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The Doors of the Church are Now Open: Black Clergy, Collective Efficacy, and Neighborhood Violence

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Prior research has documented the historical significance of the black church beyond serving parishioners' religious and spiritual needs. Specifically, several black churches are involved in community organizing, social service activities, and political action. Scholars, however, have paid less attention to its role as a potent social institution in community crime control and prevention efforts. We conducted face-to-face interviews with 30 members of Boston's Ten Point Coalition of activist black clergy to document the motivations for and mechanisms through which ministers became involved in efforts to reduce street violence, the varied methods through which ministers develop strategic coalitions and manage violence reduction initiatives, and the ways ministers address the complex challenges involved in doing this work. Study findings suggest that black churches can serve as sources of collective efficacy that can help mobilize other churches, community organizations, police departments, and neighborhood residents in a coordinated effort to address urban youth violence.

INTRODUCTION

Urban policy makers, practitioners, and scholars have long considered the variation in neighborhood characteristics that lead to high rates of violence in particular urban communities (see, e.g., Sampson and Groves 1989; Shaw and McKay 1932). Empirical evidence suggests that the capacity of neighborhood residents to achieve a common set of goals and exert control over youth and public spaces, termed "collective efficacy," is a protective factor against serious violence (Sampson et al. 1997). The presence of community-based organizations, which draw membership from individuals within and outside specific neighborhoods, predicts collective efficacy and collective civic action (Sampson 2012). Concentrated disadvantage in urban neighborhoods undermines local collective efficacy and gravely limits the ability of residents to address serious violent crime problems. Unfortunately, due to a long history of exclusion from economic and social opportunities, residents of disadvantaged urban neighborhoods are primarily minorities and often black (Sampson and Wilson 1995).

In many black communities, the black church functions as a central social institution. Beyond serving the religious and spiritual needs of parishioners, some black churches

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are involved in community organizing, social service activities, and political action (see DuBois 1903; Frazier 1964). Although 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. The available research suggests that black churches can be important sources of social capital and could serve as important elements of collective efficacy in black neighborhoods (Winship and Berrien 1999; Brunson et al. 2015). 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. It stands to reason that numerous violence reduction initiatives would be connected to faith-based institutions given that "...African American residents of urban disadvantaged neighborhoods create their own civil institutions—the church being one—to deal with community-based problems" (Meares and Brown Corkan 2007: 1378).

Although there are some promising case studies (e.g., Meares 2002; Winship and 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 black clergy-led violence reduction efforts. As such, we interviewed 30 members of Boston's Ten Point Coalition (TPC) of activist black clergy to document the motivations for and mechanisms through which ministers became involved in efforts to reduce street violence, the varied methods through which ministers develop strategic coalitions and manage violence reduction initiatives, and the ways ministers address the complex challenges involved in doing this work. Our findings suggest that activist black clergy can, if appropriately oriented, play central roles in the development and implementation of community-based violence reduction strategies. Specifically, black churches can serve as producers of collective efficacy that can help mobilize other churches, community organizations, police departments, and neighborhood residents in a coordinated effort to address urban youth violence.

This paper begins with a review of the efforts of the TPC to reduce serious youth violence in Boston, integrates a brief discussion of the black church as a central social institution in black communities, and considers the potential for black churches to enhance the collective efficacy of disadvantaged neighborhoods. Our study methodology and key research findings are then presented. The paper concludes with a discussion of the lessons learned from our research on the TPC black clergy and how these insights can be used to stimulate the involvement of black churches in other urban settings to become more involved in community-based violence reduction efforts.

BLACK CHURCHES AND BOSTON COPS

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, and 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 et al. 2001). Although 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 and Winship 2002; Johnson 2011; Winship and Berrien 1999).

As we highlight above, prior scholarship concerning the TPC has focused on specific innovations rather than their general approach to community building (Winship and Berrien 1999; Brunson et al. 2015). Therefore, a brief summary of the unusual TPC-Boston Police Department (BPD) partnership 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 and laypersons formed TPC after a gang invasion of the Morningstar Baptist Church in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston. During a memorial for a slain rival gang member, mourners were attacked with knives and guns (Berrien and Winship 2002; Winship and Berrien 1999). In the wake of that outrage, TPC ministers and laypersons 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. Thus, a "Ten Point Plan" was developed in an effort to garner support from area churches and faith based organizations to address youth violence and invoke positive change in the lives of Boston youth (http://btpc.org).[1] The TPC initially included some 40 Boston-area churches with Reverends Jeffrey L. Brown, Raymond Hammond, and Eugene Rivers as its key leaders.[2]

Initially, the ministers of the TPC assumed an adversarial role to the BPD and were highly critical in the public media of police efforts to prevent youth violence (Brunson et al. 2015; Winship and 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.

Although TPC ministers were not initially involved in the development of Operation Ceasefire, they soon played key roles in the implementation of the gang violence reduction strategy and, more broadly, served as central brokers in the management of positive relationships between the BPD and Boston's minority community (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 2001; Braga and Winship 2006). 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 and 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 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 and 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).

Based on semistructured qualitative interviews with BPD managers, TPC ministers, and community activists in Boston, (Brunson et al. 2015) scholars concluded that 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. Although their operational capacity has waxed and waned over time (Braga, Hureau, and Winship 2008), Boston TPC maintains its mission to end violence in Boston through the participation of faith-based institutions in citywide crime prevention efforts.[3] In addition to continuing its involvement in Operation Ceasefire (Braga, Hureau, and Papachristos 2014), the TPC supports prisoner reentry initiatives by providing mentors to aid recently-released inmates in their transitions back to the community (Braga, Piehl, and Hureau 2009), female delinquency prevention programs by working with schools to address substance abuse and mental health issues among preadolescent and adolescent girls, and staffing community crisis intervention teams to help minimize neighborhood trauma through outreach (e.g., offering counseling after serious violent events). Church facilities are often used for meeting space and to host youth recreational events. While much of this work is performed by the clergy and volunteers from their congregations, TPC efforts that require full-time staff are supported through grants from federal and state governmental agencies and private donations.

