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# We Trust You, But Not *That* Much: Examining Police–Black Clergy Partnerships to Reduce Youth Violence

**Rod K. Brunson, Anthony A. Braga,  
David M. Hureau and Kashea Pegram**

This paper examines activist black clergy involvement in local youth violence reduction initiatives and efforts to improve police-minority community relations in Boston, Massachusetts. In-depth interviews were conducted with activist black clergy, community organizers, and Boston Police Department (BPD) managers. Study findings highlight how the work of a specific group of black ministers supports that of BPD and vice versa. The research suggests that police-black clergy partnerships can improve police legitimacy in minority communities and enhance informal social control elements of youth violence prevention strategies.

**Keywords** activist black clergy; police-minority community relations; youth violence

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## Introduction

Police departments, unfortunately, often do not have strong relationships with community members in disadvantaged, minority neighborhoods where violent crime problems tend to concentrate. Scholars have long recognized the persistent problem of fragile police–minority community relations. In fact, prior research concerning citizens' attitudes toward police has consistently found that blacks report more dissatisfaction with and distrust of the police than their counterparts from other racial groups (see, e.g. Skogan & Frydl, 2004; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). This is an important concern because neighborhood residents are more apt to assist police in the performance of their duties if they view the police favorably. There are many historical reasons for the poorer assessments of the police held by African-Americans; these include the harms generated by over- and under-policing black neighborhoods, a lack of diversity in several police departments, the concentration of police misconduct in black neighborhoods, and other concerning issues disproportionately affecting African-Americans (see, e.g. Brunson & Miller, 2006; Kane, 2002; Terrill & Reisig, 2003). Indeed, recognizing these persistent problems, many contemporary community policing programs are focused on stimulating improved relationships with minority communities.

In many African-American communities, the black church functions as a central social institution. Beyond serving the religious and spiritual needs of parishioners, several black churches are involved in community organizing, social service activities, and political action (see DuBois, 1903; Frazier, 1963). Whereas the historical significance of the black church is well documented, scholars have paid less attention to its role as a potent social institution in community crime control and prevention efforts. It stands to reason that numerous police-community initiatives would be connected to faith-based institutions given that "... African American residents of urban disadvantage neighborhoods create their own civil institutions—the church being one—to deal with community-based problems" (Mears & Corkan, 2007, p. 1378). While there are some promising case studies (e.g. Mears, 2002; Winship & Berrien, 1999), the available research has not elicited the kind of information that would allow scholars, community leaders, and policy-makers to acquire deeper understandings of the nature and extent of these police-clergy partnerships.

The current study examines the relationships between activist black clergy and police managers involved in youth violence reduction initiatives and efforts to improve police–minority community relations in Boston, Massachusetts. We conducted in-depth interviews with three key constituencies: Boston Police Department (BPD) managers, Boston TenPoint Coalition (TPC) black ministers, and community organizers working in disadvantaged Boston neighborhoods. It is important to note from the outset that our study does not take a position on whether faith-based initiatives have the potential to reduce criminal behavior, whether spirituality is a key ingredient to increasing community cohesion,

or any other issues in the broader debate on religion and crime. Our inquiry centers on understanding the advantages and challenges of police partnerships with leaders of a ubiquitous social institution in black neighborhoods—the black church.

This study highlights that the degree to which community policing efforts are successful hinges largely on a police department's ability to forge and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with organizations that can effectively broker trust between neighborhood residents and police. Further, our results suggest that police–clergy partnerships, in particular, have the potential to improve police–community relations and garner community support for crime control initiatives. The broader implications are that police administrators should work to identify key intermediaries to community-based organizations and local social institutions that could deliver critical social control elements to police crime prevention strategies. Finally, we recognize that not all black churches will “answer the call,” instead crime control efforts will likely be led by a small, but active few that have a disposition and capacity for civic action, making the “identification” aspect all the more important.

### Black Churches, Crime, and the Police

Scholars have long recognized the prominent role that black churches<sup>1</sup> have played in various facets of African-Americans' lives (DuBois, 1903; Frazier, 1963). In fact, commentators have consistently identified black churches as important social institutions for its members—beginning with slavery, during emancipation, throughout the Civil Rights era, and in contemporary campaigns for social justice (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Cavendish, 2000; Lincoln, 1974). Thus, black churches have shouldered the weighty responsibility for attending to the purposeful and systematic exclusion of African-Americans from full participation in many segments of society (Cavendish, 2000; Lincoln, 1974; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). Further, a number of historians have credited black churches for effective organizing, while simultaneously accepting responsibility for parishioners' well-being beyond the four walls of places of worship (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). For example, Cavendish (2000) notes, “African Americans have historically looked to their churches as their chief source of culture, music, values, community cohesion, and political activism” (pp. 66–67).

The available research suggests that black churches can be important sources of social capital and could serve as important elements of “collective efficacy” in African-American neighborhoods. Collective efficacy is generally

1. Although we make frequent reference to black churches, parishioners, and clergy, we are fully aware and appreciate the diversity that exists among them. Further, we attempted to capture such religious diversity within the black community in the study design.

defined as “social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good” (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997, p. 918) and has been revealed to be inversely related to high levels of violent crime in neighborhoods. In disadvantaged neighborhoods where social control mechanisms offered by the family, school, and other institutions may be weakened, the social policy implication is to facilitate black churches, either alone or in partnership with secular institutions, to exert informal social control or enhance shared expectations of residents in a way that controls and prevents serious violence.

Efforts to address delinquency have led to pioneering research concerning the role of the church as a protective factor that helps to build and strengthen neighborhood social networks.<sup>2</sup> For example, in measuring concepts, such as one’s religiosity and church involvement in relation to delinquency, scholars have found that youth who are more active in church are also less likely to engage in various forms of both serious and minor delinquency (Johnson, Jang, De Li, & Larson, 2000; Johnson, Larson, De Li, & Jang, 2000). Launched in 2000, the Amachi mentoring project in Philadelphia, a collaboration of inner-city congregations (mostly black churches), Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Prison Fellowship (a national prison ministry), Public/Private Ventures, and others, was designed to mentor the children of prisoners with the intent of breaking the cycle of imprisonment in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Johnson, 2011; Jucovy, 2003). By 2002, Amachi was operating through volunteers from 42 churches and some 517 children had been paired with mentors. According to Johnson (2011), 82% of the mentors were African-American and 8% were Latino. Most striking, 34% of the mentors were African-American males—a critically important, but difficult to recruit, group of volunteers in inner-city communities.

Forming effective working partnerships with black churches seems to be a logical mechanism through which police executives can strive to build better relationships with the black community. Black communities have a much higher density of churches per 100,000 residents than white communities (Sampson, 2012).<sup>3</sup> In domestic and international polls, many measures suggest that African-Americans are consistently among the most religious people in the world (Gallup & Castelli, 1989). In fact, relative to white Americans,

2. A voluminous literature exists regarding the relationship between religion and individual offending (see, e.g. Freeman, 1986; Hirschi & Stark, 1969; Johnson, Jang et al., 2000; Johnson, Larson et al., 2000). As mentioned at the outset of this article, an analysis of this relationship is not the focal point of the current study. However, in a recent systemic review examining the relationship between religious involvement and delinquency, Johnson (2011) found that the vast majority of studies “report an inverse beneficial relationship between religion and some measure of crime and delinquency” and that hardly any studies linked religion with a “harmful outcome” (p. 78). Reflecting on this body of research, Cullen (2010) argues that the study of religion should be an integral part of the criminological enterprise and a vibrant subfield within the discipline.

3. Please note that we are not conflating density with religiosity. The density of black churches is in part—if not mostly explained—by low-overhead costs and the presence of “storefront” churches. African-American communities in many cities are overwhelmingly disadvantaged, with exceptionally low real estate costs.

African-Americans “attend church more frequently, participate in other church-related affairs more often, and belong to more church-affiliated organizations” (Ellison & Sherkat, 1995, p. 1415). Drawing on the civil rights literature, it would seem that black churches represent potentially powerful local social institutions to carry out community-based actions to address violent crime problems.

