precincts, nine of the 33 panel respondents had no idea that TNT had been there.<sup>75</sup>

### B. Knowledge of TNT's Goals and Methods

Although TNT was successful in making its presence well known to most community leaders and activists on the panels in the research areas, almost all of whom had what is characterized above as the highest level of knowledge, it was less successful in making TNT goals and methods well known even to them.<sup>76</sup> During post-TNT interviews, the majority of panel respondents who knew about TNT perceived its goal to be simply “to rid the neighborhood of drugs” by arresting buyers and sellers.

Only a small minority of panelists were as knowledgeable about TNT goals and methods as one precinct-community council and community board member in the 70th Precinct who, although judging the effort a failure, effectively described the TNT goal of helping the community “reclaim the streets”:

[TNT] was tremendously effective in making arrests and deterring the [drug] problem. However, as soon as TNT left, the problem resurfaced and many of the people who were arrested were back out on the streets. And the neighborhood did not have enough time or opportunity to band together to take the place of TNT. That was actually the goal of TNT and the goal our group had set for itself. We would attempt to organize the existing community groups, block groups and so forth to sort of patrol their own buildings or blocks and organize around the problem. That didn't come to fruition. . . .

An equally knowledgeable neighborhood association executive, who had been intensively lobbying the 71st Precinct (the comparison precinct) to bring TNT in, captured another major goal of TNT — fear reduction:

. . . I don't know that much about TNT because it's not here. I only know about it from talking to people in other communities that have had it. . . . It is a specially trained group of undercover police that *hound* a specific target area that's known for heavy drug activity. . . . They make sweeps in the area, making a lot of arrests and it has a serious impact on the community. Now, I don't know how long this lasts. I've

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<sup>75</sup> The majority of these least knowledgeable respondents were from the panels' ordinary community residents.

<sup>76</sup> It can be argued that it is not important for members of the community to either know or understand the theory and goals behind enforcement efforts such as TNT. The problem-solving orientation of the community policing approach that increasingly characterizes the NYPD does, however, call for such sharing of knowledge. Because community policing stresses police-community partnerships as the most effective means of crime prevention, it tends to view it as important that community residents be aware of and understand the theory and goals of TNT or any other police initiative.

only spoken to people while TNT is there. People had a sense of going back into their own streets, back outside, they felt less a sense of fear than they had before in terms of just being out with and getting to know other people. All the drug trafficking had gone and the people who buy and sell were no longer loitering. The people felt comfortable knowing that TNT was there.

Some of the more politically active panel respondents believed that TNT had a latent political goal as well — to assuage or “shut-up” residents of areas besieged by drugs. For example, when asked about TNT’s goals after it had left the community, a community leader in the 70th Precinct argued:

... a realistic answer is that TNT is a force that exists to shut-up a community that is in trouble and is complaining about it. TNT comes in for three months, cleans it up, everybody is happy for a while . . . . It’s a public relations program for the police department. . . . TNT gives people a feeling that there is maybe some hope . . . that maybe the police are doing something. But it’s not true.<sup>77</sup>

Data from the waves of interviews with the panels suggest that TNT made itself relatively well known to most community leaders and to those associated with community organizations that have routine contact with the police. However, even among these better-informed residents of the precincts targeted by TNT in Brooklyn South, there were varying levels of knowledge about TNT. For example, while most respondents who knew of TNT knew about the undercover “buy and bust” tactics, the interagency task force established as part of the initiative was known to only a few of the most knowledgeable respondents (most notably community board leaders), and only a minority of the 70th Precinct’s panel were aware that an experimental 20-officer component of uniformed TNT officers were assigned to foot patrol at drug hot spots after the 90-day TNT enforcement period ended.

### C. Knowledge about the TNT Target Area Selection Process

The panel respondents who knew about TNT’s presence in their communities were asked how they thought areas were selected for TNT.<sup>78</sup> The majority said they had no idea, but those who were generally the most knowledgeable knew that the selection was made at the “Borough Command level” and, as one respondent said, it

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<sup>77</sup> While the NYPD hopes that TNT will have a positive effect on police-community relations, it hopes that the effect will be the product of TNT making community residents feel safer through TNT’s effectiveness in keeping street-level drug trafficking to a minimum. Respondents such as this one used the term “public relations” in a pejorative sense. The implication is that the program does little, if anything, to help rid a community of drug trafficking.

<sup>78</sup> As detailed in Chapter Two, the designation of TNT areas within a borough is made by the Police Commissioner, based on information supplied by the District Narcotics Division and the Patrol Borough Command. The formal criteria for target selection include the level of drug activity in suggested target areas, the volume and nature of other criminal activity there, the immediacy of the drug problem there in relation to the patrol borough as a whole, and the extent to which community support there is sufficient to suit TNT’s design.



was based “on drug arrest statistics, so selection is based on need.” The *most* knowledgeable and politically active respondents believed “politics” had as much to do with the selection process as “need.” One influential community board member in the 67th Precinct stated the view this way: “. . . a more politically active precinct will probably get TNT quicker. . . . The process is that the community has to request TNT and lobby for it. We have to stay on the Police Department's back to let them know that we demand it.” In the 70th Precinct, a community association executive was more blunt:

It's politics. Sure it is. You know, [politician's name] lives here, [politician's name] lives here. What the hell do you think? In this little area right here [pointing to area map] there are major league judges and politicians who live back-to-back with this drug problem and they are nervous. So I think that TNT came here over Brownsville and Bed Stuy for that reason.

#### D. Sources of Information about TNT

The Police Department relies on several mechanisms to inform the public of TNT's presence and goals. The most important is the series of three public meetings convened in each target area. The Department also expects media coverage and word-of-mouth to inform the public of TNT's presence and purposes.

Panel data show that the majority of those who knew that TNT was deployed in their communities learned about it through community organizations to which they belonged (*e.g.*, community boards, precinct-community council, merchants associations). Those who were active in community organizations that had routine contact with the Police Department were likely to get their information directly from the Department, through the community group. But members of the average block or tenant association who were aware of TNT's presence were most likely to have heard about it from the media. The TNT community meetings in the 70th and 67th precincts were mentioned by only eight of 33 panel respondents. Although these panel members knew about the community meetings, few had actually attended them. Only one of the panels' ordinary residents (*i.e.*, those who were not community leaders) had attended a TNT community meeting.

Panel interviews and household survey data suggest that the devices used by TNT for community outreach were insufficient to inform the *general* public in these target areas of TNT's presence and purpose. Most panel respondents who did know TNT was deployed in their communities argued that the Police Department had not done enough to inform the public and had not involved community leaders to the extent necessary to make the program a success. A community board member in the 70th Precinct, for example, claimed that TNT's outreach to the larger community had been a failure because the community meetings did not draw a sufficient number of the target area's ordinary residents and because TNT had not really worked with the community board office. A leading member of a local merchants association reflected the consensus of the panel:

In all the years I have been here, and I like the police, I get along with them, the police don't look to community agencies to get involved in police matters and this is no exception. They are very closed that way. I think that they probably find us to be a pain in the neck. They find us useful when they need us for sure. But some of the agencies, all they do is bitch and moan, groan and complain . . . Police don't respect most of these community people because they think they are nuts. So why should they become involved with the community at that level . . . ?

Panel interviews strongly suggest that those who were least likely to know anything about TNT were the ordinary residents and workers who formed the core of the community.<sup>79</sup> That so few panel respondents interviewed after TNT had heard of the Drugbusters hotline raises further questions about the efficacy of the Department's effort to disseminate information it believed the community needed if it were to join in making the initiative a success. One community organizer in the 70th Precinct argued that the Drugbusters hotline had not been emphasized and marketed sufficiently:

I was not initially aware of a formal TNT hotline number that you could call. And I don't think that people in the community are generally aware either. I think that there were a few people in attendance at the community meetings and they were given numbers to call directly but I don't think that people community-wide knew that they should focus their reports to TNT. It wasn't publicized.

Television was by far the source of information about TNT most commonly mentioned by household survey respondents; three out of four respondents (74%) in the 70th Precinct who had heard of TNT (but did not necessarily know it was in their community) and 86% of those who had heard of TNT in the 67th Precinct said they had heard about it on television. The only other sources of information mentioned with any frequency were general circulation newspapers, mentioned by about a quarter of those interviewed for the household survey (23% in the 67th Precinct and 25% in the 70th Precinct), and radio (mentioned by 16% of the respondents in the 67th Precinct and 14% in the 70th).<sup>80</sup> Other sources of information included friends and relatives (a total of 15 respondents), local neighborhood newspapers, police officers or police newsletters, and groups or organizations (between two and four respondents mentioned each of these as sources of their information about TNT).

The panel interviews and the household survey data raise questions about the effectiveness of using community meetings of the kind TNT convened in the study precincts to inform target areas' residents of TNT's presence and purposes. In the

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<sup>79</sup> There were exceptions. An influential member of the area's largest merchants association was interviewed more than four months into the TNT intervention and did not know TNT was in the precinct. He remembered being told by an executive of the association that "a drug task force" was scheduled to arrive in the precinct but believed it had not yet done so.

<sup>80</sup> Interviewers coded as many sources as a respondent mentioned. Thus, some of the respondents who said they had heard of TNT on television may also have mentioned radio, newspapers, etc.

household survey, respondents who had heard of TNT were asked whether they had been to any meetings in the past three months, at which TNT or other drug enforcement was discussed. Only two respondents in the 67th Precinct and seven in the 70th Precinct said they had; most of the meetings were tenant association meetings, community board meetings, or block or neighborhood association meetings. In fact, respondents to the survey were more likely to report that they found out that TNT was in their neighborhood by “seeing it” than from attending a community meeting; five respondents in the 67th Precinct and 16 in the 70th Precinct said they had observed TNT in action.<sup>81</sup>

#### IV. Perceptions of TNT's Effect on the Streets

##### A. Community Perceptions of TNT's Impact on Drug Trafficking

Most panel respondents who knew TNT was deployed in their precincts believed it had a short-term positive effect on the volume of drug sales on the street. A community board member in the 70th Precinct echoed the prevailing wisdom among respondents when she argued, “How could more cops *not* help the drug situation? Any additional resource can be helpful.” During TNT's intervention in the 70th Precinct, for example, a community patrol organizer in the research area asserted that TNT had made a definite impact on local drug trafficking:

The drug dealers and users have certainly changed their behavior patterns. The street corners and the drug locations before TNT were like infestations, nests of drug dealers all in one location . . . you'd have five or six guys pulling on someone to buy drugs. Now . . . at most I'll see two dealers and that's becoming more rare even in the well-known drug locations because they're really scared.

However, this panelist, like most respondents from the 70th and 67th precincts, reported that the drug markets had for the most part returned to normal after TNT's departure. When asked in post-TNT panel interviews how effective TNT had been in reducing the overall amount of drug trafficking in their community, nine of 12 respondents in the 70th Precinct and all 11 respondents in the 67th Precinct answered that TNT had not significantly affected it. TNT's positive effects, as viewed by members of these panels, were temporary at best.<sup>82</sup> For example, a community board and precinct community-council member in the 67th Precinct said:

Well, I think TNT is effective on a short-term basis. The drug dealers mostly move to other areas or are arrested. Many lay low until they know TNT is gone.

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<sup>81</sup> Exactly what these respondent meant by saying they had observed TNT is not clear. Not all members of the TNT unit wear identifying jackets. It is possible that these respondents witnessed an arrest and were told that it was TNT or simply assumed it was TNT.

<sup>82</sup> The explanations panel members gave for TNT's apparent inability to achieve permanent reductions in street drug markets are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

TNT may keep a location clean for a while, two or three months, but TNT has been gone for a couple of months now and the drugs are coming back to those same locations. Frankly, everybody I've talked to has the same impression.

Although most respondents reported that the positive effects of TNT were temporary — that drug markets returned to normal after TNT left — there was one exception that bears mentioning. Two panel respondents from a block just west of the 70th Precinct research area reported dramatic changes in drug trafficking during *and* after the TNT intervention.<sup>83</sup> According to these respondents, street-level dealing virtually disappeared during TNT's presence. During post-TNT interviews, both reported that the effect had persisted well after TNT's departure. One resident was particularly enthusiastic about TNT's positive effects on drug dealing and general disorder on his block:

TNT's effects are incredibly obvious. One week I couldn't go out on the street without being accosted by someone trying to sell me drugs and the following week that was all gone. That one strip in the Parade Grounds, I mean it was like a bazaar where they would hawk their wares and they are still not back there even at night. . . . I am waiting . . . for the drug trafficking to return. There was a clearly barbaric attitude that people on the street have. Even that has not come back since TNT left. I was noticing last night while I was walking home, something that I haven't seen in a long time, couples strolling down the street together. I was thinking back to the time when you wouldn't see anybody on the street except for the street people. . . . TNT's arrival was like December 8th, within a week it was like night and day. From that point on it has continued. TNT stayed around until the end of February and I thought that as soon as they left the dealers would return. Now it's been five months [since TNT's departure], and it is still wonderful out there.

Another resident, a homeowner living just one block south, also reported that the number of dealers and users had decreased dramatically even after the TNT intervention ended. She added that cars with out-of-state license plates that used to park in the area (presumably to make drug purchases) were also fewer in number. Unfortunately, panel members' reports of TNT's success at and around this block stand out against the more pessimistic general view that TNT's effects were temporary.

One hypothesis of this research was that to the extent that respondents were aware of TNT, their estimates of the volume of street drug sales (and crime in general) would be lower in *post-TNT* interviews than in *pre-TNT* interviews. Responses to three questions from the household survey were used to test this hypothesis. First, residents were asked, "Compared to three months ago, would you say the problem of drug selling and buying on the streets in this area has gotten much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse, or stayed about the same?" Just over half the

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<sup>83</sup> Although this area lies outside the 70th Precinct's formal research area, panel interview staff sought respondents in this location after ethnographic data showed that the drug market on this particular block underwent a dramatic change during TNT's enforcement period.

respondents in each precinct (55% in the 70th and 52% in the 67th) indicated that drug selling and buying on the streets was about the same as it had been three months earlier (at about the time TNT entered the area). In the 70th Precinct, one-third said the problem of street drug markets drugs had improved and 12% said it had gotten worse. In the 67th Precinct, 24% said the drug problem had gotten worse and 24% said it had improved.<sup>84</sup>

A second question measuring residents' perceptions of TNT's effectiveness was more direct: "How effective do you think TNT has been in reducing drug dealing in this area?" This question was asked of all respondents who had heard of TNT. It followed a question first informing them that TNT had been in the area for about three months and then soliciting their opinion as to whether that was too long, too short, or about right. In the 67th Precinct, half of the 42 residents who answered the question thought TNT was somewhat or very effective in reducing drug dealing in the area, and the other half thought it was somewhat or very ineffective. Similarly, 61% of the 70th Precinct respondents said that TNT had been somewhat or very effective and the remainder said it was somewhat or very ineffective.

The final measure of TNT's perceived effectiveness was a question asking all respondents whether they thought sale or use of drugs in public places was a big problem, some problem, or no problem (in the area). This question was asked in each wave of the household survey (pre-TNT, post-TNT, and follow-up three months after TNT left the precinct). The responses to this question also suggest that TNT was perceived as ineffective in reducing the problem of local drug trafficking. At the time of both the pre-TNT and post-TNT interviews, an overwhelming majority of respondents in both precincts said sale or use of drugs in public was a big problem. In the 70th Precinct, 95% of pre-TNT respondents and 84% of post-TNT respondents thought it was a big problem and another 12% said it was "some problem." In the 67th Precinct, 75% of pre-TNT respondents and 71% of post-TNT respondents thought sale or use of drugs in public places was a big problem.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> There was no statistically significant relationship between precinct and estimates of the drug problem in the area.

<sup>85</sup> A chi square test of independence failed to detect a statistically significant relationship between wave (Pre-TNT, Post-TNT, Follow-up) and severity of the drug problem in the 70th Precinct. In the 67th Precinct there was a significant relationship ( $X^2=27.37$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.0001$ , Cramer's  $V=.24$ ); the difference, however, was in the follow-up period. Fifty-two percent of follow-up survey respondents thought drug use and sales in public were a big problem and 43% thought they were some problem. The reason for this perceived improvement in the drug problem during the follow-up period cannot be ascertained from these data; it is possible, however, that this perception reflects the effect of Operation Takeback (which was in the 67th Precinct during the follow-up period). The primary reason for collecting follow-up data in the two TNT precincts was to test for decay of a TNT effect. That is, most interventions show the largest effects immediately after the intervention and experience some slippage back toward pre-intervention levels; this phenomenon is known as decay. The data, however, evinced very few (and small) effects attributable to TNT. Therefore, although analyses were computed that included the follow-up data, these analyses are discussed only where TNT effects were observed.

Taken together, these three measures suggest that household survey respondents, like the majority of the panels, did not perceive TNT to have been very effective in reducing the problem of drug sales and drug use on the streets of the target areas. When asked whether the problem had improved, worsened or stayed the same after TNT, most thought it had stayed the same, and they still thought it was a big problem.

### **B. Perception of TNT's Effect on Ancillary Crime**

Panel interview data indicate that TNT did not affect perceptions of the level of crime in the target areas. During and after TNT's deployment, panel respondents in the target areas generally reported that they thought crime levels had not changed noticeably. During post-TNT interviews, only three respondents in the 70th Precinct and two in the 67th Precinct said they believed crime had decreased in their neighborhoods. The remaining panel respondents in both areas said that the level of crime had remained the same or increased. Data from the household surveys were a little more encouraging.

In each of the three waves of household surveys, respondents were asked whether they thought that crime had increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the preceding three months. It should be noted that this question was not expressly tied to TNT; rather, it simply asked the respondent to indicate whether he or she thought there had been a change. With this caveat in mind, it appears that household survey respondents were more likely to have perceived improvements during the TNT period than were the panel members. As can be seen from the data in Tables V-1 and V-2, pre-TNT respondents in both precincts were much more likely to say crime had increased during the last three months than were respondents in the post-TNT surveys, and the perception that crime was not increasing appears to have been sustained during the follow-up. While respondents were not asked why they thought crime had increased or decreased, something occurred, in both precincts, during the months that TNT was deployed there, that reduced the proportion of respondents who thought crime was on the rise.<sup>86</sup> To determine whether this effect was somehow an artifact of time, the data from the two "pre-TNT" waves in the 71st Precinct (the comparison precinct where TNT was not deployed during the research period) were subjected to the same analysis.<sup>87</sup> No similar effect was found there: Close to half the

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<sup>86</sup> In both precincts, the relationship between perceived crime and wave was significant; in the 67th Precinct,  $X^2=10.03$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p=.04$ , Cramer's  $V=.15$ ; in the 70th Precinct,  $X^2=21.71$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.0001$ , Cramer's  $V=.21$ .

<sup>87</sup> To determine whether any of the effects found in the experimental precincts (70th and 67th), which might be attributed to TNT, were also found in the comparison precinct (the 71st), a parallel set of analyses were run on data from the two pre-TNT waves of household surveys in the 71st Precinct. Although a substantial number of tests of statistical significance (chi square, t-tests between means, and F-tests for regressions) were computed, very few yielded significant results. Under such circumstances, little faith can be placed in the validity of these results. Nevertheless, the tests that yielded significant

*footnote continued*

respondents in both waves (48%) thought crime had stayed about the same during the preceding three months; about one-third (35%) thought it had increased; and 18% thought it had decreased.

**Table V-1**  
**Crime in the Past Three Months — Perceptions in the 67th Precinct**

	WAVE		
	Pre-TNT	Post-TNT	Follow-up
Crime Decreased	7%	14%	6%
Crime the Same	47%	63%	65%
Crime Increased	46%	23%	29%
(N)	(57)	(73)	(93)

**Table V-2**  
**Crime in the Past Three Months — Perceptions in the 70th Precinct**

	WAVE		
	Pre-TNT	Post-TNT	Follow-up
Crime Decreased	6%	18%	9%
Crime the Same	42%	57%	69%
Crime Increased	52%	26%	23%
(N)	(64)	(90)	(93)

In addition, two of the scales developed by the Police Foundation and used in the household survey focus on perceptions of crime — *Perceived Area Personal Crime* and *Perceived Area Property Crime*. (See Appendix A.) The results of analyses of the household survey responses on these scales are consistent with respondents' perceptions of crime in general. For *Perceived Area Personal Crime*, there was a statistically significant, though very weak effect for wave: in both the 70th and 67th precincts, post-TNT respondents perceived crime against persons to be lower than did pre-TNT respondents.<sup>88</sup> The responses on the *Perceived Area Property Crime* scale were somewhat more complicated: In the 67th Precinct, post-TNT respondents perceived property crime to be a *bigger* problem than did pre-TNT respondents, while

*footnote continued...*

differences between the two "pre" waves in the 71st Precinct are discussed (in footnotes) in the relevant sections of this chapter.

<sup>88</sup> A similar result was found in the responses from the 71st Precinct: Respondents in the second pre-TNT survey perceived personal crime in the area to be significantly lower than respondents to the first pre-TNT survey. Again, although the effect was statistically significant, it was quite small.

in the 70th Precinct, post-TNT respondents perceived property crime to be *less* of a problem than did pre-TNT respondents. Although this difference was observable, it was quite small.<sup>89</sup> Still, the bottom line is that respondents to the household survey were more likely than were panel respondents to see an improvement in the crime problem, once TNT had been deployed, and the household survey respondents were closer to the problem.

### C. Perception of TNT's Effect on General Disorder

Only a few panel respondents argued that general disorder (*e.g.*, loitering) decreased with TNT's presence in the neighborhood. Much of the decrease in drug activity and general disorder in the 70th Precinct, however, was attributed by many respondents to the heavy police presence on Church Avenue during daylight hours. When asked if police presence had increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the community, most respondents commented that it had increased because of the heavy police presence at the Korean market boycott.<sup>90</sup> They felt safer *in that immediate area*, but very unsafe away from Church Avenue. Some respondents argued that the increased police presence around the boycott had lowered the incidence of drug dealing in the immediate vicinity. One 61 year-old worker commented:

I've seen more cops on this demonstration than I've seen in this community in years. I swear to god . . . I have never seen so much brass! You got the chief . . . and they are all here for the demonstration. That makes me feel safe from the dealers there, but after that [i.e., the demonstration] settles down just ride down here and there'll be nobody on the beat!

Only two of the 24 panel respondents interviewed during TNT's presence in the two target precincts argued that TNT had made a *dramatic* difference in the amount of drug trafficking on the streets, general disorder, or overall crime.<sup>91</sup> All others were far more cautious in their assessments. Indeed, the most frequent explanations given by panel respondents who believed that TNT did not have a long-

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<sup>89</sup> Two-way factorial analyses of variance were computed on both perceived area property crime and perceived area personal crime. On property crime, neither the main effect for precinct (67th or 70th) nor the main effect for wave (pre-TNT or post-TNT) was significant; there was, however, a significant Precinct\*Wave interaction ( $F(1,269)=6.85; p<.01$ ). On personal crime, there was a significant main effect for Precinct ( $F(1,269)=11.58; p<.001$ ); respondents in the 70th Precinct perceived personal crime to be a bigger problem (mean=5.5) than did those in the 67th Precinct (mean=4.9). There was also a main effect for Wave ( $F(1,269)=7.86; p<.01$ ); personal crime was perceived to be a bigger problem by pre-test respondents (mean=5.6) than by post-test respondents (mean=5.0).

<sup>90</sup> Since December 1989, a boycott of two Korean green grocers had been in effect on Church Avenue (bordering the 70th Precinct research site). Throughout the enforcement period, and for months after TNT left the 70th Precinct, there were often more than a dozen uniformed officers on that block of Church Avenue to maintain order on the picket line. (See Chapter Two.)

<sup>91</sup> During post-TNT interviews, one of these two respondents was far less enthusiastic about TNT's gains and concluded that the dramatic effects he had seen during TNT had decayed significantly.



term impact on the quality of life in the community were, in order of frequency, that TNT did not: (1) reduce the drug traffic significantly, (2) change resident behavior, (3) reduce fear, or (4) have long-term impact.

The quality of life experienced by those living in the TNT target areas was measured by the answers household survey respondents gave to questions about their perceptions of physical deterioration (*i.e.*, dirty streets and sidewalks, abandoned buildings, vacant lots filled with trash, and abandoned cars) and social disorder (*e.g.*, groups of people hanging around, drinking on the streets, gangs, sale or use of drugs in public places). Their answers were given numerical weight and summed; analysis of the resulting scores of perception permitted a test of the hypothesis that their perceived quality of life would improve from the pre-TNT to the post-TNT period. (*See Appendix A.*)

Respondents to the post-TNT household survey waves did perceive physical deterioration in the area to be less of a problem than did the pre-TNT respondents, but again the effect was quite small. On a scale with a possible range between four and 12, the pre-TNT mean was 6.3 and the post-TNT mean was 5.7 — in short, physical deterioration of these areas was not perceived as a big problem either before or after TNT.<sup>92</sup> Perceptions of TNT's effect on social disorder were similar, but slightly stronger. Social disorder was perceived to be a bigger problem before TNT than after: Scores on this scale could range between seven and 21; the pre-TNT mean was 14.5 and the post-TNT mean was 13.1. While responses in both precincts reflected perceptions that social disorder diminished from pre-TNT to the post-TNT period, the effect was more pronounced in the 70th Precinct (pre-TNT mean=15.4 and post-TNT mean=13.5) than in the 67th Precinct (pre-TNT mean=13.6 and post-TNT mean=12.6).<sup>93</sup>

It is likely that household survey respondents in the 70th Precinct were very much affected by the increased police presence in their area because of the Church Avenue boycott described in Chapter Two. Household survey respondents were asked whether they thought police activity had increased, decreased or stayed the same during the previous three months. Responses to this question in the 70th Precinct were quite different from those in the 67th Precinct. Seventy percent of

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<sup>92</sup> Respondents in the second pre-TNT household survey wave in the 71st Precinct also perceived physical deterioration to be less of a problem (mean=5.8) than the first wave of pre-TNT respondents there (mean=6.4). While a t-test on these means produced a statistically significant result, the difference was again quite small. Furthermore, the means are virtually identical to those found in the pre-TNT/post-TNT comparison in the 70th and 67th precincts, suggesting that physical deterioration was not perceived to be a big problem in the 71st Precinct either.