BLACK CHURCHES AND THE POTENTIAL FOR COLLECTIVE EFFICACY IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

Scholars have long recognized the prominent role that black churches have played in various facets of African Americans' lives[4] (DuBois 1903; Frazier 1964). 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 and 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' wellbeing beyond the four walls of places of worship (Billingsley and Caldwell 1991; Pattillo-McCoy 1998). For example, Cavendish (2000:66–67) notes, "African Americans have historically looked to their churches as their chief source of culture, music, values, community cohesion, and political activism."

In advocating for the black community, however, the church has unquestionably become more than simply a religious institution. For example, as Johnson (1971:91) observed:

> ... the church is still the only institution which provides an effective organization of the group, an approved and tolerated place for social activities, and forum for expression on many issues, and outlet for emotional repressions, and a plan for social living. It's a complex institution meeting a wide variety of needs.

Thus, the black church has a well-established history of taking responsibility for community members' overall wellness outside the four walls of the church. As stated by DuBois (1971:82), "probably the 'chief' function of the Negro church has been to buoy up the hope of its members in the face of adversity and to give them a sense of this community."

In its expanded role, the black church has embraced two overarching influences: priestly and prophetic. For instance, as noted by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990:12), "priestly functions of the church involve those activities concerned with worship and maintaining the spiritual life of members ... " while "prophetic functions refer to the involvement in political concerns and activities in the wider community ... " (p. 12). As Barnes (2004:205) further explained, "congregations believed to follow a more prophetic stance are often keenly aware of social problems such as poverty and unemployment, and make a concerted effort to address these types of problems in practical, tangible ways."

An abundant body of scholarship suggests that black churches can be important sources of social capital and could serve as important elements of "collective efficacy" in African American neighborhoods (Barnes 2005; Owens 2007; Owens and Smith 2005; Pattillo-McCoy 1998). Collective efficacy is generally defined as "social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good" (Sampson et al. 1997:918) and has been revealed to be inversely related to high levels of violent crime in neighborhoods. Sampson (2012:152) observes that collective efficacy is created through both "social cohesion" and "shared expectations of control." He explains that the degree of social control exerted in a neighborhood mediates neighborhood violence. Specifically, Sampson et al. (1997:918) offer that "social control refers generally, to the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles—to realize collective, as opposed to forced, goals." Black churches could be mobilized to exert informal social control in ways that prevent serious violence in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Bursik and Grasmick's (1993) systemic application of social disorganization theory wisely points to how public, private, and parochial levels of community control might function to curtail neighborhood crime problems (see also Hunter 1985). Specifically, at the parochial level, crime is potentially reduced through networks of individuals supervising the conduct of neighborhood residents (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Carr 2005). Unfortunately, due to certain persistent neighborhood conditions (e.g., disproportionate rates of poverty, unemployment, and single-parent households), many socially disorganized communities lack effective parochial networks.

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.[5] 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 et al. 2000a, 2000b). 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 percent of the mentors were African American and 8 percent were Latino. Most striking, 34 percent of the mentors were African American males—a critically important, but difficult to recruit, group of volunteers in inner-city communities.

Black churches seem to be a logical mechanism through which strategic violence prevention efforts could be launched within predominantly black neighborhoods. Black communities have a much higher density of churches per 100,000 residents than white communities (Sampson 2012).[6] In domestic and international polls, many measures suggest that African Americans are consistently among the most religious people in the world (Gallup and Castelli 1989). In fact, relative to white Americans, African Americans "attend church more frequently, participate in other church-related affairs more often, and belong to more church-affiliated organizations" (Ellison and Sherkat 1995: 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. Coalitions of black churches may stimulate collective efficacy by developing relationships among neighborhood residents, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies within and across communities. Collective efficacy flows from robust social networks and, like social capital, is not in the possession of an individual or single organization.

Although there is prima facie evidence that black churches could serve as important sources of collective efficacy in disadvantaged neighborhoods, there is little systematic research that specifically examines whether black clergy can deliver community-based action to reduce violence. Research in Chicago, however, suggests there are perhaps two divergent narratives about the potential of black clergy in mobilizing communities to control violence. 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 black churches organized prayer vigils in May 1997 (Meares 2002; Meares and Brown 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 (Meares and Brown 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 predominantly black 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 predominantly black communities. Although the density of nonprofit organizations was positively related to collective efficacy, Sampson (2012:205) found "... that the density of the churches is *negatively* related to collective efficacy and one of its core indicators—trust." 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 those of 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.

METHODOLOGY

It is important to note here that prior research studies reviewed above mostly focused on the basic dimensions of the BPD – TPC partnership to reduce youth violence and how this unusual relationship improved the legitimacy of the BPD among the city's minority residents. This study specifically examines how the work of activist black clergy enhances the collective efficacy of disadvantaged black neighborhoods in Boston. Data for the current study were gathered through face-to-face interviews with 30 Ten Point Coalition clergy members. In only one instance were two clergy members from the same church interviewed. All interviews were conducted between the spring and fall of 2012. Activist black

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Clergy Interviewed, $N = 30$

	N	Percent
Gender		
Male	24	80.0
Female	6	20.0
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	28	93.3
White	2	6.7
Denomination		
African Methodist Episcopal	2	6.7
Baptist	13	43.3
Catholic	2	6.7
Nondenominational	5	16.7
Pentecostal	7	23.3
Presbyterian	1	3.3
Age		
49.4 years old (mean)		
29–73 years old (range)		
Experience working in disadvantaged, Boston neighborhoods		
19.8 years (mean)		
7 to 40 years (range)		

clergy were recruited for participation with the assistance of community liaisons. Snowball sampling techniques were employed in an effort to identify and recruit additional participants for inclusion in the study. TPC clergy members were compensated with a retail gift card worth $25 for their voluntary participation. Furthermore, respondents were assured confidentiality regarding their interviews.

