

## KIDS, CRACK, AND CRIME

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*As part of a larger study, 254 crime-involved youths in Miami were interviewed on the street about their drug use, crimes and — in more detail — experiences with crack-cocaine. In this strongly drug- and crime-involved sample, greater participation in the crack business was clearly associated with not only more crack use and more drug sales, but also more frequent use of other drugs and more crimes against property and persons. The criminogenic influence of the crack trade is discussed in relation to both media reports and the classic drugs/crime pattern first identified for heroin users.*

**C**rack-cocaine is the newest substance included in discussions of the relationship between drug use and crime. Since it made its first appearance on the streets of urban America during the mid-1980s, media attention has focused on how the high addiction liability of the drug instigates users to commit crimes to support their habits, and how rivalries in crack distribution networks have turned some inner-city communities into urban "dead zones," where homicide rates are so high that police have written them off as anarchic badlands.<sup>1</sup>

Of special emphasis in press reports on crack has been the involvement of inner-city youths in the crack business. As *Time* magazine explained in its 9 May 1988 cover story:

With the unemployment rate for black teenagers at 37%, little work is available to unskilled, poorly educated youths. The handful of jobs that are open — flipping burgers, packing groceries — pay only minimum wages or "chump change," in the street vernacular. So these youngsters turn to the most

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lucrative option they can find. In rapidly growing numbers, they are becoming the new criminal recruits of the inner city, the children who deal crack (p. 20).

Other stories have targeted the "peewees" and "wannabees" (want-to-be's), the street gang acolytes in grade school and junior-high, who patrol the streets with walkie-talkies in the vicinity of crack houses, serving in networks of look-outs, spotters, and steerers, and aspiring to be "rollers" (short for high-rollers) in the drug distribution business (*Newsweek*, 28 March 1988). Yet with all the media attention on youths in the crack scene, only minimal empirical information has been collected on their use of the drug, their complicity in the drug business, and their specific criminal behaviors. This paper describes such data, collected during the second half of the 1980s as part of a broader study of drug use and serious delinquency in Miami, Florida.

### Methods

In 1985, few people nationally had heard of crack, but it was already a problem in Miami (Inciardi 1987). Awareness of this permitted crack to be included in the drug history section of a planned interview schedule for a street study of adolescent drug use and crime. The focus of the research was not crack per se, but was the drug-taking and drug-seeking behaviors of some 600 Miami youths who were "seriously delinquent," defined as having committed, in the prior twelve months, a minimum of ten FBI "index" offenses,<sup>2</sup> or 100 lesser crimes. Subjects were located through standard multiple starting point "snowball sampling" techniques (Inciardi 1986: 119-122).

Preliminary analysis of the first interviews showed a surprisingly high prevalence and incidence of crack use. Of the first 308 youths interviewed, 95.5% reported having used crack at least once, and 87.3% reported current regular use — (i.e., in the ninety days prior to being interviewed, use three or more times a week). These unexpected figures motivated the design of a supplementary crack data instrument, which was ultimately used during the last 254 interviews, from October 1986 through November 1987.

### Findings

As indicated in Table 1, some 85% of the sample were males and 15% were females. In addition, 43.3% were whites, while 39.4% were blacks and 17.3% were Hispanics. While blacks (only 15% of the Miami-Dade population) are over-represented in the sample, and Hispanics (44% of the population) are considerably under-represented, this race/ethnic distribution is not unlike that found in other studies of the Miami drug scene (Inciardi 1986: 123). These 254 youths had a median age of 14.7 years, with almost half in the 14-15-year-age cohort. Finally, although more than three-fourths were still attending school at the time of interview, almost all (89.4%) had been either expelled or suspended

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from school at least once, with such disciplinary actions often resulting from drug use or sales on school premises.