<sup>93</sup> The two-way analysis of variance on physical deterioration produced statistically significant main effects for Precinct ( $F(1,314)=4.93$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and Wave ( $F(1,314)=9.65$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Similarly, the analysis on social disorder produced significant main effects for both Precinct ( $F(1,314)=13.40$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and Wave ( $F(1,314)=17.51$ ;  $p<.0001$ ). In addition, the Precinct\*Wave interaction approached significance ( $F(1,314)=3.52$ ;  $p=.0615$ ).

household survey respondents in the 67th Precinct thought police activity had remained the same, while about 20% thought it had increased over the three months when TNT was in operation there. In the 70th Precinct, about 40% thought police activity had stayed the same, while nearly half believed it had increased.<sup>94</sup> While household survey respondents were not asked *why* they thought police activity had increased, many of the 70th Precinct respondents mentioned the Church Avenue boycott in response to other questions.

Taken together, responses to the household survey questions about drug trafficking, crime, and quality-of-life problems only partially parallel the responses from the panel: TNT was not perceived to be effective in reducing the problem of street drug sale and use, but household respondents did seem to perceive improvements in ancillary crime and in social disorder, particularly in the 70th precinct.

#### D. TNT's Impact on Residents' Level of Fear in Target Areas

Both the panel interviews and the household survey data strongly suggest that TNT did not have an impact on residents' perceptions of safety in their communities during the enforcement period or afterward. In post-TNT interviews, 10 of the 15 panel respondents in the 70th Precinct and 10 of the 13 respondents in the 67th Precinct said they were afraid to walk their streets at night. The minority of respondents in the two TNT precincts who were *not* afraid to walk their streets at night had done so prior to TNT's arrival and continued to do so during and after it left. Similarly, those who would not walk the streets at night prior to TNT did not do so either during or after the TNT enforcement period.

A small number of panel respondents (mostly, ordinary residents who knew about TNT's presence in the target areas) reported that their level of fear had *increased* as a direct result of TNT. For example, a resident in the 67th Precinct, interviewed post-TNT, argued:

Yeah, drug dealing has changed. It *was* heavy in the streets. But TNT has busted a lot of those people and now they are back *in* the apartment buildings and they are back in my hallways. Before TNT came, they were pushing heavy on the street or in front of the building, now they are *in* the building.

Similarly, a security director for the large housing complex in the 67th Precinct, where many TNT buy-and-bust operations had been conducted around the perimeter of the complex, argued that the effect had been to drive dealers off the street and into the relative safety of the housing complex. "The only benefit [of TNT]," he argued, "is that some of the people that they arrested were dealers on the property . . . but they drove other people [dealers] from the streets onto my property." These respondents experienced *higher* levels of fear because drug dealers who were easily avoided on the

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<sup>94</sup>  $\chi^2=15.42$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p<.0001$ ; Cramer's  $V=.30$

street prior to TNT were now conducting their business in the hallways of apartment buildings where they could not be avoided.

Given the consensus among panel members and household survey respondents that TNT was not effective in reducing the street drug markets, there should be little or no evidence of fear reduction between the pre-TNT and the post-TNT waves of the household survey. Indeed, analyses on the two scales used to measure fear (*Fear of Personal Victimization* and *Worry Regarding Property Crime Victimization*) failed to produce a significant effect for wave, on either measure. While fear levels were slightly higher in the 70th Precinct than in the 67th, there were no differences between the pre-TNT and post-TNT responses.<sup>95</sup>

One of the major hypotheses framing this study of TNT was stated in the research design as: "to the extent that residents are aware of TNT (or at least aware of increased police activity) and to the extent that disorderly conditions are visibly improved, fear of crime would be lower post-TNT than pre-TNT." Although most residents were not aware that TNT was in the area and although perceived improvement in disorderly conditions was small, it is possible that those residents who were aware of TNT or who believed that disorderly conditions had improved might be less fearful. To test this possibility, analyses were computed which included knowledge of TNT (or perceived change in police activity) and perceptions of disorder as variables that might explain responses on the fear of crime scales. In one of these analyses, respondents' awareness of TNT's presence, perception of social disorder, and precinct were used as independent variables to predict fear of personal victimization. The results suggested that those who perceived social disorder to be relatively high tended to be more fearful than others; but awareness of TNT had no relationship to fear of being the victim of a crime of personal violence.<sup>96</sup> Similar analyses showed

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<sup>95</sup> Analysis of variance on the scale measuring fear of personal victimization produced a significant main effect for Precinct ( $F(1,314)=10.99$ ;  $p<.001$ ); the mean in the 67th Precinct was 7.9, and the mean in the 70th Precinct was 8.8. There was no effect for Wave and no interaction. The analysis of variance on worry regarding property crime victimization also produced a significant main effect for Precinct ( $F(1,189)=9.38$ ;  $p<.01$ ); the mean in the 67th Precinct was 4.6 and the mean in the 70th Precinct was 5.1. There was no significant effect for Wave and no interaction.

<sup>96</sup> This analysis was a multiple regression, in which the awareness of TNT, the score on the scale measuring perception of social disorder, and a dummy variable for precinct (67th or 70th) were used to predict score on the scale measuring fear of personal victimization. All data in this analysis were drawn from the post-TNT wave. The analysis produced an adjusted multiple  $R^2$  of .30,  $F(3,122)=19.20$ ,  $p<.0001$ . While the individual t-tests indicate that the betas for each of the three predictor variables reached statistical significance, the only sizable one was for social disorder. Furthermore, the zero-order correlation between social disorder and fear of personal victimization was .48 (significant at  $p<.0001$ ) while the zero-order correlation between knowledge of TNT and fear of personal victimization was only .16 (ns).

Three additional multiple regressions were computed to investigate the predictors of fear. One used the model described above, but substituted perception of physical deterioration for social disorder. In the other two equations, the dependent variable was "worry regarding property crime

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that knowledge of TNT's presence (reported in post-TNT interviews) was not significantly related to the level of fear of personal or of property crime.

Another set of analyses was computed on data from all household survey respondents in the pre-TNT and post-TNT waves. The independent variables used in these analyses were: perceptions of police activity over the previous three months (increased, decreased or stayed the same); either perceived social disorder or perceived physical deterioration; wave (pre-TNT or post-TNT), and precinct. These variables were used to predict fear of crime (either personal or property). The results parallel those discussed above — that is, the only significant or meaningful predictor of fear of crime was the level of perceived social disorder.<sup>97</sup> (These results underscore the saliency of disorder in the factors creating fear and the potential strategic importance of it in police initiatives of any kind.)

Thus, even when sophisticated, multivariate statistical approaches were used, the household survey results failed to support the hypothesis that TNT's presence in the target areas reduced fear of crime among residents there. While the results do suggest that those who perceived social disorder to be higher were more afraid, there was no evidence that TNT was in any way responsible — either for lower perceptions of social disorder or for lower levels of fear of crime.

#### E. TNT's Effects on Resident Behavior

Another way of measuring whether TNT reduced fear is to determine whether people changed their patterns of behavior during the TNT intervention (or whether they noticed changes in others' behavior). According to police officials interviewed for this study, one of TNT's goals is to reduce fear in target communities and thereby

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victimization" and the predictors were knowledge of TNT, the dummy variable for precinct, and either social disorder or physical deterioration. The analysis predicting fear of personal crime from knowledge of TNT, physical deterioration and precinct produced an adjusted  $R^2=.09$ , which was significantly different from zero; but with only 9% of the variance in fear explained from these three variables, the results do not seem meaningful. Similarly, the analysis predicting worry about property crime from knowledge of TNT, perception of physical deterioration, and precinct produced an adjusted  $R^2=.12$ , and the equation that substituted social disorder for physical deterioration yielded an adjusted  $R^2=.21$ . In these equations, precinct and perceived social disorder were significant predictors of fear of property crime, but in both cases the  $R^2$  was small, and knowledge of TNT did not predict the level of worry about property crime.

<sup>97</sup> Four multiple regressions were computed; in each regression, the dependent variable was either fear of personal victimization or "worry regarding property crime victimization." Each of the four equations included as predictors: perceived police activity during the previous three months, wave (pre-TNT or post-TNT), precinct (dummy variable for 67th or 70th), and a variable carrying the Wave\*Precinct interaction. In addition, each equation included either perceived social disorder or perceived physical deterioration as a predictor. The only statistically significant predictors of fear of personal victimization were perceived social disorder and perceived physical deterioration. The only statistically significant predictor for fear of property crime was perceived social disorder.

change residents' behavior; that is, before communities can "reclaim their streets" they must feel safe enough to venture into them. Because of TNT's presence, one TNT spokesman predicted, "People this spring will walk on blocks they haven't walked on in years."

Although most panel respondents perceived a reduction in the volume of drug trafficking on the streets of their precinct during TNT's enforcement period, in post-TNT interviews they argued that TNT's presence had not changed residents' everyday behavior — particularly at night. They did not believe TNT had inspired people to make more use of parks and other public amenities or to venture out to stores later than they normally would. A tenant association leader reflected a consensus among panel respondents when she said:

I haven't noticed any changes in the way people behave at all. . . . I didn't go out after dark before TNT got here, and I don't plan to now either. The same people who always went out at night still do but that's it. Most people won't do that. Because the same dealers who I saw before TNT, I be looking out the window right here, they still be right out there. Even my kids, I don't let them go out even though TNT is here.

Respondents to all three waves of the household survey (pre-TNT, post-TNT and follow-up) were asked, "During the past week, other than going to work, on how many days did you go somewhere in this area during daylight hours?" They were asked the same question about going out at night. Like the panel respondents, the household survey respondents reported being no more likely to go out in the area, during the day or the night, after TNT had been there (*i.e.*, in the post-TNT and Follow-up interviews) than before. On average, respondents in both the 70th and 67th precincts reported going out during the day about four times a week (mean=3.9). While there were no changes in the frequency of going out at night after TNT, residents in the 67th Precinct generally reported going out at night slightly more often (mean=2.3 times per week) than did those in the 70th Precinct (mean=1.8 times per week).<sup>98</sup>

There was, however, one area in the 70th Precinct where TNT seems to have changed residents' behavior. It is the block, bordering the research area, where TNT appeared to reduce dramatically the volume of curbside drug trafficking. Post-TNT interviews suggest that the fears of residents in that immediate area were greatly reduced by TNT and, as a consequence, that they were venturing outside more often in the evening hours.

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<sup>98</sup> An analysis of variance on the reported number of times per week the respondent went out at night revealed no significant effect for Wave, but a significant main effect for Precinct ( $F(1,516)=5.44, p<.05$ ). The Wave\*Precinct interaction was not significant.

## F. TNT's Effect on Police-Community Relations

TNT is, in part, an NYPD effort to establish credibility among residents of areas where street drug trafficking is perceived to be a serious problem — to meet the demand that “something be done” about it. One of the Department's hopes was that highly visible TNT operations would help satisfy that public demand and would have a positive effect on police-community relations. The first wave of panel interviews revealed generally poor police-community relations. In the 70th Precinct, of the 11 respondents who would comment on the state of police-community relations, seven said they were not good. In the 67th Precinct, six of the eight who would comment had the same bleak view. In the 71st Precinct, nine of the 13 respondents who would comment had negative assessments. Post-TNT panel interview data in the 70th and 67th precincts show that these attitudes did not change: Despite the TNT effort, 10 of the 14 respondents who would comment on police-community relations in the 70th Precinct, and 11 of the 13 commenting in the 67th Precinct, still felt that police-community relations were poor.

In all three areas, there were many reasons given for poor police-community relations. In the 70th and 67th precincts, many community leaders and residents explained that distrust of police was high among the large numbers of Caribbean immigrants (especially the undocumented immigrants), who brought to these Brooklyn neighborhoods negative experiences of police in their homelands. As one long-time community leader in the 70th Precinct said, “Within the Haitian community, for example, there is a great fear of the Police Department. We have to realize that that goes back to their own cultural experiences. The police in Haiti hardly treated them well under Papa and Baby Docs.” Many of the panel worked closely with these immigrant groups and reported that fear of extradition or imprisonment caused undocumented immigrants not to call the police, even if victimized by crime.

Racial bias was another frequently mentioned reason for poor police-community relations. Many panel respondents argued that the majority of police working in their communities were white officers who treated the black population with a lack of respect. A tenant association leader in the 71st Precinct, for example, complained that police there treated the precinct's Hasidic Jews far better than the black population:

I'm very concerned about how they deal with the law-abiding black citizens. They get very rough, and in this neighborhood they look at everyone as if they are part of the street-criminal element, and I don't like it! The police are sympathetic to the Hasidic community . . . but there is a double standard when it comes to the black community.

Such views led several respondents to comment that the police needed to recruit more minority officers who, these respondents believed, would be more respectful of and sensitive to the needs of community residents. Another widely held perception among panel respondents was that patrol officers assigned to radio cars

were isolated from the community. The solution, they said, is more foot patrol officers. One resident in the 67th Precinct argued:

I would like to see more policemen walking the street — foot patrol. . . . I think that would establish a better rapport between the community and the police. Once the community can regain its confidence in the police, with our officer on the beat, we can provide him with information to let him know what's going on. Right now, I think that the community is more afraid of the police rather than seeing them as a protector. . . . There is no relationship between the community and the police right now.

Police-community relations also suffered from a widespread perception that uniformed officers did not make arrests of street-level drug dealers and buyers. This gives the appearance, according to several respondents, that the police are inefficient or unconcerned about the drug problem in their communities. One community leader on the 70th Precinct panel (who has a police officer in the family) said:

. . . the normal patrol officer is not allowed to make street-level drug arrests. And I really do not care what any police official . . . will tell you. They can make a few arrests. . . . I know, from working with residents in the community, that the majority of them know this. They have said to me, "The police come right by. Dealers are standing there selling drugs and the police just ride by. They don't care." And I can understand how they feel because in their eyes that's what is happening. . . . If an ordinary patrol officer starts making too many narcotics arrests they are going to be questioned about it. They're worried about corruption so they are not allowing patrol officers to get heavily involved in addressing the drug problem. . . . As a result, the Police Department is building up a reputation among people in the community that they just do not understand. The citizen sees the police officer walk right by a drug deal and think, "They could care less because they just walk by." That's not necessarily true. But the resident living there truly believes that.

In the household survey, police-community relationships were measured through the use of two scales — police aggression and police service. The police aggression scale measured respondents' perceptions about whether police officers stop too many people in the area without good reason and whether they are too tough on those they stop. Responses to the items on this scale suggest that police aggression was not perceived to be much of a problem in either the 70th or 67th precinct. Scores on this scale could range from two (indicating no problem with police aggression) to six (indicating a big problem with police aggression); the overall mean on this scale was 2.8. There was a significant, but very small effect for wave: police aggression was perceived to be highest by respondents in the pre-TNT wave (mean=3.2), slightly lower in the post-TNT wave (mean=2.9), and slightly lower again in the Follow-up wave (mean=2.6).<sup>99</sup> These were changes in perceptions about something that was not considered a problem before TNT; but it can be concluded that TNT did not have a negative effect on perceptions of police aggression in the target areas.

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<sup>99</sup>  $F(2,378)=5.88$ ;  $p<.01$ .

The police service scale employed five questions to measure respondents' perceptions of the quality of police service: (1) crime prevention, (2) helping crime victims, (3) politeness, (4) helpfulness, and (5) fairness. While respondents in the 67th Precinct were statistically significantly more satisfied with police service (mean=14.2) than those in the 70th Precinct (mean=13.3), the difference was very small and there were no changes in either precinct after TNT.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, while interviews with the community leaders and residents on the panels revealed general support of TNT's efforts, it is clear that TNT did not change their attitudes toward the police or their views of police-community relations. Both the panel interviews and the household survey data show that few residents were aware of TNT's presence in their area when it was in operation. It is hard to see how a police enforcement program could improve or worsen police-community relations if the greater part of that community is unaware of its presence. It is perhaps unreasonable as well to expect a three-month drug enforcement effort to appreciably affect community attitudes toward the police in communities like these where (as the panels' responses revealed), the problems in police-community relationship are long standing.

## V. Community Perceptions of the Likelihood that TNT Would Work

For TNT to help residents of target areas to "reclaim their streets" and to hold that claim after TNT moves on, community-based anti-drug efforts need to arise or grow stronger. In theory, if a relatively short TNT operation can reduce the volume of drug trafficking, the incidence of general disorder and the overall crime rate, then residents will reclaim their streets — by going outside more and organizing more ambitiously to resist drug markets. The panel and survey interviews contain little evidence of such developments. Panel respondents who were associated with local organizations (especially those categorized as community leaders) reported no new or more concerted community efforts — informal or organized — to rally around the drug issues as TNT came and went. Only one of the panel members who belonged to community organizations (*e.g.*, community board, tenant or block association) reported any increase in the membership of a community organization during or after TNT: A community board member who directs a citizen patrol group in the 70th Precinct attributed an increase in active membership in that community patrol to the success of TNT. Post-TNT panel interviews revealed only one panel respondent in each target precinct who believed the community would actively organize around the successes of TNT.

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<sup>100</sup> The scores on this scale could range between five and 22 (with a midpoint of 13.5). The overall mean was 13.7 — that is, the 430 household survey respondents evaluated the quality of police service as mediocre.



Generally, panel respondents perceived TNT to have no more than a limited effect on drug trafficking, on ancillary crime, or on the level of fear. They offered a number of explanations: (1) Many thought TNT's three-month time frame too brief to produce any significant change or lasting impact; (2) many thought the criminal justice system so overburdened that those arrested by TNT are too soon returned to the street or too leniently sentenced; (3) many believed conflicts within the target communities would prevent them from organizing effectively and from working with the police on drug market problems; (4) many suggested that residents were too fearful of retaliation by drug traffickers to organize against them; and (5) some took the view that social-structural problems virtually ensure that the drug trade will continue whatever the police do.

#### A. "Time"—Duration of TNT Operations and Length of TNT Sentences

Police officials offered Vera researchers several reasons for designing TNT as a short-term intervention: (1) resource limitations; (2) "everyone wants a TNT"; (3) concern that undercover officers get recognized by dealers if they stay in a target precinct too long; and (4) expectation that drug trafficking should diminish in a target area after a short period of time, at which point TNT efforts might begin to yield diminishing returns. The panel and household surveys make it clear, however, that one reason for TNT's lack of effect on levels of fear and on residents' behavior was respondents' belief that any positive effect of TNT would be temporary; they often argued that three months was much too short a time to expect any community to regain control of its streets or the hallways of its apartment buildings. An executive, from a merchants' association, stated the consensus view of panel respondents this way:

TNT will make us all feel good for three months by making a clean sweep of the streets. They'll get all the drug dealers in jail and clog-up the criminal justice system. God knows what happens to the hundreds they'll arrest . . . this is the drug dealers' neighborhood. They have taken control and they do what the hell they want . . . TNT just comes in and shakes them up for three months. . . . TNT makes them go into hiding for a while . . . that makes the rest of us feel good. When TNT leaves, they have this sort of follow-up program where the cops come in for six months and increase street patrols . . . then that sort of goes away too. Ideally, the community is supposed to develop leadership, take control of the community again, get connected with the police and aid them in this anti-drug effort. But I'm not that optimistic. We've lost.

Another frequently mentioned reason respondents gave for doubting TNT's capacity to produce change was that few of those arrested would be convicted in court and most of them would probably get lenient dispositions. Respondents were generally convinced that the courts, jails and prison system are so overcrowded that arrested crack sellers will make bail and return to their trade immediately or be given brief sentences and return shortly. As they viewed the consequences of TNT arrests this way, they argued that the criminal justice response could have little effect through incapacitation — or through deterrence: As one respondent put it, "if you

lock one drug dealer up there's always another to take his place." A man employed on Church Avenue for nearly forty years argued:

Most of the cops do their job. They take the dealers in and they do their paperwork and then turn them over to the prosecutors and judges and say, "It's now up to you." They don't have enough lawyers and judges to handle this stuff and they don't have enough jail space to keep them all in. So what do they do? They let them back out again. . . . You know how many dealers get arrested over and over again? They turn them loose too quick. . . . That's where the buck stops — with the judges and the courts. They gotta do something. You just can't keep letting people out like that. . . .

The data reported in Chapter Three and Appendix C show that these widespread views about dispositions in TNT cases appear wrong in fact — at least with respect to those arrested by TNT for felony-level crack sales. But it is *perception* that the panel interviews revealed and that the household surveys measured, and panel interview data show clearly that, while there was plenty of community support for TNT, it co-existed with deep skepticism about TNT's deterrent value and incapacitative capacity. Many panel respondents suggested that for TNT to have any significant impact on drug trafficking, the courts must punish offenders more quickly and harshly than they were believed to do.

The explanations panel members offered for TNT's ineffectiveness are consistent with the responses to the household survey. The 45 survey respondents who thought that TNT had been "somewhat" or "very" ineffective in their neighborhood were asked why.<sup>101</sup> They most frequently answered with a statement that arrested dealers are back in a few days (mentioned by ten respondents in the 67th Precinct and eight in the 70th Precinct), or that the program is too short (mentioned by nine respondents in the 67th Precinct and six in the 70th Precinct). All who were aware of TNT's existence (N=125), when informed that TNT had been in the target area for three months, were asked whether they thought that too long, too short, or about right: The overwhelming majority (81%, post-TNT) thought it was too short. Other frequently cited explanations were: New dealers replace the ones who are arrested (nine mentions); dealers move to new locations in the same area (eight mentions); not enough TNT cops (seven mentions); and dealers know when TNT is in the area (five mentions).

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<sup>101</sup> Interviewers coded as many reasons as a respondent gave; thus, a total of 68 responses were coded for the 45 respondents.

## B. Conflict Within the Community

Panel respondents attributed the inability of the community to organize more effectively not so much to TNT's lack of capacity to effect change as to a general lack of solidarity in the community, which they attributed to pervasive racial, ethnic and economic conflicts.<sup>102</sup> Nearly all panel respondents characterized their communities as lacking solidarity; they almost unanimously attributed lack of solidarity (or absence of "community") to ethnic tensions. As one police-community council member in the 70th Precinct observed:

This is not a tightly-knit community at all because of the different ethnic groups that are living in the area. They don't have an understanding of one another's cultures. . . . Certain people in the area are strictly pro African-American black and they feel that the American black has never been given the opportunity or chance to succeed economically. They see these other black ethnic groups succeeding and that bothers them. You have Haitian people who believe that only Haitians are discriminated against. Now, in this community you have Jamaicans, Haitians, American blacks and Koreans. The sad part is that each one is not trying to understand each other's cultures and that leads to tension.

According to most respondents, this ethnic tension is inseparable from economic competition. African Americans own very few businesses in the 70th and 67th Precincts' research areas, while many newly arrived ethnic groups prosper along the Church and Flatbush Avenue commercial strips. This is an obvious source of tension between African-American and Caribbean blacks and is a major contributing factor to the area's lack of solidarity and its inability to organize effectively around issues affecting the community.

The well-publicized Korean grocery boycott on Church Avenue is a manifestation of ethnic conflicts separating the various groups that live there and obstructing efforts to organize that community effectively. By all panel accounts, most of the protesters involved in this incident were not members of the immediate community but had been bused in from other areas of the city.<sup>103</sup>

These conflicts handcuff the community in its fight against drugs. An African-American woman, a local tenant organizer in the 70th Precinct, argued that Caribbean

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<sup>102</sup> See Chapter Two for more information on the level of community organization in the research areas.

<sup>103</sup> Some members of the immediate community did organize around this issue. A teacher from a nearby high school, for example, brought some of his students into the green-grocer to make purchases in defiance of the protesters. As a result, he received anonymous death threats. Two respondents, an African-American woman (who is a local tenant organizer) and a Puerto Rican man (a building superintendent), also reported that they had defied the pickets and made purchases. They also reported being threatened but continued to shop at the grocery. The local merchants association had attempted to encourage sensitivity training for all local merchants but had limited success.

groups never participated in local anti-drug protests and, as a result, turnouts for such events were always poor:

There's a lot of foreigners that's here without their cards and they don't want to get involved. Even the legal ones won't get involved. When we had our anti-drug rally out here and I went to the buildings on the corner and asked them to get involved, yeah, no way! They slammed their doors right in my face! These are the West Indians and Caribbeans. And you know they was, "Oh, no! We don't want to get involved." And that's just where they're at right now. The problem is that they think they better than blacks. I keep telling them, "You're the same color as I am! We all bleed the same way in this community!"<sup>104</sup>

Lack of solidarity and organization in the research areas is also manifest in the paucity of tenant, block and neighborhood associations. Though a member of the local community board argued that the 70th Precinct research area was "one of the most organized communities in New York," panel respondents knew of very few active tenant associations and no active block or neighborhood association in their communities. The community organization mentioned most often was a local merchants association that meets approximately six times a year. The executive director of the association told the researchers that no more than fifteen to twenty people participate at meetings. Lack of active community organizations in the research areas was also made apparent when the merchants' association called the researchers to ask whether Vera had discovered any tenant or block associations in their catchment area.