It is important to recognize that one area of concern among many black church leaders has been persistent, tenuous police–minority community relations (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). Graphic images of untoward police brutality from the Civil Rights era have for many Americans come to symbolize the longstanding, troubled relationship between police and black citizens (Bass, 2001; Websdale, 2001). Further, black church leaders routinely occupied the frontlines of some of the most violent clashes between police and African-American protesters, reflecting a regrettable but undeniable part of US history. An abundant body of research has revealed that residents of disadvantaged urban areas routinely bear the brunt of frequent, unwelcome police contacts (e.g. arrests, pat downs, and pedestrian stops) (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Weitzer & Brunson, 2009). Specifically, recurring, negative police experiences have dire consequences for the legitimacy of law enforcement officers and public confidence in the criminal justice system (Brunson, 2007; Brunson & Weitzer, 2009).

It stands to reason then that prolonged levels of heightened racial animus between neighborhood residents and local police also have dire implications for police–community relations and black citizens’ perceptions of aggressive crime-control efforts. And while perhaps not rising to the same level in seriousness or egregiousness of previously documented incidents of police malfeasance, there is no shortage of contemporary, unsettling accounts of black persons’ alleged mistreatment at the hands of police (Brunson, 2007; Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, & Simons, 2009). The widespread diffusion of these unsettling narratives increases the likelihood that neighborhood residents will come to view local policing initiatives as racially biased (Brunson, 2007; Stewart et al., 2009; Weitzer, 2002).

Damaged police–minority community relations have the potential to undermine police legitimacy and thwart their ability to implement effective crime control initiatives. For example, people who believe that officers routinely engage in discriminatory acts express less trust in the police (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004). Citizens are more willing to support officers’ crime fighting efforts, however, when they believe that police will dispense justice equitably (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Interestingly, the importance of procedural justice for increasing police legitimacy is also confirmed by individuals who report having unwelcome police interactions but express greater satisfaction following such encounters if they believe the officer treated them fairly (Tyler & Folger, 1980).

Crawford, Lister, Blackburn, and Burnett’s (2005) research on plural policing in England and Wales is relevant to the current study (see also, Crawford,

2008; Crawford, Blackburn, Lister, & Shepherd, 2004). Specifically, they note that, “good community consultation at both strategic and operational levels was identified as important in establishing and maintaining community engagement and helping to build constructive and informed relationships” (2005, p. x). Thus, Crawford et al. (2005) observe that high levels of police–community engagement have the potential to increase residents’ willingness to come forward with information on local crime.

While there is *prima facie* evidence that black churches could serve as important partners to the police in their pursuit of improved police–community relations and more effective crime control strategies, there is little systematic research that specifically examines these partnerships. Research in Chicago, however, suggests there are perhaps two divergent narratives about the potential of black clergy in mobilizing communities to control crime. In an effort to reduce youth violence rates on Chicago’s West Side and strengthen police–community relationships, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and several hundred African-American churches organized prayer vigils in May 1997 (Mears, 2002; Mears & Corkan, 2007). These prayer vigils were credited with establishing stronger working relationships between clergy and the police, enhancing police legitimacy in the black community, and improving police officer perceptions of West Side residents. The West Side prayer vigil was also credited with initiating a critical rethinking of the CPD’s community policing strategy as the City of Chicago became more interested in supporting similar local grassroots events involving churches and faith-based institutions (Mears & Corkan, 2007). Collaborations between police and churches were argued to enhance the community efficacy of poor minority neighborhoods in Chicago. Similarly, Skogan (2006) reported that about one-third of all community policing beat meetings in 1998 were held in churches, especially in predominately African-American communities where the link between the community policing program and churches was observed to be particularly strong.

Sampson (2012), however, suggests that black churches may deliver little in terms of collective community-based action. He specifically examined whether the density of churches and other community-based nonprofit organizations impacted the collective action underway in Chicago’s predominately black communities. While the density of nonprofit organizations was positively related to collective efficacy, Sampson (2012) found “... that the density of the churches is *negatively* related to collective efficacy and one of its core indicators—trust” (p. 205). In explaining this surprising result, Sampson (2012) suggests that the impact and legacy of concentrated disadvantage in black communities has made it difficult for churches alone to establish the trust among local residents needed to facilitate collective action. Moreover, he suggests that just because a church is located in a particular community does not mean that its interests coincide with that community or that its parishioners necessarily live in that community. Interestingly, Sampson (2012) also reported that religious leaders in Chicago had stronger inter-institutional connections

to politicians when compared to connections with leaders in community, business, education, and law enforcement organizations.

McRoberts (2003) examined black churches in Boston's Four Corners neighborhood, one of the densest neighborhoods for churches in the city. He found that most African-American churches in Four Corners were led and attended by "outsiders" with little investment in the surrounding neighborhood. Rather, these churches were located in Four Corners due to cheap rents. McRoberts (2003) further noted that most of the congregations were not actively engaged in neighborhood revitalization or improvement efforts. In fact, in terms of social and physical disorder, many of the structures remain shuttered during the week, looking uninviting and offering little in terms of additional eyes on the street and potential for improved community guardianship.

### *Boston's police–black clergy partnership*

Boston received national acclaim for its innovative approach to preventing youth violence in the 1990s (Butterfield, 1996; Witkin, 1997). The well-known Operation Ceasefire initiative was an interagency violence intervention that focused enforcement and social service resources on a small number of gang-involved offenders at the heart of the city's youth violence problem (Kennedy, Piehl, & Braga, 1996). The Ceasefire "pulling levers" focused deterrence strategy was associated with a near two-thirds drop in youth homicide in the late 1990s (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001). While the sudden decrease in youth homicide was surprising and certainly newsworthy, the Boston approach was also noted for its extraordinary police–community relationship spearheaded by a small network of activist black clergy (Berrien & Winship, 2002; Winship & Berrien, 1999). In his review of the so-called "Boston Miracle," Johnson (2011) further credits these black ministers with reducing complaints against police by 60% during the 1990s. Given the history of poor race relations in the City of Boston, it was remarkable that any group of black community members were able to forge such a highly productive partnership with the BPD.

The development and trajectory of Boston's unusual police–clergy partnership has been extensively documented elsewhere (Braga, Hureau, & Winship, 2008; Braga & Winship, 2006; Berman & Fox, 2010; Berrien & Winship, 2002; Winship, 2005; Winship & Berrien, 1999). However, a brief summary is necessary here. A series of well-publicized scandals emanating from highly aggressive and indiscriminate policing tactics, poor management practices, and corruption led to an extensive overhaul of the BPD's command staff personnel, organizational structure, mission, and tactics during the early 1990s. A community policing plan was implemented and the Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF, initially known as the Anti-Gang Violence Unit) was created to disrupt ongoing gang conflicts and focus on more general youth violence prevention work. While these changes were important in creating an environment where



the police could collaborate with the community, residents of Boston's poor minority neighborhoods remained wary of and dissatisfied with a police department that had a long history of abusive and unfair treatment.

In 1992, a loosely allied group of activist black clergy formed the TPC after a gang invasion of the Morningstar Baptist Church. During a memorial for a slain rival gang member, mourners were attacked with knives and guns (Berrien & Winship, 2002; Winship & Berrien, 1999). In the wake of that outrage, TPC ministers decided they should attempt to prevent the youth in their community from joining gangs, and also that they needed to send an anti-violence message to all youth, whether gang-involved or not. The TPC initially included some 40 Boston-area churches with Reverends Jeffrey Brown, Raymond Hammond, and Eugene Rivers as its key leaders.<sup>4</sup>

Initially, the ministers assumed an adversarial role to the BPD and were highly critical in the public media of police efforts to prevent youth violence (Braga & Winship, 2006; Winship & Berrien, 1999). However, as TPC ministers worked the streets, they started to form effective relationships with particular YVSF officers and develop a shared understanding of the nature of youth violence in Boston: only a small number of youth in the neighborhoods were involved in violence, many of these gang-involved youth were better served by intervention and prevention strategies, and only a small number of these gang-involved youth needed to be removed from the streets through arrest and prosecution strategies.