Table 1  
Selected Characteristics of 254 Serious Delinquents Interviewed  
in Depth About Crack, Miami 1986–1987

		Number	Percent
Sex:	Males	216	85.0%
	Females	38	15.0%
Ethnicity:	Blacks	100	39.4%
	Whites	110	43.3%
	Hispanics	44	17.3%
Age:	12–13 years	62	24.4%
	14–15 years	107	42.1%
	16–17 years	85	33.5%
	Mean age	14.7 years	—
School Status:	Attending grades 5–8	98	38.6%
	grades 9–10	79	31.1%
	grades 11–12	21	8.3%
	Dropped out of school	56	22.0%
	Mean Grades Completed	8.0 grades	—
Ever Expelled or Suspended from School:			
	For drug use	209	82.3%
	For drug sales	143	56.3%
	For other crime	91	35.8%
	For <i>any</i> reason	227	89.4%

### *Drug Use Histories*

All of the juveniles interviewed had histories of multiple drug use with identifiable patterns of onset and progression. As illustrated by the mean ages reported in Table 2, they began their drug-using careers at age 7.1 years with alcohol experimentation and had been high by age 8. The majority (61.4%) proceeded to "regular use" (3+ times per week) of alcohol, at a mean age of 9 years. The onset of marijuana use began by age 10, followed by the regular use of the drug by age 11. Moreover, *all* of the youths reported having used marijuana "regularly." Cocaine use occurred next in the progression, with experimentation by 98.4% of the sample at age 11.6 years, followed by regular use less than a year later.

Experimentation with heroin, speed and prescription depressants was clustered in the early part of these juveniles' twelfth year, with only half moving



Table 2  
**Drug Use Histories: Mean Age at Onset and Percent of Sample Involved**

	Mean Age	Percent Involved
Alcohol		
First use	7.1	100.0%
First high	8.0	98.8%
First regular use	8.9	61.4%
Marijuana		
First use	9.9	100.0%
First regular use	11.0	100.0%
Cocaine		
First use	11.6	98.4%
First regular use	12.4	94.5%
Heroin		
First use	12.1	58.7%
First regular use	11.9	19.7%
Prescription Depressants		
First use	12.3	86.2%
First regular use	12.8	51.6%
Speed		
First use	12.4	50.0%
First regular use	12.7	4.7%
Crack		
First use	12.8	96.9%
First regular use	13.3	84.3%

on to the regular use of depressants, 20% reporting the regular use of heroin, and less than 5% using speed regularly. Some 96.9% reported experimentation with crack, however, at a mean age of 12.8 years, with the overwhelming majority of these moving on to the regular use of crack within but a few months.

#### *Drug Use and Crack Business Involvement*

Current drug use rates were also high, but varied considerably by degree of participation in the crack trade. Of the 254 youths under analysis here, all but 50 (19.7%) had some type of involvement in the crack business. Twenty subjects (7.9%) had only "minor" involvement, since they sold the drug only to their friends, worked for dealers as lookouts and spotters for dealers, or steered customers to one of Miami's approximately 700 crack houses. Most of the youths (138 or 54.3%) were crack "dealers," involved directly in the retail sale of crack. Finally, 46 subjects (18.1%) were designated as "dealer +," since they not only sold the drug, but also manufactured, smuggled, or wholesaled it.

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By examining drug use within the context of a youth's level of involvement with the crack business (none, minor, dealer, and dealer +), a number of relationships quickly become evident. As indicated in Table 3, for example, the greater a youth's involvement in the crack business, the more likely was the daily or at least regular use of such drugs as marijuana, depressants, and crack. Whereas 66% of the youths with no business involvement were daily users of marijuana, this proportion increased to 80% for those with minor involvement, 91% for dealers, and 100% for those in the dealer + group. The most pronounced differences were apparent with crack use, with the proportions using crack daily ranging from 2% of those with no crack business involvement, to 87% of those in the dealer + group.

