

Risk Factors of Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets

Summary of Key Factors: Camouflage and escape, Gun violence, Owner-Occupied Housing, Proximity to prostitution areas; Street robbery areas, Budget motels, convention centers, hotels, coffee shops and bars, Transportation hubs and arterial routes, schools, recreation areas, shopping malls.

Aim: To assist analysts with the identification of risk factors for the production of risk terrain maps. Specifically, this brief provides an annotated review of the factors related to drug dealing in open-air markets and the settings and times for which some factors may be most relevant. This information should be especially useful to help choose a time period for creating risk terrain maps (i.e., Stepⁱ 3), to identify aggravating and mitigating risk factors to include in your risk terrain model (i.e., Steps 5 and 6), and to inform the operationalization of your risk factors to risk map layers (i.e., Step 7).

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Operational definition: Drug markets may take different forms (in certain instances more than one form) regarding *the geography of the market* and *the nature of the transaction* between the buyer and the sellerⁱⁱ:

- *Closed* markets are where the buyer and seller know each other through friends and acquaintances;
- *Open* markets are where the buyer and seller do not know each other;
- *Mobile* markets are where the buyer and seller agree on the details of the transaction--including the location of the transaction--over the phone; and,
- *Open-air* markets are where the transactions take place in geographically well defined open-air areas.

For the purposes of this research brief, open-air drug dealing covers all types of illegal drug transactions that physically take place in open-air.

Aggravating/Mitigating Risk Factors Based on a Review of Empirical Literature

Proximity to Prostitution Areas: Studies suggest that one of the main reasons for involving in prostitution is financing drug addictionⁱⁱⁱ. Accordingly since many prostitutes use drugs, proximity to prostitution areas may be a strong correlate for drug dealing in open-air markets.

Proximity to Street Robbery Areas: When the motive of robbery is to acquire cash in exchange for drugs, proximity to street robbery areas is a strong correlate of drug-dealing in open-air markets, especially when small scale drug dealers and customers are targeted as victims.^{iv}

Proximity to Budget Motels, Convention Centers, Hotels, Coffee Shops and Bars: Prostitutes constitute a high risk group for drug abuse. Accordingly, proximity to the hang around locations of prostitutes such as budget motels, convention centers, coffee shops and bars etc. may be a strong correlate for drug dealing in open-air markets.^v

Proximity to Transportation Hubs, Arterial Routes, Schools, Recreation Areas, and Shopping Malls: The presence of legitimate and daily activities and the easy access to the market area attracts buyers to markets around these routes and facilities.^{vi}

Camouflage and Escape: To avoid the risk of being caught, most buyers and sellers prefer local environments which facilitate an easy money and drug exchange such as; dim lighting, concealing landscape, and abandoned buildings (for the use of drugs after purchase).^{vii} In a similar vein to avoid the risk of apprehension, most buyers and sellers prefer streets and roads in which they will be able to watch for the police and complete the transaction quickly.

Gun Violence: Research relates youth gun violence to street drug markets.^{viii}

Owner-Occupied Housing: Since drug dealers prefer the least supervised environments, in neighborhoods where owner-occupied housing dominates public housing, the probability of the establishment of open-air drug markets is less.^{ix}

Temporal Effects

As indicated earlier open-air markets gather around transportation hubs and arterial routes, accordingly illicit drug markets are more likely to be open when “the arterials and nodes have a great deal of licit routine activities, and will be closed when the routine activities of the area are at their lowest. If this is the case, the limits of temporal displacement are set by the legitimate routines of the area in which the marketplaces are found”.^x

But in the case where open-air markets supply the needs of drug addicts, the physical dependency of the hard drugs may necessitate the drug markets to be open 24/7. Nevertheless, depending on the demanded product, the operation times of the markets may vary.^{xi}

Setting Effects

Open-air markets are specifically preferred in cases where the buyer is either an addict or wants to get the product quickly. In most cases open-air markets are open accordingly for the buyers to locate the seller. Most of the time sellers stick to particular locations and when they have to move, they will try to limit the distance they move, so displacement will be limited to the high routine activity area.^{xii}

Since transportation hubs and arterial routes provide easy access to drug markets, open-air drug markets are often located in inner city or urban areas. Additionally, open-air markets are more likely to be located in economically depressed neighborhoods where the presence of vacant buildings and the lack of informal surveillance facilitate the drug market. Furthermore, “markets that have a reputation for selling drugs can grow large in size and the concentration of activity in a small area will be hard to hide”.^{xiii}

Recommended (Publically Available) Readings

Braga, A. A. (2002). *Gun Violence Among Serious Young Offenders*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