### C. Fear

According to a large number of panel respondents, TNT could not hope to help the community "reclaim its streets," because the community is simply too afraid of drug dealers to assist the police through organized efforts or even through the anonymous Drugbusters hotline. The consensus among panel respondents familiar with TNT was that fear of drug dealers is so deeply rooted in the target areas that a short-term program like TNT would never convince residents to aid the police, or to resolve the conflicts that balkanize them so they might organize to resist the resurgence of drug markets. As one resident in the 67th Precinct argued:

People in the community are happier now that TNT is here because they at least can catch their breath for a little while. . . . They are not going to organize or anything like that because they know that the pushers are going to be right back out.

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<sup>104</sup> This woman's reference to "blacks" is significant. Many respondents in the 70th and 67th precincts mentioned that Caribbean and West Indian populations often refer to African-Americans as "blacks." During formal interviews three Caribbeans referred to "blacks" in their responses. When asked to clarify what blacks they were referring to, they responded "Black Americans." During formal interviews in all three precincts the idea that Caribbean populations look down on African-Americans had wide acceptance among respondents and was cited as a source of ethnic tension among these groups. This is not to suggest, however, that there is solidarity among the various Caribbean or West Indian cultures, which have their own divisions.

They are glad that TNT got them and everything . . . but they will say, "I am not sticking my neck out because this is not over with!" They're not going to participate in combating the drug problem or anything like that because they are still afraid.

The research areas targeted by TNT were rife with ethnic, racial and class conflicts. Community members believed that three months was an unrealistic time period within which to expect any changes in the level of drug selling in the streets or in residents' behavior. These characteristics of community life, and this view of TNT's likely impact, combined with a lack of faith in the incapacitative and deterrent effects of the criminal justice process raise significant questions about whether a program of TNT's design could realistically improve quality of life through fear reduction and community mobilization.

#### D. Perspectives on the Roots of the Drug Problem

Although law enforcement is desired, from the community's perspective, it is considered by most as no more than one component in what might be an effective strategy to deal with the drug problem as they experience it. Another significant reason for respondents' general lack of belief in TNT's having enduring effects is a perception that drug trafficking and abuse have social-structural roots unreachable by the police. Poor educational and job opportunities, for example, were commonly cited as reasons why people turn to drugs.<sup>105</sup> As one community board member and tenant association leader argued:

I don't even think the police should be the ones to address the drug problem. I personally see it as a public health issue. The only thing that the police can do is what they do right now which is pick people up and arrest them but . . . these are short-term solutions to long-term problems. . . . Some of the people that use drugs may have some of the sharpest minds around if they're given the right opportunities — educational opportunities.

I read some time ago that most of the people that are in prison today are functionally illiterate. An individual like that is going to attempt to survive, and drugs is his means of survival. The police can't deal with this end of it. . . . I think we would see a huge reduction in drug and criminal activity if the government could provide quality education, reasonably decent housing and employment opportunities. TNT as a short-term solution is great, but we're just putting a Band-Aid on a cancer. If we were serious about it, what the government would do is set up treatment centers and then properly educate children so they can function in this society.

Many on the panels believed that, so long as economic and educational opportunities are limited, illegal drug selling will persist despite enforcement efforts like TNT. Under current conditions, they argued, drug trafficking is an attractive job

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<sup>105</sup> Such explanations, of course, ignore drug abuse among the middle and upper classes, where such opportunities are a given. But most panel respondents focused on visible drug use and trafficking in the streets of their own neighborhoods when they conceptualize the "drug problem."

opportunity for many in poor and disorganized neighborhoods. The profit (or at least the access to drugs) that is associated with drug selling was seen by panelists as a force driving people to sell drugs no matter what the risks. And they found it difficult to believe that TNT could deter addicts from searching for (and ultimately finding) drugs in areas not targeted by TNT.

Taken together, these views help explain the general skepticism about TNT's prospects, and skepticism about the likelihood that communities would, after a respite given them by TNT, mobilize and organize to carry forward the fight.

## VI. Community Support: TNT as "Symbolic Crusade"<sup>106</sup>

Although panel respondents in the 70th and 67th Precincts believed that any positive effects of TNT on the quality of life would be short-lived, all panel respondents who knew of the program supported the goals, tactics and presence of TNT in their communities.<sup>107</sup> Most supported TNT's efforts to lock up dealers and users. The tension between this supportive posture toward TNT and skepticism about its likely effects can be explained by TNT's symbolic function. Perhaps the only thing uniting this economically and ethnically diverse community was the insistence that *something* must be done about the drug problem. With few exceptions, respondents defined drug trafficking and addiction as the most pressing social problems affecting their community. Drug use and trafficking, they argued, threatens the very fabric of society — it is simply "wrong." When asked about their perspective on the legalization of drugs like cocaine, crack cocaine and heroin, most gave negative responses. One woman bristled at the notion of legalization:

If we had drugs legalized this wouldn't be much of a world to live in. People would be killing one another faster than they do now. And what kind of message does that give kids anyway? That it's all right for you to be out of control of your own behavior by taking this stuff? Please, no! It's just wrong. There's no good reason to have or use these things. If a kid is addicted, what chance can he have of getting a job or supporting a family? Everything would fall apart for us.

TNT clearly had perceived value as a response to the community's demand that "something be done about the drug problem." Although the overwhelming majority of panel respondents perceived little, if any, change in rates of crime or street-corner drug sales during or after TNT's implementation, they wanted TNT. Their support of it seemed most firmly grounded in a refusal to abdicate the moral high ground on the

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<sup>106</sup> The term "Symbolic Crusade" is taken from Joseph Gusfield's 1963 study of the Volstead Act.

<sup>107</sup> Only two respondents knowledgeable about TNT voiced any criticism of TNT's tactics. They both reported that they had gotten reports of incidents where law-abiding citizens had been caught in TNT sweeps on street corners. Both, however, believed that such incidents were generally excusable given the exigencies of the situations in which TNT operates.

issue of illicit drug use. Respondents supported TNT because they expected it to provide some immediate relief from the problem they considered most threatening to the social fabric of their communities, but also for its symbolic value. As one community-board member and youth organizer in the 67th Precinct explained:

Well, if TNT did not come into this area, then these dealers would have three more months . . . of going unmolested. They own this area . . . but TNT breaks their hold on the area. . . . And we know that TNT is not going to stop the drug problem. But we know that TNT is going to give us a little breathing room.

TNT was proof that the police were doing something about the drug problem; the community welcomed the effort and whatever immediate relief it may have brought. Many of the more politically active panel respondents believed that, for discouraged residents, TNT had the latent function of instilling hope that “the community can get better.” A community organizer and precinct-community council member in the 70th Precinct, for example, said:

TNT is effective in that it's giving the people a feeling of relief — temporarily. . . . It's a very good PR program in so far as making area residents feel more secure and that, “Oh, someone is finally doing something about drugs in this area!”

Nevertheless, panel respondents who offered observations of this kind often cautioned that if TNT failed to make significant inroads against drug traffickers, it could further damage police credibility in communities where the relationship between residents and the police was already tenuous.

## VII. The Community's Suggestions for Improving TNT: Cops on the Beat

Most panel members who knew about TNT believed it had a positive role to play in a coordinated drug policy, but they also believed that TNT could be greatly improved. The most common suggestion was to make TNT a permanent fixture in every precinct so that it could deal with drug “hot spots” as needed and in conjunction with the existing narcotics unit. They argued that such an arrangement would provide a greater deterrent effect on drug trafficking, because drug traffickers and buyers would never be certain when TNT would strike. Another common recommendation was that TNT simply stay in the community longer, because three months was too short to expect any change in drug-trafficking patterns, levels of fear, or community organization.

Many respondents were dismayed about the perceived inability of ordinary uniformed officers to make street-level arrests of dealers and buyers. This was closely linked to their poor assessments of police-community relations in the TNT target areas. For example, four residents in the 70th Precinct were incredulous that uniformed officers assigned to the Korean Grocery picket line would ignore drug transactions taking place within their view just across the street near St. Paul's Church. A police-community council member told interviewers that she had to explain constantly to area residents the reasons why uniformed officers were not making drug arrests, and she argued that patrol officers should be allowed to make

drug arrests regardless of the added risks of police corruption. The current policy, she said, undermines the already tenuous legitimacy granted to the police by community residents.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, a community board and precinct-community council member actively organizing at the grass-roots level said:

I have been hearing from a lot of people that uniformed officers don't make drug arrests. That doesn't make sense to me. I was under the impression that as a police officer's job is to uphold the law. If he sees the law being broken and he can't do anything about it, what good is he? That is something I would like to see changed. It is certainly not a very positive message. What I have been hearing is a lot of anger and frustration about that . . . especially . . . the police officers around the picket line up here [*i.e.*, Korean green-grocer boycott]. . . The community is saying that they are just standing there all day and . . . guys are dealing left and right . . . and the police officers drive by on their way to their post, you know the fruit market, and do nothing. People are really frustrated about that and angry, really angry.

An implicit recommendation that emerged from panel interviews was that TNT adopt a more community-oriented approach. The Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP), designed for a problem-solving approach to police work and a close interaction with community residents, was popular with respondents, and was brought up by them in several contexts. When asked for recommendations to improve the police response to the drug and crime problem, the beat-walking CPOP officer was mentioned more often than anything else. CPOP was also second only to TNT in "new police programs" of which respondents were aware. Respondents believed that "walking beat officers" foster better relationships between the police and the community and would be more effective in dealing with the drug problem. A precinct-community council member said:

As far as improving TNT. . . The work that they're doing is fine. But one of the things that I would suggest is that after they leave, the police department concentrate more on community relations to the extent of the "cop on the block" type of thing — the beat cop. Those guys can develop a better relationship between the community and the police. Those are the guys who can learn who the residents are and who the bad guys are. If the community doesn't trust their police then they won't help the police.

A local community association leader put it more bluntly when she criticized TNT for not being "community-minded" in its enterprise and for failing to interact with residents on a face-to-face basis the way she believed the local CPOP officer did. A tenant leader criticized the TNT "community meeting" approach to interaction with the community. The distance between TNT and the law-abiding community,

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<sup>108</sup> Although the perception that uniformed officers are not allowed to make narcotics arrests was widespread, Department policy does not forbid this practice, and a substantial proportion of narcotics arrests are made by uniformed precinct officers. However, a substantial number of panel respondents, especially in the 70th Precinct, mentioned that they had observed uniformed officers ignore open-air drug dealing in their neighborhood.



she argued, was not effectively bridged by a community meeting, and was a major obstacle because police, in her view, cannot hope to deal with the drug problem without the help and trust of community residents:

I think if the police actively did something to show us that they were concerned with the community—come to *our* meetings and tell us what we can do to help—the residents in the community would be willing to get involved. I as an individual, I'm not going to go out there and play Rambo, as much as I'd like to. I think the police should have better ties to the community whereby people could be informed of what their options are in helping the police and what the police programs are all about.

Panel respondents (particularly those most familiar with the police) often criticized other aspects of TNT's community outreach efforts. One precinct-community council member and community-patrol organizer in the 70th Precinct argued:

. . . there are areas where there are tenant associations . . . and they didn't seem to get the word about TNT. As we patrol . . . we talk with people in the area and get feedback on what's happening. All too often people were ignorant about what was going on with TNT. . . . I just think that people who attended the community meetings were not sufficiently impressed with the presentations that were made by the police department. There was incomplete information on the methods of operation of TNT. What exactly would they be doing? These issues were addressed, but not well enough for people to understand and relate to — “How is this going to affect my block?” I would suggest to TNT . . . that in order to be effective the first thing that they must do is form a real, genuine lasting *partnership* with the people who live and work in the area. It cannot be a relationship where it's, “We are the police officers and we know it all and you are going to learn.” None of that . . . That was one of the things that I was dissatisfied with in the [TNT community] meetings . . . the idea of the police and community forming a true partnership was missing. I would like to see the police stress that and distribute literature on that very point. Our group got out and beat the drum all over the neighborhood about the community and police working together on TNT but it was too little, too late.

If community leaders who routinely interact with their precinct feel that the police neglect community outreach and community involvement in the TNT effort, it is very likely that ordinary residents (even the minority that knows about TNT's presence in the community) feel still greater alienation from the program.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> The difficulties police must overcome when attempting to forge productive partnerships with the community should not be underestimated. In their research on New York City's Community Patrol Officer Program, where community input and participation play a much more central role than in TNT, McElroy *et al.* (1992) make the following observations:

While the CPOs had extensive contact with people in the community, sustained contact with the *same* people and the serious involvement of such people in all phases of the problem-solving process were rare. One of the reasons for that fact was that very few of the officers had any experience with or training in the skills of community organizing.

*footnote continued*

While many community leaders and residents were critical of TNT's community outreach efforts, they were no less critical of the apparent unwillingness of community groups to become actively involved in the anti-drug effort. Panel respondents often mentioned apathy on the part of community residents as a major factor limiting TNT's potential for success even if it was, in their view, the understandable product of years of experience with police programs aimed at drug traffickers that largely failed to make a difference.

TNT was not designed simply to make arrests. The hope was that its operation would both permit and encourage community residents to involve themselves in the anti-drug effort — by giving them a respite from the problems associated with street-level drug trafficking and by giving them some confidence that it could be done. To the extent TNT makes a lot of street-level arrests without communicating fully and effectively with a substantial number of residents, without encouraging them (and helping) to create capacity to take up where TNT leaves off, it falls short. The panel and household survey data strongly suggest that TNT did just that, in the target areas studied.

Nevertheless, analysis of interview data indicates that the majority of community leaders and ordinary residents alike remain stubbornly hopeful that some of these problems can be overcome. As one tenant leader argued:

The people make this community. If we stood together on this we would still have drug problems, but not so bad as we do now. . . . We have to help the cops. The cops can't do it alone. They have their limitations and we have ours. If we don't start working together, and we're not now, nothing's going to get done.

## VIII. Summary

The panel interviews and household surveys reveal a consensus among community leaders and residents about problems in the community, awareness of TNT, and perceptions of TNT's effectiveness. They cited drugs as the major quality of

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*footnote continued...*

. . . They came into the program [CPOP] without any training of this sort and with a basic shyness about reaching out to community organizations. Nevertheless, the researchers' observations indicate that an appreciable majority of the CPOs overcome that shyness and make contact with a large number of people in their beats within the first few months of operations. . . . [But] building on these contacts to develop effective working relationships with the people and organizations in the community is another matter. Some officers are not persuaded that such developments would be valuable, and many of those who are so persuaded are not sure of how to go about the process. In addition, some of the CPOs operate in beats that are quite disorganized socially, and in which many of the residents and merchants are afraid to participate in meetings, especially those involving police officials. Finally, many of the officers are not prepared for the ebb and flow of enthusiasm that is so much a part of citizen action efforts. (55-56)

life and the major crime problem in their communities. They felt that quality-of-life had declined because of drug trafficking and drug use; they believed that enforcement programs like TNT could have an impact on these problems (though they did not expect it to be a powerful or enduring effects). They were far less aware of TNT's presence than might have been expected from the program's design and, although glad that "something is being done about drugs," they were disappointed in what they believed TNT's actual effects to be.

Community leaders were aware of the presence of TNT in their areas, but the panel and survey data suggest that remarkably few ordinary residents were aware of its presence. The more regular a respondent's interaction with the police or with the community board, the more likely he or she would know the goals and methods of TNT, but most panel respondents who knew about TNT believed its goal to be to get rid of drugs simply by arresting buyers and sellers. Few respondents believed that would work (or that the effect of such tactics would last), and few mentioned TNT's other methods or goals (*e.g.*, helping the community organize a capacity to resist return to pre-TNT conditions, reducing fear). Similarly, most respondents who knew about TNT were aware of its buy-and-bust tactics, but few were aware that it was designed to deploy an interagency task force to attack quality-of-life conditions in the target areas.

Most community leaders who knew of TNT's presence in their areas learned about TNT from community organizations to which they belonged. The roughly two-thirds of household survey respondents who had heard of TNT learned about it through the media, most often television. Very few ordinary residents or community leaders attended the meetings the NYPD held to inform these target areas' residents about TNT.

Community leaders and household survey respondents were in general agreement about TNT's lack of enduring effect on activity in local drug markets and its lack of effect on ancillary crime, general disorder, fear, behavior of residents, and police-community relations. Most panel respondents who were aware of TNT in their areas thought it had a *short-term* positive effect on drug locations, but believed that drug dealing returned to normal after TNT left. Household survey respondents did not perceive TNT to be very effective with respect to drugs.

Panel data suggest that TNT had no effect on public perceptions of the level of crime in the area. Although household survey respondents were more likely to see a lessening in crime during the TNT period, the effects were very small.

Few respondents argued that the local level of general disorder had been diminished by TNT. While some panel respondents in the 70th Precinct noted a decrease in social disorder, this was attributed to the increased police activity associated with the Korean grocery boycott on Church Avenue. Most believed that TNT did not have an impact on quality of life because it did not reduce drug trafficking, change residents' behavior, or reduce fear. Among household survey respondents, those interviewed post-TNT perceived physical deterioration and social disorder to be less of a problem than did those interviewed pre-TNT, but the

difference was very small: the difference was greater in the 70th Precinct than in the 67th Precinct, probably because of the increased police presence around the Church Avenue boycott site. Respondents in the 70th Precinct were more likely to think police activity had increased during the TNT period than were those in the 67th Precinct; again, this is more likely an effect of the boycott than of TNT.

Panel and survey data alike suggest no impact of TNT on perceived safety in the target areas. Indeed, the general view of those who were aware of TNT's presence — that TNT was not effective in curtailing the drug traffic — made any reduction in levels of fear unlikely. And as there was no evidence of fear reduction among the substantial number of respondents who were unaware of TNT in the area, there was no change in the reported behavior of panel or household respondents between the pre-TNT and post-TNT periods.

Panel interview data suggest that police-community relations were poor before, during, and after TNT. Respondents attributed these poor relations to distrust of the police by Caribbean immigrants, perceived racial bias, and the perception that uniformed officers do not make drug arrests. No effect of TNT on police-community relations was found in analyses of panel data or of survey data.

When panel respondents who believed TNT was ineffective were asked why, they indicated that: (1) three months is too short a time period for TNT to have an effect; (2) the criminal justice system is overburdened, which leads to lenient sentences for convicted drug dealers; (3) racial and ethnic conflicts within the community keep it from organizing; (4) fear of retaliation from drug dealers prevents residents from working with the police; and (5) social-structural problems prevent enforcement tactics alone from being effective. Household survey respondents agreed.

Although the panel members expected any effects of TNT to be short-lived, they supported its goals, tactics and presence. For them, TNT gave official voice to the community's quiet refusal to give up the fight against drugs, and it provided some immediate relief from what they perceived to be their biggest problem.

The most frequently offered suggestions for improving TNT was that it be made permanent in every precinct, operating in conjunction with existing precinct narcotics enforcement efforts. They also recommended that regular uniformed patrol officers be permitted to make drug arrests. Their praise of "walking beat officers" implied that they would welcome a community-oriented approach to street-level drug enforcement. Both community leaders and ordinary citizens expressed the belief that successful crime prevention requires a partnership between police and community.

## Chapter Six

### Findings and Policy Recommendations

#### I. Summary of Findings

Although TNT presentations at community meetings in the target areas emphasized the “three-pronged” nature of the initiative — enforcement, community involvement and inter-agency cooperation — in the two study precincts where TNT was implemented in Brooklyn South during the research period, there was far more enforcement than anything else. The intensity of TNT’s implementation in these two study precincts varied, but TNT units in both areas produced large numbers of felony drug arrests and confiscated a substantial number of cars driven by drug purchasers. There was, however, little evidence of any substantial community involvement with or awareness of the TNT initiative in these areas; nor was there evidence of extensive inter-agency activity focused on identified drug hot spots in the target areas.

This section reviews the research findings: the evidence of TNT’s impact on drug markets and ancillary crime in the target areas; the evidence of its impact on community awareness of police activity in the area and attitudes toward the police; and the evidence of its impact on perceived disorder, perceived quality of life, fear of crime and use of public amenities. It reflects the perspectives of the various groups covered by the research: TNT staff, other NYPD personnel, drug users and dealers in the drug markets targeted, community leaders, and ordinary household residents.

On the whole, there was consensus among these groups about the effects of TNT in these neighborhoods. Although respondents reported some short-term impacts on visible street drug markets in the target areas, at most locations these effects appeared not to endure. There was little evidence that TNT effected any reduction in other crime in the vicinity of the targeted drug locations or that TNT improved perceptions of disorder, reduced fear of crime, increased use of public amenities, or improved attitudes toward the police.

#### A. Market Effects

A substantial number of curbside crack sellers were arrested in both precincts, particularly during the early days of TNT operations. Ethnographic data indicate that many were quickly replaced by other user-dealers. Over the course of the TNT enforcement period, street dealers adapted to the intensive enforcement activity in a variety of ways, some of which directly affected the community: by moving selling locations indoors, by shifting selling hours to times when it was believed that TNT might not be operating, by devising schemes to reduce hand-to-hand exchanges, by moving out of the selling location after a sale, by using “observers” adept at spotting TNT vehicles, and by reducing the volume of outdoor sales for the duration of the intervention.

The data reflect general agreement among crack sellers and users on the streets, TNT officers, local precinct personnel, community leaders and ethnographic observers. These groups generally agreed that TNT had had a substantial impact on a single block, somewhat separated from the highly concentrated drug market locations in the first target area (in the 70th Precinct). TNT officers believed that the initiative was far less effective at drug market locations that catered solely to recognized local purchasers. It was also generally agreed that TNT had been unsuccessful in the large apartment complex in the 67th Precinct, an area that provided ecological protection to traffickers. In fact, some observers reported that drug trafficking had intensified there during the course of the intervention. TNT appeared to be most effective in reducing the visibility of street markets in areas that were geographically separate from highly concentrated drug markets and in areas that catered to purchasers from outside the neighborhood.

These groups also reported that, overall, drug trafficking became less blatant and less visible than it had been before the TNT enforcement period. Yet some movement of drug trafficking off the streets was evident in the comparison area as well. Data from the comparison area, pointing to a decline in the crack trade during this period at market locations where TNT was not deployed, suggest that broader market processes were at work in the 70th and 67th precincts as well. TNT may have accelerated some of the other market processes that were already underway (*e.g.*, a movement off the streets to indoor locations).

Reduction in the blatant visibility of some street drug markets was clearly not the result of large-scale geographic displacement either within or outside the TNT target areas. While there were some small geographic and temporal shifts in curbside drug markets, including intensification of activity in some areas, the primary form of displacement observed was the movement of drug selling and using off the street to indoor locations in the same geographic areas.

Both ethnographic data and quantitative analysis of the time spent by TNT units before making a successful undercover drug purchase point to an increase in “search time” (the amount of time it takes to find a dealer and buy drugs) over the course of the enforcement period in both precincts. Some research literature (*e.g.*, Kleiman, 1988) suggests that drug crackdowns that actually increase the “non-financial costs” of purchasing drugs — such as the amount of time it takes to find them — are likely to reduce the demand for drugs, particularly among new users.

Yet the ethnographic team came in contact with few new crack users during the year in which they actively observed the study areas. Most users had been using crack for at least two years. There appeared to be few new entrants into these markets and little evidence of extensive crack consumption among local teenagers.

Ethnographic data also suggest that the increased difficulty established users had finding drugs was associated with more erratic consumption patterns — an

increase in drug “binges” — rather than a reduction in overall consumption. Although occasional users (known locally as “weekend warriors”) and buyers from outside the neighborhood may have reduced consumption because of increased difficulty in finding curbside dealers, the ethnographic data suggest that daily crack users consumed at least as much crack during the TNT period as they had previously.

Although the period of TNT enforcement was associated with a variety of changes in drug market operations and structure, there was a strong perception among research respondents of all types (sellers, buyers, police, community leaders) that these market adaptations were temporary and that drug trafficking on the streets would resume in full force once TNT was gone. Ethnographic observations suggest that the local crack trade continued to flourish throughout the enforcement period in both precincts, and that, after the departure of TNT, it returned to a substantial extent to the locations where it had been reduced. In some areas, the locus and intensity of the market appear to have changed. Yet even during the peak of the enforcement period, knowledgeable purchasers were able to find drugs with little difficulty.

Although respondents who were close observers of drug markets did report some reduction in visible transactions on the street, this perception was not shared by ordinary community residents. Respondents to the household survey seemed to be unaware of any change in the intensity or structure of those markets. The vast majority of community residents defined drug trafficking as a “big problem” in their immediate neighborhood both before and after TNT. Even though it appeared to be harder for purchasers to find street-level sellers during the enforcement period (and street sellers who did operate hawked their wares less aggressively), neighborhood residents continued to see drug trafficking as a primary, undiminished community problem.

For residents of buildings into which drug trafficking moved, the movement off the streets may have brought drug trafficking even closer to home. The proportion of TNT enforcement activity in indoor locations (approximately a fifth of all arrests) remained relatively steady over the course of the intervention in both precincts. Thus, it appears that TNT did not aggressively pursue drug traffickers into indoor “hot spots” that developed or intensified in response to TNT's buy-and-bust attack on the street markets. For some residents at least, reduction in visible drug trafficking appears to have been countered by increased concentration of the crack trade in the lobbies and hallways of their apartment buildings.