Table 3  
Current Drug Use by Crack Business Involvement

		Crack Business Involvement				Total Sample (N = 254)
		None (N = 50)	Minor (N = 20)	Dealer (N = 138)	Dealer + (N = 46)	
Alcohol						
	Daily	4.0%	5.0%	7.2%	8.7%	6.7%
	Regular	14.0%	15.0%	39.9%	56.5%	35.8%
	Occasional	78.8%	80.0%	48.6%	34.8%	54.3%
	No use	4.0%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	3.1%
Marijuana						
	Daily	66.0%	80.0%	91.3%	100.0%	87.0%
	Regular	30.0%	20.0%	6.5%	0.0%	11.0%
	Occasional	4.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	2.0%
Prescription-type Depressants						
	Regular	2.0%	5.0%	32.6%	50.0%	27.6%
	Occasional	56.0%	55.0%	52.9%	36.9%	50.8%
	No use	42.0%	40.0%	14.5%	13.0%	21.7%
Cocaine Powder						
	Daily	10.0%	15.0%	2.9%	0.0%	4.7%
	Regular	44.0%	60.0%	21.0%	8.7%	26.4%
	Occasional	36.0%	25.0%	76.1%	91.3%	66.9%
	No use	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Crack						
	Daily	2.0%	5.0%	70.3%	87.0%	54.7%
	Regular	26.0%	50.0%	15.2%	6.5%	18.5%
	Occasional	48.0%	45.0%	14.5%	6.5%	22.1%
	No use	24.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%
All Forms Of Cocaine*						
	Daily	16.0%	30.0%	82.6%	95.7%	67.7%
	Regular	58.0%	70.0%	17.4%	2.2%	26.8%
	Occasional	16.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	3.5%
	No use	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%

\*Includes cocaine, crack, and/or basuco (coca paste).

When viewing all forms of cocaine collectively, the percentage of daily users increases from 16% of those with no involvement to 95.7% in the dealer + group. These figures reflect total cocaine use, regardless of form, and hence include regular cocaine, crack, and *basuco*.

Basuco, also known as "susuko," "coca paste," "pasta basica de cocina," or just simply "pasta" (Jeri 1984), is an intermediate product in the transformation of coca leaves into cocaine. It is typically smoked straight, or in cigarettes mixed with tobacco or marijuana. The practice became popular in the coca-growing regions of South America beginning in the early 1970s. Basuco was readily available, inexpensive, had a high cocaine content, and was absorbed rapidly when smoked. As the phenomenon was studied, it was quickly realized the smoking of basuco was likely far more dangerous than any other form of cocaine use. In addition to cocaine, basuco contains traces of all the chemicals used to initially process the coca leaves — kerosene, sulfuric acid, methanol, benzoic acid, and the oxidized products of these solvents, plus any number of other alkaloids that are present in the coca leaf (Almeida 1978). One analysis undertaken in Colombia in 1986 found, in addition to all of these chemicals, traces of various talcs, brick dust, ether, and leaded gasoline acid (Bogota *El Tiempo*, 19 June 1986: 2D). In this sample, 10.6% (N=27) of the youths reported having some experience with the drug, and 3.1% (N=8) reported occasional use during the 90-day period prior to interview.

The only data in Table 3 not following the same general trend of more frequent use as involvement in the crack market increases appears in the proportions of daily users of cocaine powder. None in the dealer + group and only 2.9% of the dealers were daily users of this form of cocaine, and only 8.7% and 21%, respectively, were "regular" users. Consequently, there were considerably more daily and regular users of this drug among those having little or no involvement in the crack trade. One reason for this difference becomes clear in Table 4.

When the 246 youths who had some experience with both powder and crack cocaine were asked to indicate their two most preferred drugs, every one of them named cocaine, in one form or another; marijuana was almost as popular a choice. These preferences remained constant regardless of level of involvement in the crack market. Differences clearly emerged, however, with preferences for crack versus cocaine powder — the greater one's involvement with the crack business, the greater the preference for crack over powder.

These differences can be explained in a number of ways. First, as shown in Table 4, some two-thirds of those with no crack business involvement and three-fifths of those with minor involvement had bad experiences with crack. Almost the reverse was the case with those in the dealer and dealer + groups. More importantly, however, market access determines a customer's ability to obtain a desired commodity, regardless of whether that commodity is diamonds, truffles, chocolate-covered grasshoppers, or crack-cocaine.