The nature of the sampling was purposive. That is, community liaisons helped to identify and recruit activist clergy who had decades of experience working in Boston's minority communities—as these individuals would likely be familiar with TPC efforts to reduce youth violence. Table 1 provides characteristics of the clergy sample. Eighty percent of the minsters were male ($N = 24$)[7] and 28 were black (93.3 percent). Respondents were between the ages of 29 and 73, with a mean age of 49.4 years. The clergy members represented several religious affiliations: African Methodist Episcopal ($N = 2$, 6.7 percent), Baptist ($N = 13$, 43.3 percent), Catholic ($N = 2$, 6.7 percent), Pentecostal ($N = 7$, 23.3 percent), and Presbyterian ($N = 1$, 3.3 percent). Five (16. 7 percent) of the respondents were nondenominational. The TPC clergy had, on average, 20 years of experience working in disadvantaged Boston neighborhoods, ranging from 7 to 40 years of service.

Study participants reported primarily working in three Boston neighborhoods: Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury. Table 2 provides U.S. Census estimates of these neighborhoods and for Boston. Dorchester has the largest number of residents, followed by Roxbury and Mattapan. Each neighborhood is majority black or African American. Dorchester has the highest per capita income, followed by Mattapan and Roxbury.

All three neighborhoods are plagued by higher violent crime rates than other neighborhoods in Boston (Table 3). Most notably, the homicide rate in Roxbury and Dorchester was more than double the citywide homicide rate. In Mattapan, the homicide rate

TABLE 2. Neighborhood Racial Composition and Socioeconomic Profile

	City of Boston	Dorchester	Mattapan	Roxbury
Total population	617,594	114,235	22,600	48,454
White	53.9%	26.5%	8.6%	18.5%
Black or African American	24.4%	46.3%	79.9%	57.0%
Hispanic or Latino	17.5%	17.0%	12.1%	27.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%
Asian	8.9%	9.3%	1.7%	2.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Some other race/ethnicity	8.4%	12.0%	5.6%	15.0%
Two or more races/ethnicities	3.9%	5.3%	3.7%	5.9%
Family households	46.0%	63.0%	67.3%	57.1%
Average household size	2.26	2.74	2.65	2.46
Occupied housing units	92.7%	91.4%	91.7%	92.4
Per capita income	$33,158	$22.120	$21,431	$17,579

Source: City of Boston. 2013. *Data Boston*. Retrieved from: https://data.cityofboston.gov.

TABLE 3. Violent Crime Rates in Selected Boston Neighborhoods, 2010

	Dorchester	Mattapan	Roxbury	Boston
Homicide	24.9	43.0	24.8	11.7
Rape	63.1	55.3	77.3	42.7
Robbery	397.7	401.7	431.4	304.6
Aggravated assault	814.5	1,188.6	1,066.9	557.8
Total violent crime	1,300.2	1,688.6	1,600.4	916.8

Note: Rates are the number of crimes per 100,000 residents.
Source: Authors' calculations based on Uniform Crime Reports Index crime data provided by the BPD.

was nearly four times the citywide rate. Youth gun violence and disorder were prominent in our study participants' descriptions of neighborhood conditions. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated that these neighborhoods suffer from historically high levels of serious gun violence and other co-occurring forms of social disadvantage (Braga 2003; Braga, Hureau, and Winship 2008; Harding 2010).

Study questions were designed to elicit detailed information from respondents regarding the Ten Point Coalition and their community-based initiatives. Thus, the interview guide consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions.[8] Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted in areas that ensured privacy. All participants agreed to have their interviews digitally recorded and transcribed. Each author read transcripts in their entirety before engaging in the initial coding stage. Then, each author independently coded and analyzed the interview transcripts by hand (recording extensive notes in the margins) to identify common themes regarding how study participants sought to increase social cohesion among residents and inspire them to intervene in violent crime problems for the common good of their neighborhoods—that is, open coding (Strauss 1987). The authors conferred to compare coding and reach an agreement on axial coding, which became the preliminary subthemes. Once we agreed on the recurrent themes, the authors reexamined the interview transcripts (examples of our codes include "how ministers become involved," "methods for developing coalitions," and "addressing complex challenges"). On the rare occasions where we initially differed on coding, we discussed the discrepancy and reached agreement. Finally, throughout the data analysis

process, we carefully examined study participants' accounts depicting salient concepts. Thus, the later featured quotes are not atypical, with the exception of rare topics that only a few respondents introduced. In sum, the research team utilized grounded theory methods to pinpoint recurrent themes in addition to uncommon but relevant matters (Strauss 1987).

RESULTS

Our primary goal here is to examine whether, and if so how, black clergy are capable of creating and executing community-based violence reduction efforts. We begin by investigating respondents' detailed accounts regarding why they decided to expand their work beyond their congregations, addressing a number of social problems adversely impacting the broader community. Next, we examine how clergy went about engaging residents of high-crime communities, often employing unconventional methods and partnering with other community-based organizations, city government, and law enforcement officials. Finally, we analyze study participants' sentiments about fellow clergy who choose to ignore the call of broader community service.