While TPC ministers were not initially involved in the development of Operation Ceasefire, they soon played key roles in the implementation of the gang violence strategy and, more broadly, served as central brokers in the management of positive relationships between the BPD and Boston's minority community. Through their involvement in Ceasefire, TPC ministers became part of the process of determining which gang interventions would be done and when. In addition, they, along with others, gave gang members the message that they had a choice: stop the "gang banging" and they would be helped—with school, a job, family; continue and the full weight of the law (and the community) would come down on them, with every possible lever being used to see that they were incarcerated. The transparency and involvement in the enforcement process built trust and further solidified a functional working relationship between the community and the BPD. In turn, by engaging a process through which they were meaningfully and appropriately accountable to the community, the BPD created the political support, or "umbrella of legitimacy," that it needed to pursue more focused and perhaps more aggressive intervention than would have been possible otherwise (Winship & Berrien, 1999).

TPC ministers also worked with the BPD to manage negative publicity by the local media after several potentially explosive events ranging from the beating

4. We interviewed all three reverends and assigned them pseudonyms.

of a black undercover officer by uniformed police to the accidental death of a 75-year-old retired minister who suffered a fatal heart attack after a botched drug raid (Braga & Winship, 2006). In these cases, TPC ministers took two positions. First, they demanded that the police department take responsibility for its actions—investigate incidents thoroughly and hold those involved accountable. Second, after it was clear that the BPD was accepting responsibility, the ministers communicated to the community that the police were in fact reacting appropriately. This, in turn, prevented these situations from becoming racially explosive and provided the police with the continued political support they needed in order to undertake policy innovations, such as Ceasefire. The ministers also performed this dual role with regards to fatal police shootings, 8 of which occurred over a 22-month period between 2000 and 2002 (Winship, 2005).

The BPD–TPC partnership seems to offer a potentially powerful way for police departments to manage tenuous relationships with minority communities and, simultaneously, to enrich community-based responses to violent crime problems. While their operational capacity has waxed and waned over time (Braga et al., 2008), Boston TPC maintains its mission to end violence in Boston through the participation of faith-based institutions in citywide crime prevention efforts.<sup>5</sup> In addition to continuing its involvement in Operation Ceasefire, the TPC supports prisoner reentry initiatives, female delinquency prevention programs, and community crisis intervention teams.

It is important to note here that data used in previous narrative accounts of the BPD–TPC relationship were limited to small numbers of interviews with key clergy and police personnel, material from local and national media accounts, and a small number of ethnographic observations.<sup>6</sup> Research on Operation Ceasefire simply acknowledged TPC clergy as important partners in the interagency working group and provided a narrative account of their role in communications with gang-involved youth (see Kennedy et al., 1996; Braga et al., 2001). Based on these modest data collection efforts, a number of important policy-relevant claims have been made about the BPD–TPC relationship. In this study, we closely examine *how* these partnerships: (1) improved police legitimacy in black communities and (2) enhanced police crime prevention and control efforts. Finally, the existing literature on the BPD–TPC partnership does not examine the challenges involved in maintaining productive police–clergy working partnerships. Our research explicitly

5. <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/SPT/Programs/43>.

6. In their popular article on TPC in *The Public Interest*, Winship and Berrien (1999) do not specify any data collection methods or analytical techniques. Berrien and Winship (2002) mention observing police–clergy crime prevention meetings and conducting interviews with clergy, police officers, and others. However, they do not specify how many meetings were observed or how many individuals were interviewed. Newspaper articles are referenced throughout both papers. Personal communication with Christopher Winship (March 2012) suggests repeated interviews with three lead clergy (Hammond, Brown, and Rivers), routine presence at crime prevention meetings occurring at one faith-based organization (the Ella J. Baker House) during the mid to late 1990s, occasional interviews with other clergy and support staff, and interviews with a small number of BPD managers.

identifies some persistent issues that arise in the day-to-day work of these two very different groups.

### Study Setting and Methodology

Our research was framed as a qualitative case study of the contemporary BPD–TPC partnership with a focus on the three specific issues identified above. Case studies generally represent empirical research inquiries that investigate phenomena within their real-life contexts (Yin, 2009). Case studies provide in-depth examinations of people, groups, and events that facilitate description, exploration, and explanation. As such, the case study approach drawing upon extensive qualitative interviews with clergy, police, and community organizers was an appropriate method to learn more about how these partnerships improve police legitimacy, enhance community crime prevention efforts, and face the challenges that arise in managing these partnerships. However, given their tight focus on specific phenomena, case studies can have limited generalizability when extrapolating key findings to other people, places, and contexts. While our findings are limited to the study site and its current context, we believe that the careful documentation of the nature of police–black clergy partnerships in one setting can yield important insight on plausible steps that can be taken to address a persistent and ubiquitous problem present in most US cities—poor relationships between the police and minority communities.

The current study enjoys a design advantage over prior examinations of the BPD–TPC partnership, and in fact, most qualitative research of police–minority community relations. Specifically, data for this paper are drawn from systematic face-to-face interviews with 70 very knowledgeable individuals: 30 inter-faith TPC clergy, 30 BPD managers of varying rank and experience, and 10 community organizers working in disadvantaged, high-violence Boston neighborhoods. The interviews were conducted between spring 2012 and fall of 2012. All respondents were recruited with the assistance of community liaisons (for the clergy and community organizer interviews) and the BPD command staff (for police manager interviews). The research team also used snowball sampling procedures to enroll additional participants by obtaining the help of those previously interviewed to introduce other persons suitable for inclusion in the study. The interviews were voluntary, and civilian respondents were paid \$25 (in the form of a retail gift card) for their participation and promised strict confidentiality.<sup>7</sup>

Sampling was purposive: key informants were asked to identify and approach individuals for participation in the research, persons who were known to work in the study neighborhoods. The goal was to interview activist clergy, police managers, and community organizers, the vast majority of whom had decades

7. We were prohibited from compensating BPD managers.

of experience working in disadvantaged Boston neighborhoods as these individuals would likely have extensive knowledge regarding current and previous efforts to combat youth crime. Thus, sampling was designed to include three specific groups of persons with considerable experiential knowledge and insight regarding the foundation and evolution of the BPD–TPC partnership.

BPD managers were selected based on a priori knowledge that they had worked an assignment that would have put them in the position to partner with TPC clergy to address violent crime problems. These assignments included working in the YVSF, in the BPD School Police Unit, as a Community Service Officer, as a member of the Safe Street Teams,<sup>8</sup> and as a Captain or Lieutenant Detective in a BPD district that provides police services in high violent crime areas.

Few studies have offered an in-depth examination of whether and if so, how the work of the police supports the mission of black churches and vice versa. Specifically, we asked a series of questions about the nature of police–clergy relationships in Boston and probed respondents for guidance regarding how best to strengthen these relationships. Our study allowed for a detailed examination of these issues with three groups of constituents. The interview schedule was semi-structured, consisting of both closed- and open-ended questions that allow for considerable exploration.<sup>9</sup> We sought to improve reliability by cross-checking and probing study participants' responses to the interview questions. Interviews lasted for approximately one hour and were conducted in private spaces. Except when respondents refused, the interviews were digitally recorded (audio only, however), transcribed, and analyzed by the authors.

In the analysis, we selected statements that illustrated themes consistently found throughout the data. The quotes used were not atypical, with the exception of a few issues that we indicate a small number of respondents mentioned. We were also careful throughout the data analysis to ensure that the emerging themes correctly reflected respondents' descriptions. Thus, the research team utilized grounded theory methods to identify recurrent topics in addition to less common but salient issues (Strauss, 1987).

## Study Participants

### *Boston police department*

Ninety percent of police respondents were male ( $N = 27$ ) and slightly more than 73% were white ( $N = 22$ ). The respondents ranged from 35 to 63 years old

8. The BPD Safe Street Team program assigns teams of officers (1 sergeant and 6 patrol officers) to persistent violent crime hot spots in Boston on a permanent basis. These officers are required to patrol on foot and/or bicycles in the hot spot area, form partnerships with local residents and business owners, use problem-oriented policing to address crime problems, and arrest offenders (see, e.g. Braga, Hureau, & Papachristos, 2011).