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Table 4  
Drug Preferences and Bad Crack Highs for the 246  
Youths Who Ever Tried Both Crack and Cocaine Powder

	Crack Business Involvement				Total Ever Tried Crack And Cocaine (n = 246)
	None (n = 42)	Minor (n = 20)	Dealer (n = 138)	Dealer + (n = 46)	
Two Most Preferred Drugs					
Cocaine (any form)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Marijuana	95.2%	90.0%	94.2%	95.7%	94.3%
Alcohol	2.4%	5.0%	2.9%	4.3%	3.3%
Heroin	2.4%	5.0%	2.9%	0.0%	2.4%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cocaine Preference					
Crack-cocaine	28.6%	55.0%	86.2%	93.5%	75.2%
Powdered cocaine	69.0%	30.0%	9.4%	4.3%	20.3%
No preference	2.4%	15.0%	4.3%	2.2%	4.5%
Bad Highs on Crack					
Never	33.3%	40.0%	66.7%	71.7%	59.8%
Once or twice	45.2%	40.0%	29.7%	26.1%	32.5%
3 + times	21.4%	20.0%	3.6%	2.2%	7.7%

Table 5  
Getting Paid in Crack and Paying for Crack, Among Crack Users

	Crack Business Involvement				Total Sample (n = 242)
	None (n = 38)	Minor (n = 20)	Dealer (n = 138)	Dealer + (n = 46)	
Paid in Crack for Dealing, Last 12 Mos					
Never	44.7%	10.0%	7.2%	2.2%	12.4%
Occasionally	39.5%	55.0%	8.0%	6.5%	16.5%
Often (6 + times)	15.8%	35.0%	84.8%	91.3%	71.1%
Money Spent on Crack for Personal Use, Last 90 Days					
\$2400 or more	0.0%	0.0%	36.2%	52.2%	13.2%
\$1000 or more	2.6%	0.0%	70.3%	93.5%	58.3%
Median amount	\$.75	\$225	\$2000	\$2500	\$1650

This access, furthermore, went beyond the obvious one of dealers having convenient opportunities to purchase crack for personal consumption. As Table 5 indicates, almost nine out of ten crack users actually received crack directly on at least an occasional basis, as part of their pay for drug sales. This was reported as a *frequent* occurrence by almost all (85%+) of the subjects in the two crack dealer groups. Furthermore, the majority of crack users who had only minor or no crack business involvement were paid in crack at least sometimes, even though their dealing entailed some drug other than crack for all of the no-involvement group and unknown numbers of the minor-involvement group.

The last part of Table 5 shows, however, that being paid in crack for dealing was not sufficient to support the crack use patterns of most crack dealers. In fact, the greater the crack business involvement, the more money was spent buying crack for personal use. The money rarely came from legal sources, since only 6.7% (N=17) of the 254 youths were employed at the time of interview. Rather, as the following section indicates, the primary source of this money was profit-making crime of all sorts.

#### *Crack Business Involvement and Other Crime*

Table 6 suggests a clear relationship between a youth's participation in the crack business and his or her overall crime and arrest history. It would appear, for example, that crack dealers, compared to youths with minor or no involvement in crack distribution, were markedly younger when they first committed a crime, and when first arrested, adjudicated, or incarcerated. Moreover, the greater the involvement in the crack business, the higher the likelihood of a youth's having been adjudicated delinquent or incarcerated at some time in his or her career.

In terms of the extent of criminal involvement during the twelve months prior to interview, once again, the greater the participation in crack distribution the greater the level of other crime commission. Most notably, as indicated in Table 7, greater proportions of those closely tied to the crack business were involved in major felonies and property offenses than those more distant from the crack trade. The major exception to this pattern involved the vice offenses, due to the small percentage of females in the sample (15%), in combination with the fact that females accounted for the majority of these offenses. Overall, females were distributed in the crack business categories as follows: "None" (N=13), "Minor" (N=1), "Dealer" (N=22), and "Dealer+" (N=2). The distribution of vice involvement across the crack-business categories thus reflects the number of females who happened to fall into each category.