### **B. Awareness of TNT, and Attitudes toward the Police**

Although street drug sellers and users quickly learned about the presence of TNT in their neighborhoods, community residents and leaders were far less knowledgeable. Community meetings were not a primary source of information about TNT for very many respondents in the target communities, particularly in the 67th Precinct where meetings were sparsely attended.

Most panel members were aware that TNT had been assigned to their areas, but many of them knew little about the nature of the initiative. Those who worked relatively closely with the NYPD (*e.g.*, members of the police-community council or local community boards) were more likely to know about the structure, operations and objectives of TNT than other respondents (*e.g.*, members of block or tenant organizations, local clergy).

Although more than half of the TNT target area community residents interviewed in the household survey reported having heard of TNT, only a small proportion of them were aware that it had been assigned to their neighborhoods. Clearly, community leaders knew more about TNT's presence than ordinary residents.

In the 70th Precinct only, both those interviewed in the household survey and the panel members reported an increase in police visibility during the intervention period. In most cases, however, they were referring to uniformed officers in the Brooklyn South Task Force, who had been assigned to monitor the ongoing boycott of Korean grocery stores in the heart of the research area.

Household survey respondents in the 70th Precinct — the study precinct where TNT was more intensively implemented — were more likely to have witnessed a street-level drug arrest in the month preceding the post-TNT interview than were respondents in the 67th Precinct. Even in that precinct, however, less than a third of respondents reported having observed recent drug enforcement activity. Apparently, the efforts of TNT personnel to be highly visible within the community, and to be recognized specifically as members of the TNT unit, did not lead to widespread awareness among ordinary community residents.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there was little change in attitudes toward the police after TNT. In the household survey, respondents were not greatly concerned about police aggressiveness (*e.g.*, police stopping the wrong people on the street) either before or after TNT. Although they were generally not satisfied with the level of police service in their community before TNT, including police enforcement action against street drug markets, there was no change in the level of satisfaction after TNT.

Respondents of various types — community leaders, local police officers, drug sellers and users interviewed on the streets — indicated that some segments of the community were hostile to the police for reasons unrelated to the drug trade. Some of this hostility was related to perceived preferential treatment of one group (*e.g.*, Jewish residents of Crown Heights) at the expense of other groups (*e.g.*, local blacks). Other respondents suggested that Caribbean residents of these areas, particularly Haitians and undocumented aliens, had both historical and practical reasons for distrusting the police. The short-term TNT intervention could have no effect on these long-standing attitudes.



Evidence that TNT served to demonstrate the Department's commitment to “do something” about the street-level drug trade in target areas is mixed. The street sellers and buyers of crack were very aware of TNT, and they adapted their behavior in response to it. Street-level drug markets were visibly reduced in several locations during the TNT enforcement period. But TNT's message that the NYPD is committed to doing something about drug trafficking on the streets did not penetrate very deeply into the larger community.

Nevertheless, the community leaders who were aware of TNT expressed support for it — as a symbolic response to the neighborhood drug problem. Even those who were skeptical about the long-term impact of the initiative appreciated the commitment of NYPD resources to a problem they saw plaguing their communities.

### C. Perceived Effects on Quality of Life

Although TNT did have some effect on the intensity and structure of drug selling on the streets in some locations, during the enforcement period, careful analysis did not reveal any “TNT effect” on the ancillary crime associated with street-level drug markets (*see* Appendix D).

And, although TNT was intended to address additional quality-of-life problems in target areas (*e.g.*, derelict parks, abandoned cars), inter-agency activities in the research areas were not extensive. Some city agencies were substantially more active in addressing problems in other TNT target areas than they were in the Brooklyn South study precincts. This is partly because there were relatively few city-owned buildings in the study precincts, and residential and commercial buildings in these areas were in better condition than in many other parts of the city. It is not clear, in fact, to what extent TNT itself was responsible for the abandoned cars that were towed or the parks that were spruced up in the study precincts during the enforcement periods. Interviews at various city agencies suggest that a significant proportion of the inter-agency activities attributed to TNT at community meetings would have been undertaken even if TNT had not been in the area.

Community residents did not report seeing an impact of TNT on the quality of life in the target areas. Most household survey respondents, when interviewed at the end of the first 90 days of TNT, reported that levels of crime had been “about the same” over the past three months. They were less likely to report that crime had been increasing than when they were interviewed before TNT — a possible TNT effect — but very few believed that crime had decreased. And, although there were small improvements in perceived levels of physical deterioration at the time of the post-TNT interviews (*e.g.*, abandoned cars), and perceived improvement in conditions indicating social disorder (*e.g.*, loitering, drinking on the streets), similar improvements were noted by respondents in the comparison precinct.

#### **D. Fear of Crime and Use of Public Amenities**

A central objective of TNT is to make any impact it has on local street drug markets endure, by reducing the intensity of those markets and the associated disorder during the TNT period so that community residents will become less afraid of their neighborhood streets and parks and will organize themselves to preserve order and resist resurgence of the street drug markets after TNT moves on.

Although TNT had an impact on the visibility of street drug markets in target areas, it had little effect on community residents' perceptions of physical and social disorder. Panel members who were afraid to walk the streets before TNT were just as afraid when TNT was in their neighborhood. Neither panel nor survey respondents reported that they had increased their use of streets and parks during the enforcement periods.

Analysis of data from the household survey supports the association between perceived disorder and fear of crime reported in previous research (*see*, for example, Skogan, 1990). Respondents' perceptions of disorder predicted a significant amount of the variation in fear of crime. Awareness of TNT's presence in the neighborhood, however, added nothing to the explanation of variation in the level of fear. Furthermore, in the absence of a perceived reduction in disorder, knowledge of TNT did not make residents feel safer or increase their use of public amenities.

If TNT had been associated with a substantial reduction in perceived disorder in the research areas, it is possible that fear of crime would have decreased, even among residents who knew nothing about the initiative. Because TNT had little effect on perceived disorder, however, it is not surprising that it had no influence on levels of fear.

Because TNT was not associated with a substantial reduction in either perceived disorder or levels of fear in target neighborhoods, it is also not surprising that it did not inspire community residents to organize community-based initiatives to reclaim the streets for themselves. Panel respondents attributed the lack of effective community organizing both to the perceived inadequacy of TNT's community outreach in target neighborhoods and to the inherent fragmentation of the multi-ethnic, multi-class communities in which they lived.

#### **E. Community Explanations of the Perceived Ineffectiveness of TNT**

There was a widespread perception among community residents, community leaders, TNT staff, and other members of the Department that the failure of the criminal justice system to respond harshly to street-level narcotics arrests was a primary factor impeding the effectiveness of TNT in eradicating street-level drug markets. Respondents frequently argued that drug traffickers returned to the streets too quickly, and did not receive custodial sentences.

Analysis of the court system's response to felony narcotics arrests, however, suggests that excessive lenience is not as much a problem as it is perceived to be. In fact, the criminal justice system response to low-level narcotics sales (particularly small amounts of crack cocaine) has grown increasingly severe in recent years. Individuals arrested on felony narcotics charges who have previously been convicted of a felony face a substantial likelihood of receiving a prison sentence. Analysis shows that TNT arrests for felony-level crack sales are not treated particularly lightly by the courts.

Community residents also argued that TNT was assigned to their neighborhoods for too short a time to have any long-lasting effects on local drug markets. Short-term reductions in the visibility of street-level drug markets were seen as decaying quickly after the departure of TNT.

Some precinct personnel argued that TNT was not sufficiently responsive to local conditions and problems and, therefore, could have little effect on community conditions. A few officers argued that TNT units were more concerned with making arrests (*i.e.*, generating "numbers") than with eradicating problems in the community.

The fact that TNT had stronger effects on street-level markets in some areas than in others suggests that strategies and tactics need to be more specifically linked to the structure of local drug markets and to the community conditions that surround them. Intensive buy-and-bust tactics were most effective in areas that catered to outside purchasers and were somewhat isolated from the concentrated curbside drug selling locations that tended to be plagued with a host of other problems as well. (The ability of TNT's buy-and-bust arrests to reduce the crack trade on the block where it was most successful may have been bolstered by higher levels of informal social control in the relatively affluent sections of the 70th Precinct adjacent to that block.)

## II. Policy Recommendations

### A. TNT and Community Policing

The Department's increased commitment to community policing, as the NYPD's "dominant philosophy and strategy" (Brown, 1991) represents a growing determination to involve community groups in addressing crime and quality of life problems, and the level of fear. The TNT research findings (that TNT had short-term effects on some visible street-level drug markets but little effect on perceived disorder, fear of crime or attitudes toward the police) raise questions about the role that TNT should play in the Department's future efforts to reduce drug trafficking on the streets, improve the quality of life, and reduce the levels of fear in neighborhoods of the kind studied here.

It is clear from Chapters One and Three that TNT was intended to be quite a bit more robust than a conventional street-level crackdown in which the number of arrests is usually the measure of success. TNT was intended to mobilize the

community and to draw on the resources of twenty-five city agencies, to help solve problems in target areas that police enforcement alone is not likely to solve. The emphasis on “the numbers” that the researchers found, when TNT was implemented in Brooklyn South, is understandable in a police crackdown on street drug markets, but it is antithetical to the approach recommended by most community policing theorists:

Community Policing is qualitative in nature focusing on impact and effect, rather than on the traditional public sector obsession with measuring and defending effort. Neither the community nor the police can rest with statements like “50 arrests were made in this area over the past 6 months,” or “we have assigned 10 more officers to this side of the city.” The question of central importance is “What impact do police and neighborhood efforts have on crime, fear of crime and the quality of life in the neighborhood” — in short, Are neighborhoods getting safer or not? (Greene, 1991: 1)

But TNT was designed to do a lot more than generate a large number of arrests. The two other components of its design — community involvement and inter-agency partnerships — are central features of the Department's evolving community policing strategy as well. As these components of TNT were implemented far less intensively than the third component — rapid buy-and-busts — large numbers of arrests were generated without much durable effect on the drug markets and without the community being very much aware of it.

Because target area residents were generally uninformed about TNT, and because many were unaware of it even when TNT was in full operation in their neighborhoods, they could not be much involved in it. Community leaders, who were relatively more likely to know about TNT and about its deployment in their areas, complained that there had been little effort to involve them either. They saw the methods used by TNT to reach out to the community to be ineffective both for disseminating information and for motivating community residents to organize to resist the drug markets.

Similarly, there was little evidence of substantial inter-agency activity targeted at drug “hot spots” in the study precincts, although TNT inter-agency activities were reportedly more extensive in other patrol boroughs. Inter-agency partnerships, however, are critical to the success of community policing and to problem-solving by community policing departments. Several representatives of agencies in the inter-agency consortium created for TNT, interviewed during the course of this research, said they worked more closely with individual CPOP officers than they did with members of the TNT units. Some reported that they regularly rely on precinct officers for back-up when their personnel conduct inspections at difficult locations, and that targeting their enforcement efforts to fit police officers' problem-solving plans was a

fair trade.<sup>110</sup> The inter-agency consortium developed for TNT did provide a formal structure for mobilizing agency partnerships, and in other patrol boroughs there was evidence that this approach has larger value. Although CPOP officers have long drawn upon other city agencies to assist in their problem-solving efforts at the beat level, their requests for other agencies' assistance have not been supported by a comparable high-level partnership structure — they do not have liaison through their command structure to high-ranking members of other agencies, and for the most part must develop individual relationships at their own level, on their own. There may be value in linking the TNT inter-agency consortium to the broader problem-solving efforts of officers, precincts and borough commands throughout the Department.

Clearly, if TNT is to continue operating along the same lines, the community outreach and inter-agency consortium could benefit from some re-design. TNT and precinct managers might usefully engage in more aggressive community outreach; precinct-based Community Police Officers could usefully encourage community residents to organize in response to the presence of TNT (*e.g.*, anti-drug marches, formation of new block watch groups). TNT administrative staff could usefully enlist other agencies in aggressive problem-solving activities designed to address specific “hot spots” identified by members of TNT modules and by CPOs.

But it would be more consistent with the Department's dominant philosophy to integrate the enforcement tactics of TNT (street-level buy and bust, tactical confiscations of drug purchasers' cars) into problem-solving community policing at the precinct level. These TNT tactics can be effective against some types of street drug markets, under some conditions (*e.g.*, locations catering to drive-by purchasers from other neighborhoods). It might be more efficient and effective for there to be a closer collaboration between the centralized Narcotics Borough Commands (currently comprised of a Narcotics District and a TNT) and patrol personnel in the precincts where street drug trafficking is recognized as a primary community problem. For this to work, some TNT personnel (*e.g.*, the undercovers) would have to remain within the Narcotics Borough Commands,<sup>111</sup> presumably assigned to Narcotics

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<sup>110</sup> Some Department officials argue that the high-ranking agency personnel who participate in the inter-agency consortium could not possibly respond to all the demands of community policing units in the city's 75 precincts. Clearly, it is easier to focus inter-agency partnerships on the seven areas targeted by TNT units at any particular time. Vera's research, however, showed that relatively few inter-agency activities in target areas represented active problem-solving initiatives generated by the local TNT unit. Although some agencies (*e.g.*, HPD) have been involved in extensive inter-agency activity with TNT in other locations, most of the inter-agency activities reported at community meetings in research areas were undertaken by the agencies themselves. Some would have been undertaken if TNT were not in the area. This finding points to a need for a more collaborative, problem-oriented inter-agency partnership.

<sup>111</sup> Because undercover buy-and-bust can serve as an effective strategy in problem-solving efforts aimed at reducing specific street drug markets, it would be important for the Department maintain a centralized pool of undercover officers, at the Patrol Borough level at least, if TNT-type tactics were to

*footnote continued*

District, others would have to be re-assigned to precinct-based units, and the centralized TNT would be displaced.

### **B. Integrating the Best of TNT with Precincts' Community Policing Efforts**

A key goal for the Department's community policing strategy is to increase coordination between centralized narcotics units and community beat officers. Currently, TNT units receive information about local "hot spots" from individual precincts before they enter a target area. They do not engage in active collaboration with precinct personnel (CPOP officers, members of SNEU units) during the enforcement period. But these precinct-based officers are often aware of unique aspects of local terrain (*e.g.*, escape routes through buildings, short cuts for cars, preferred locations for stashing drugs) that are of considerable value officers implementing buy-and-bust tactics.

In fact, it is consistent with the Department's strategy for community policing to locate the decision to use TNT-type tactics at the precinct level, perhaps with the requirement that precincts "make the case" for use of the tactics and the undercovers, by the kind of problem-solving analysis that would give higher levels of command some confidence that the proposed effort has good prospects for success at the designated location. Patrol Borough commanders could then establish the relative priorities of these requests.

Vera's research points to several reasons why this approach might be more effective. The market effects of TNT's short-term crackdowns decayed quickly; the community-level effects of these crackdowns were negligible. Instead of focusing on one target area at a time, the Department could deploy some of the resources currently assigned to TNT through the Narcotics District — the car confiscation unit, trained undercover officers, some back-up teams — to enhance precinct-based problem-solving efforts that have a longer time-frame. Routine street-level drug enforcement, however, would become, increasingly, the province of precinct-based personnel, trained in the methods currently employed by SNEU and CPOP units, enhanced by a more active collaboration with the Narcotics District.

A re-shaped Narcotics District could, in turn, focus more resources on indoor drug market locations. Neither the SNEU nor the TNT approach is well-designed to address such locations, which create quality-of-life problems at least as serious as the

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*footnote continued....*

be used at the precinct level. Active undercover officers cannot be effectively based in precincts because they would eventually be identified by street traffickers. During the research period, a precinct commander recalled a time when the NYPD had a single centralized undercover unit, composed of undercover officers of various ethnic backgrounds. He thought that this approach would solve the problem of insufficient undercover officers of a particular ethnic background within some Patrol Boroughs.

curbside markets do. Narcotics District personnel could work more collaboratively with precinct Community Policing Officers, in identifying specific indoor drug market locations and devising strategies to address them. A re-focused inter-agency consortium of the kind created for TNT would be a major resource in such an effort.

The redeployment of some TNT personnel to precincts with curbside street drug markets would serve several purposes. It would increase the Department's ability to provide a uniformed presence at those locations, which virtually all respondents in this research viewed as more effective than TNT itself. The presence of such officers, addressing problems of identified concern to the community and actively collaborating with community residents to identify and attack those problems, ought to do more than TNT itself to reduce fear and improve attitudes toward the police in the city's troubled neighborhoods.

Overall, the approach outlined above represents movement away from short-term enforcement actions (which tend to develop an emphasis on "the numbers"), towards problem-oriented community policing at the neighborhood level. Although TNT-type actions mounted under these conditions would be less intensive than TNT's crackdowns, they ought to yield longer-term improvement in troubled areas of the city.

### III. Conclusion

Although targeted crackdowns have been effective in eliminating street-level drug markets in some places (*e.g.*, Lynn, Massachusetts and New York's Lower East Side), they may be insufficient to affect omnipresent curbside crack markets like those in Central Brooklyn. The documented, successful crackdowns addressed highly concentrated heroin markets catering to drive-by purchasers from other areas for whom there were few readily accessible alternative markets. In addition, some of these crackdowns were supported by on-going neighborhood transitions (*e.g.*, gentrification in some parts of the Lower East Side) and an enforcement period that was lengthy enough to sustain project achievements (*e.g.*, the long-term commitment of Operation Pressure Point).

Other recent initiatives, focusing intensive enforcement on widely-scattered street crack markets, have not been as effective. For example, in Tampa, where such a crack market developed in the late 1980s, crackdowns produced thousands of arrests but, according to a recent case study (Kennedy, 1991), these crackdowns were no more than a temporary expedient, designed to "assuage the public":

. . . street-level enforcement . . . is costly, not easily combined with regular patrol, generally fails to take dealers off the streets for long, does nothing to prevent the entry of new dealers into the business and frequently simply displaces dealers or the market to a new location. (Kennedy, 1991, p. 8)

According to Kennedy, Tampa's QUAD (Quick Uniform Attack on Drugs) Teams, which followed, were more successful than the intensive street-level enforcement alone. Like TNT, QUAD was designed to employ a combination of "traditional, problem-solving and community policing approaches" (Kennedy, 1991 p. 1). A battery of strategies were melded with traditional police enforcement, including inter-agency partnerships (for enhanced civil abatement and code enforcement) and community partnerships. QUAD officers were equipped with beepers, to permit community residents to provide confidential information about drug locations; they used reverse stings; they relied on media coverage to help mobilize the community; they established visible observation posts at known drug locations; they tried to mount a visible response to all drug complaints; they confiscated buyers' cars; they posted warning signs at known drug locations, and they tried some ingenious tactics particularly suited to conditions in Tampa:

They took particular delight in making dealers physically uncomfortable: hauling away chairs and couches dealers had set up on street corners, confiscating coolers of beer and wine, having the city trim trees and shrubs that provided shade from the hot Florida sun. That attention alone was sometimes enough to close a spot down. (p. 19)

None of the tactics employed by QUAD was new and, taken together, they have the feel of a replication of TNT (albeit, with the benefit of a few more years in the evolution of problem-solving policing). According to Kennedy's case study of QUAD, written without the benefit of the kind of rigorous examination given to TNT in this research, street-level drug trafficking in Tampa was virtually eliminated within a year. Kennedy did note that problems had developed in areas where the market had moved indoors — a problem that surfaced in the TNT research areas as well.

But it is doubtful that QUAD's overall impact would look very different from TNT's, if the program were subjected to similarly rigorous analysis. In 1992, according to Tampa substance abuse and correctional personnel, low-level crack markets persist in Tampa's inner-city areas, despite the continuing operation of QUAD units.<sup>112</sup>

It appears that police crackdowns on curbside crack markets are not likely to achieve durable improvements in the neighborhoods plagued by them, unless the community itself is drawn into a more active role than was observed in the Brooklyn South TNT target areas or was reported from Tampa. Some recent initiatives, representing yet other attempts to combine intensive drug enforcement with community policing techniques, are reported to have had significant effects on resident's perceptions of the quality of life, their attitudes toward the police, and their

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<sup>112</sup> Personal communications.



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level of fear (Uchida *et al.*, 1990 and 1992; Hayeslip, 1991; *see also*, Kleiman, 1992: 142-145). And the Bureau of Justice Administration's new "Weed and Seed" initiative (BJA, 1991) also reaches for an incorporation of street-level enforcement into a comprehensive strategy of community-oriented policing and problem-solving, prevention, and treatment. However difficult it will be to implement "Weed and Seed" programs effectively, the agenda recognizes that enforcement action alone is insufficient to address the kinds of drug markets studied in this research.

The New York City Police Department today is much more deeply committed to community policing and problem-solving at the precinct level than it was when TNT was designed and launched. It is possible that by incorporating some of the tactics used by TNT more directly into the Department's evolving strategy for precinct-based police services, the benefits expected from TNT itself can be more fully realized now.



## APPENDICES



## Appendix A

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### I. Assessing TNT's Impact on Community Attitudes, Perceptions and Behavior

##### A. The Household Survey

1. *The Methodology as Set Forth in the Research Design.* The research design called for a first set of baseline household surveys to be conducted in all three study precincts simultaneously, during the month preceding TNT implementation in the Brooklyn South patrol borough. This period is designated as "Pre-TNT" in Figure A-1 below. Then, at the end of what was to be 90 days of TNT

enforcement, household survey "impact" data would be collected (designated as "Post-TNT" in Figure A-1). Finally, if TNT had measurable effects (as revealed by the Post-TNT data), data revealing any decay of those effects were to be collected through a "Follow-up" household survey, occurring three months after TNT deployment ended in a study precinct.

Figure A-1  
Original Schedule for Waves of Household Surveys

TIME	TNT TARGET AREA		
	70th Precinct	67th Precinct	71st Precinct
1	Pre-TNT	Pre-TNT	Pre-TNT
2	Post-TNT	Pre-TNT	Pre-TNT
3	Follow-up	Post-TNT	Pre-TNT
4	Follow-up		

Thus, in the first study precinct (which turned out to be the 70th Precinct when it became the first precinct targeted for TNT after the start of research in Brooklyn South), the household survey data collection was to start with a Pre-TNT wave, in the month prior to TNT implementation in any of the three study precincts,<sup>1</sup> and was to be followed with one Post-TNT survey, immediately after TNT left the precinct, and a Follow-up wave three months later. In whichever precinct became the second TNT target — it turned out to be the 67th Precinct — Pre-TNT household survey data was to be collected twice: the first wave would be the one conducted in the month prior to implementation in any of the precincts, the second (approximately 90 days later) would be conducted in the month prior to implementation in the 67th Precinct. The

third precinct selected for the TNT research it turned out to be the 71st Precinct — was to remain a pure comparison area, so each wave of household surveys there is labeled "Pre-TNT."

While it would have been ideal to use a "panel" design for the longitudinal household surveys (that is, to interview the same individuals in each wave of interviews), panels were not practical because the attrition rate of household panel members in a study of this nature, in relatively unstable neighborhoods, was certain to be high. Therefore, a new random sample was chosen, within each research area, for each wave. This approach provided a larger sample of household survey respondents, for the same or lower level of expenditure, than would have been required for a panel of sufficient size to counter attrition. As long as random selection procedures are followed rigorously and the sample is large enough, the approach chosen for the household survey reduces to acceptable levels the danger that Pre-TNT,

<sup>1</sup> The procedures used to select the Brooklyn South TNT study precincts are detailed in Chapter Two.

Post-TNT and Follow-up waves would differ on demographic or other important characteristics. (And if such differences were detected, they could be handled through appropriate statistical techniques.) The research design called for a residential survey sampling process survey that parallels the method described by Pate and Skogan (1985) and Wycoff and Skogan (1985) in the Police Foundation's study of community policing and fear reduction.

First, during the period when the NYPD was planning its deployments of TNT in Brooklyn South, Vera researchers were informed which precincts would be likely to be targeted first (the "study precincts") and, in cooperation with TNT and precinct personnel, a formal research area was identified within each precinct, focused around concentrations of "hot spots" within the precinct's TNT target area. Tighter boundaries were drawn, within the TNT target areas, to create the research areas so that research inquiry could be focused on small, specific targets (e.g., particular streets, intersections, sets of buildings, or other "hot spots"). A tighter focus was given to the research than was given to TNT itself, because the techniques being used to study TNT's neighborhood-level effects — the household surveys, the ethnography, and interviews with panels of key informants — might fail to detect real effects of the intervention if they were cast too broadly and not focused on areas where effects were likely to be evident.

Once a research area was identified, Vera staff used updated 1980 census block maps (obtained from the New York City Planning Department) to compile sample frames for the household survey. All residential addresses within the defined boundaries of the area were recorded on a list and assigned consecutive identification numbers. A random sample of addresses was then generated by computer. From each household so identified, a respondent for the survey was to be selected (during an initial visit by an interviewer) by listing all household members 19 years of age or older, then assigning each a number, and then using a random selection table was to determine which household member should be interviewed (Kish, 1965).

2. *Implementation — The Pre-TNT Data Collection Period.* During the months of September and October, 1989, the household survey instrument was drafted, reviewed, and edited. At the end of October, field staff were trained in the use of the instrument and it was pilot tested. Introductory letters were sent to the 250 households that had been randomly selected in each precinct.<sup>2</sup> Field staff (consisting of four full-time interviewers, all male) began the first wave of Pre-TNT interviewing in the 67th, 70th and 71st precincts on November 7, 1989.