- “The guide is divided into three main areas: (1) the problem of gun violence among serious young offenders which includes related problems and factors contributing to gun violence among serious young offenders; (2) understanding the local problem by asking the right questions and measuring effectiveness; and (3) responses to the problem of gun violence among serious young offenders including offender-oriented responses, place-oriented responses, and responses with limited effectiveness. The report also presents a summary of responses to gun violence among serious young offenders, the mechanisms by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they ought to work best, and some factors that should be considered before implementing a specific response”. Available: <http://www.popcenter.org/problems/pdfs/GunViolenceFinal.pdf>

Eck, J. (1995). A General Model of the Geography of Illicit Retail Marketplaces.” In J. Eck and D. Weisburd (eds.), *Crime and Place*. Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 4. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

- “Sellers and buyers of illicit goods and services (e.g., drugs, sex, stolen merchandise, stolen and illegal firearms) must find ways of meeting each other and making exchanges in order to get the rewards they seek. However, they also risk having their money or illicit goods stolen by others or being apprehended by the police. There are two strategies that participants in illicit markets can use to balance risks and rewards. First, they can sell only to people they know or to people who know people they know. This substantially reduces the risk of being arrested or ripped-off, but it restricts sales and buying opportunities. Second, they can sell to strangers. For the seller, this approach provides access to more customers. For the buyer, this approach allows shopping. Nevertheless, it increases participants' risks of arrest and rip-off. The two strategies to marketing illicit goods and services result in very different geographical patterns of retail marketplaces, the types of places used and the relationship of illicit retailing to licit routine activities.” Available:

Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

- “This problem-specific guide summarizes knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by **drug dealing in open-air markets**. Open-air markets represent the lowest level of the **drug** distribution network. Low-level **markets** need to be tackled effectively not only because of the risks posed to **market** participants but also to reduce the harms that illicit **drug** use can inflict on the local community. The guide begins by describing the problem and reviewing factors that increase the risks of **drug dealing in open-air markets**. The discussion then identifies a series of questions that might assist police in analyzing local **open-air drug market** problems. Finally, responses to the problem and what is known about each from evaluative research and police practice are described”. Available:

<http://www.popcenter.org/problems/pdfs/DrugMarkets.pdf>

Jacobson, J. (1999). *Policing Drug Hot-Spots*. Police Research Series, Paper 109. London: Home Office

- “This report reviews literature on situational crime prevention and drug law enforcement, applies situational crime prevention methods to policing drug hotspots in Great Britain, specifies six elements of successful initiatives aimed at disrupting local drug markets, and highlights the importance of effective interagency cooperation” Available:

[http://www.popcenter.org/Responses/police crackdowns/PDFs/Jacobson.pdf](http://www.popcenter.org/Responses/police_crackdowns/PDFs/Jacobson.pdf)

Scott, M., S. & Dedel, K. (2006). *Street Prostitution*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

- “The authors identify the problem of street prostitution by focusing on female prostitutes and male clients. They first identify the problem and factors contributing to it, then propose a series of questions for the reader to analyze their local problem and lastly evaluate the responses to the street prostitution problem from evaluative research and practice”. Available:

<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/pop/e10062633.pdf>

ⁱ For steps of risk terrain map production, download the RTM Manual at www.riskterrainmodeling.com

ⁱⁱ Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, pp.1-4

ⁱⁱⁱ Benson, C & Matthews, R. (1995). Street Prostitution: Ten Facts in Search of a Policy. *International Journal of Sociology of Law*, 23:395-415

^{iv} Wright, R. & S. Decker. (1997). *Armed Robbers in Action: Stickups and Street Culture*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, pp.63-6

^v Scott, M., S. & Dedel, K. (2006). *Street Prostitution*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.9

^{vi} Eck, J. (1995). A General Model of the Geography of Illicit Retail Marketplaces.” In J. Eck and D. Weisburd (eds.), *Crime and Place*. Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 4. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press ; Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.5

^{vii} Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.5

^{viii} Braga, A. A. (2002). *Gun Violence Among Serious Young Offenders*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.2

^{ix} Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.7

^x Eck, J. (1995). A General Model of the Geography of Illicit Retail Marketplaces.” In J. Eck and D. Weisburd (eds.), *Crime and Place*. Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 4. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press; Jacobson, J. (1999). *Policing Drug Hot-Spots*. Police Research Series, Paper 109. London: Home Office, p.7.

^{xi} Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.5

^{xii} Eck, J. (1995). A General Model of the Geography of Illicit Retail Marketplaces.” In J. Eck and D. Weisburd (eds.), *Crime and Place*. Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 4. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press

^{xiii} Harocopos, A Hough, M. (2005). *Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, p.5