In terms of absolute numbers, these 254 youths were responsible for a total of 223,439 criminal offenses during the twelve months prior to interview. Some 61.1% of these offenses were drug sales, 11.4% were vice offenses, 23.3% were property offenses, and 4.2% were major felonies including robberies, assaults,



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Table 6  
Crime and Arrest Related Histories: Mean Age and Percent Involved

	Crack Business Involvement				Total Sample (n = 254)
	None (n = 50)	Minor (n = 20)	Dealer (n = 138)	Dealer + (n = 46)	
<b>Drug Sale</b>					
First marijuana	12.6	12.3	10.1	9.9	10.6
% ever	86.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	97.2%
First other	13.1	13.1	11.2	11.3	11.7
% ever	70.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	94.1%
Start regular	13.7	13.4	11.4	11.5	12.0
% ever	84.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	96.9%
<b>Theft</b>					
First time	12.0	12.6	10.8	10.7	11.2
% ever	94.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.8%
Start regular	13.4	13.5	11.7	11.7	12.0
% ever	74.0%	55.0%	89.9%	100.0%	85.8%
<b>Crime (earliest)*</b>					
First time	11.7	12.1	9.8	9.7	10.3
Start regular	13.2	13.2	11.2	11.2	11.7
% ever regular	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Arrest</b>					
First	12.8	13.1	10.6	10.4	11.1
% ever	68.0%	100.0%	98.6%	93.5%	91.7%
<b>Adjudication</b>					
First arrest resulting in adjudication	14.1	14.6	10.9	10.9	11.3
% ever	20.0%	45.0%	84.8%	93.5%	70.5%
<b>Incarceration</b>					
First	14.2	15.0	12.6	12.8	12.8
% ever	12.0%	25.0%	61.6%	71.7%	50.8%
<b>Treatment for Drug/Alcohol</b>					
First entry	N/A	N/A	13.2	13.0	13.1
% ever	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	8.7%	3.9%

\*In each case (first, regular) age at time of first such occurrence, whether for drug sales, theft, prostitution, or robbery (the latter taken as "regular" at the tenth occurrence rather than at starting 3+ times/week).

Table 7  
Involvement in Specific Crimes During the Twelve Months Prior to Interview

	Crack Business Involvement				<i>Total Sample</i> (n = 254)
	<i>None</i> (n = 50)	<i>Minor</i> (n = 20)	<i>Dealer</i> (n = 138)	<i>Dealer +</i> (n = 46)	
Major Felonies	44.0%	65.0%	87.7%	95.7%	78.7%
Robbery	12.0%	40.0%	66.7%	73.9%	55.1%
Assaults	4.0%	0.0%	8.0%	17.4%	8.3%
Burglary	24.0%	25.0%	70.3%	91.3%	61.4%
Mot. Vehicle Theft	30.0%	35.0%	57.2%	73.9%	53.1%
Property Offenses	94.0%	95.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.4%
Shoplifting	90.0%	95.0%	100.0%	100.0%	97.6%
Theft Fr. Vehicle	34.0%	30.0%	75.4%	84.8%	65.4%
Pickpocketing	2.0%	5.0%	13.0%	10.9%	9.8%
Prostitute's Theft	8.0%	5.0%	20.3%	4.3%	13.8%
Other Larcenies	4.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	1.2%
Con Games	6.0%	5.0%	53.6%	63.0%	42.1%
Forgery (any)*	10.0%	5.0%	60.1%	73.9%	48.4%
Stolen Goods*	76.0%	85.0%	94.9%	97.8%	90.9%
Prop. Destructn*	16.0%	0.0%	35.5%	34.8%	28.7%
Other Crimes	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.4%
Vice Offenses	18.0%	5.0%	33.3%	17.4%	25.2%
Prostitution	18.0%	5.0%	22.5%	6.5%	17.3%
Procuring	4.0%	5.0%	30.4%	15.2%	20.5%
Drug Business (Any Drug)	86.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	97.2%

\* Forgery (any) includes checks, credit cards, and prescriptions. Stolen goods includes selling, trading, and buying to resell. Property destruction includes arson, but is almost entirely vandalism.

burglaries, and motor vehicle thefts. As indicated in Table 8, the relationship between crack trade participation and level of other criminal involvement is quite clear. The mean number of crimes per subject during the twelve-month period ranges from 375.9 for those with no involvement in the crack business, to 1419.1 offenses for those in the dealer + category. Furthermore, although it did not hold for vice offenses, this pattern was apparent for major felonies, property crimes, and drug business offenses.