Each of the four interviewers was given a list of addresses (all of each interviewer's addresses were in a single study precinct) and was trained to use the random selection tables that were attached to the survey instruments. When someone answered the door, the interviewer was instructed to explain who he was and why he was there, and to begin administering the informed consent protocols (attached to this Appendix). If the person answering the door consented to proceed with the random selection, the interviewer was to determine which adult living in the household would be the randomly selected respondent. If the designated respondent was home, the interviewer was to continue the informed consent procedures<sup>3</sup> and attempt to complete

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<sup>2</sup> These letters were signed by Vera's Associate Director for Research, but also contained the names of local political and community leaders (a State Senator, two members of the New York State Assembly, the local City Council representative, members of the local Community Board, a member of a local merchants association, etc.). The purpose of obtaining these endorsements was to provide prospective household survey respondents with an indication that the endeavor was legitimate most of them would not be familiar with the Vera Institute, but might know their local politicians. Each envelope contained copies of the letter in English, Spanish and Creole.

<sup>3</sup> The informed consent protocol was read by the interviewer to the respondent. The information in this protocol included: the time it was projected to take to complete the interview; assurances about confidentiality of the data; and assurances that participation was voluntary and the respondent could stop at any time. The interviewer would also leave a brief description of the research with the respondent. Interviewers did not obtain written

the interview right away. If the designated respondent was not home, or if the respondent was unable to complete the interview at that time, the interviewer was to arrange to call or come back to do the interview at another time.

It soon became clear that there would be substantial problems with implementing this component of the original research design. One of the earliest problems encountered was that, in many households, no one was at home during morning and afternoon hours. The working hours of field staff were expanded, so they could focus on afternoons, evenings, and weekends. More serious problems were the substantial apathy in all three communities (e.g., "I'm not interested"); the apartments where someone was home but no one would answer the door; and potential respondents who scheduled an appointment for interview but were not home (or were unwilling to conduct the interview) at the appointed time. If the interviewer found no one home at the time of his initial visit, or if the initial contact resulted in a refusal, he was instructed to return at a different time of day. (For example, if a first, unsuccessful visit to a household was made at 3:00 p.m., the interviewer might make his second attempt at 7:00 p.m.) In this way, it was hoped, households in which all members were employed would be represented in the survey; and when an interview was refused, it was hoped that, by returning at a different time and day, the interviewer might encounter a different, more receptive member of the household.<sup>4</sup> Interviewers were expected to

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consent from the respondents. Vera's Institutional Review Board reviewed the project and concurred with the researchers that written consent was not necessary and that, because such a writing would be the only permanent record identifying a respondent, more of a risk might be created if a form were signed.

<sup>4</sup> Once an interviewer had received two refusals from the same household, or if he felt certain that he could not turn the refusal into a completed interview, the household was assigned to another interviewer. Interviewers were instructed to make written notes about the nature of refusals and any other relevant information. For example, if an interviewer originally assigned to an address was

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make up to five attempts per household (varying the day and time), to obtain a completed interview.

Once the NYPD announced that TNT would begin in the first study precinct — the 70th Precinct — on about December 6, all four of Vera's household interviewers were re-assigned to the 70th Precinct.<sup>5</sup> But the difficulties Vera's interviewers were encountering continued, and different strategies had to be devised. As it was thought that some individuals, particularly women, might feel threatened by the male interviewing staff and might be more receptive to female interviewers, and because it was thought desirable to have more field staff to cover evenings and weekends, three women were hired to work part-time, primarily on evenings and weekends, and were assigned to the 70th Precinct. In addition, a white, female Columbia University senior volunteered to conduct interviews for a few hours each week, in the company of one of the male interviewers.

As it turned out, the female interviewers were not able to get any better response than the males. With only days remaining until

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African American, and indicated that the person who answered the door appeared to be Latino or Haitian, a Latino or Haitian interviewer would be next assigned that address. If no special characteristics suggested that one interviewer might be more successful than another, the address reassignment was based on location and caseload. In some cases, if a respondent was particularly adamant or the interviewer felt it would be dangerous to return, the address would be classified a "refusal" and no further attempts would be made. An example of this type of case was one interviewer's report that when he attempted to get an interview, he heard a household member say, "Get the gun." Another situation in which no further attempts were made was when an interviewer believed drugs were being sold from the household.

<sup>5</sup> The knowledge that TNT would be starting in the 70th Precinct made boosting the size of the household sample in that precinct a top priority — the household survey there would be an actual Pre-TNT test, while there would be another opportunity to collect Pre-TNT household survey data in the 67th and 71st precincts.

TNT was to enter the 70th Precinct, only 49 household survey interviews had been successfully completed there, while 10 had been completed in the 67th Precinct and 25 in the 71st Precinct. The 20% response rate in the 70th Precinct and the insufficient number of Pre-TNT household interviews led Vera staff to adopt still further changes in procedure. First, because many of those who were willing to speak at all did not remember receiving the introductory letter (which had been sent a month earlier), a second copy of the letter was sent to all households in the 70th Precinct sample in which no interview had been completed. Second, the interviewers attempted to engage the help of superintendents in the sampled buildings, in the hope that they could help win the cooperation of potential respondents. Third, the interviewers were instructed to offer respondents \$5 for a completed interview. "Pre-TNT" interviewing continued in the 70th Precinct until TNT had been deployed there for two and a half weeks; at that point, although the number of completed interviews was still not satisfactory, it was no longer reasonable to continue a Pre-TNT survey. The total number of household survey interviews completed in the 70th Precinct in the Pre-TNT wave was a disappointing 68 (a response rate of 27%).

The next problem was that, because the field staff had focused so heavily on the 70th Precinct, few interviews had been successfully completed in the 67th and 71st precincts, and TNT was scheduled to begin in one of them during the first week of March. The original research design called for the second set of Pre-TNT household survey interviews to begin in those precincts no later than February 1. But because all the interview staff had been kept in the 70th Precinct until late December, no more than 5.5 weeks remained in which to complete the first Pre-TNT wave, and to start and finish the second Pre-TNT wave of household interviews in those two precincts. Experience in the 70th Precinct made it clear 5.5 weeks was not enough time to do that and, in any event, the first Pre-TNT wave would blend right into the second wave, rendering the distinction meaningless. As a result, the first wave of Pre-TNT interviews in the 67th and 71st precincts were dropped and the staff

focused on generating a sufficient number of interviews for a single Pre-TNT wave.

After introductory letters were sent, in early January, to 250 randomly selected households in the 67th and in the 71st precincts, Pre-TNT interviewing efforts began on January 15. The interviewers were instructed to offer \$5 to any adult in a sampled household who was willing to be interviewed (but only to one respondent per household). Two of the four full-time interviewers were assigned to each precinct. In late January, an additional male Latino interviewer was hired to work about 20 hours each week. (The productivity of the part-time female interviewers was not sufficient to warrant continuing their efforts.)

After 3.5 weeks, only 35 household interviews had been completed in the 71st Precinct and only 23 in the 67th Precinct. It seemed likely that, without any new intervention, the number of Pre-TNT household interviews in this wave in the 71st Precinct research area would have been adequate for the research design, and the effort in that precinct was supported by field staffs' good contacts with block and tenant association leaders in the precinct's southern portion. In the 67th Precinct, however, it was projected that a total of only 53 interviews would be completed by the end of the wave; therefore, an additional random sample of 250 households was selected in that precinct. The additional sample was drawn because, with a projected response rate of 20%, the original sample of 250 households would not yield enough completed interviews for it to be reasonable to view the data as coming from a random sample of households. No useful statistical analyses could be done on the 53 interviews projected to result from the original sample.

When three weeks remained, it was apparent from continued monitoring of the response rates that, although the rate in the northern part of the 71st Precinct was satisfactory, the expected number of interviews in the southern portion had not been reached. In addition, only 39 interviews had been completed in the 67th Precinct, where a total of 64 had been projected by the end of the wave. At that point, the stipend for completed interviews was increased to \$10,



and an additional sample of 250 households was drawn in the 71st Precinct.

These extraordinary efforts just barely sufficed. By the end of the wave, only 66 Pre-TNT household interviews had been completed in the 67th Precinct (a response rate of 13%) and only 87 in the 71st Precinct (a response rate of 17%).

As a result of the difficulty of obtaining Pre-TNT household survey interviews, much of the rigor of the original research design was lost. For example, the random selection of respondents from among household residents had to be dropped, to increase the sample size and to facilitate the offering of stipends to potential respondents. It is important to recognize the implications of this change for the generalizability of the results, but it should be noted that the low response rate (prior to and after these changes) had put generalizability in jeopardy anyway. As noted below and in text, statistical techniques were used to assess the representativeness of the sample actually obtained. And, although the first of the two waves of "Pre-TNT" interviews shown in Figure A-1 for the 67th and 71st precincts had to be dropped, the longitudinal nature of the research design remained intact, with pre-test, post-test, and follow-up waves of household interviews in the 70th and 67th precincts, and two pre-tests in the 71st Precinct.

Thus, the household survey research design that was implemented is weaker than the one on which the researchers embarked, but it does allow for a number of tests of the effects of TNT on target area residents' attitudes and perceptions. Through comparison of post-TNT and follow-up survey data, it also provides a means to test for the decay of any TNT effects. The 71st Precinct remains a comparison precinct, and the two waves of pre-TNT interviews there (the first collected in January and February, and the second collected in May) permit tests of changes over time in the absence of a TNT deployment.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The second wave of Pre-TNT interviews in the 71st Precinct began on May 1, 1990 and continued until June 11; it produced a total of 120 interviews. The procedures followed during this wave were

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3. *Post-TNT and Follow-up Waves of Household Surveys.* TNT was deployed in the 70th Precinct on December 6, 1989, and was scheduled to remain there for 90 days. As detailed in the text, the TNT unit did not leave the 70th Precinct and go to the 67th Precinct as planned: Instead, on March 8, 1990, half of Brooklyn South's TNT officers were moved to the 67th Precinct and the rest were retained in the 70th Precinct for six more weeks. Despite this, the demands of the research time-line required Vera staff to begin the wave of "Post-TNT" interviews in the 70th Precinct on March 12, 1990.

The procedures for selecting households randomly, obtaining informed consent, and so forth, were the same as the ones used during the Pre-TNT survey, but interviewers were instructed to conduct the interview with any willing adult in the sampled household and to offer a stipend of \$10 for a completed interview. As in the Pre-TNT survey, introductory letters were sent to the randomly selected addresses: This time, however, the letters were signed by New York City Mayor David Dinkins and were printed on Mayor's Office letterhead.<sup>7</sup> In addition, follow-up letters from Vera's Associate Director for Research were sent, two weeks later, to sampled households from which an interview had not yet been obtained. The final procedural difference was in how "refusals" were handled. During the Pre-TNT waves, Vera's interviewers were encouraged to return to households in which an initial approach was met with a refusal, to attempt to get a

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*footnote continued...*

identical to those used for the 70th Precinct Post-TNT wave in March, as described in the text below.

<sup>7</sup> The decision to have the Mayor send the letter was based on the political climate in New York City at that time. David Dinkins, New York's first black mayor and a former Vera Trustee, had been elected in November 1989 and enjoyed considerable popularity in the city's black communities. It was hoped that a letter from him saying, "I have asked researchers from the Vera Institute of Justice to survey a sample of residents in the . . . communities. . . . I hope you will find time for the Vera research interview," would encourage recipients to cooperate.

completed interview. The Pre-TNT survey efforts had left the interview staff persuaded that they would continue to be turned away at these households, and the research managers agreed. Beginning with the Post-TNT wave in 70th Precinct, "refusals" were immediately assigned to another interviewer. Thus, each interviewer was responsible for the addresses originally assigned plus additional addresses where an interview had been refused to the interviewer originally assigned. The Post-TNT interviewing continued in the 70th Precinct until April 18, 1990, yielding 103 interviews (a 41% response rate).

On June 11, 1990, these same procedures were followed in the 67th Precinct and yielded 82 interviews by the time Post-TNT interviewing ended there on July 13. Research procedures were affected somewhat, however, by changes in TNT's own deployment plan for Brooklyn South, described above and in text (*i.e.*, the splitting of Brooklyn South TNT personnel between the 70th Precinct and 67th Precinct for the first six weeks of TNT in the 67th Precinct, the reduction of TNT staffing

levels when the Social Club Task Force was expanded after the Happy Land arson, and the introduction of Operation Takeback in the 67th Precinct shortly after TNT finished there). Thus, although Post-TNT household interviewing in the 67th Precinct had been scheduled to be conducted simultaneously with the 70th Precinct Follow-up wave, and both had been scheduled to begin on June 11 and to continue for approximately one month, and although Post-TNT interviews in the 67th Precinct began and ended on schedule, the beginning of 70th Precinct Follow-up interviewing was delayed until July 16 (and continued until August 17, 1990). The Follow-up wave in the 67th Precinct began on September 9 and ended on October 22, 1990. The Follow-up waves yielded 103 interviews in each precinct.

Final sample sizes for each household survey wave, in each study precincts, are presented in Table A-1:

Table A-1  
Household Survey Waves — Final Sample Sizes

WAVE	TNT STUDY PRECINCT		
	70th Precinct	67th Precinct	71st Precinct
PRE-TNT	68	66	87 *
POST-TNT	103	82	120 *
FOLLOW-UP	<u>103</u>	<u>103</u>	<u>—</u>
TOTAL	274	251	207

\* All 71st Precinct interviews would properly be categorized as "Pre-TNT."

4. *Demographic Characteristics of Household Survey Respondents — a Test of the Sampling Procedures.* Data on demographic characteristics of the respondents were collected in each of the eight waves discussed above. These data were analyzed to ascertain whether there were differences among precincts and whether there were differences among waves. Certain differences among precincts would be expected (*e.g.*, ethnic breakdowns), and it would be expected that the demographic differences among the research areas within those precincts would be reflected as well (see

Chapter Two). Differences between waves, among respondents from the same precinct, would have been problematic, however, and would suggest that the sampling procedures failed to produce comparable samples. The results of these analyses are discussed below.

Respondents' characteristics were fairly similar across the three study precincts. The average age of respondents was 39.5, with ages ranging from 18 to 88. There was little difference among the precincts, although the mean age of respondents in the 71st Precinct was 42.6, compared to a mean age of 37.8 in

the 67th Precinct and 38.7 in the 70th. There were no real age differences between waves in the 70th and 67th precincts; those means ranged from 36.6 to 39.6.

Given the number of female-headed households in New York City, it is not surprising that 60% of the respondents in each precinct were women. (There were no significant differences on this measure across waves.) The great majority of respondents were either Caribbean Blacks or African Americans, with about 10% of the sample

Latino and virtually no whites. There were more Latino respondents in the 70th Precinct than in the other two precincts, but the ethnicity of the respondents there did not vary significantly across waves. (See Table A-2 for complete ethnic breakdowns.) Nearly half the respondents were married or cohabiting, and another quarter to a third had never married. (See Table A-3.) The mean number of children under the age of 19 living in the sampled households was 1.2.

**Table A-2**  
**Race and Ethnicity of Household Survey Respondents, by Precinct**

	TNT STUDY PRECINCT		
	70th Precinct	67th Precinct	71th Precinct
Caribbean	51%	60%	46%
African American	28%	30%	44%
Latino	15%	7%	6%
White	2%	–	2%
Other	4%	3%	2%
(N = 729)	(273)	(250)	(206)

**Table A-3**  
**Marital Status, by Precinct**

	TNT STUDY PRECINCT		
	70th Precinct	67th Precinct	71th Precinct
Married / Cohabiting	49%	42%	47%
Never Married	27%	37%	28%
Divorced / Separated	21%	17%	17%
Widowed	4%	4%	9%
(N = 730)	(273)	(250)	(207)

Approximately two-thirds of the 728 respondents (combined across precincts and across waves) indicated that they were working outside the home at the time of the interview — most in full-time jobs. Thirteen percent were unemployed at the time of their interview. These proportions were substantially the same across precincts and waves.

The median household income (across all three precincts and all three waves) was between \$20,000 and \$29,999. Household incomes were lowest in the 70th Precinct, where one-third of the respondents had

household incomes under \$15,000; 44% lived in households where the income was between \$15,000 and \$30,000; and a quarter lived in households with incomes above \$30,000. Household incomes were highest in the 71st Precinct, where approximately a quarter of the respondents (28%) lived in households with incomes below \$15,000; another 39% had household income between \$15,000 and \$30,000; and the household income for the remainder (34%) was over \$30,000. In the 67th Precinct, about one-fourth of respondents (24%) reported household incomes below

\$15,000; about half (49%) had household incomes between \$15,000 and \$30,000; and another quarter (27%) had household incomes over \$30,000.

5. *The Household Survey Instrument.* The Pre-TNT survey instrument consisted of 110 questions and took about 20 minutes to administer. (The length of time it took to complete the interview varied with the number of questions the respondent was able to answer.) Forty of these questions comprised the 10 scales developed by the Police Foundation as part of its research on fear reduction in Newark and Houston (Pate and Skogan, 1985). Other questions were included to collect demographic data about the respondent and the composition of the household. Internal consistency reliabilities were computed for each of these scales and are reported below. The Pre-TNT household survey instrument also contained: (a) follow-up questions that permitted explication of respondents' answers to the scale questions<sup>8</sup> or that set up scale questions; (b) questions about recent police activity and programs the respondent might have noticed; (c) questions about whether the respondent had been the victim of various crimes during the past year or knew of people in the area who had been crime victims; and (d) questions designed to tap concerns about gentrification of the area. The Pre-TNT questionnaire did not mention TNT or any other police program; questions about police activities or programs were either very general or open-ended.

The Post-TNT and Follow-up questionnaires were identical, and were the same as the Pre-TNT questionnaire, except for the addition of a series of six questions about drug

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the scale that measures *Satisfaction with the Area* includes a question about whether the area has (in the past three months) become a better place to live, gotten worse, or stayed the same. The questions that follow this one probe the ways in which the area has improved or worsened (e.g., crime, drugs, schools, shopping, police visibility, disorder, etc.). Similarly, following the scale item on how safe the respondent feels in the area when outside, alone, at night, are a series of questions designed to pinpoint the locations the respondent fears, the reasons for the fear, and the times he or she is afraid.

arrests in general and another ten specifically about TNT. These questionnaires contained 127 questions and did not take significantly longer to administer than the Pre-TNT questionnaire.

6. *The Scales Used.* The ten scales used in the household surveys were originally developed by the Police Foundation. Pate and Skogan (1985: Appendix N) described the methods used for developing and scoring the scales and reported reliabilities for each. The scales used in the TNT study were virtually identical to those described by Pate and Skogan.<sup>9</sup> To determine the reliability of the scales, the four waves of Pre-TNT data (two for the 71st Precinct and one each for the 70th and 67th precincts) were concatenated into one file, and the two Post-TNT waves (one each for the 70th and 67th precincts) and the two Follow-up waves (one each for the 70th and 67th precincts) were concatenated into a second file. SPSS/PC+ (Version 4.01) was used to compute reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for each scale, separately for the Pre-TNT file and the Post-TNT/Follow-up file. Results of these analyses, and comparisons of them with the results obtained by Pate and Skogan (1985) are presented next.

7. *Scale Results.* A two-item scale, developed by Pate and Skogan to measure *Satisfaction with the Area*, started by asking respondents whether, during the last three months, the area had become a better place to live, gotten worse or stayed the same. The second item asked them to indicate, on a four-

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<sup>9</sup> One item on the *Social Disorder* scale was deleted because project interviewing staff reported that respondents were often either confused by it or offended by it. The item was one in a series, preceded by: "Now I am going to read a list of things that you may think are problems in this area. After I read each one, please tell me whether you think it is a big problem, some problem or no problem here in this area." The specific item was, "The wrong kind of people moving into the neighborhood?" Another item, this one on Pate and Skogan's *Police Service* scale, was dropped from this research by clerical error. This item, which sought a summary view of matters explored in other items, was "How good a job are the police in this area doing in keeping order on the streets and sidewalks?"

point scale, how satisfied they felt about the area as a place to live. Responses to these two items are added together to measure satisfaction with the area; a high score indicates that the respondent thinks the area is a good place to live and is improving. The Pre-TNT reliability for this scale was .47 (N=338) and the Post-TNT/Follow-up reliability was .58 (N=384). While these reliabilities are fairly low, Pate and Skogan reported an alpha of .50 for the scale, indicating this was "good for a two-item measure" (Pate & Skogan, 1985; Appendix N:8).

Four items were used to measure respondent's perception of the level of *Physical Deterioration of the Area*. Each item was measured on a three-point scale (no problem, some problem, big problem). The items asked respondent about dirty streets, abandoned cars, abandoned buildings, and trash-filled vacant lots. This scale yielded alphas of .54 (Pre-TNT, N=327) and .61 (Post-TNT/Follow-up, N=385), which are comparable to the .63 obtained by Pate and Skogan.<sup>10</sup>

According to Pate and Skogan, their measure of *Perceived Area Social Disorder* was based on a concept introduced by Hunter (1978) as "incivility." Pate and Skogan argued that the theoretical significance of the concept had been expanded in the work of Wilson and Kelling (1982), which linked disorder to the generation of serious crimes. In addition, Skogan (1983) had found relationships between the level of social disorder and the levels of fear, community cohesion, and residential stability in urban neighborhoods. Pate and Skogan's (1985) *Perceived Area Social Disorder* scale consists of seven items, focusing on deviant behavior in public. For each item, the respondent was asked to indicate whether the behavior was a big problem in the area, some problem or no problem at all. The items covered: people hanging out; people saying insulting things or bothering others as they walk down the street; drinking in public (e.g.,

on street corners); breaking windows; graffiti; gangs; and sale or use of drugs in public places. For these seven items, Pate and Skogan reported an alpha of .85; the TNT research obtained alphas of .72 for the Pre-TNT samples (N=286) and .70 for the Post-TNT/Follow-up samples (N=341).

In their survey, Pate and Skogan also included six items that could have been included in an area social disorder scale, but which they did not use because the programs in Newark and Houston did not address the problems. Five of these items were included in the TNT household survey questionnaire: Respondents were asked about truancy, pornographic movie theaters and bookshops, prostitution, beggars, and children being bothered on their way to school. When these questions were included, alphas for the area social disorder scale increased slightly to .80 and .79. (Pate and Skogan did not report reliability analyses with the additional items.) The sixth of these items ("The wrong kind of people moving into the neighborhood") was included in Vera's original version of the household survey instrument, but was dropped after the questionnaire was pre-tested, for the reasons noted above.

Two scales for measuring attitudes toward the police were included in the survey: *Police Aggression* and *Police Service*. The *Police Aggression* scale contains two items, each of which is answered on a three-point scale, with responses ranging from "no problem" (1) to "big problem" (3). Respondents were asked about police stopping too many people in the area without a good reason and police being too tough on the people they stop. This scale was highly reliable, producing alphas of .80 (Pre-TNT, N=249) and .85 (Post-TNT/Follow-up, N=293). These reliabilities were substantially higher than the .66 reported by Pate and Skogan (1985). The *Police Service* scale, with five items, produced even higher reliabilities: .86 for the Pre-TNT sample (N=257) and .90 for the Post-TNT/Follow-up sample (N=240). Pate and Skogan reported an alpha of .86 for a scale containing the same five items plus one additional item which, as described above, had been omitted from the Vera survey instrument through clerical error. The five items asked respondents how good a job the police are doing in crime prevention, how well

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<sup>10</sup> Pate and Skogan included three of the four items in their computation of the scale. The item about abandoned cars was included in the TNT research because it was a problem in at least one of the research areas.

they do in helping crime victims, and how polite, helpful, and fair they are.

The survey included two scales that measure fear of crime: a four-item scale to measure *Fear of Personal Victimization* and a two-item scale to measure *Worry Regarding Property Crime Victimization*. To measure fear of crime against the person, respondents were asked how safe they would feel being outside, alone, in the area at night (answered on a 4-point scale, from very unsafe to very safe). They were also asked whether there was any place in the area they would be afraid to go either during the day or at night (dichotomous). Two questions explored how worried respondents were about specific types of crime while outside in the area: robbery and assault, both answered on 3-point scales. The *Fear of Personal Victimization* scale produced alphas of .77 (Pre-TNT, N=325) and .78 (Post-TNT/Follow-up, N=365), which were quite similar to the .72 reported by Pate and Skogan (1985). The scale measuring fear of property crime contained two items, both measured on a three point scale (from not at all worried to very worried); the property crimes included in this scale were burglary and car theft (or car vandalization). The alphas for this scale were substantially lower than the alphas for the *Fear of Personal Victimization* scale: .57 for the Pre-TNT sample (N=194) and .54 for the Post-TNT/Follow-up sample (N=204).<sup>11</sup> This is not surprising, however, because the property crime scale is comprised of only two items and the personal crime scale contains five. (Pate and Skogan report a similar level of reliability — alpha = .60.)

The survey also included two scales that measured respondents' perceptions of crime in the area. A three-item scale measuring *Perceived Area Property Crime* asked respondents

how big they thought these problems were in the area: household burglary, cars being vandalized, and car theft. This scale produced good reliabilities: .73 (Pre-TNT, N=298) and .81 (Post-TNT/Follow-up, N=330), compared to the .77 reported by Pate and Skogan. Another three items were used to measure *Perceived Area Personal Crime*. On the same 3-point scale, respondents were asked how big they thought these problems were in the area: people being attacked or beaten up, people being robbed, and rape (or other sexual attack). Pate and Skogan reported an alpha of .73, similar to the alpha found for the Pre-TNT sample (.67, N=280). The Post-TNT/Follow-up data produced a substantially lower alpha (.49, N=339), and the data provide no clues as to why.