9. The instruments were intended to tap into consistent themes but were revised slightly because some questions were not relevant to each of our three groups.

with a mean age of 43.8 years. A diversity of BPD management positions were represented among the subjects ranging from front-line supervisors (sergeants and lieutenants) to the upper echelons of the command staff structure (captains, deputy superintendents, and superintendents). At the time of the interviews, the most frequently held rank of the subjects was sergeant ( $N = 9$ , 30.0%) followed by deputy superintendent ( $N = 7$ , 23.3%). A majority of the BPD subjects were assigned to patrol forces (Bureau of Field Services,  $N = 17$ , 56.7%), followed by detective management positions (Bureau of Investigative Services,  $N = 9$ , 30%), and the Office of the Police Commissioner ( $N = 4$ , 13.3%). On average, the respondents had served as BPD officers for 23.8 years with a range of 14–33 years of police experience.

### *TenPoint coalition clergy*

Eighty percent of the ministers were male ( $N = 24$ ) and all but two were black ( $N = 28$ , 93.3%). These study participants were between the ages of 29 and 73 with a mean age of 49.4 years. Ministers reported having worked in disadvantaged Boston neighborhoods on average for 19.8 years. Our clergy sample was comprised of the following religious affiliations: African Methodist Episcopal ( $N = 2$ , 6.7%), Baptist ( $N = 13$ , 43.3%), Catholic ( $N = 2$ , 6.7%), Pentecostal ( $N = 7$ , 23.3%), and Presbyterian ( $N = 1$ , 3.3%). Finally, 16.7% ( $N = 5$ ) of our clergy respondents were nondenominational.

### *Community organizers*

Eight of the ten community organizer respondents were male (80%), and two were female. Seven respondents were (70%) identified as black, one (10%) as Latino, one (10%) as white, and one (10%) as mixed race. The community organizers ranged in age from 26 to 62, with a mean of 38 years. They further served an array of Boston's neighborhoods, particularly those that were majority nonwhite and disproportionately affected by violence. Although the primary neighborhoods served range from Dorchester ( $N = 5$ ) to Mattapan ( $N = 1$ ), the subsample had a wealth of work experience throughout the city. Aside from Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, several community organizers also mentioned experience working in South Boston, Jamaica Plain, and the South End. While only four respondents in the subsample (40%) currently serve as outreach workers to gang-involved individuals (tasked with reducing serious youth violence), a unique feature of this group is that 90% ( $N = 9$ ) had served as gang outreach workers at some point in their careers, giving them a unique and longitudinal perspective regarding on the ground policing efforts of BPD and the outreach and service work of the TPC.

## Study Findings

Our main objective here is to provide a more nuanced understanding of two central claims offered in prior research on the TPC–BPD partnership (i.e. increased police legitimacy and enhanced community crime prevention) and investigate one important but previously overlooked policy area. We begin by examining study participants' reports that the BPD gained increased legitimacy in the eyes of Boston's black community by establishing strong working relationships with TPC. Next, we investigate respondents' views that TPC involvement in BPD crime prevention initiatives provided mechanisms for officers to improve rapport with high-risk youth and their families as well as convey their anti-violence message to gangs. Finally, we analyze each constituency's detailed accounts to highlight how particular individuals in particular organizations relied on their preexisting relationships, built on mutual trust and respect to successfully navigate the daily challenges of police and clergy working together. The current study supports, refines, and extends prior research on the topic, resulting in an improved and more holistic understanding of the TPC–BPD relationship.

### Improved Legitimacy as an Important Outcome of Police–Clergy Partnerships

Study participants from the three constituencies almost uniformly identified improved police legitimacy with minority communities as the primary benefit of the BPD–TPC working partnership. Here, we adopt the definition of police legitimacy used by the National Research Council's Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices: "the judgments that ordinary citizens make about the rightfulness of police conduct and the organizations that employ and supervise them" (Skogan & Frydl, 2004, p. 291; see also Tyler, 2004). As the Committee suggests, perceptions of legitimacy are, by definition, subjective and legitimacy "lies in the hearts and minds" of the public. The police are more effective in achieving their goals when citizens trust the police and view them as legitimate authorities.

While all mentioned the importance of the TPC relationship to improved police–community relations, the majority of BPD managers ( $N = 22$ , 73.3%) explicitly recognized that the clergy provided them with an important mechanism to develop enhanced trust, transparency, and legitimacy with black communities. These officers explained that there was a long history of bad relations between the BPD and the black community that improved over the course of the 1990s. The development of strong working relationships with the TPC clergy helped to address some longstanding grievances with the provision of policing services in black neighborhoods and maintain open lines of communication on ongoing issues when tensions arise. BPD Manager Delaney:

We are dealing with two different worlds. In the 80s and 90s, we didn't trust each other and we didn't understand each other at all. [The BPD] changed the

way we did policing [by adopting community policing] and partner[ing] with anyone who wanted to work with us to make the streets safer. The ministers became, perhaps, our most important partner in changing community perceptions of our work. Things aren't perfect ... there will always be problems that come up ... but we communicate with each other now.

Seventeen officers (56.7%) described the value of clergy members in explaining police actions in tense situations to the community, such as police-involved shootings or apparent excessive uses of force in apprehending offenders. These BPD managers suggested the TPC clergy were able to provide the department with a "moment of pause" to explain incidents and deal with any bona fide police transgressions before community members protested in streets or, possibly, rioted. Commenting on a recent video recording of an arrest of a young black male that appeared, at first blush, to involve excessive use of force, BPD Manager Mallett reported:

I can understand why the community may have gotten the wrong impression about that [incident]. However, [the forced used] wasn't excessive ... the officer did what he was trained to do. While there were some initial protests, it was important that the clergy and other community leaders gave us a chance to explain the officers' actions ... The story in the [Boston] Globe turned out really good for us ... the Reverends' comments in the paper [that the arrest did not involve excessive force] helped cool things down.

The same BPD managers also observed that relationships with the TPC clergy enhanced their ability to have open conversations about the nature of violence in Black neighborhoods and how their gang enforcement strategies did not seek to target all young black males indiscriminately. For instance, BPD Manager Dawson observed:

Many community meetings before the [TPC] partnerships weren't very productive. The residents often took a very defensive stance when talking about gangs and shootings. You would hear things like ... "you only call them *gangs* because they are a bunch of young black guys hanging on the corner ..." or "why don't you do something about the drugs that are coming into the neighborhood? Our kids aren't responsible for that and the drugs are causing most of the violence ..." with one of the Reverends by your side, it is much easier to have an honest talk about what is going on. ... [Members of the black community] are much more likely to trust your opinion and defer to your judgment on enforcement actions when a minister is on your team.

Ten officers (33.3%) recognized that it was particularly valuable to consult with clergy members on planned law enforcement operations before implementation.<sup>10</sup> The discussions were focused on the strategic elements of overall

10. It is important to note here that sensitive tactical elements, such as investigations of particular individuals or the use of confidential informants and undercover officers in specific areas, were not discussed with ministers.

enforcement plans. BPD managers reported two related benefits. First, BPD managers received valuable feedback on how the community might perceive the enforcement strategy so they could consider tempering any actions that the community might find overly harsh or draconian. As BPD Manager Mamalian suggested, "it is always a good idea to present your ideas to the ministers first and hear out any concerns they have before you act." Second, a priori conversations with TPC clergy helped BPD inform the community of the real goals of the law enforcement action and the careful consideration through which targets were selected. BPD Manager Bonner commented, "we can't rely on the media to get it right for us ... we need to make sure the community gets it right from the people it trusts. It is powerful when a minister says to residents that our enforcement actions were focused on reducing violence in the neighborhood rather than some misguided comments about the police wrongfully hassling young black men."