Table 8 also indicates that although less than 1% of the 223,439 offenses resulted in arrest, some 87.4% of the sample were arrested during the twelve months prior to interview. The fact that the subjects were youths, that 358 (88.4%) of the 405 crimes resulting in arrest were either drug, vice, or petty

Table 8  
Crimes and Arrests During the Twelve Months Prior to Interview

	Crack Business Involvement				<i>Total Sample (n = 254)</i>
	<i>None (n = 50)</i>	<i>Minor (n = 20)</i>	<i>Dealer (n = 138)</i>	<i>Dealer + (n = 46)</i>	
Number Done					
Major felonies	444	164	5,857	2,938	9,403
Property offenses	5,479	3,937	32,360	10,203	51,979
Drug business	9,785	6,630	70,365	49,766	136,546
Vice offenses	3,115	2,020	18,006	2,370	25,511
Total offenses	18,823	12,751	126,588	65,277	223,439
Mean Number per Subject					
Major felonies	8.9	8.2	42.4	63.9	37.0
Property offenses	109.6	196.9	234.5	221.8	204.6
Drug business	195.7	331.5	509.9	1081.9	537.6
Vice offenses	62.3	101.0	130.5	51.5	100.4
Total offenses	375.9	637.6	917.3	1419.1	879.6
% Arrested For					
Major felonies	6.0%	10.0%	17.4%	26.1%	16.1%
Property offenses	30.0%	25.0%	46.4%	32.6%	39.0%
Drug business	46.0%	90.0%	76.1%	58.7%	68.1%
Vice offenses	4.0%	5.0%	6.5%	2.2%	5.1%
Any Offense	64.0%	100.0%	94.9%	84.8%	87.4%

property offenses, and that Miami-Dade has a seriously overburdened criminal justice system, explains why these youths were still in the free community at the time of interview.

### Discussion

Recent media reports appear to be correct in assessing youthful involvement in the crack business as a significant crime trend in some locales. If anything, media reports may underestimate its importance since the crack trade is related to not only heavier crack use but also more use of other drugs; young crack dealers commonly violate not merely drug laws but also those protecting persons and property; and the crack business appears criminogenic in ways that go beyond any potential it may have as a *lure* into crime.

This last point is particularly well illustrated by the sample described in this paper. For these youths, money to be made in the crack business was *not* the



motive for initial criminal activities. Future research may show such cases, but as it happened, crack was not widely available until most of these subjects had been engaged in some sort of regular crime for at least a year or two. Due to this timing, most actually sold marijuana before ever using crack. This means that, crime initiation aside, the crack business is criminogenic in that it leads serious delinquents to become even more seriously involved in crime.

In particular, it should be noted that these data suggest that it is not drug sales in general but specifically the crack business which is so highly problematic. Tables 7 and 8 show that 86% of the no-crack-business group were selling *some* drug, averaging around 200 sales per year. But the involvement of this group in major felonies and petty property crime was distinctly lower than that of youths with even minor involvement in the crack business, let alone compared to that of crack dealers. At the other end of the scale, one might expect that more crack trade participation would lead to less time for, or less interest in, other crime. However, there is only a slight drop-off in petty property crime for the dealer + group compared to other dealers, and for the most serious offenses — major felonies — the dealer + group averaged nearly 50% more crimes per offender than other crack dealers, who in turn did nearly five times as many as subjects with minor or no crack trade participation.