WHY CERTAIN CLERGY BECOME INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH BEYOND THE WALLS OF THEIR CHURCHES

The majority of study participants indicated that their community outreach efforts were aimed at ending an apparent culture of violence and creating safer environments for Boston youths. For example, Reverend Wooten explained that the TPC goal is "… to find effective ways to leverage the influence of the black church as a tool to impact… limit and ultimately hopefully diminish the reality of violence in the city." Clergy members focused on bettering the lives of youth through their violence reduction efforts, and by extension, the city of Boston. Reverend Triplett noted, "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." Reverend Triplett's comment exemplifies study participants' view that in order to be most effective, church leaders had to figure out ways to "successfully get outside of the church." Specifically, clergy realized all too well that simply having church buildings clustered in disadvantaged communities was not enough to generate collective community-based action (Sampson 2012). Further, clergy acknowledged that not all of their colleagues would "answer the call" and expressed skepticism regarding the motives of a few ministers that were supposedly committed to the work. Specifically, respondents were critical of a small number of clergy who often made appearances at media events in the wake of highly publicized crimes but were rarely seen on the streets interacting with residents.

All study participants agreed that clergy and the church should be active participants in the community. The vast majority of respondents, however ($N = 19$, 63.3 percent), stressed the importance of church leaders making connections with people on the street and other nearby congregations in an effort to build enduring community relationships. For instance, Pastor Ackles shared his strategy for improved community engagement,

emphasizing the value of clergy maintaining a visible presence on violence plagued streets. He stated, "...I sort of spend time in all of the neighborhoods, reaching out, connecting with church pastors and then connecting [with] those on the street, with youth there, and I would say that if you are looking at a week's worth of time, I probably spend anywhere from a quarter of my time to maybe 30 percent of my time making those connections. Just being out there." In addition, clergy members focused on being involved with *all* community members, not just those actively seeking spiritual salvation. Pastor Glasgow stressed that it was important to "... not be afraid, to just engage people right where they are. ... [T]hat's a value that we have as a church ... engaged evangelism, but then also just live authentically. [Churchgoers should be] able to say that no matter what condition you are in that I am going to engage you right where you are."

Clergy explained that they would encourage church leaders and parishioners to regularly (ideally, monthly) walk the streets of high crime neighborhoods, singing inspirational hymns, and inviting residents to join them in prayer. Respondents labeled this activity "community walks" and heralded them as instrumental toward spreading the gospel to and galvanizing neighbors around youth violence reduction initiatives. Study participants explained that these walks allowed them to reach both the unchurched and community members least likely to attend traditional worship services (e.g., gang-involved youths, street-level drug dealers, and the homeless). Further, although these walks provided clergy unique opportunities to interact with the broader community, ministers reportedly paid specific attention to problem places and/or groups. In addition to explaining their reasons behind encouraging local churches to participate in "community walks," the clergy also discussed their rationale for enlisting churches from across the city in their community outreach efforts. For example, Reverend Stewart noted:

> We wrote up a plan. On that Tuesday, the mission was to one, mobilize the faith community, not just the black churches, faith communities, white religious leaders and suburban churches and that was part of the plan. ... [T]he mission was very clearly defined, we're calling on churches to be missionaries to do outreach to gangs. We're calling on churches to adopt gangs in neighborhoods. ... [T]hat's very specific, right? We are calling on churches to develop partnerships with suburban and downtown churches and black churches to support frontline community organizers on the ground that focus exclusively on gangs.

Another key aspect of actively engaging local youth was the notion that clergy members were able to acquire better understandings of all their activities—lawful and otherwise. Reverend Stewart explained, "If you're on the street working with the kids every day you have a better sense of their criminal activity than the cops do. The cops don't know anything until after the fact..." With the clergy being privy to youths' criminal and noncriminal activities, the clergy's role in reducing youth violence tended to focus on conflict resolution. For instance, Reverend Ackles explained, "a lot of the work is interacting, building relationships, finding out what the latest conflicts are, whether they be personal one-on-one conflicts or group to group conflicts. And then seeing what I can do to help ease the tension between the two groups."

Although clergy touted the benefits of being in the community, several respondents drew attention to challenges associated with delivering the word of God outside the four walls of the church. That is, church leaders understood that their evangelical work would

look different on the street and wanted to ensure that their spiritual messages were indeed reaching and benefiting neighborhood residents. Reverend Montague explained:

> . . . Some adults have failed the young people. The community has failed young people in a number of ways. . . . [S]o churches need to build their capacity to figure out how to get outside the doors. They need to build their capacity around trying to figure out how to engage young people and it's not a lot of rocket science but the young people are not going to necessarily come into your church . . .

In agreement, Reverend Triplett noted:

> . . . there absolutely are challenges to moving outside of the church because the church is like a hospital so everybody that comes in is somewhat broken and needs to be repaired themselves. And so the challenge is finding the individuals who have received the benefit of being in a relationship with God and being actually equipped to go out and to bear witness to what fellowship can do, what relationships can do . . .

HOW CLERGY ENGAGED THE UNCHURCHED, CITY LEADERS, AND THE BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

This section highlights how study participants went about engaging community residents and forming partnerships with secular institutions. Specifically, our analyses reveal four different but overlapping TPC functions: (1) stimulating informal social control, (2) shaping and representing community views on youth violence, (3) connecting high-risk youth and their families to social services, and (4) providing a strong moral voice on violence in partnership with government entities.

As highlighted above, the clergy believed that the foundation of their community outreach efforts centered on being active and present in distressed communities. Thus, church leaders insisted that they could not be squeamish when interacting with the unchurched. This point was poignantly driven home by several clergy who openly challenged their colleagues who seemingly held the view that merely strolling through high crime neighborhoods was sufficient. Specifically, church leaders were insistent that pastors needed to form genuine connections with youth if there was any hope toward curtailing youth violence. For instance, Pastor Griggs implored, " . . . you can't just go walk through the area and let [young people] stand back in the shadows and let them watch you walk through. You have to engage them. If you're engaging them then you're slowing down the activity in the area but you got to engage them." Further, clergy understood that their active participation in neighborhood life often resulted in greater familiarity with youths' broader social needs. Reverend Arnette commented, "[You have to] go out on the street and try to build relationships with [youth] and try to funnel them into opportunities that they're reluctant to be in or they don't want to be in or don't know anything about. Not only them, but their families also . . . " Our respondents described developing meaningful relationships with troubled youths as an uncertain process that required a sustained effort. As Reverend Pettigrew explained:

> It takes time to build a genuine connection with a disconnected young person. The first step is to be a regular presence on the streets . . . become a familiar face . . . when they are hanging out on the corners and in the parks, don't be afraid to

> introduce yourself, get to know their names. You then need to develop a rapport with them... engage them in conversation about sports, anything they might be interested in. Buy them some food. A pizza can buy a lot of good will with a teenager. Once you have a rapport, you can start talking to them about their lives... their families... their needs. When you get that relationship, you need to back it up with action to show them that you actually care. Meet their moms and develop a relationship with them (the mother), see what you can do to connect them to whatever help they need.