The vast majority of TPC clergy ( $N = 23$ , 76.6%) emphasized that their ability to forge an effective partnership with BPD centered largely on their success at brokering trust from community members. Further, faith leaders also understood that if they were able to enhance neighborhood residents' trust of them, it might extend to BPD, resulting in increased police legitimacy. Specifically, as did BPD managers, our clergy respondents pointed to how BPD often sought advice from TPC leadership about planned enforcement strategies because police believed that they were able to accurately communicate the minority communities' moral voice and conscience. Reverend Lindsey noted:

I know from being on the inside that the [TPC] is consulted almost immediately by the police department when there is going to be a change of strategy ... the first calls that are made are to the people who are a part of the [TPC]. [The black clergy] have been supportive of the police while at the same time maintaining their individual voice, which is important. And the community has to believe and know that the [TPC] has their interest at heart as paramount ... that no one's cutting deals in order to give support to the police [arbitrarily] when it may go against the valid interest of the community.

As recognized by Winship and Berrien (1999), TenPoint provided the BPD with an "umbrella of legitimacy" and an opportunity to address seething community tensions in the aftermath of questionable police actions. Reverend Shegog remarked, "... I think the police are glad that [TPC] is there because of course some of the incidences that the Coalition has dealt with and will deal with [the police] don't have to deal with. And it's kind of like a buffer for [the police] and they know that ..." Ten of our clergy (33.3%) mentioned the complexities inherent in simultaneously representing the communities' interests and preserving positive relationships with BPD. For instance, Pastor Rooks said, "... the majority of people come to the conclusion that if sometimes the police are mad with you, the Mayor is mad with you, and sometimes the community is mad with you, you're probably trying to be honest ... I think the position TenPoint and other groups have tried to play is being honest brokers and



honest partners in this process ...” Likewise, Pastor Rodgers commented, “... I think clergy took a pragmatic approach to police-community relations ... [deciding] we’re going to praise the cops that are doing the right thing and shine a light on the cops that aren’t, but primarily we’re going to focus on the cops who are doing the right thing. Build some good will with the department and begin to work from within. And address the concerns of the community that way.”

Of the three interview subsamples, the community organizer subsample was the least sanguine in its views regarding TPC’s role in promoting police legitimacy. Half of the community respondents ( $N = 5$ ) felt that TPC played a role in improving police–community relations in Boston. Tilly summarized the views of this subset of the community sample, stating:

In the 1990s, [TenPoint] was a part of the puzzle. The fact that we could do saturation policing to cool off crime waves was great, and this was due in part to TenPoint. They don’t do much directly with youth—they don’t have a lot of capacity, and frankly their volunteers aren’t very good and don’t like the type of kids they are supposed to work with. Their main thing was political, not direct service.

Like Tilly, the majority of community organizers understood TPC’s role in both building police relations and preventing street violence as largely symbolic and political. Half of the sample ( $N = 5$ ) praised TPC for serving as a “voice” for the black community.

### Enhancing Community Crime Prevention and Control Efforts

The BPD managers were well aware that, in general, police departments benefit from strong relationships with community members in their efforts to control and prevent serious violent crime problems in urban settings. It seemed to be common knowledge among the police respondents that community support and involvement in police programs can enrich their violence prevention effectiveness in many ways. While particular police respondents identified varying mechanisms, several common themes emerged. For the BPD’s community and problem-oriented policing initiatives, TPC ministers relayed information from residents and encouraged community members to provide valuable insights on the underlying conditions and dynamics that caused violent crime problems to persist in specific neighborhoods and particular hot spots. TPC clergy were also recognized as important conduits to community groups and local social networks that could add important informal social control elements to police crime prevention plans. For enforcement-based initiatives, such as Operation Ceasefire, clergy provided complementary voices at offender call-ins and helped to connect social services to gang youth and their families. Strong relationships with TPC clergy were credited with holding some potential in forwarding investigative efforts. The willingness of

community members to step forward as witnesses was critical in BPD efforts to hold violent offenders accountable for their crimes.

Two-thirds of the BPD managers ( $N = 20$ ) valued the enhanced “information sharing” that partnerships with TPC clergy offered. Through community meetings held at churches such as the Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury or at faith-based organizations such as the Ella J. Baker House in Dorchester, BPD managers reported learning about community concerns (such as problematic drug houses, certain groups of disorderly youth, and a lack of police presence in particular areas) and specific incidents that may not come to the attention of the police (such as simmering feuds among youth that could escalate to more serious violence). The officers also saw the strong benefits in providing the clergy with information to communicate to community members in violent areas. As BPD Manager Dobkin reported, “residents seem more comfortable sharing information in meetings facilitated by their clergy ... we can also use the meetings as opportunities to let residents know what we are doing about crime and whether they are actually at risk of being victims ... it helps manage expectations and fear.”

The majority of our clergy respondents ( $N = 18$ , 60%) consistently identified reciprocal and responsible information sharing between themselves and the police as an important byproduct of the BPD–TPC relationship. In fact, the ability to share intelligence was fundamental to ministers’ unwavering belief that the work of TPC supported that of BPD and vice versa. For example, Reverend Weems pronounced, “it’s a partnership because [the police and clergy] connect and talk and [the BPD] even shares intelligence with clergy.” Reverend Wooten noted, “... it’s a robust working relationship that helps the police do their job.” And, Reverend Arnette explained, “... we walk a thin line and I don’t mean it in a negative way with the Boston police. We have a good relationship and I don’t think that we could do as good of a job without the support of the police. ... part of their patrol awareness of the neighborhood is to know that we’re out there. We’re in those high crime areas so they drive by and see [us]. They’re available to help us do our job.” In agreement, Reverend Shegog remarked, “The presence and the rapport that [Ten Point] have built up with the city, with the Mayor, with the police, that makes a difference.” Finally, Reverend Ackles elaborated on what he considered mutual benefits to the police–clergy partnership:

[We] have a police department that is committed to community policing, but community policing has to be more than holding a series of neighborhood meetings and having those usual suspects come out and talk ... What happens when you have faith community activists out there understanding the problem and the issue of violence and all its interactions, you have another group of people who can help build a community policing platform that leverages the best of both worlds. I think an ideal relationship does just that.

Ministers also reported relishing opportunities to share information with the police. At the same time, however, church leaders recognized their weighty

responsibility as trusted confidants and were reportedly extremely careful regarding how they shared information obtained from neighborhood residents. For instance, Reverend Weems commented, “[We] have to be very mindful of the confidentiality piece and how it plays out in the lives of young people ... they need to know that as clergy I’m not just throwin’ all of their business out there.” Church leaders also understood how they might be instrumental toward helping challenge anti-snitching campaigns often credited with stifling the flow of information from troubled inner-city communities to the police (see Rosenfeld, Jacobs, & Wright, 2003; Woldoff & Weiss, 2010).

Many BPD managers believed that it was strategic to include clergy in their violence prevention plans because ministers gave them a powerful way to interact with troubled youth and their families ( $N = 18$ , 60%), help connect these youth to services and job opportunities ( $N = 15$ , 50%), and send pro-social service and moral / spiritual messages ( $N = 10$ , 33.3%) to active street criminals and gang members. BPD Manager McNulty commented:

We often do home visits with ministers to talk to parents about how their kids are involved in gangs and headed towards a bad life outcome ... We are just trying to make sure they are aware what their son is doing and that we can get them some help to get him headed down the right road. If it was the police alone at the front door, most parents in these neighborhoods would not let us in and not want to talk with us about their kid. Many of them don’t trust us and worry that we are there to lock their kid up ... The ministers reassure them that the visit isn’t about making arrests and that the conversation might benefit the kid’s future ... they give us a way in that front door that wouldn’t be there if the ministers weren’t our partners.

In discussing the role of TPC clergy in Operation Ceasefire gang call-ins, BPD Manager Dawson reported:

It is powerful when a respected member of the community, who knows many of the gang kids in the room, stands up and says, “We’re tired of losing our young men to gun violence. We’re tired of losing our young men to the criminal justice system ... please put your guns down and end this senseless violence. Please take advantage of the services and opportunities presented to you here ... if you don’t, we support law enforcement in doing what they need to do (intensive enforcement) to keep our community safe.” A message like that gets [the gang members’] attention and shows that no one supports what they are doing out there.