So what explains the criminogenic effects of the crack trade? The general drugs-crime literature (Gandossey et al. 1980; Research Triangle Institute 1976) suggests that one factor is the interactive pattern typical of crime-drug relationships for addictive, expensive drugs: crime finances use, use encourages more use, more use encourages more crime. Crack certainly appears eligible for this general pattern since it is highly addictive and, although cheaper than other forms of cocaine use, it is expensive for unemployed users with anything more than a sporadic use pattern. At retail prices, a big crack habit — dozens or even scores of hits per day — can be at least as expensive as a big heroin habit, since the latter entails considerably fewer daily doses.

One major problem with the crack trade is that it facilitates crack addiction. Every single youth interviewed for this study who was involved in the crack business to even a minor degree was a crack user; of the crack dealers, over 70% used crack every day while under 15% used it less than regularly. Furthermore, even though greater crack trade participation meant more crack earned directly, as payment for drug sales, it also meant heavier use patterns, so that crack dealers were paying an average of over \$8,000 a year to purchase crack for personal use. The fit to the classic crime-drug interactive cycle seems clear: crack dealing finances crack use, crack use encourages more crack use, and more crack use requires more profit-making crimes of all sorts to support an ever growing addictive use pattern.

To the degree that one driving force for this cycle is indeed crack use, one possibility for breaking the cycle is forced intervention into the addiction pattern. This requires that these youths be located, but the criminal justice

system is, in fact, finding them: 92% of the total sample had been arrested at some time (true for almost 98% — 199/204 — of those with any crack business involvement at all). Moreover, over 87% had been arrested just within the twelve months prior to interview. This is a much higher percentage than that typical of young adult heroin users in street studies ten or twenty years ago. Although these youths have been located, intervention has not occurred. Fewer than 4% of this extremely drug-involved sample had *ever* been in drug treatment. This reflects not only an overburdened juvenile court system but also inadequate treatment resources for adolescents. Both problems are commonplace across the nation.

An additional criminogenic aspect of the crack business — and another reason why compulsory intervention is required — is the crack trade's strong attractiveness as a lifestyle to the youths involved in it. This fascination is reminiscent of descriptions applied some years ago to the heroin-user subculture: the joys of hustling and "taking care of business," the thrills of a "cops and robbers" street life (Preble and Casey; Sutter 1969). Interviews with young crack dealers give the impression that the crack trade is, for them, not only all this but much more. Demand for crack makes dealing it remarkably easy and profitable — apparently much more so than selling heroin used to be. Further, crack business networks permit upward mobility, and therefore, a feeling of achievement; movement up the ranks is rare for heroin dealers. A likely additional factor is that the rewards for crack dealing include a drug that makes its users feel not merely unworried but omnipotent. Finally, the sheer youth of these young crack dealers means that dangers — street violence, arrest, overdose and potential death — are perceived with particularly giddy enthusiasm as challenges to be outwitted and overcome. Participation in the crack trade, in short, provides its own kind of intoxication for the youths entangled in it.

In conclusion, the crack-crime dynamic, at least for adolescent crack dealers, represents an intensified version of the classic drug-crime relationship originally described for (adult) heroin users. Both patterns rest on addiction, but for crack, addiction onset appears to be more rapid while maximum physiological intake — and thus financial requirements — seem more unlimited. For both, sales of the drug of choice are the most common criminal offense, but the rewards of the crack trade go well beyond those of "getting by" through heroin dealing. Finally, while both patterns ensnare youth in their formative years, young crack dealers are astonishingly more involved in a drugs-crime lifestyle at an alarmingly younger age.

### NOTES

1. See *New York Times*, 29 November 1985; *Newsweek*, 16 June 1986; *USA Today*, 16 June 1986; *Newsweek*, 30 June 1986; *New York Times*, 25 August 1986; *New York Times*, 24 November 1986; *Newsweek*, 27 April 1987; *New York Times*, 20 March 1988; *Miami Herald* ("Neighbors" supplement), 24 April 1988; *New York Times*, 23 June 1988; *Time*, 5 December 1988; *New York Doctor*, 10 April 1989; *U.S. News & World Report*, 10 April 1989.
2. "Index" offenses, in the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports*, include homicide, forcible rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

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