The clergy acknowledged that some neighborhood youth were not responsive to such outreach efforts. In these cases, they attempted to develop an indirect influence on hard-to-reach youth by cultivating strong relationships with their peers, siblings, parents, and others in their immediate social networks.

It is important to note the clergy almost uniformly reported that they did not work as direct service providers to disadvantaged youth. Rather, they served as "connectors" and "brokers" for resources and opportunities. For instance, the Operation Homefront initiative partners BPD officers and Boston Public School Police officers with TPC clergy to conduct weekly home visits with families of "at-risk" students who are misbehaving in school and performing poorly in their academic studies. These teams have access to a wide array of academic, social service, substance abuse, job training, and other resources to offer troubled families. Ministers facilitate discussion with the parents about the students' problems and the kinds of resources that might be needed to improve particular situations. As Reverend Ackles described:

> We play at least two important roles during home visits. First, the families of problem students usually don't trust the police and are reluctant to invite the police into their homes to discuss sensitive issues involving their children. We are able to assure the parents that the police officers are not there to arrest their kids. We help them understand that the [Homefront] team is there to help keep their kids in school and stay out of trouble. Second, we are able to have honest conversations about what might be going wrong. Sometimes, it is as simple as the parents not knowing what their kids are doing... other times, the parents themselves need help and we can talk to them about what that might be... getting a job, getting off drugs, whatever...

Although the vast majority of clergy reported being actively engaged in the community, routinely connecting with youth on the street, they also emphasized the time and effort needed in order to cultivate working relationships with a wider range of community members. Respondents shared various strategies they used to build trusting and meaningful relationships with neighborhood residents. Specifically, clergy reported tirelessly taking advantage of every opportunity to introduce themselves to unfamiliar community members. For example, Reverend Birdsong explained that this approach often facilitated "talking, pastoring, counseling." She continued noting that, "...I even go around to the [neighborhood] stores and introduce myself to the people that own the[m]. ... [I might say,] 'Hi' I am the Pastor [from] up the street ...if you need anything let me know [and] we can talk." Pastor Taylor added, "I think it's a lot about developing those relationships and letting people know how they can be most useful and helpful in terms of working toward a common goal of keeping the community safe." Continually

emphasizing a shared purpose of having a safe community was an important way in which church leaders were able to connect with community residents. For instance, Reverend Triplett reasoned, "...everybody wants to live healthy and to live whole but sometimes they are not afforded those opportunities so your ear is not to the ground if you're not actually out there doing the work you'll never meet those people."

In reaching out to other congregations, study participants noted the value of ministers presenting a united front to neighborhood residents, regardless of religious affiliation, in the hope of achieving their shared goal of safe and prosperous communities. Reverend Montague explained:

> ...I try to treat people with respect and help people to understand that this work is all hands on deck. It's not about big churches. It's not just about the [African Methodist Episcopal Churches]. It's about all the different denominations which you know again to me that's a dividing kind of thing but you know it's not about all men. ... [I]t's about all of us putting our hands together and trying to figure out how we can do this together...

Similarly, Pastor Rodgers commented:

> The most rewarding part of my job at Ten Point was organizing churches ...working with churches because I'll put it like this, putting out the call to churches meant that we had to put feet on the street and really engage churches in the same way we want churches to engage youth. So we had to welcome them into what we were doing, let them know that we care about them, that we are here not just to ask them to provide things to youth and families but we're going to provide some things to them as well. And sometimes that was just [offering] moral support because as a minister, I would go out to other ministers and just hear their pain, hear what they were going through, hear about their struggles, and hear about their triumphs...

Numerous outreach efforts (e.g., youth sporting leagues, back to school drives, and gang mediation) emerged as a result of clergy attempting to establish strong ties with high-risk youth. Before these outreach efforts could take hold within the community, however, it was important that the clergy had a clear understanding of persistent challenges confronting local youth before putting a plan in place to address those issues. Reverend Reed remarked:

> So first get clear on who it is that you are serving. What it is that you want to do with each specific population. ...If you're going to work with the proven risk population, first of all they are the most disconnected group of kids in the city which is why they're into violence. ... [N]obody has diverted them from violence all their lives. How disconnected do you have to be to the point that you can pick up a gun and shoot somebody? I mean there's no mentor there. There's no moral compass provider or anyone there when you get to that point. So if you're gonna reach those kids you gotta embed somebody with them. Somebody that they will learn to trust and then learn to listen to. That takes a long time. That's not a we're gonna invest in this for six months. This is we're going to be at this for at least a minimum [of] three years just to connect with those groups of kids. Now you can start to leverage change...

Similarly, Reverend Bowes noted:

> . . . I would say that's where you start conversations around challenges and opportunities or strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats that sort of stuff in terms of being a citizen in your neighborhood or in your community. You [should consider] the question, what is it like to be a citizen in Four Corners? And identify what the challenges are but also the opportunities. . . . [I]nvariably in poor, black communities across the country, public safety is going to be a threat and [we should] talk [to community residents] about what it means to be a citizen in relationship to feeling threatened or having your children's lives threatened as they walk through the streets. . . . [We should] build out strategies based on that . . .