The final scale, measuring *Defensive Behaviors*, uses four items, each scored to range between 0 and 1.<sup>12</sup> The first three of these refer to the *last time* the respondent went out after dark in the area, and ask whether he or she went with someone else to avoid crime; stayed away from certain streets or areas to avoid crime; or stayed away from certain types of people to avoid crime. The fourth question asks, "In general, how often do you avoid going out after dark in this area because of crime?" This scale produced acceptable reliabilities — .72 (Pre-TNT, N=337) and .77 (Post-TNT/Follow-up, N=390) — which were comparable to the .74 found by Pate and Skogan.

8. *Scale Scoring*. All scale scores were computed by summing the constituent items. If a respondent was missing data on one or more items of a scale, the mean of the respondent's other values on that scale was substituted for the missing values. However, if the scale consisted of only two or three

<sup>11</sup> The sample sizes for this scale are substantially smaller than those for the other scales, because the scale measuring respondents' worry about property crime includes an item about theft or damage to the respondent's car, and many respondents — indeed, many who live in New York City do not own cars. Many respondents were unable to respond to this item at all, and any respondent who did not answer both items on the scale was excluded from the reliability analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Three of the four questions may be answered, "yes," "no," or "never go out." Pate and Skogan's analysis (1985) is that the response "never go out" should be scored as "yes," since these questions are designed to measure defensive behaviors, and people who say they never go out (presumably because it's too dangerous) should be classified as "precaution takers." The fourth question had four response categories which were recoded to range between 0 and 1.

items, data had to be present on all items or the scale score was considered missing. For a four- or five-item scale, one item could be missing (and the mean of the other four items would be substituted for that item). Data could be missing for two items on a seven-item scale and for four on a 12-item scale.

## B. The Panel Interviews

Vera researchers also conducted intensive, in-depth “panel” interviews with community leaders, residents and business people in each of the research areas. (“Community leaders” were community board members, tenant and block association leaders, police-community council members, and local religious leaders.) Panel interviews are semi-structured, relatively lengthy interviews conducted *with the same respondents* on at least two occasions during a research period.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of these panel interviews was essentially the same as the purpose of the household survey — to determine changes occurring in people’s perceptions or behavior as a result of TNT. The content of the panel interviews was also similar to the household survey. The interview schedule contained questions about respondents’ perceptions of crime, disorder, and the quality of life in their communities; how safe they thought their community was; police responses to the drug

problem; their knowledge of TNT; and TNT’s effects on drug trafficking and the quality of life in their communities.

A total of 74 interviews were conducted for the panel portion of the research.<sup>14</sup> Most of the thirty-five panel respondents in the TNT study precincts (the 70th and 67th precincts) were interviewed twice — once while TNT was deployed in the precinct and once after it left.<sup>15</sup> The seventeen panel respondents in the comparison precinct (the 71st Precinct) were interviewed once. Panel interviewing began in January 1990, a month after TNT moved into the 70th Precinct, and the first wave was completed in both study precincts while TNT was still deployed in the precincts’ target areas (January - April, 1990). Post-TNT panel interviews were conducted in the target precincts between April and August, 1990.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The original research design called for eight to ten panel interviews per precinct, per wave. The number of respondents in the panels was increased, when it became apparent that the number of household survey interviews would be lower than anticipated.

<sup>15</sup> The majority (81%) of respondents who participated in the first wave of panel interviews also participated in the Post-TNT wave. As in all panel studies, there was some attrition among respondents (“panel mortality”). One respondent in the 70th Precinct, for example, refused to participate in the Post-TNT interview because his son had been arrested by TNT the day after Vera researchers interviewed him the first time. This respondent had revealed, during his first interview, that his son was a crack user, and he implied that Vera researchers had supplied the police with information leading to his son’s arrest. Other panel respondents moved or left their jobs in the area during the three months between the two waves of interviewing. Overall, panel mortality was relatively low because most respondents were long-time residents, or were community leaders who were unlikely to leave.

<sup>16</sup> Before being interviewed, all respondents were given an informed consent protocol. The protocol explained the purpose of the research, the sources of its funding, the content of the requested interview, and assurances that all data would be confidential and that respondents’ names (and any other specific information that might identify them) would not be used in any report or made known to anyone outside of the Vera research staff.

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<sup>13</sup> The panel interviews were standardized “scheduled” interviews. That is, they were structured so that all respondents were asked the same basic questions — questions sufficiently open-ended for respondents to be free to introduce unanticipated commentary, issues, and assessments. Certain core questions were common to both interview schedules (one administered during TNT deployment in the area and one administered post-TNT). For example, panel respondents who were aware of TNT’s presence, were asked on both schedules to assess how effective TNT was in reducing the overall amount of drug dealing and buying in their communities.

Most interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes and were tape recorded with the consent of the respondents. In this report, all quotations from panel respondents are verbatim accounts. (Two respondents refused to be recorded; when they were interviewed, notes were made by a second member of the research staff.)

Across the three research areas, panel respondents averaged 47 years old, and 57% were male. African Americans made up 44% of the sample; another 35% were white; 15% were Caribbean; and 6% were Latino. Most of the respondents lived in the research areas (65%) and had lived there an average of 17.5 years; other respondents worked in the research areas on a daily basis (e.g., merchants and community organizers). Some panel respondents lived outside the research areas, but were selected for one or another specific reason: First, when the process analysis and the ethnographic data on the 70th Precinct TNT target area suggested that TNT had made significant progress along a certain block on the periphery of the research area, the panel interview staff made an effort to recruit respondents along that block. Second, the process analysis and the ethnographic data coming from the 67th Precinct suggested TNT was making little progress in the research area because the drug market was largely confined to apartment houses rather than operating on the street. As TNT was principally designed to counter outdoor street drug markets, the limitation on its potential effectiveness in the 67th Precinct research area led panel interview staff to seek out respondents in adjacent parts of the 67th Precinct's TNT target area (mostly to the east of the research area), where TNT had been far more active.

Selecting some panel respondents from outside the formal research area, but from within the TNT target areas of which the research areas were part, proved useful in examining whether general perceptions of those living or working in the research areas were unique. As it turned out, panel respondents had remarkably uniform perceptions and assessments of TNT, no matter where they lived or worked.

The original research design also called for panel interviews of local youths. To help recruit youths, the panel interview staff had hoped to rely on ethnographic informants and on the community leaders selected for panel interview. Community leaders and ethnographic informants who attempted to recruit for the panel from the 15- to 19-year-old age group reported that parents feared partici-

pation might compromise their children's safety.<sup>17</sup> One well-known tenant association leader in the 70th Precinct (herself a panel respondent), approached a number of parents, none of whom agreed to allow their teenaged children to be interviewed. Despite Vera's guarantee that the interviews would be completely confidential and that, if a respondent chose, the interviews could be conducted away from home and neighborhood, only four from that age group agreed to be interviewed.<sup>18</sup>

Community leaders and research area residents were not selected randomly for panel interviews.<sup>19</sup> They were identified from

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17 The household survey interview staff also attempted to recruit youths for panel interviews but were unsuccessful. Parents generally objected, despite the \$20 offered to youths for each hour-long panel interview, because they feared for their children's safety. Youth Officers in the 70th and 67th precincts were also asked to identify teenagers for potential panel interviews, but were able to find only two youths who would agree to an interview.

18 All community leaders who agreed to help recruit youths for the panel portion of the research insisted that they ask the parents' permission before speaking to their children about the project. In almost all cases, community leaders reported that parents rejected their requests.

19 Whether or not the perceptions and assessments reported in the panel interviews reflect a consensus of the larger Flatbush and Crown Heights communities, they are significant at least because so many of the respondents hold positions of influence and leadership within their respective communities. Many panel respondents maintained close working relationships with their police precincts (e.g., as community board members or as precinct-community council members). In addition, a conscious attempt was made to include on each panel a broad sample of the many "voices" that characterize each of the target precincts. The perceptions of this diverse panel ought to yield insights into each community's structure and its assessment of police services, including TNT.

In a recent Vera research inquiry into New York City's Community Patrol Officer Program (CPOP), the panel interview method was found useful to understanding the community perception of a police program, because community leaders were reasonably knowledgeable about their areas, the problems there, and police responses to those problems. The CPOP study also found that com-

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four major sources: (1) various lists of prominent persons in the research precincts; (2) efforts by household survey staff to identify long-term residents; (3) key informants; and (4) ethnographic staff.

All panel interviews were transcribed (from tape or, for two respondents, from notes) into a free-form text database manager (*askSam*), and were subjected to a standardized coding procedure. In this procedure, the "codes" are categories for analysis, developed from the research questions or hypotheses, which serve as organizing devices to facilitate quick retrieval of all interview data relating to those research questions or hypotheses. This systematic method of coding, storing and retrieving interview data made it possible to determine, for example, whether a consensus existed among a precinct's community leaders and research area's residents about the effectiveness of TNT in reducing street-level drug traffic, or about whether they thought fear diminished during the period of TNT deployment.

Systematic coding of the panel interview data revealed patterns, both within and across research areas, and thus functioned much like cluster-analytic and factor-analytic devices used in quantitative analysis.<sup>20</sup> This method for analysis of qualitative data from the panel interviews also closely parallels the method leading to "theoretical saturation" suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

## II. Process Analysis: Implementation

### A. Interviews and Observations

Research staff working on the process analysis made weekly trips to TNT headquarters at the Brooklyn South Narcotics Borough offices from December 1989 through October 1990 to gather statistical data about TNT and to conduct interviews with TNT staff. In the early weeks of the research, staff

conducted formal structured interviews with TNT investigators, undercover officers and TNT supervisors to help explain how TNT operated, the perceived characteristics of target areas, why officers were drawn to the TNT approach, how they perceived the goals of the unit, and how effective they believed it could be in target precincts. In later months, research staff conducted unstructured interviews with TNT personnel (line officers, supervisors and command staff working both in the TNT modules and in the experimental 20-officer TNT uniformed component deployed in the 70th Precinct after TNT enforcement moved to the 67th Precinct); these interviews explored emerging implementation issues, differences between various TNT target areas, and the influence of local precinct characteristics on TNT's effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> Over the course of this period, research staff conducted a total of 40 interviews (both structured and unstructured) with TNT staff alone. These interviews were supplemented with informal conversations with TNT personnel during the course of routine data collection.

During this period, research staff also conducted interviews with other NYPD personnel both in the Brooklyn South Narcotics Borough and in precincts that were the subject of the research. Research staff spoke with commanders of the Narcotics District, with Narcotics District personnel working in research areas, with members of the NITRO (Narcotics Investigation Tracking Recidivist Offenders) unit, with commanding officers of the study precincts, with community affairs officers in those precincts and with members of special units (Street Narcotics Enforcement Unit, SNEU; Community Patrol Officer Program, CPOP) in those precincts. As a group, these interviews provided information on other types of narcotics enforcement in target areas, interactions between TNT and other branches of the

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munity leaders were more likely than randomly selected respondents to provide useful insight into police interventions (McElroy *et al.*, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion of this point, see Miles and Huberman (1984).

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<sup>21</sup> Research staff also interviewed the fiscal officer of TNT and other administrative staff, to gain a fuller understanding of how the unit operated, fiscal procedures for undercover buy-and-bust operations, the data maintained by the unit, and the unit's involvement with inter-agency activities.

Department, the nature of drug and crime conditions within target precincts and the perceived effects of TNT on those conditions.

Research staff rode with TNT modules in the research areas on five occasions. These “ride-alongs” provided opportunities to observe street-level buy-and-bust activity first hand, to watch the car confiscation module in action, to see how community residents responded to visible TNT enforcement activity and to hold extended conversations with TNT staff (lieutenants, sergeants and line officers) about TNT strategies and particular locations targeted by TNT.

Research staff also attended six TNT community meetings in target areas. In addition to meetings announcing the arrival and departure of TNT in the 70th and 67th precincts, research staff went to the first TNT community meeting in Brooklyn South — held in the 72nd Precinct (the first Brooklyn South TNT precinct) shortly before the unit began operations there.

Finally, research staff conducted interviews with staff at other agencies involved in TNT’s inter-agency consortium. These interviews were conducted because TNT personnel in Brooklyn South made relatively little use of the inter-agency component of TNT. Some of the more active agencies in that consortium (e.g., the Department of Housing Preservation, HPD) had little role to play in Brooklyn South research precincts, because there was relatively little city-owned property in these areas. NYPD staff involved with the inter-agency consortium suggested that researchers speak to staff at a few city agencies that were most active in that consortium in areas of the city where the inter-agency approach had proved effective in addressing drug conditions. Based on the recommendations of Department officials, research staff focused these interviews on personnel who were active in the inter-agency consortium from HPD, the Department of Consumer Affairs, and the Taxi and Limousine Commission.

## B. Statistical Record Data

Research staff gathered data available at TNT headquarters on the number and type of arrests and property seizures made by the TNT unit, on routine enforcement activities and on drug purchases made by TNT under-

cover officers during buy-and-bust operations. These data provide information on the characteristics of individuals arrested by TNT, the nature of those arrests, arrest locations, the nature of TNT enforcement attempts at particular locations, the success or failure of those attempts, the kinds of drugs purchased in undercover buy actions, and the price and weight of those drugs.

The dataset on TNT enforcement activity was drawn from a variety of sources. Each week, TNT staff provided Vera researchers with a list of all arrests made in the past week, including information on the demographic characteristics of those arrested, charge type, drug type, date, street address and locale (indoor and outdoor arrest locations).

Vera staff also gathered data each week on enforcement activities in target areas from the Daily Activity Reports (DARs) produced by TNT staff. These documents, essentially time sheets, provide information on the location and nature of all narcotics enforcement attempts (undercover buy and bust, warrant buys, observation, other), the success or failure of those attempts and the amount of time spent on each action.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Each TNT officer produces a DAR, describing how time was spent on each day worked. On days when TNT modules are in the field, the DARs produced by each member of a module are virtually identical, outlining where the team went and what was accomplished. Because of this similarity, and because so many DARs are produced, Vera researchers selected a sample of DARs designed to represent the activity of all modules except the car confiscation team. To construct this sample, research staff selected one officer from each enforcement module (N=13) and gathered information from that officer’s DARs every week. DAR data on “down” days (in TNT headquarters, court days) was excluded, as was information on maintenance activity in areas that were not research target areas (e.g., the 72nd Precinct).

The resultant sample does not provide a precise count of all TNT enforcement attempts in the 70th Precinct. When there were not enough undercovers available (a frequent occurrence in the early months of the research), modules often worked together. In these instances, the sample of DARS produced by module representatives yielded

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The researchers also gathered information from the TNT Undercover Buy Book, a log of all purchases made by TNT. This log contained information on the cost of purchased drugs, the amount of buy money recovered, the location of the buy, the type of drug purchased, the number of units (vials, envelopes) purchased and lab information on the weight of the purchased drugs.

Together, these data sets permit a composite description of TNT activity in the target area. In addition to the data supplied by TNT, the researchers gathered Departmental data on arrests made by the Narcotics District staff and on the volume of narcotics complaints in the 13 Brooklyn South precincts; on the disposition of car confiscations in the 70th Precinct; on the volume of complaints about other types of crime before and after the TNT intervention in both target precincts and in Brooklyn South as a whole; and on the type and disposition of complaints made to the Internal Affairs Division (IAD) about TNT staff in Brooklyn South during the research period. Research staff also gathered data from New York City's Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) on the disposition arrests made by TNT in the first 90 days in the 70th Precinct to provide a review of how seriously TNT arrests were treated by the courts.

### III. The Ethnographic Research

From October 16, 1989 through September 28, 1990, Vera ethnographers conducted fieldwork in the three study precincts. The ethnographic team (described in more detail below) maintained a steady field presence in each study precinct, took detailed fieldnotes which recorded their daily obser-

vations and invited dozens of street-level drug distributors and several hundred drug users to participate in research interviews. Whenever possible, the ethnographic team developed working relationships with several informants at each of the locations they targeted for intensive ethnographic study. Many informants were willing to speak freely with the ethnographers about their own circumstances and about conditions and changes in the conditions of the street-level drug market; however, they were often reluctant to speak "on the record" — that is, conduct a tape-recorded interview, even with assurances of anonymity.

In addition to maintaining daily fieldnotes of their observations, the ethnographic team conducted 99 interviews with their informants — 49 with distributors and 50 with users. The respondents were paid \$20 for being interviewed. Some precincts were better represented than others (70th Precinct, 59 interviews; 67th Precinct, 30; 71st Precinct, 10). The reasons for the unequal distribution of interviews are explained below and in Chapter Four, as are the ways in which the ethnographic team attempted to compensate for this uneven distribution of inquiry across the three study precincts.

Perhaps the most difficult problem facing the ethnographers were the time constraints created by the TNT implementation plan in Brooklyn South and the research design. In most anthropological research a researcher is afforded a period of time to become acclimated to the field. This entry period often lasts several months before the researcher is comfortable enough to begin collecting data other than general descriptive information. In particular, ethnographers often take several months to select a "main informant." For the TNT research, however, data collection began on October 16, 1989 — a mere seven weeks before TNT was scheduled to begin enforcement action in the first study precinct, and it had not yet been decided which precinct that would be. Thus, the ethnographic team not only had to become comfortable with the various research sites by December 5 (when TNT started in the 70th Precinct), but also had to use these few weeks to establish a "baseline" of information about street-level drug markets in all study precincts, to be able

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duplicate data on enforcement attempts for a given day. In addition, when a sampled officer was out on an enforcement day, the sample would miss information on that module's enforcement.

Although the DAR sample does not precisely reflect the total number of individual TNT actions, it does provide a descriptive representation of the kinds of actions engaged in by TNT modules. It also permits analysis of changes in TNT's ability to conduct successful buy-and-bust operations over the course of the intervention. (See Chapter Three.)

to assess whether any changes in market conditions took place during or after the TNT enforcement periods.

To compensate for a relative shortness of time before the first TNT enforcement period would start, ethnographers were employed whose primary strengths included intimate knowledge of street-level drug markets in central Brooklyn — especially in the three study precincts — developed over a substantial period of time. In addition to a full-time staff of three ethnographers, the Project made use of several consultants who helped the ethnographic team focus its efforts efficiently and provided quick entree into several sites suitable for intensive study,<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Ansley Hamid, an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and author of several papers on drug markets in central Brooklyn, provided technical assistance and guidance to the Vera ethnographic researchers, lending conceptual clarity to the categories of analysis that were adopted by the ethnographic team. It was with Dr. Hamid's guidance, in the early stages of data collection, that the ethnographic team adopted the concept of drug "markets" as the proper unit of analysis for their study. Dr. Hamid also helped the ethnographers focus their inquiry by sharing his detailed knowledge of the three study precincts — he lived in the 70th and 67th precincts between 1979 and 1987 and still has family living in the 70th and 71st precincts.

Carl Cesvette's consultancy to the ethnographic team was similarly helpful. He lived in the 67th precinct, had worked as an ethnographer on several of the Vera Institute's previous research projects, and his detailed knowledge of drug markets in his section of the 67th precinct, together with his training and experience in anthropological fieldwork, helped the Vera ethnographers pursue the TNT research more efficiently.

The Vera ethnographic team employed three other consultants: Earl Beddoe, Benjamin Harry and Clinton Abbott. Mr. Beddoe, a Vietnam veteran and former drug distributor in central Brooklyn, was instrumental in getting the ethnographic team access to some of the networks of drug distributors and users in the study precincts of which the team had been unaware or had been unable to penetrate. Mr. Harry, a student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Mr. Abbott, a former Corrections Officer, have lived in

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especially in the 67th and 71st precincts which were less intensively studied than the 70th Precinct. The combination of full-time ethnographers who had prior knowledge of local drug markets and the use of consultants who provided access to particular sets of distributors and users in specific drug market locations broadened and deepened the scope of ethnographic research within the limited time imposed by the TNT implementation plan and research design.

The original research design envisioned ethnographic data collection occurring simultaneously in the three study precincts, with each member of the ethnographic team developing particular research sites in separate precincts. Although the team maintained a research presence in all three study precincts throughout the duration of the project, before the first intervention period began it was decided that the majority of the team's time would be spent in the precinct that was soon to be the first target of the TNT. The decision to concentrate on one precinct at a time was made for two reasons. First, the team felt that, to strengthen the validity of the pre-TNT baseline data from each precinct, it was necessary to maintain a heavy research presence in the target precincts several weeks prior to each respective intervention. This permitted the ethnographic team to conduct a more thorough review of a precinct's street-level drug markets and to develop several specific study sites, which would be visited regularly throughout the intervention period. Second, the team felt that it was important to develop several study sites, each with its own set of ethnographic informants, as a fail-safe mechanism in the event that one or more of the study sites became inaccessible to the research team (*e.g.*, if all informants were arrested or if researchers were mistaken for members of TNT). This approach was designed to compensate for what was expected to be a high rate of attrition among

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the 71st precinct for many years and provided the ethnographic team valuable information about and contacts with drug distributors and users there.

respondents active in the markets targeted by TNT (which did, in fact, occur).<sup>24</sup>

Concentrating efforts on one precinct at a time also helped the team cross-validate the data. The team made heavy use of two techniques to insure the accuracy and validity of the ethnographic data: Every statement given by an informant that was considered important was double-checked by asking at least two other informants to comment on its validity and accuracy. The statements of these three informants were then compared and matched against observations made by members of the ethnographic team — even twice-validated stories of field informants were not automatically accepted.

The second way in which the ethnographic team sought to insure the accuracy and validity of their data was by cross-checking each others' observations. In general, the ethnographic team worked in pairs, and some amount of time was spent by

each pair cross-checking each others' observations and re-interviewing informants for consistencies, inconsistencies or outright fabrications. There were several reasons for working in pairs. First, team members felt that it was safer to do so. Even though members of the team were familiar with the various research locations, they did not know everyone. Given the climate of violence in these areas, the team decided at an early stage that working in pairs was necessary to ensure safety. Second, working in pairs also offered some unanticipated methodological advantages. Rather than relying on weekly staff meetings to digest material collected over several days, this method allowed for much quicker interpretation of raw data and the generation of new hypotheses. Team members also reported that the presence of two researchers allowed for a more objective and immediate assessment of the truthfulness of informants' responses.

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<sup>24</sup> The first two weeks of fieldwork were spent surveying the three study precincts to determine where street-level drug market "hot spots" were located and to determine appropriate research areas in which both the ethnographic and survey components would be concentrated. Each precinct had one research target area. Within these areas, the ethnographic team chose several locations where groups of drug distributors and consumers would be engaged and developed into ethnographic informants. In the 70th and 67th precincts, three sites were developed inside the formal research area and one outside it. In the 67th Precinct, two of these locations were within the formal research area and two were outside. In the 71st Precinct, two were in the formal research area and one outside.



Appendix B

**MAPS OF THE TNT TARGET AREAS  
IN THE STUDY PRECINCTS  
AND  
THE TNT RESEARCH AREAS**





# NEW YORK CITY

■ TNT Research Precincts

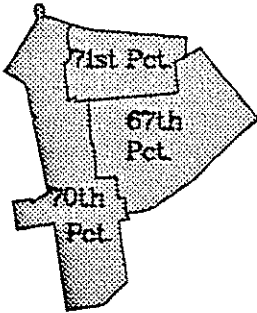
Bronx

Manhattan

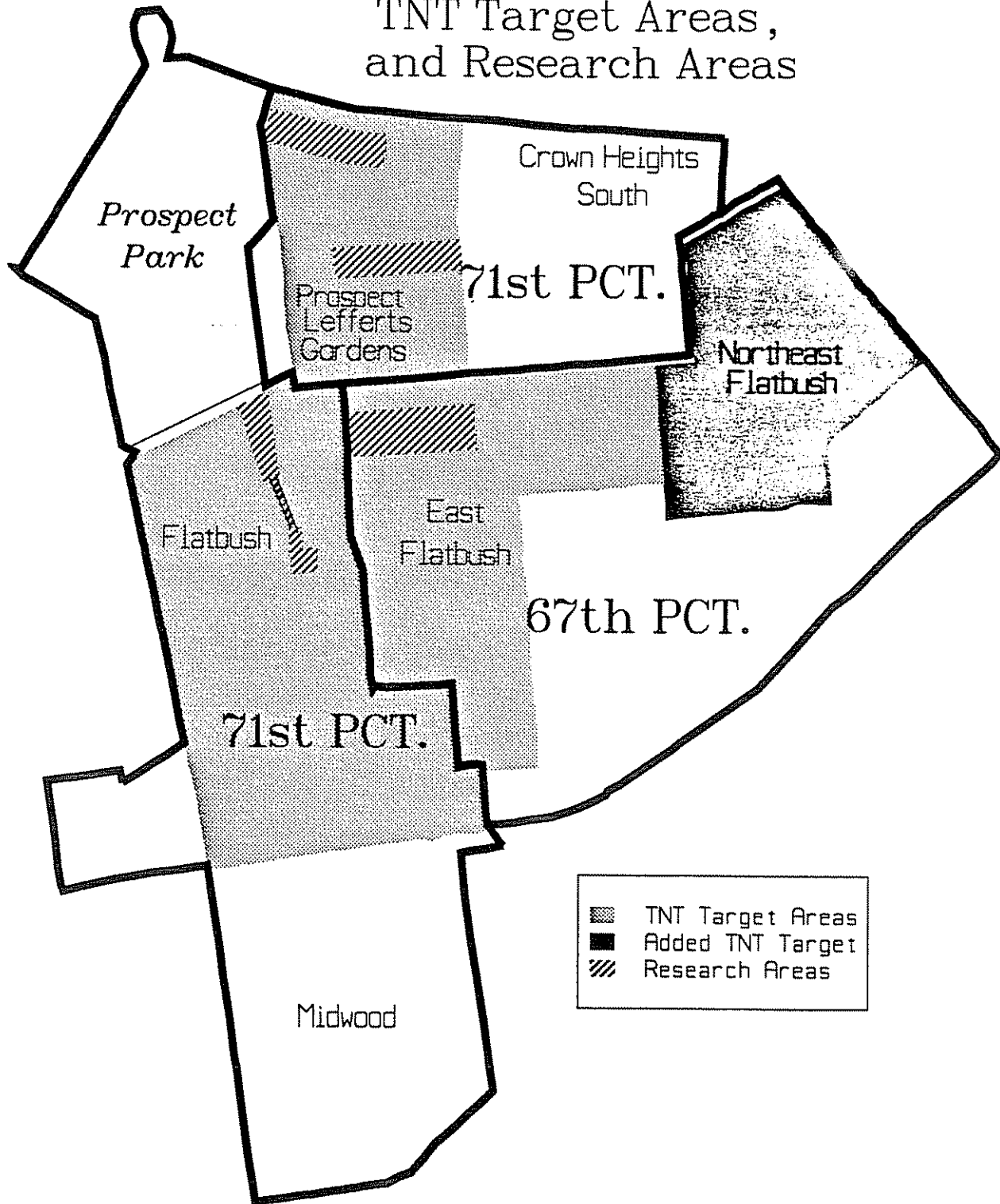
Queens

Brooklyn

Staten  
Island



# The Research Precincts, TNT Target Areas, and Research Areas



## Appendix C

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM OUTCOMES IN TNT ARRESTS

#### I. Introduction — The 70th Precinct Sample

This appendix presents and analyzes the dispositions reached in the criminal justice system, for TNT arrests made in the 70th Precinct during the 90-day enforcement period there. Demographic data about those arrested, and details about the charges, the types of drugs, and the date and location of the arrests are described briefly in this text, but were detailed in Vera's *Interim Report* on the TNT research (November 20, 1990). Here, the focus is on the court dispositions and the sentences meted out. At the end of this appendix, data are presented on the arrests made by the 20-officer experimental TNT uniformed component deployed in the 70th Precinct during the "maintenance period" that followed the 90-day enforcement period (see Chapter 3).