Finally, while the BPD managers did not specifically use academic terms like “informal social control” or “collective efficacy” in their responses, nearly two-thirds ( $N = 19$ , 63.3%) mentioned that the ministers could deliver collective community action and work to improve cohesion among residents to protect against continued violence in particular neighborhoods.

Similar to the BPD managers, the majority of clergy respondents ( $N = 20$ , 66.6%) consistently touted community members’ organized efforts as the linchpin of sustained crime reduction. For example, Reverend Stewart

observed, "... what made the police thing even possible is that the black community owned crime in their community. Nothing that the [BPD] attempted to do, Ceasefire, anything, had any possibility until there was a consensus in the black community led by the black clergy that black on black violence was going to be owned and not excused and justified ..." Likewise, Pastor Triplett explained, "our responsibility as a community is to raise our young people and to make sure that we're doing the best we can not just by our own households but also with our neighbors or by our neighbors because a good man takes care of his family but a great man takes care of his neighborhood and community."

More than half of our church leaders ( $N = 17$ , 56.6%) reported participating in a number of specific local crime control and prevention efforts. They consistently said that these initiatives afforded them unprecedented opportunities to establish greater rapport with neighborhood residents. For example, pastors and members of their congregation periodically marched through nearby high crime neighborhoods, singing, praying, and distributing leaflets about regular worship services (encouraging residents to attend). Activist clergy referred to this particular activity as "community walks" and touted their potential importance for ministering to and mobilizing the public around youth violence reduction strategies. For example, Reverend Ackles said, "[I want people to] sort of look at the faith group contribution like a streetwise Red Cross if you will. You got people who are out there to help you, not to hurt you. People welcome that kind of help." Similarly, Reverend Pettigrew explained, "... walking the streets gives you the opportunity to be in that community before something really happens so when it does happen, people already know about you, you've been out there, they feel more comfortable with you, talking with you, maybe coming to your church ..." Likewise, Pastor Nero noted, "[community walks] are a step in the right direction because it's getting the church out of the four walls and into their community to meet and greet people ... the community appreciates seeing people of faith walking, praying and being a part of their local neighborhood." As highlighted above, church leaders viewed community walks as a proactive approach toward reducing the negative consequences stemming from sporadic episodes of neighborhood violence by connecting with and building trust among neighborhood residents.

### The Challenges of Partnerships

Among the varying concerns raised by BPD managers, the most consistent problem in partnering with clergy involved the difficulty they had navigating existing minister rivalries and managing the infighting among the clergy ( $N = 18$ , 60%).<sup>11</sup> BPD Manager Majeski described how a BPD-supported "gang

11. Similarly, in Chicago, relationships between many of the black churches were marred by cleavages resulting from religious ideologies and the demographics of each church's congregation (Mears & Corkan, 2007).

truce” was nearly derailed by two feuding TPC clergy who were supposed to serve as peace facilitators for gang members on opposing sides of the gang rivalry. He commented, “... the gang kids seemed more willing to make peace with each other than the ministers were ...” In general, the BPD managers were concerned that working with any particular minister might cause other ministers not to work with them. Similarly, they also worried about jeopardizing longstanding relationships with ministers if they launched new partnerships with other clergy on similar types of issues. As BPD Manager Ianello lamented, “my orientation is to work with anyone who can help me keep the community safe ... unfortunately, this sometimes runs up against the complicated social world of the ministers. I need a scorecard to keep track of their problems with each other ... and a metal detector to avoid any unseen landmines that might derail my [violence reduction] plans.” Six out of ten (60%) community organizers also mentioned difficulties in partnering with TPC because of personal conflicts between the ministers. Organizer Bivins noted that:

One of the challenges [in working with TPC] is you couldn't even bring [TPC] folks in the same room together! They were always trying to figure out—as the street guys say—who was going to [profit]. And some of them wanted to take the whole pie. There was a lot of backstabbing and selling each other out for what amounted to crumbs at the table. It's just not uncommon for these guys to stab each other in the back. There were many times I'd ask myself, “Are these guys just talking, or are they about the work?”

The BPD managers also observed that, beyond particular TPC ministers, there were not enough clergy doing work on the streets in the community ( $N = 15$ , 50%). Too many clergy seemed to prefer to stay in the church and service their congregation rather than engage the surrounding community. Reflecting on his experiences leading Safe Street Teams in different neighborhoods, BPD Manager Stone complained:

When I was working in the Bowdoin and Geneva area, my team had a great relationship with [name and church removed]. We dropped by the church every weekday to help neighborhood kids with homework in their afterschool program, we walked the streets of the neighborhood together and talked to residents about problems and concerns, and we worked together on the gang violence problem ... when I took over the Heath Street team, I immediately visited all the local churches in my area. None of the clergy seemed too interested in actually doing something about crime in the neighborhood ... the only problem I've worked on with one of those local churches involved community concerns over parking during their services.

Similarly, in discussing his lack of partnerships with clergy from churches in his Safe Street Team area, BPD Manager Thornton observed that “most of the congregation members for the churches in my area don't live there. They commute in from the suburbs and other parts of the city ... many of the residents from Orchard Gardens [a housing project with high levels of violence] go

to the bigger churches, like Jubilee and Morningstar Baptist, on Blue Hill Ave [located more than a mile away in another police district].”

BPD managers suggested that there needed to be more consistency from the active TPC clergy in these partnerships ( $N = 12$ , 40%). Some complained that certain TPC clergy only showed up at big media events surrounding horrific incidents, such as the shooting of a child, but were not there for the day-to-day work, a view that was supported by the community organizers. BPD Manager Dobkin observed, “if there are cameras there, you can count on *all* the reverends being there.” Others suggested that the TPC clergy who were willing to do the work were spread too thin across multiple initiatives and this caused their inconsistency and unavailability for strategic prevention work. For instance, BPD Manager McNulty commented, “Reverend [name removed] is terrific. I wish I could clone him. The problem is that there are not enough ministers doing this work and everyone wants him on their projects. He sometimes misses meetings and can’t help me with my stuff because he is way overcommitted.”

Although the community organizers spoke of TPC’s lack of capacity largely in terms of their inability to deliver on expectations of direct services, similar to BPD complaints of TPC ministers being spread too thin, 40% of the community sample ( $N = 4$ ) mentioned that TPC’s power was concentrated too heavily in the hands of a small number of individuals. For the community organizers who mentioned this, this led to two key problems. First, the concentration led to personality-driven (rather than problem/issue-driven) responses to youth violence. The dark side of institutional arrangements that function primarily through individual relationships is that they can be inefficient when a personal relationship is not in place to fit an organizational need. For example, community organizers cited examples of key TPC ministers only working with people and neighborhoods that they were comfortable with and trusted, and thus neglected other neighborhoods and their problems. Second, community organizers raised the long-run concern that TPC’s concentrated leadership failed to develop younger clergy leaders across the city and enroll them in the civic partnerships.

There was also a grouping of varied concerns held by the BPD managers on the credibility of particular TPC clergy members. It is important to note here that these concerns were attributed to specific clergy members within TPC and did not necessarily represent their general opinion of the organization. In summary, 22 (73.3%) BPD managers articulated that their trust in the clergy was highly personalized to particular ministers rather than to the entire TPC movement. One-third of the BPD managers ( $N = 10$ ) felt that certain clergy were not involved with the residents of disadvantaged black neighborhoods and that they did not actually represent the views of that community. As BPD Manager Velez commented, “some of them are nothing more than opinion-givers without a real constituency.” Another 10 BPD managers (33.3%) were concerned that particular ministers played “both sides of the fence” with police and community. The officers suggested that certain ministers would praise the police

or express understanding to their faces and then made matters worse by harshly criticizing them to the community. They simply felt uncomfortable collaborating with certain TPC clergy members because they were too political (8, 26.7%) and self-aggrandizing (7, 23.3%). BPD Manager Majeski noted that “some of them are nothing more than politicians.” BPD Manager Dawson noted, “I tend to avoid the ministers who show up at the press conferences in their \$1000 suits and drive \$80,000 Mercedes ... those guys tend to care about themselves more than anything else.” BPD respondents’ abrasive comments regarding some clergy are not surprising given police cynicism. Further, it is worth noting that whereas our clergy generally agreed with certain BPD officers’ remarks about some of their colleagues (e.g. clergy who routinely showed up at media events following tragedies but were seldom seen interacting with neighborhood residents in the streets), they were much more diplomatic in the way they articulated these points.