In addition to fostering strong and trusting relationships in an effort to reduce youth violence and create prosperous communities, activist clergy understood the potential benefits resulting from establishing partnerships with the police and other key community organizations. Activist clergy commented that such partnerships facilitated the holistic betterment of the community and concentrated resources that could be used by community members. Reverend Richards explained, "The best practice is being present in the community and working with partnerships. Nobody can do it by themselves and there are duplications of efforts and there are turf wars and all of that. But if you are around the same table you come up with consensus and also leaders get to know each other . . . " Likewise, Pastor Weems emphasized the importance of collaborating with various entities as long as these partnerships were centered on reducing urban youth violence. He observed, " . . . I think the collaboration can be successful but it has to be done in in a way that promotes the best interest of the young people that we are trying to reach."

Several church leaders provided concrete examples of their efforts to partner with other churches, community organizations, and the police in the hope of pooling resources that would ultimately result in a myriad of direct social services to disadvantaged youth. For example, Pastor Taylor commented:

> . . . last summer funding was cut for youth programs period, we called together a huge community meeting of police, residents, young people, service providers to figure out how we could put together a schedule where we could broadcast widely to young people to let them know the activities that they could get involved [in]. . . . [A] lot of churches do vacation bible school and have free feeding, eating programs for kids. . . . When you are doing collaboration you gotta have someone behind it. People just don't naturally collaborate.

Nearly all respondents discussed their partnerships with the BPD. In describing this relationship, study participants stressed the importance of working with the police and specifically mentioned a number of initiatives developed between the BPD and various local churches.[9] Reverend Ackles shared his thoughts regarding the clergy-police relationship. He stated:

> . . . [We are] partnering with the police department because the reality is no community can survive without some form of law enforcement. I have said this many times before, either you have the more formal law enforcement which is manifested in police, DAs, etcetera or you have the informal, which is our youth trying to

> handle business on their own and that is what's killing us right now. So we need to have that law enforcement piece, but you can't have a relationship that is more like a subservient role or just asking the police to come in and to help. ... [T]here 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...

Similar to Reverend Ackles, numerous study participants mentioned the tenuous police–minority community relationship that has plagued Boston. The history of this fragile relationship has, at times adversely impacted neighborhood residents' willingness to participate in BPD-sponsored and/or -supported activities. For example, Pastor Cokely observed, "...in some communities and not just here but in some places that's very controversial. ... [S]ome people distrust the fact that some clergy have close relationships with the police. ... [S]ome people would prefer that you didn't work with the police at all." And Pastor Griggs remarked, "...you have to have the trust of your partner. And so it's difficult to use that term community–police partnership because the trust is very hard to come by." Even though there was not universal trust of the police among clergy, they acknowledged that the BPD plays an important role in effective crime-control efforts. Although the majority of respondents did not characterize their working relationship with BPD as perfect, they overwhelmingly considered it an important partnership, nonetheless. For instance, Pastor Weems noted, "...there is a partnership... there is room for improvement, but you could say it's a partnership because [the police] do connect and talk and even share intelligence with clergy."

Not only was creating strong partnerships vital to the clergy being able to engage in local crime control efforts, study participants insisted that mutual respect for the different roles and responsibilities of everyone involved was also critical for success. For example, Pastor Nero noted:

> First, there needs to be like a frank discussion of roles and responsibility in terms of what the police department's role is and what other non-profits, Ten Point, other non-profits who deal with youth violence what their role is. So there isn't any confusion about the police department being involved in doing community activities. ...[T]heir role is to enforce laws, their role is to public safety and their role is to support initiatives brought up by non-profits and community organizations, not to spearhead them...

Several clergy members agreed with Pastor Nero's stance regarding the importance of respecting the roles of each person at the table. In particular, Pastor Pettigrew explained, "[Good partnerships require] understanding of the partnership. Again, [individuals should] respect each person's role and the responsibilities. If I don't respect what you do or even know what you do, how am I supposed to be coming into a partnership with you?"

Study participants explained that candid discussions regarding the role and expectations of stakeholders allowed each partner to establish goals and align their resources in the best interest of the community and its residents. Reverend Montague commented, "...one of the overarching values [of the TPC–BPD partnership] is a [sense of] community shared responsibility. That it's not just the police. It's not just the churches... ...it's not just the businesses. We all have to kind of get on the same plane. And how we

get to that is somewhat incremental." This belief was supported by Pastor Pettigrew. He stated, "... at the end of the day it's not about me and you. It's about this person in the community, we are trying to make some change so when this partnership comes together everybody understands that we're still in a partnership ... "

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO STIMULATING INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

In seeking to establish strong and meaningful relationships with community members, the clergy realized that residents were often hesitant to engage with others due to their unfamiliarity with fellow neighbors. Church leaders sought to increase community support for crime-control efforts by strengthening informal social control, the human intervention aspect of collective efficacy in neighborhoods. For instance, Reverend Shegog explained that, "... sometimes people don't want to come out their doors anymore. They've lost hope. Sometimes it takes knocking on a door or when you're familiar. ... [T]hat's the community I grew up in and that kind of gives me an in with the elderly. Whereas normally they aren't going to open their doors to just anybody ... " Pastor Arnette echoed this sentiment:

> ... as a black community, we've totally gotten away from [community engagement] and that's why there are so many things going on that we don't know about or we don't know this person and half the time we don't know the person that's right next door. ... And I think that it has gotten away from that and that's what I coach my staff up to do. [I emphasize] that the relationship part is the most important because sometimes it takes quite a while to build. ... I'm sure that these kids have heard so many people promise them so many different things and never follow up ...