The researchers were able to collect basic descriptive data on 973 of the 1,011 TNT arrests made during the enforcement period. From this sample, arrests with incomplete arrest numbers, and arrests for summonsable offenses were dropped in order to create a sample for dispositional analysis. That left 882 arrests, for which the New York City Criminal Justice Agency was able to provide court processing data on 817.<sup>1</sup> In addition, docket information was missing in one case and the prosecutor declined prosecution in eight.

Thus, there were a total of 808 arraigned cases available for analyses of court processing and outcome, from the original 70th Precinct TNT arrest sample.

The demographic profile of defendants in the 808 cases in this court processing sample was the same as the profile of the full sample of 973 arrests for which basic descriptive data were available. For the 808, some additional background information was obtained from CJA interview records and from criminal history checks: Of the 684 defendants for whom employment status was shown on the CJA records, 38% (259) were reported employed at the time of arrest. Prior criminal record data were available on 710, and showed that over three-fifths (441) had not been previously convicted of any crime (including 27% [195] who had no record of prior arrest). Thirty percent (211) had at least one prior misdemeanor conviction (and 16% [115] had two or more misdemeanor convictions). Prior felony convictions were recorded against 22% (154) of the defendants (and 6% [44] had been convicted of a felony on two or more occasions).

Although the full sample and the 808 cases in the analytic sample were equivalent demographically, there were notable differences in the charges. While misdemeanors accounted for 55% of all TNT arrests in the 70th Precinct, only 49% of the 808 cases analyzed here were commenced by misdemeanor arrest. Similarly, arrests for drug possession comprised 51% of all the arrests, but only 46% of the analytic sample. These differences arose because the arrests that were dropped in constructing the analytic sample, for the reasons given above, tended to be arrests for possession of marijuana (124 cases in the full sample and only 12 in the analytic sample). The wide use of summons for possession of marijuana accounts for their absence from the CJA case processing database. With the decrease in marijuana cases, proportionately more crack cases remained in this sample, accounting for 81% of all charges (up from 74%), and 86% of all possession charges (up from 69%).

A strong relationship observed between arrest charge severity (felony vs. misdemeanor) and charge type (sale vs. possession) remained in the analytic sample. In almost nine in ten of the felony cases (89%, 369 of 415), the most serious charge was for a drug sale, while drug possession was the top charge in nearly as high a proportion of the misdemeanor cases (85%, 332 of 393). Given the

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 65 cases for which CJA data were not available, 13 were juvenile arrests and 52 simply could not be matched with any records in the CJA database, despite use of all the various identifiers recorded in TNT files.

strong association between these two variables, charge type was omitted from further analyses; the results that would be found if charge type were used in the analysis that follows would parallel those obtained for charge severity.

Additional analyses of arrest charges were performed, using the criminal history information obtained from the CJA database. As anticipated, defendants with felony conviction histories were about three times more likely to be charged, on the TNT arrest, with a felony than a misdemeanor (74% of these arrests were on felony charges and 26% were on misdemeanor charges). All other defendants (those with no prior arrests, no prior convictions, or prior misdemeanor convictions only) were fairly equally distributed between felony and misdemeanor charges as the top charges on their TNT arrests. While there was little to suggest a relationship between prior criminal history and type of drug for which the TNT arrest was made, powder cocaine and marijuana arrests were slightly more prevalent among defendants with less prior involvement in the criminal justice system (3% of those with prior felony convictions, but 10% of those with no previous arrests or convictions).

## II. Criminal Court Processing, Dispositions and Sentences

*Criminal Court Arraignment.* Of the 808 TNT arrests in this sample, drug offenses were the most serious affidavit charges in 96% (778). Two categories accounted for 84% of these affidavit charges; for 340 (42%), the most serious charge was a B-level felony sale of narcotics (PL 220.39), and virtually the same number (339, 42%) faced A-level misdemeanor possession of narcotics (PL 220.03) as the most serious charge. In forty-three cases (5%), A-level misdemeanor sale of marijuana was the most serious charge (PL 221.40), and in 21 cases (3%) it was B-level felony possession of narcotics (PL 220.16). No other charge category accounted for more than 1% of the affidavit charges.

Over one-third of the cases in this sample (299, or 37%) were disposed at arraignment, including 248 (30% of the defendants) who entered guilty pleas at that first appearance, and 51 (6%) whose cases were adjourned in contemplation of dismissal (ACD). No outright dismissals were recorded at arraignment. This 37% arraignment disposition rate is considerably higher than previously reported, for other TNT samples (*e.g.*, dispositions were reached at arraignment in 8% of a CJA sample of 1988 Queens TNT arrests [Solomon, 1989]), and it appears attributable to the unusually high number of misdemeanor (and possession) cases among 70th Precinct TNT arrests. But, in keeping with previous TNT research, misdemeanor (and possession) cases in the 70th Precinct sample were the ones most likely to be disposed at arraignment (270 of 393 a 69% arraignment disposition rate), while nearly all felony level arrests (and arrests for drug sale) were continued (393 of 415, 95%).<sup>2</sup>

Bail was set in 318 (62%) of the 509 arrests continued past Criminal Court arraignment, and all but five of the defendants facing bail were unable, at arraignment, to post the cash (or bond) in the amount set. The lowest dollar amount of cash or bond required ranged from \$1 to \$200,000, with a median of \$1,500. The most common bail amounts were \$500 (14%), \$1,000 (19%), \$2,500 (15%) and \$5,000 (12%). In nearly all of the continued cases in which bail was not set the defendant was released on recognizance (181, 35% of continued cases). Those who had been arrested for misdemeanors (or

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<sup>2</sup> Given the relationships noted above between charge severity (felony or misdemeanor), drug type, and criminal history, it is not surprising that arraignment disposition is also related to the latter two variables. Arrests for marijuana sale and possession, for example, were more likely to be disposed at arraignment: of the 64 marijuana cases, 75% were disposed at arraignment, compared to about one-third of the arrests involving crack or cocaine. This pattern is consistent with patterns found in earlier studies of TNT case processing. In addition, defendants with felony conviction histories were roughly half as likely as those with less serious criminal records to have their arrests disposed at arraignment. These relationships between drug type and criminal history on the one hand, and arraignment disposition rates on the other, hold true for both the felony- and the misdemeanor-level cases, indicating that the impacts are additive, not interactive.

for drug possession) were more than twice as likely to be ROR'd at arraignment (70%) than those facing felony charges or charged with drug sale (29% ROR'd). When cases involving drugs other than crack were continued past arraignment, they had higher ROR rates (ranging from 53% for powder cocaine to 73% for marijuana); 35% of the 433 defendants in continued cases involving crack were ROR'd. Criminal history was also related to arraignment release, as about two-thirds of those with no prior arrests were ROR'd while ROR was granted to less than one-third of those with prior arrest histories.

*Criminal Court Dispositions.* Seventy percent (567) of the 808 70th Precinct TNT arrests in the court processing sample reached or were destined to reach final disposition in the Criminal Court. (Five cases were still pending in Criminal Court at the time of data collection [1%], and an arrest warrant was outstanding in 36 cases at that time [6%.]) Conviction was achieved in 383 (73%) of these 526 final Criminal Court dispositions. Eighty-six were ACDs (16%) and 57 (11%) were dismissals. (ACDs and dismissals are combined in the dispositional analyses below).

Although no case in this TNT sample was arraigned on a disorderly conduct charge (PL 240.20), disorderly conduct was the most serious charge by the time over one-third of the sample reached Criminal Court disposition (281 cases, or 35% of the sample, including the Criminal Court dispositions that were transfers to the Supreme Court for further processing). Thus, while 97% of the 70th Precinct TNT arrests were for drug sale or possession, this proportion dropped to 60% by Criminal Court disposition. About one Criminal Court disposition in five (154, 19%) was disposed as A-level misdemeanor narcotic sales (PL 220.03). Slightly more (190, 24%) carried a B-level felony narcotics charge (PL 220.39) at their final stage in the Criminal Court, and these were transferred to Supreme Court for further processing. Forty-two (5%) cases reached the final stage of Criminal Court process carrying attempted C-level felony narcotic sale charges (PL 110/220.39), these were also transferred to Supreme Court. No other charge was observed in more than 2% of the Criminal Court dispositions.

Criminal Court dispositions did vary with the severity of the original TNT arrest charge. About three-fourths (74%) of the cases initially classified as misdemeanors resulted in Criminal Court convictions. Of the 415 cases originally charged as felonies, 174 (42%) were finally disposed in Criminal Court, and just over half (89, 51%) of these cases resulted in (misdemeanor) convictions. As the felony cases not transferred to Supreme Court are bound to be "weaker" from a prosecutorial perspective, they are dismissed in Criminal Court at nearly twice the rate of cases originally classified as misdemeanors. Similarly, dismissal was more common among Criminal Court dispositions at both ends of the criminal history continuum: Dismissal rates in cases against defendants with prior felony convictions and against defendants with no prior arrest record were quite similar 37% and 36%, respectively. Again, when a defendant carrying a serious prior criminal record is not taken to Supreme Court, it is likely to be because the prosecution believes the case is relatively weak. Thus, less than 20% of the cases disposed in Criminal Court were dismissed when the defendant had a prior arrest but no conviction or when the defendant had a misdemeanor conviction but no felony conviction.

*Criminal Court Sentences.* Criminal Court sentencing information was available on 378 of the 383 Criminal Court convictions. (Sentencing was pending in five of Criminal Court convictions cases at the time of data collection). Just under half (171 of 378, 45%) of those who were sentenced got a fine with a jail alternative; and a fine was the sole sanction in four cases. Fine amounts ranged from \$10 to \$500, with three-fourths set at \$50 (39%), \$100 (23%), or \$150 (13%). About a quarter of those convicted were sentenced to conditional discharge (101), and a similar number (95) got jail. Nearly two-thirds of the jail sentences (61 or 64%) were for "time served;" the rest ranged from 5 to 90 days, with an average sentence length of 18 days and a median of 10 days.

A fine or a fine combined with a jail alternative was imposed in over half (53%) the cases resulting in conviction where the original charge was a misdemeanor; sentences in the remaining misdemeanor cases that resulted in conviction were split evenly between conditional discharges (24%) and imprisonment (22%). Fines were about half as likely in Criminal Court convictions when

the case was commenced on felony charges (26%) as when it commenced as a misdemeanor (53%), but conditional discharges were somewhat more likely (36% vs. 24%) as were jail sentences (35% vs. 22%). The fine amounts did not differ between cases originally charged as misdemeanors and those commenced on felony charges, but the jail sentences imposed in Criminal Court (other than the "time served" sentences) were on average nearly three times as long for those originally arrested on felony charges (mean = 30.6 days) as those arrested on misdemeanor charges (mean = 11.5 days).

Criminal Court sentences were also related to the type of drug identified at arrest. Four of every five convictions in cases involving marijuana resulted in fines, while a fine was the sentence in less than half of the Criminal Court convictions on arrests involving powder cocaine (48%) and crack (43%). Surprisingly, when fines were given, the average dollar amounts were actually higher for the marijuana cases (mean=\$143, median=\$150, N=30), than the crack cases (mean=\$92, median=\$75, N=130) or powder cocaine cases (mean=\$102, median=\$63, N=10). Sentences of imprisonment and conditional discharges were imposed in between 25% to 30% of the crack and powder cocaine cases, while these sentences were used in less than 10% of the marijuana convictions. Time served sentences accounted for the great majority of jail sentences, regardless of the type of drug involved.

Defendants' prior criminal records did not much affect the type of Criminal Court sentence imposed, but did affect the amount of fines and the length of the jail terms imposed. It was evident, for example, that fines were greater for defendants with prior convictions (mean=\$120) than for those lacking them (mean=\$102) or for those with no prior arrests (mean=\$84). Similarly, defendants with prior convictions who were sent to jail got terms averaging 32 days, while those without prior conviction or arrest got terms averaging one-third that length.

Criminal Court dispositions for all 808 arrests arising from the 70th Precinct's 90-day enforcement period (including the transfer of 241 to Supreme Court for felony processing), and the sentences imposed on those convicted in Criminal Court, are summarized in Figure C-1 at the end of this appendix.

### III. Supreme Court Processing, Dispositions and Sentences

*Supreme Court Processing and Dispositions.* Supreme Court data were not available for 19 of the 241 cases transferred to Supreme Court. At first Supreme Court appearance, bail was set in 95 (43%) of the 222 remaining cases. In 22 (10%) of these cases, bail was continued for defendants who made bail in Criminal Court; in 73 (33%) cases, bail was set at Supreme Court appearance and six of these defendants made bail and were released at that point (the Supreme Court arraignment bail-making status was unknown for three cases). In about one-fourth of the Supreme Court cases (53, 24%), ROR was continued, and another forty (18%) were released on recognizance by the Supreme Court. The balance of cases were either remanded (26, 12%) or a warrant was ordered for failure to appear (8, 4%).

Predictably, Supreme Court arraignment bail-setting and bail-making varied with defendants' criminal histories. Approximately two-thirds of defendants who had one or more prior felony convictions remained in detention after the first appearance in Supreme Court, compared to about one-third of those with no prior arrests. Just over half of the defendants with prior arrests but no convictions, and half those with a prior misdemeanor conviction remained in detention.

Only six cases involving marijuana in the top charge got to Supreme Court, and all but one of the defendants were released at the first hearing (either ROR'd or Criminal Court ROR continued). Slightly more than half (55%) of the defendants in crack cases were detained, and slightly less than half (44%) in the powder cocaine cases.

At the time of data collection (February 5, 1991), twelve (5%) of the 222 Supreme Court cases were still pending in the court and an arrest warrant was outstanding in another 23 cases (10%). Convictions were obtained in 94% (177 of 187) of the remaining cases, and only ten (6%) were dismissed. Three-fourths of the Supreme Court convictions were either for B-level felony sale of

narcotics (PL 220.39, 27%) or for C-level attempted sale (PL 110/220.39, 48%). D-level felonies convictions, either narcotics sale (PL 220.31) or narcotics possession (PL 220.06), accounted for 8% and 4% of the convictions respectively. No other category of charge accounted for more than 2% of convictions. In all but 2% of the TNT Supreme Court convictions, the most serious charge at disposition was for drug sale or possession.

Because almost all (94%) of the 70th Precinct TNT cases that went to Supreme Court ended in conviction, differences in disposition could not be analyzed properly by other variables. Nevertheless, it could be seen that the type of drug seemed to matter. Of the 167 crack cases disposed in Supreme Court, only five (3%) were dismissed, but two of the five marijuana cases, and three of the 13 powder cocaine cases disposed in Supreme Court were dismissed. The small numbers necessitate that this point be viewed with caution.

*Supreme Court Sentences.* Sentence information was available for 162 of the 177 Supreme Court convictions. Less than 10% of these cases resulted in non-custodial sentences — 14 defendants (9%) were sentenced to probation, and one got a fine. In over half of the convicted cases (86, 53%) prison or jail was imposed as a sole sanction, another 37% (60) of the sentences were imprisonment plus probation, and one was imprisonment plus community service. Custodial sentences were split fairly evenly between jail terms (77, 52%) and prison terms (70, 48%). Jail terms ranged from one day (effectively a "time served" sentence), to one year (13, 9% of custodial sentences). "Time served" was effectively the sentence in 33 cases 22% of all Supreme Court custodial sentences. Other relatively common jail sentences were six months (11, 8%), and ninety days (7, 5%). Indeterminate prison sentences ranged from 1-3 years (26, 18% of custodial sentences) to 6-12 years (one case). Ten custodial sentences (7%) were for 2-4 years, seven (5%) were for terms of 18 months to 3 years (5%), and there were seven 2-5 year sentences. No other custodial term occurred in more than 3% of the Supreme Court convicted cases.

Figure C-2 summarizes the outcomes of the 241 TNT arrests from the 70th Precinct's 90-day enforcement period that were transferred to Supreme Court.

#### IV. Summary of Case Processing Data

Case processing data were available on a total of 808 of the 1,011 TNT arrests arising in the 70th Precinct during the 90-day enforcement period (December 5, 1989 through March 7, 1990). While the demographic characteristics of these 808 closely resemble the universe of 70th Precinct TNT arrests, they included fewer defendants originally charged with marijuana possession, apparently because many of them were issued summonses and did not get into the CJA database. Even after excluding these "lighter" cases, the 70th Precinct TNT arrests were more heavily weighted toward misdemeanors than arrests from other TNT target areas (393 were misdemeanor arrests [49%], and 415 were felony arrests). The top arrest charge in 85% of the misdemeanor cases in the sample available for analysis involved drug possession, while 89% of the felony arrests were for sales. In only 2% of the arrests were the defendants charged with non-drug crimes. More than four-fifths involved crack (including 86% of all felony arrests and 76% of the misdemeanor arrests). Eight percent of the arrests involved marijuana, and 84% of these were misdemeanor arrests. Powder cocaine accounted for 6% of the arrests, and most of these (62%) were classified as felonies.

The great majority of arrests were arraigned either as B-level felony narcotics sales (42%) or A-level misdemeanor narcotics possession (42%). By the end of Criminal Court processing, the proportions had dropped to 24% and 19%, respectively. The most serious Criminal Court disposition charge in over one-third of the cases was disorderly conduct (a violation). Seventy percent of the arrests reached final disposition in Criminal Court, and nearly three-fourths of these resulted in conviction at some level. Adjudgment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD) was the disposition in 16%, and 11% were dismissed outright. Included in these Criminal Court outcomes were a substantial number of arrests (37% of the 808) that were disposed at arraignment. This high arraignment disposition rate appears to be the consequence of the large number of misdemeanor

possession cases among 70th Precinct TNT arrests — those cases tend to be disposed early in the court process.

Fines were imposed in slightly less than half the Criminal Court convictions (nearly all with a jail alternative), and other sentences were split evenly between conditional discharge and jail terms (two-thirds of which were for "time served"). Fines were more common in the misdemeanor arrest cases and the marijuana cases, and larger fines and longer jail sentences were associated with defendants having more extensive criminal histories.

Fifty-eight percent of the 70th Precinct TNT's felony arrests reached Supreme Court, and dispositional data were available on 222 of these 241 cases. Convictions resulted in 94% (177), excluding the twelve cases still pending and the twenty-three cases in which warrants were outstanding at the time of data collection. Just under half of the Supreme Court convictions were for C-level felony attempted sale of narcotics, and about one-fourth were for B-level felony sale. Nine in ten Supreme Court convictions resulted in custodial sentences — about half of them jail sentences and half of them prison sentences. When the custodial sentence was to jail time, it was most often "time served" (which was the sentence in just over one-fifth of Supreme Court convictions); a similar number were prison terms of 1 to 3 years, which was the most common prison sentence.

Figure C-3 summarizes the court processing data on the 415 cases arising from felony arrest by the 70th Precinct TNT during the 90-day enforcement period.

## V. Arrests by the 70th Precinct's Experimental Uniformed TNT Component

The researchers requested court processing data for all 124 arrests made by the 70th Precinct's experimental uniformed component, deployed after the 90-day enforcement period: 113 of these cases were found in the CJA database, using case identifiers coded from TNT files.

Compared to 70th Precinct arrests made by the regular TNT modules, described above and in previous Vera reports (see, the *Interim Report*, dated November 20, 1990), those arrested by the uniformed TNT component were more likely to be black (81%), less likely to be white (7%), but just as likely to be Hispanic (11%). Most were men (84%) and most were under 35 years of age (one-fifth were 16-21 years of age and two-thirds were between 22 and 35). These defendants also resembled the main arrest sample with respect to prior criminal history — three-fifths had no prior convictions, including the one-third who had no record of prior arrest.

Arrest charges levied against them differed substantially from the patterns observed among those arrested by TNT modules during the 90-day enforcement period, as 86% (97 of 113) of those arrested by the uniformed component were charged with A-level misdemeanor drug possession (PL 220.03), and most of the remaining cases (9 arrests, 8% of the total) did not involve drug charges. Only six defendants were charged with felony-level drug crimes, including four charged with B-level felony possession (PL 220.26) and two with B-level felony sale (PL 220.39). Crack was the principal drug involved in nearly all of the arrests (89 of 93, 96%) for which data about type of drug were available.

The arrest charges were largely unchanged at Criminal Court arraignment, where the top affidavit charge against 96 (87%) of the defendants was an A-level misdemeanor possession charge. As with the main TNT arrest sample, misdemeanor charges tended to be disposed at Criminal Court arraignment, the fate of over two-thirds of the arrests made by the uniformed TNT component (including the 74 convicted at arraignment [67%] and the two that were adjourned in contemplation of dismissal at that point).

Of the 37 defendants whose cases survived Criminal Court arraignment, a little more than half (20, 54%) were released on recognizance (ROR'd): the remainder were detained for not making the bail set. About three-fifths of those ROR'd had no prior convictions, while a similar proportion of those detained had one or more previous convictions.



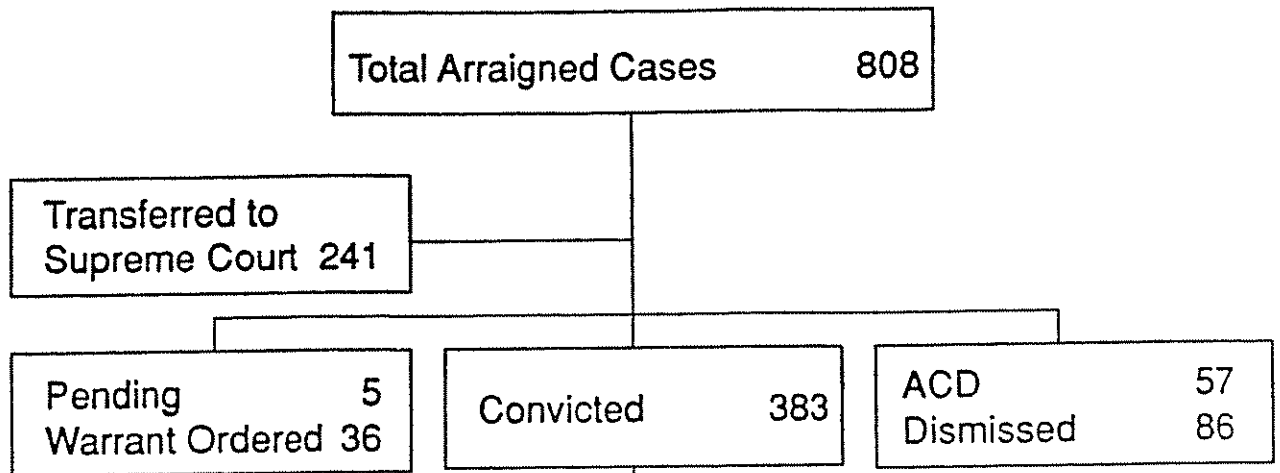
All but five arrests by the uniformed TNT component in the 70th Precinct reached final disposition in Criminal Court (including those disposed at arraignment). Only three were transferred to Supreme Court, although that number could rise, as warrants were outstanding in two cases at the time of data collection. In addition to the 74 guilty pleas at arraignment, there were 19 other convictions in Criminal Court. Four cases resulted in ACDs, and seven in outright dismissal.