Interestingly, whereas our clergy respondents repeatedly mentioned the importance of trust regarding their work with citizens and the police, bouts of distrust seemingly jeopardized their relationships with both groups. For example, our clergy respondents said that some community members were quite suspicious of individual TPC ministers’ own agendas. For instance, Pastor Rodgers explained, “... the point is that everyone can’t be a star, someone who has a magnetic personality ... you need people in the trenches who have heart, passion ... cause when the stars start to have friction ... when they go off on speaking engagements, have a moral lapse ... if things fall apart, you still need leaders ...” Pastor Nero commented on how clergy members’ internal conflicts seemingly undermined citizen trust:

... one of the larger reasons why we haven’t been able to overcome some of the issues that we’ve been fighting for 20 plus years is because the people in power are so distrustful of each other that they have the same gang warfare, turf beef that the kids have ... you got the same beef that the kids have and you want them to stop and you holding on to grudges that you’ve had for ten plus years. It’s crazy! It’s crazy!

Further, respondents explained that some community members openly questioned the extent to which TPC operated independently from BPD. For instance, Reverend Wooten observed, “... I would suspect that some folk would say that Ten Point and the police is too cozy.” Likewise, Reverend Cokely noted, “some people distrust the fact that some clergy have close relationships with the police ... some people would prefer that you didn’t work with the police at all.” Finally, Pastor Rodgers quipped, “... to be totally frank, there have been times when people have said that the police *are* the clergy ... that the clergy protect the police and make it seem that things aren’t as bad as they really are ...”

Citizen skepticism of the BPD–TPC relationship was seemingly a byproduct of longstanding tensions between BPD and the black community. For instance, Reverend Weems noted, “the police have to learn how to be honest, open, and

transparent ... one of the problems is that people don't trust the police because they do not approach them in an amicable way. They always

are antagonistic and try to intimidate." Similarly, Reverend Glasgow noted, it's the challenge of the community ... The mistrust, the distrust [of police] ... The track record of what we often see with police officers. ... whether it's a misuse of authority vs. seeing a family member hurt by an officer... ... it's just a tremendous sense of mistrust." Reverend Weems observed, "the police need to understand that how you engage with people, their communication, they need to improve in that area." Further, several clergy described the relationship between the police and Boston's minority youth as especially tumultuous. For example, Pastor Edwards explained:

... most young folks don't view [the police favorably]. Most young folks dislike them. It's a lack of trust there. ...[youths] feel injustice. They feel like they're targets. ... they may not be doing anything, but they're getting stopped anyway. ... in [the black] community the young folk don't look at the police as protection as they do in white communities. They look at them as an adversary. ... the police department needs to do more within the community to establish a rapport with the young folks and speak to them and not just look at them suspicious[ly] like [they're] up to something, but create a dialog with them.

Finally, Reverend Shegog implored members of the BPD "... to treat our young men and women like they were their [own] children."

The accounts noted above beg the question whether, and if so, how TPC, and by extension BPD, could reasonably forge relationships with individuals who were at times somewhat cynical of each partner's motives. Reverend Ackles, however, explained that improved police–minority community relations and any resulting crime control benefits required changes in the approaches of both groups. He noted:

... there is a negative history between the community and the police department and so there needs to be some effort on the part of the police department to approach things differently. And on the part of the community, they also have to begin to approach things differently out of necessity. Out of expediency probably initially, but eventually those relationships have to be forged if we are going to be able in a combined way to most effectively address the violence in the community.

The majority of clergy ( $N = 21$ , 70%) mentioned, while they may harbor residual skepticism of BPD as an organization, given its history, they expressed having more confidence in individual officers with whom they had established strong, long-term relationships centered on mutual trust and respect. For example, Reverend Birdsong reported, "I grew up with a lot of the Boston police and a Superintendent. ... I have rapport with them. The Commissioner that we have now is much more on the scene [than his predecessor]. He goes



to houses, [and meets with] families, which makes a difference. ... He's not a person that says you can't touch him ... You can talk to him." Likewise, Reverend Arnette said, "... our biggest supporter is the Police Commissioner." Pastor Rooks also noted:

... back in the beginning [of the police-clergy partnership] I think the sense often was that there were local police and folks scattered within the department who got it. ... now I'd say pretty reliably that the Commissioner and to some extent the command structure gets it. ... you [also] have community service officers that get it, youth service officers who get it. ... the remaining challenge is to continue to sell [community policing] to the patrol officer, to the detectives, to the gang unit officer that the [strategy] is the best approach over the long haul ... you still have a lot of [BPD officers] who think in terms of busts, arrests, and 911 calls answered ... you still got that. ... it's like any other culture. It's a long, hard slog to turn it around.

It appears that both our BPD and TPC respondents perceived police-clergy relationships as occurring mostly between individual officers and pastors rather than permeating either institution.<sup>12</sup> For instance, Reverend Reed observed, "the [police officers] we know, that we built a relationship with, we trust. There are some we don't have a relationship with probably because they don't trust what we do and we don't trust them." Finally, Pastor Griggs remarked, "there are officers whose fathers that I know [and] worked with and the sons are now [police officers] doing gang work but those are based on real relationships that are trustworthy relationships." This same idea of person-to-person (rather than organization to organization) partnerships was echoed in community organizer descriptions of TPC-BPD collaborations. As community respondent Shawan put it, "As far as collaboration between agencies—officially—that just never works in Boston. I would just collab[orate] person to person. Using big entities to work together just never works."

The variability of views offered by our clergy respondents highlight the diversity in the black community regarding attitudes toward the police—an aspect missing from many prior studies. Specifically, our findings demonstrate that black citizens, even those residing in high crime neighborhoods, can be generally supportive of the police as agents of formal social control while simultaneously critical of particular crime prevention strategies (e.g. stop, question, and frisk). In fact, even those individuals expressing the most trepidation about the overall fairness and effectiveness of BPD recognized the importance of having a legitimate voice through TPC. For example, Reverend

12. To illustrate the importance of trust, both clergy and BPD study participants pointed to Operation Homefront—an intervention and prevention initiative where YVSF officers and clergy visit the homes of at risk students previously identified by school personnel. When necessary, the police-clergy teams make referrals to a number of local social service agencies who conduct follow-up visits with and provide resources to the families. Our respondents were adamant that due to its voluntary nature (i.e. parental consent), such a program would not have been possible without considerable community trust in the police/clergy relationship.

Tucker remarked, "I don't necessarily work *with* the police. I don't at all. I don't get in their way and I hope we have meetings where we are asking them not to get in ours. I would like to believe [that there's] a mutual respect. They've been hired by the society at large. It's what it is. So I have to navigate through that. Not around it, through it ..."

## Discussion

This qualitative analysis of police–black clergy partnerships provides further evidence that such collaborations can be highly beneficial to urban police departments and the African-American citizens they serve. It is also important to note, however, that this study does not claim that police–black clergy partnerships in Boston directly resulted in improved relationships between the police and all black residents or produced noteworthy reductions in serious youth violence in black neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup> Further, while our results may not be widely generalizable, our methodological approach and data analysis raise important issues that may guide future research on this important topic. Specifically, more wide reaching evaluation research is clearly needed to determine the independent effects of these types of partnerships on police–community relations and youth violence. Nevertheless, given the persistent problem of poor police legitimacy in black neighborhoods, we believe that urban police departments should be working to develop strong working relationships with black churches. This is particularly true in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods suffering from serious violence where the church may be the only functional social institution.