Deteriorated relationships among community residents seemed to present a considerable challenge to clergy members. In particular, our respondents' efforts to help convey community norms were seriously undermined by residents' self-protection strategies (i.e., withdrawal from neighborhood life and avoidance of perceived dangers). Clergy were willing to take on assorted obstacles in the hope of achieving higher levels of community engagement, however. Specifically, the clergy realized that one of the best mechanisms for improved community involvement was through their continued presence in the most distressed neighborhoods. For instance, Pastor 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 ... "

As Reverend Pettigrew explained, clergy members' ability to break down barriers thwarting effective communication centered on trust. Specifically, church leaders first needed to establish trust with community residents and then, community residents had to trust that the clergy were working in their best interest. Reverend Birdsong proposed that one way to establish mutual trust was by, "... first getting the community to trust what [clergy] are saying to believe that they are really there to help and not just another organization coming in and giving lip service. Actually coming in there and really caring ... going to court with them, advocating for them."

Although respondents did not use scholarly phrases like "collective efficacy" or "informal social control" when describing their outreach efforts, the majority of pastors credited collective community action for enhanced cohesion among residents. Study participants' accounts featured several tangible examples of their reported achievements. For instance, clergy were proud of their ability to persuade residents knowledgeable about unsolved crimes to come forward and divulge that information to BPD. In addition, pastors were pleased that neighborhood residents often took ownership of social service programs originally launched by the church. Finally, study participants celebrated the outgrowth of various grassroots, anti-violence campaigns, spearheaded by residents (e.g., mothers having lost children to violence).

Nearly half of our clergy respondents described how they regularly advocated for community-based sentences for gang-involved youth being adjudicated for non-violent offenses. This advocacy work often involved meeting with probation officers before sentencing proceedings to discuss why particular youth deserved a community sentence over incarceration and how they could jointly ensure that the youth would not violate any court-mandated probation conditions. If they could negotiate an agreement with probation, the judge would then be advised of the support of both probation and the clergy in granting probation. Although judges made their own independent decisions on appropriate punishments, the clergy reported their advocacy work and willingness to partner with probation to develop a community supervision plan often generated the desired results. As Reverend Ackles suggested, "People need to believe that outcomes can be changed. Community folk are much more willing to join a movement that has tangible impacts on people's lives . . . when you spare a young person from a prison or jail sentence, you gain not only their trust but also the trust of their families and friends . . . it has a magnifying effect. Small wins accumulate, people begin to believe."

In addition, church leaders emphasized that an important aspect of establishing enduring partnerships is that information sharing must happen frequently between all parties involved. Specifically, clergy indicated that information sharing among community residents, various churches, the BPD, and community-based organizations all helped to inform their outreach and problem solving strategies. This reciprocal information sharing was viewed as both a benefit and a hindrance depending on the particular situation underway in the community. For example, information sharing was viewed as problematic when community members were unwilling to confide in the clergy or the police. This refusal to confide in the clergy and/or the police often stemmed from community residents having prior experiences with sensitive information being mishandled. The most recognized benefit of information sharing was its potential to draw attention to a specific community concern. Pastor Webber noted:

> Information is always critical to trying to do something to alleviate a problem. And I see that Ten Point has a lot of information that they have garnered by various sources that sometimes helps to identify hot areas of concern as well as well as identify problem groups within certain neighborhoods that we may want to try to impact in a more positive, wholesome way.

This point was also stressed by Pastor Arnette, who remarked, "it takes the right kind of person or people to work [shooting] cases because you're only as good as the information the community will give you. And if you're not getting the information, you can't

possibly solve any crimes . . . ” The clergy indicated that whereas community residents share sensitive information with them, they expect that clergy members will keep their sources confidential. Pastor Griggs explained that inherent to effectively working with youth requires maintaining their trust:

> . . . I’m not looking to get much information from them because I think it’s important that you have a relationship with the young folks where there’s a certain privilege to confidentiality. It’s not a legal principle but it certainly is a community principle that the young folks that confide in you have the trust that the information and your relationship is a confidential one that’s not breeched. And when it’s breeched the effectiveness is again almost nonexistent . . . .

Community residents expressed two primary concerns regarding being encouraged to share information. Specifically, individuals worked to avoid being branded a snitch both because of the social stigma and due to what they considered real concerns regarding their physical safety. Reverend Montague provides a rationale for such reluctance. She noted, “ . . . it’s kind of like the community code of I don’t want to be a snitch or I don’t want to put my family in jeopardy or my house in jeopardy so there is a little bit of that overtone I think.” Reverend Nero, however, offered a perspective for helping residents to distinguish between acting responsibly as a witness and being a snitch. He explained:

> You give [residents] clear distinctions, you let them know what the differences are. . . . [B]asically at the end of the day you have got to let them know what a snitch is, lay it out for them. Give them an example of what it is. Give them an example of what a witness is. And let them make their own decisions ‘cause again you have people saying stop snitching to witnesses. . . . [T]hat’s not what a snitch is. If I’m a witness, I’m not a snitch. A snitch is somebody who is trying to get less time. That’s what a snitch is.

In addition to their desire to avoid the social stigma associated with being branded a snitch, clergy reported that residents also expressed fear for their physical safety. Pastor Blakenship said:

> [An individual] might tell me certain things if they trust me. And if you trust me, I am the one who now needs to convince you that this information needs to be shared if you trust me enough. That is where the X factor comes in. Because if I take this information and share it with the police without you knowing, then our relationship is going to be damaged.

Pastor Blakenship continued, explaining that long-term neighborhood crime control efforts hinged more on his ability to persuade individuals with information about unsolved crimes to come forward themselves. He noted, “My responsibility is to convince you that what you shared with me is vital. I want to set up a situation where you’re not going to be looked at as a snitch. I gotta convince you that this is not going to be the case. . . . We can use the information without having it known that it’s coming from you.”