As was seen in arrests by the TNT enforcement modules, charges on the arrests made by the uniformed TNT component tended to drop in severity between arraignment and final Criminal Court disposition. Nearly four-fifths of the cases charged at arrest with A-level misdemeanor drug possession were disposed on charges of disorderly conduct (PL 240.20); this was the top charge in about three-fourths (74%) of Criminal Court dispositions for the uniformed component's arrests. Fourteen cases maintained an original A-level misdemeanor possession charge, and in two cases an initial B-level felony possession charge dropped to an A-level misdemeanor charge. One arrest reached Criminal Court disposition still carrying a felony charge (a B-level felony sale). About 70% of the disorderly conduct dispositions involved defendants with no prior convictions, while nearly half of the defendants whose cases were disposed on possession charges had a prior felony conviction.

Over half the convictions in Criminal Court (57 of 93, 61%) resulted in fines, or a fine with a jail alternative. The most common fine amounts were \$50 (35%), \$75 (16%), \$100 (23%), and \$150 (14%). Most of the other sentences were either conditional discharge (19, 20%) or imprisonment (13, 14%). The frequency with which certain sentences were imposed did not appear to differ by arrest charge or disposition charge.

Figure C-1

## SUMMARY OF CRIMINAL COURT CASE OUTCOMES



Most severe Criminal Court sentence for convicted cases:

Imprisonment	95
Probation	7
Fine or Imprisonment	171
Fine	4
Conditional Discharge	101
Sentence Pending	5

Most severe charge at Criminal Court outcome:

A Felony	4
B Felony	205
C,D,E, Felony	73
A Misdemeanor	193
B Misdemeanor	38
Unclassified Misd & Violations	295
Total	808

Figure C-2

## SUMMARY OF SUPREME COURT CASE OUTCOMES

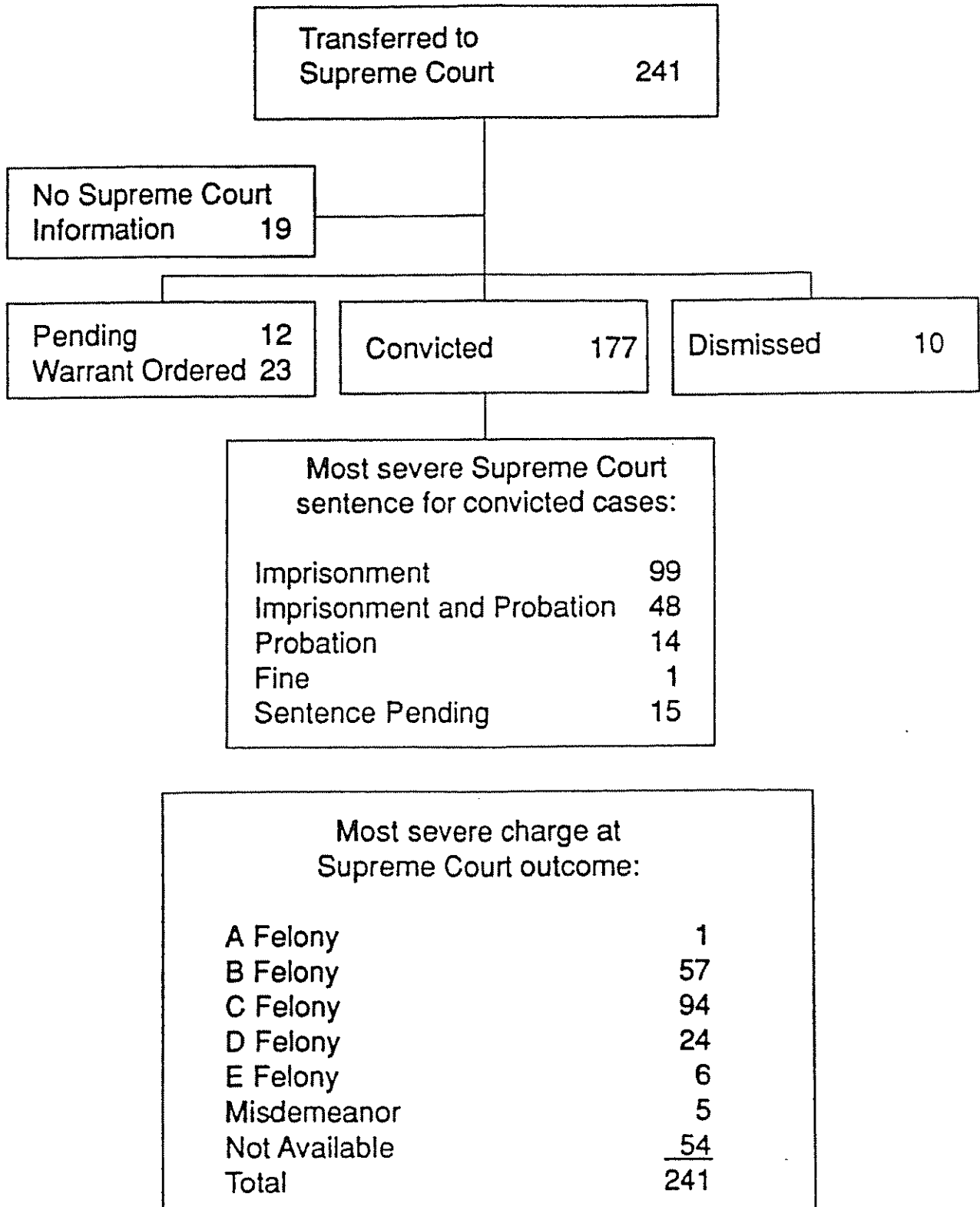
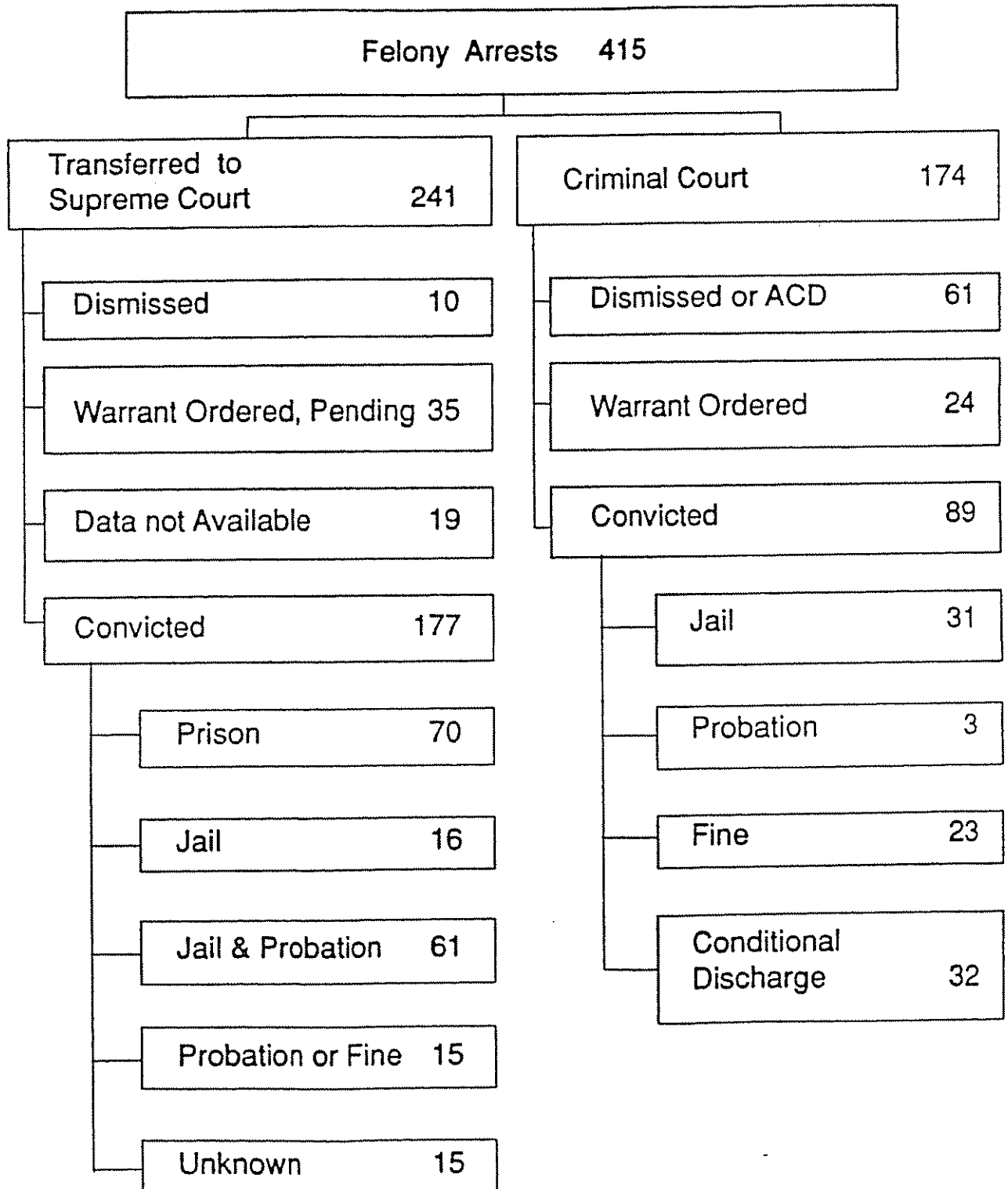


Figure C-3  
**SUMMARY OF FELONY ARREST OUTCOMES**



## Appendix D

### TNT AND ANCILLARY CRIME

This appendix addresses the question whether TNT's deployment in the study precincts resulted in any reduction in ancillary criminal activity. Although not a core objective in the TNT strategy, reduction of non-drug street crime in targeted communities would be one of the ways TNT could hope to accomplish improvements in the community's quality of life and to inspire community residents to organize themselves to preserve any gains against drug traffic after the TNT enforcement period ended. Thus rates of non-drug criminal activity before and after intervention by TNT were compared, to try to detect such an effect.

Chapter 3, where these comparisons were summarized and no "TNT effect" on ancillary crime was found, refers to two types of analysis: The first, apparently commonsensical approach was to compare the number of each type of crime reported during the TNT period in a target precinct with the number reported there in the same months of the previous year. The second, more precise approach was an "interrupted time series analysis." Both are presented in some detail here, though the traditional police year-to-year comparisons are left to the end of this Appendix.

The time frame for ancillary crime data collection in the 70th and 67th precincts started with the date the TNT enforcement period began and went forward through the fourth month after it ended (so that the period would include the time when the household survey follow-up interviews were being conducted). To have enough data for time-series analysis, it was also necessary to collect data for two years prior to the implementation of TNT. In the comparison precinct (the 71st) and for the Brooklyn South patrol borough as a whole, the time frame for data collection covered all of the 67th Precinct and 70th Precinct data collection periods. Thus, crime complaint data was collected for the 67th Precinct for the period starting December 1987 and ending November 1990; for the 70th Precinct, starting September 1987 and ending August 1990; and for the 71st Precinct and the Brooklyn South Patrol Borough, starting June 1987 and ending November 1990.

The best way to detect any impact of TNT on ancillary crime (absent a reliable count of crimes actually committed, rather than complaints) would have been to limit the data to complaints arising in the research areas only, or at least the TNT target areas only. This was not possible, because NYPD crime complaint data are not routinely disaggregated to that level. However, it is not wholly unreasonable to expect the available precinct-level data to reflect changes in crime complaint levels in the TNT target areas, because the TNT target areas are in fact the areas where most crime occurs in the study precincts.<sup>1</sup>

#### A. The Time Series Analysis.

Monthly rates of burglary, robbery, assault and homicide were chosen as indices of non-drug crime. These data were gathered on a precinct-wide level and were available for the months preceding the intervention of TNT, during its operation, and after TNT had withdrawn from the area.<sup>2</sup> These time series data were examined for the 67th, 70th and 71st precincts, and for the entire Brooklyn South patrol borough. Thus sixteen separate analyses of TNT's impact on ancillary criminal activity were conducted.

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<sup>1</sup> While the TNT target areas are likely to be the highest crime areas in a precinct, depending on the size of the precinct and the volume of crime there, the effect of TNT would have to be rather large to produce a measurable effect for the precinct as a whole. Therefore, by using precinct-level data to measure the impact of TNT on ancillary crime, a bias against finding such an effect is introduced. That is, many other things (*e.g.*, police programs, social programs, events) that might affect the volume of crime are going on in a precinct at the same time that TNT is active in a portion of the precinct. These other factors add "error" or "noise" to the basis on which the effect of TNT is evaluated. Therefore, the absence of a precinct-level effect on the volume of crime does not demonstrate that TNT was necessarily ineffective.

<sup>2</sup> Because TNT operated only in selected areas of a precinct, more disaggregated data would be desirable. But precinct-wide data were the least aggregated and most reliable statistics available to examine TNT's effect on ancillary criminal activity.

The technique of interrupted time series analysis, which relies on the Box-Jenkins — or ARIMA — model-building process, was employed in this task.<sup>3</sup> ARIMA modeling involves a three-step iterative process of identification, estimation and diagnosis of a time series.<sup>4</sup> Once this procedure yielded statistically adequate models, the impact of the TNT intervention was tested and measured. The research hypothesis was that TNT intervention would cause a drop in the level of the time series — that TNT would cause a reduction in each of the indices of criminal activity: burglary, robbery, assault and homicide.

Change was represented by a dummy variable, with observations not experiencing the event (intervention) coded as zero (0) and observations experiencing the impact coded as one (1). However, variations between the 70th and 67th precincts in how TNT was implemented required that the impact of TNT be tested in other ways. In both precincts, after the initial three months of TNT activity,

there was a diminished though still active TNT presence for two additional months. Thus two separate impact analyses were implemented for the criminal activity indices in the 70th and 67th precincts: one that conceptualizes the latter two months as part of the intervention period and one that places these observations outside of the intervention. Moreover, in the 67th Precinct, another police activity Operation Take-Back was launched during the third month after the TNT enforcement period. Because this police operation included a full restoration of the TNT enforcement program, the period coded as TNT "intervention" in that precinct was extended to include these later months.

Table D-1 lists the dates of intervention for each of the study precincts and for Brooklyn South, and the starting and ending dates of the respective time series.

Most of the ARIMA time series models were built as either white noise or autoregressive processes of order one.<sup>5</sup> However, the

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<sup>3</sup> Before statistically comparing the pre- and the post-intervention segments of the time series, it is necessary to control for the "noise" in the series. If not taken into account, this "noise" factor can make it difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the impact correctly. Such occurrences as a trend, seasonality and serial dependency must all be removed or controlled before the pre- and post-intervention periods are compared. The ARIMA model-building process accounts for these sources of "noise."

<sup>4</sup> Identification involves the preliminary specifications of the model obtained from the autocorrelation function (acf) and partial autocorrelation function (pacf) of the observed time series. The acf of the observed time series is the correlation of that series with itself at different lags; and the pacf of the observed series is the "correlation between time series observations  $k$  units apart after the correlation at intermediate lags has been controlled or 'partialled out'" (McCleary and Hay, 1980:75). Estimation of parameters of the model follows identification. If these estimated parameters meet certain statistical criteria such as significance, then additional diagnostic checks are conducted for the adequacy of the model.

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<sup>5</sup> In the Box-Jenkins methodology, a time series is conceptualized as the result of a series of random shocks. Each shock can be any value empirically, though theoretically a shock is assumed to possess a value of zero. Random shocks represent the combined effect of all factors that can be held responsible for a unique observation. At each observation in the time series, a shock is observed, and the determination of what happens to the shock after it "hits" the series is the fundamental task of the ARIMA (or Box-Jenkins) method. How these random shocks behave are categorized by three structural parameters:  $p$  — an autoregressive estimator;  $d$  — a differenced estimator; and  $q$  — a moving average estimator. The parameters of a model are usually represented as  $(p,d,q)$ . In this context, a white noise process results from the complete loss of the effect of the random shock immediately after it appears —  $(0,0,0)$ ; and an autoregressive process occurs when factors which combine to constitute a random shock remain in the system, where they continually (though at a depreciating rate) affect future observations —  $(p,0,0)$ . The latter process is of order one if the pacf (defined in the notes, above) possesses a significant spike at the first lag.

time series measuring assault for the 67th Precinct and Brooklyn South revealed seasonal variation every six months. These models contain an assault rate that peaks in the late spring-early summer month of June and reaches its nadir during December.<sup>6</sup> The only "mixed" model a time series containing more than one of the parameters that describe how the random shocks drive the observations appears in the Brooklyn South data, where robbery is both differenced and has an autoregressive estimate of  $-.56$ .<sup>7</sup> These findings are summarized in Table D-2.

Table D-2 also reveals that only one of the sixteen time series considered was significantly affected by the TNT intervention. In the 67th Precinct, the level of the time series for assaults experienced a reduction during the TNT intervention. There is a significant difference in the assault rate between the months when TNT was not present in this precinct and the months of TNT activity. This finding was true for two of the three definitions of the intervention period examined, with the magnitude of the decrease being greatest for the TNT-only (March 1990 - May 1990) intervention.<sup>8</sup>

It is safe to say that TNT does not appear to have had the hypothesized effect (reducing ancillary criminal activity) in the Brooklyn South TNT study precincts. The fact that the rate of only one of the indices declined, in only one of the two experimental precincts — assault, in the 67th Precinct — when TNT was active in the area strongly supports this conclusion.

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*footnote continued....*

The equation form of a white noise process is  $Y_t = A_t$ , where  $Y_t$  is the predicted value for the observation at time  $t$  and  $A_t$  is the random shock at time  $t$ . Similarly, the equation form of an autoregressive process of order one is represented by  $Y_t = \Phi_1(Y_{t-1}) + A_t$ , where  $Y_t$  is the predicted value for the observation at time  $t$ ,  $\Phi_1$  is the autoregressive estimate,  $Y_{t-1}$  is the value of the previous observation, and  $A_t$  is the random shock at time  $t$ .

<sup>6</sup> The negative coefficients of  $-.54$  and  $-.75$  for the 67th Precinct and Brooklyn South, respectively, reflect such a cyclical pattern.

<sup>7</sup> In ARIMA modeling, when random shocks are integrated (summed) over the life of the series, the series must be differenced. This procedure involves subtraction of the first observation from the second, the second from the third, and so on.

<sup>8</sup> The TNT-only intervention had a difference of  $13.7$  between pre- and post-intervention levels, while the March 1990 - October 1990 intervention had a smaller though still significant impact of  $11.2$ .

Table D-1

<u>Series Length / Intervention Period</u>	<u>67th Precinct</u>	<u>70th Precinct</u>	<u>71st Precinct</u>	<u>Br'klyn South</u>
December 1987 – November 1990 / March 1990 – October 1990	X			
December 1987 – November 1990 / March 1990 – July 1990	X			
December 1987 – November 1990 / March 1990 – May 1990	X			
September 1987 – August 1990 / December 1989 – April 1990		X		
September 1987 – August 1990 / December 1989 – February 1990		X		
June 1987 – November 1990 / December 1989 – October 1990			X	X

Table D-2

	<u>67th Precinct</u>			
	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Assault</u>	<u>Homicide</u>
Mean of Series	228.19	163.86	87.67	4.94
Univariate Model	(1,0,0) p = .39*	(1,0,0) p = .49*	(1,0,0) <sub>6</sub> × (1,0,0) p = -.54*	(1,0,0)
March 1990 – October '90 Intervention	2.48 t = 0.13	1.87 t = 0.11	-11.15* t = 2.26	-.57 t = -0.58
March 1990 – July '90 Intervention	-4.27 t = -0.19	9.76 t = 0.50	-10.49 t = -1.50	.06 t = 0.05
March 1990 – May '90 Intervention	-34.34 t = -1.61	-5.95 t = -0.28	-13.7* t = -1.69	-1.03 t = -0.70



Table D-1 (continued)

<b>70th Precinct</b>				
	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Assault</u>	<u>Homicide</u>
Mean of Series	241.5	168.69	79.08	4.94
Univariate Model	(0,0,0)	(1,0,0) p = .65*	(1,0,0) p = .32*	(0,0,0)
December '89 – April '90 Intervention	-17.54 t = -1.05	-8.27 t = -0.46	-18.72 t = -1.61	-1.19 t = -1.42
December '89 – Feb. '90 Intervention	-21.64 t = -1.04	-26.54 t = -1.44	-22.54 t = -1.63	-.24 t = -0.23
<b>71st Precinct</b>				
	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Assault</u>	<u>Homicide</u>
Mean of Series	193.81	131.86	79.86	2.95
Univariate Model	(1,0,0) p = .44*	(1,0,0) p = .36*	(0,0,0)	(0,0,0)
December '89 – Oct. '90 Intervention	-18.61 t = -1.39	10.25 t = 1.08	-7.93 t = -1.52	-.3 t = -0.44
<b>Patrol Borough Brooklyn South</b>				
	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Robbery</u>	<u>Assault</u>	<u>Homicide</u>
Mean of Series	1883.69	1104.6 17.76 <sup>a</sup>	537.55	21.83
Univariate Model	(1,0,0) p = .63*	(1,1,0) p = .36*	(1,0,0) <sub>6</sub> × (0,0,0) p = -.75*	(0,0,0)
December '89 – Oct. '90 Intervention	97.48 t = 1.10	.22 t = 0.01	-13 t = -0.01	-1.75 t = -0.52

\* .05 significance.

<sup>a</sup> Mean of the differenced series**B. Conventional Police Analyses.**

For the sake of consistency, the data were also subjected to the less sophisticated type of analysis usually employed by police departments. For each crime, the number of complaints received during the three-month TNT intervention was compared to the number received during the same three-month period in the prior year. Crime complaints for the 71st Precinct and Brooklyn South as a whole serve as a kind of control. Thus, for example, 70th Precinct burglary complaints during the months of December 1989, January 1990 and February 1990 were summed and compared to the number of burglary complaints during the

months of December 1988, January 1989 and February 1989. These were also compared to complaints received during the same months in the 71st Precinct and in Brooklyn South as a whole. The results are presented in Tables D-2 through D-7 below.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Although data were collected for these periods on homicide complaints, the number of homicide complaints received in any one of these precincts during a three-month period ranged from seven to 12, numbers too small to produce reliable results. Therefore the homicide data are omitted from this discussion.

Table III-1

## Comparing Burglary in the 67th Precinct with Control Areas

	TNT Period March - May, 1990	Prior Year March - May, 1989	% Change
67th Precinct	565	644	-12.3%
71st Precinct	586	569	3.0%
Brooklyn South	5,900	5,000	18.0%

Table III-2

## Comparing Burglary in the 70th Precinct with Control Areas

	TNT Period Dec '89 - Feb '90	Prior Year Dec '88 - Feb '89	% Change
70th Precinct	665	697	-4.6%
71st Precinct	472	591	-20.1%
Brooklyn South	5,467	5,751	-4.9%

Table III-3

## Comparing Robbery in the 67th Precinct with Control Areas

	TNT Period March - May, 1990	Prior Year March - May, 1989	% Change
67th Precinct	460	450	2.2%
71st Precinct	438	377	16.2%
Brooklyn South	3,627	3,111	16.6%

Table III-4

## Comparing Robbery in the 70th Precinct with Control Areas

	TNT Period Dec '89 - Feb '90	Prior Year Dec '88 - Feb '89	% Change
70th Precinct	532	399	33.3%
71st Precinct	393	390	.8%
Brooklyn South	3,839	3,170	21.1%

**Table III-5**  
**Comparing Assault in the 67th Precinct with Control Areas**

	TNT Period	Prior Year	% Change
	March - May, 1990	March - May, 1989	
67th Precinct	249	303	-17.8%
71st Precinct	212	214	-0.9%
Brooklyn South	1,517	1,617	-6.2%

**Table III-6**  
**Comparing Assault in the 70th Precinct with Control Areas**

	TNT Period	Prior Year	% Change
	Dec '89 - Feb '90	Dec '88 - Feb '89	
70th Precinct	167	210	-20.5%
71st Precinct	213	196	8.7%
Brooklyn South	1,363	1,341	1.6%

The results presented in these tables must be interpreted with a great deal of caution. For example, Table III-1 shows that burglary complaints in the 67th Precinct were 12% lower during the TNT period than they were in the same period the previous year, and that, for those same periods, burglary complaints in Brooklyn South increased 18%. The implication seems to be that TNT had the effect of suppressing burglary complaints, but crime complaints fluctuate a great deal at all times. Some fluctuations are seasonal; for example, violent crimes are generally higher during the summer months. It is because of this seasonal fluctuation that police departments (including the NYPD) assess change by comparing the incidence of any particular crime to the incidence during the *same period* in the previous year.

But some fluctuations are more complex or longer-term, rather than simply seasonal, and some are in fact random. The time series analysis, presented above, is a method for assessing changes over time that is sufficiently sophisticated to distinguish between these

various types of fluctuation in crime reports: it permits evaluation of whether an observed effect (such as those in the tables above) is likely to be the result of an intervention (in this case TNT) or is better explained as seasonal, random, or some other type of change. Thus, while some of Tables III-1 through III-6 suggest rather large changes following deployment of TNT, the time series analysis reveals these changes to be neither large enough nor consistent enough to be attributed to TNT.

On closer examination, the tables themselves hint at the randomness revealed in the time series analysis: Robbery *rose* 33% in the 70th precinct *during* the TNT period (faster than in the comparison precinct or in Brooklyn South as a whole) while assaults *fell* 21% and burglary did not change. This lack of consistency across the "snapshot" that these tables present suggests the randomness found through the more sophisticated approach, and may help readers understand why it is likely that the apparent improvements suggested by the tables above would have been observed in the absence of TNT.



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