Our qualitative inquiry was designed to provide a deeper understanding than previous accounts of the role of police–black clergy partnerships in improving police legitimacy and enhancing community-based crime prevention efforts. These contemporary interviews strongly support and refine prior work on the emergence of this collaboration during the 1990s. Our constituent groups reported that the BPD gained increased legitimacy in the eyes of Boston's black community by forming strong working relationships with TPC. BPD managers recognized that the BPD–TPC relationship facilitated an improved dialog between the police and black residents and generated opportunities for black citizens to convey longstanding and ongoing concerns about the nature of policing in their neighborhoods. BPD managers suggested that the involvement

13. As described earlier, there is some indirect empirical evidence that BPD–TPC partnerships improved police relationships with the community by virtue of fewer complaints lodged against Boston police officers after the partnership was developed in the early to mid 1990s (see Johnson, 2011). There is also some indirect empirical evidence that police–black clergy partnerships can be very helpful in reducing youth violence. TPC clergy were the lead community partners in the Operation Ceasefire strategy that was associated with a large reduction in youth homicides in Boston during the 1990s (Braga et al., 2001).

of TPC clergy in their crime control interventions provided an improved way to connect with high-risk youth and their families as well as strengthening their anti-violence communications with gangs. BPD managers also noted that they routinely called upon TPC to represent the moral voice of the community and facilitate many important facets of informal social control. Further, BPD managers explained that TPC was highly effective in explaining questionable police actions to an often anxious and skeptical black community, providing the BPD with “a moment of pause” during volatile situations. The BPD also routinely sought feedback from TPC leadership prior to launching potentially controversial crime-control strategies in black communities.

Our clergy respondents valued highly their ability to garner citizen trust and judiciously extend it to the BPD. Pastors were acutely aware of the “fine line” they were required to walk, constantly considering community needs while working as earnest partners to the BPD. Black clergy respondents particularly appreciated the benefits of reciprocal and responsible information sharing. They were able to provide police with some insights on particular recurring violent crime problems and specific violent events. In turn, TPC clergy received new information on violent crimes and the general content of police response to those crimes that could be shared with concerned community members. TPC clergy also reported appreciating the opportunity to assist the BPD in shaping law enforcement responses to outbreaks of violence in ways that minimized unintentional harms to the black community. In these settings, they worked with BPD managers to ensure focused rather than indiscriminate enforcement responses that were blended with social service and opportunity provision elements. Community organizers generally recognized the value of the BPD–TPC partnerships for improving policing responses in black neighborhoods.

These partnerships aid urban police departments in strategic and programmatic ways. Both broad sets of action share the common theme of extending an “umbrella of legitimacy” to the police (Winship & Berrien, 1999) and enhancing their ability to work with residents of black neighborhoods. Black clergy can be very helpful to the police in managing citywide political discussions on appropriate policing strategies. The explicit involvement of black clergy in these discussions signals to the black community that the police department seeks their input on problems and proposed programs, values transparency in decision making and the resolution of community concerns, and embraces accountability to community leaders. At a programmatic level, black clergy can help police by mobilizing local communities to act against violence, sharing information on the nature of violent crime problems in particular places, and appealing to troubled youth and their families to take advantage of services and opportunities rather than persisting in high-risk activities. It is worth noting here that most contemporary theoretical and policy discussion of improving police legitimacy focuses on improving police–citizen encounters through the application of procedural justice principles (see, e.g. Tyler, 2004). Police departments need to recognize that, in addition

to procedurally-just encounters, there are multiple pathways they can pursue to improve their legitimacy in the minds and hearts of the public they serve (see Skogan & Frydl, 2004 for a discussion of varied approaches). As Crawford and colleagues (2005) recommend, community engagement and helping to build constructive and informed relationships certainly represent an important complementary pathway to changing citizen perceptions of police as legitimate authorities.

Previous research did not examine the ongoing challenges that arise from types of collaborations (Berrien & Winship, 2002; Winship & Berrien, 1999; but see Berman & Fox, 2010). In the absence of further evidence, policy-makers and practitioners are left with a sense that there are few, if any, problems and that these partnerships are rooted in deep trust that permeates a majority of the individuals that comprise these two very different institutions. In our study, participants across constituent groups reported challenges associated with the BPD-TPC partnership. BPD managers and community organizers alike often found it difficult to navigate the complex political terrain of clergy relationships and bemoaned what they perceived as a lack of involvement of far too many black church leaders. While a number of BPD managers and community organizers questioned the sincerity of specific TPC clergy, they did not disparage the entire organization. Further, those respondents appeared to reserve the harshest criticisms for black church leaders whom they considered detached and self-absorbed. Clergy respondents also mentioned problems stemming from their BPD partnership. For instance, TPC clergy at times wondered whether certain colleagues were more interested in capturing the media spotlight than working earnestly for the black community. Indeed, Berman and Fox (2010) observed that squabbling among partnering agencies, highlighted by internal and external TPC disputes over credit and grant funding, contributed to the eventual cessation of Operation Ceasefire in the early 2000s (see also Braga et al., 2008). TPC study participants also reported periodically drawing the ire of certain black citizens who took particular exception to their "cozy" relationship with the BPD. Interestingly, the majority of TPC clergy readily acknowledged having lingering misgivings about BPD as an organization due to a long history of perceived racial discrimination at the hands of Boston Police. A number of pastors and BPD managers reported, however, having established long-term relationships with individuals from the other organization. Both BPD managers and clergy were adamant that these relationships were founded on mutual trust and respect. Further, it is important to recognize that these were seemingly highly idiosyncratic associations, confined to a small number of people (a handful of true believers in the BPD and in the TPC) and operated within a modest number of neighborhoods.

As we note above, the strongest and deepest relationships occurred between individuals, not institutions, and were developed over long periods of time. In fact, while acknowledging the value of the BPD-TPC partnership, both BPD managers and clergy expressed skepticism about individuals from the other organization whom they did not know and/or trust. BPD managers and

community organizers routinely expressed frustration over the uneven distribution of activist black clergy across Boston's neighborhoods. Certain black churches did not serve the immediate neighborhood in which they resided and some black clergy were simply not interested in getting directly involved in local violence prevention work. Similarly, clergy respondents noted that many BPD officers were not interested in engaging them as partners.

These observations suggest that effective, ongoing police–black clergy partnerships in Boston are uncommon and surprisingly fragile. Police departments and community leaders need to ensure that these relationships are not limited to partnerships among a small number of people who focus on a limited number of areas in cities. Moreover, police manager, clergy, and community organizer respondents alike expressed concern that the small number of pastors and officers that coordinated the bulk of their joint actions were nearing retirement and investments were not being made in the development of the next generation of TPC and BPD partners. Boston, and other municipalities seeking to promote these partnerships, face the common problem of bringing innovative and effective programs “up to scale” (see, e.g. Welsh, Sullivan, & Olds, 2010). The participants had a number of ideas on how these partnerships could be spread to a broader set of neighborhoods and individuals. These included TPC-led faith-based summits to stimulate interest among uninvolved clergy, the inclusion of TPC clergy as guest speakers in BPD Academy classes on community policing, the introduction of local clergy at roll call in BPD districts, the attendance of local officers at church services, and other suggestions. Given the promise of these partnerships, more work needs to be done to understand how these relationships can be stimulated and broadened to include a wider range of participants from both organizations.

Finally, it is important to note that black clergy do not necessarily represent the views of the entire black community. Not all residents go to church and church-going residents can have divergent views on particular issues. Equally important, some local clergy may not be well suited to deliver community involvement in crime prevention plans. Indeed, Sampson (2012) suggests that it is unreasonable to expect that churches alone can establish the trust among local residents needed to facilitate collective action. Police officers may be tempted to view clergy members as reliable “short cuts” to working with residents in black neighborhoods. While our research suggests that churches should be a focal institution for police partnerships, community policing programs need to be geared toward engaging a broader set of community members that best represent a particular neighborhood's concerns and capacities to respond to local problems.

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