This trepidation holds true when community residents share information with the police and are subsequently injured or killed due to their actions. Pastor Nero acknowledges the concerns of community residents when he states “don’t expect us, the community, to give you information when you don’t protect us when we do give you information.” As

Pastor Nero's comment suggests, community residents come to expect a certain degree of protection when they share information.

In building relationships in the community, establishing partnerships, and sharing information all in an effort to decrease youth violence and create thriving communities, clergy members were specific about what it meant to them to engage in local crime control efforts. This view was perhaps best communicated by Reverend Ackles. He noted:

> ... what I love about [doing this work] is that I know that it makes a difference in the lives of people. And that's what gives me joy ... watch[ing] a young person go from one extreme to another extreme. ... [T]hey [might begin] in a negative extreme and they move into a positive lifestyle. And to watch that develop, is a wonderful thing.

Pastor Pettigrew also discussed the importance in "doing the work" and realizing the positive impact that it can have on local youths' lives. He stated: "... I realized that years later when a young man said oh yeah thank you for a, b, c ... this is what I'm doing [now]. I'm in college. Yeah I'm in school now. I'm like what? That's why I didn't see you 'cause when you don't see them [you wonder], is he in jail? ... No you're in school now, like wow. It's what it is. It's important ... "

In addition, the clergy were also specific about what they would like to see as a result of their outreach efforts. For example, Pastor Shegog said:

> ... [This may be my] spiritual guidance talking ... I'd like to see more Bible study, more families praying, get into the word of God. ... And I want to see more things for the youth because [adult community residents and the police] don't want to see the youth hanging around, but they don't have the programs that they had when we were coming up.

Although their primary concerns involved youth, study participants understood that there was an urgent need for services to assist the entire family. Reverend Richards commented that comprehensive outreach efforts are "... an attempt to get the kids early on so they don't follow the older brother's footsteps. Get them in after school programs. Summer programs. All that. Get the family as much help as you can ... " Finally, the clergy recognized the need to do a better job of highlighting the many positive results stemming from their community outreach efforts. For example, Reverend Triplett stated:

> I'm real big on outcomes. So I would like to see more outcomes of actual families, individuals, and communities that have come through this process and been successful and we see evidence of that because that's the one thing that I can't say we've necessarily seen. We haven't heard those stories. ... [T]hey're not told up front that Ten Point was able to bring this child from that place to this place. We see the work that we're doing.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative analysis conducted here of activist black clergy highlights their role in developing and implementing community crime control and prevention strategies

in response to persistent youth violence in Boston neighborhoods. This study sought to provide a greater understanding of the motivations behind the clergy's community outreach efforts, the various types of activities they undertook, and how ministers navigated the complex challenges encountered in doing their evangelical work outside the walls of their churches. Although the study findings may not be generalizable beyond Boston's current context, study participants' detailed narratives suggest that that the black church (and its leaders) can play important roles in local crime control efforts by helping to mobilize other churches, community organizations, police departments, and neighborhood residents in a concentrated effort to combat urban youth violence.

In seeking to reduce youth violence occurring in disadvantaged Boston neighborhoods, TPC clergy stressed the importance of being actively involved in the community. In particular, for church leaders, the best way to curb youth violence centered on having a sustained presence on the streets, engaging with neighborhood residents. In getting outside of the church, clergy members reported that they were better able to interact with the unchurched and improve church leaders' understanding of neighborhood residents' perspectives regarding crime and other important local problems. Thus, the clergy were better able to address a wide range of issues facing youth, develop programs and initiatives aimed at getting and keeping at-risk youth off of the street, and connect youth and their families to a broad network of community-based resources.

In discussing their reasons for engaging in community outreach, TPC clergy members specifically mentioned that their spiritual calling led them to do so. Church leaders also discussed how their work was facilitated by partnerships that they had established with various local churches, community-based organizations, and the BPD. Study participants noted that these partnerships were needed in order to decrease duplication of efforts, pool resources, and to effectively address a wide range of pressing community issues. Clergy members noted that bringing together numerous organizations would have a greater impact on reducing youth violence. The TPC clergy also maintained that mutual respect was the key to sustaining effective community partnerships. Study participants recognized that all involved parties shared the goal of creating and promoting safe and healthy communities and were committed to not losing sight of that goal after program implementation. In sum, church leaders realized that there may have been different ideas regarding how best to increase public safety, they maintained, however, that what was most important was that they always spoke on one accord, in the best interest of the community residents.

Neighborhoods suffering from high levels of violence are characterized by the inability of local community structures to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls (Sampson and Groves 1989). Sampson (2011: 226) suggests the key to fostering informal social controls and collective efficacy ''is to increase positive connections among youth and adults in the community'' and recommends initiatives such as parent involvement in after-school and nighttime youth programs, adult-youth mentoring systems, and organized supervision of leisure time youth activities. We found a faith-based social network in Boston that strove to unite residents around a common set of values against violence, develop stronger connections among residents, and leverage the combined resources of social service, law enforcement, and other governmental agencies to prevent youth violence. The work of the TPC clergy seemed to fit well within contemporary policy recommendations on how community-based organizations should be attempting to prevent and control neighborhood youth violence.

Our interviews suggested that the TPC clergy were central players within the social and professional networks that connected Boston's minority neighborhoods to a variety of community-based, social service, and criminal justice agencies. In essence, the clergy served as "brokers" through whom disconnected or isolated individuals and groups can interact (Stovel and Shaw 2012). Disadvantaged neighborhoods suffering from serious violent crime problems are often characterized by social isolation. TPC clergy developed and leveraged informal personal relationships within communities to form local coalitions to mobilize against violence. The ministers were also able to connect neighborhood coalitions (and, importantly, troubled youth) to a broader network of governmental and nongovernmental agencies that could support and enhance the ability of residents to exert control over violent youth behaviors in public spaces. In this way, the TPC clergy could also be described as "mavens" (see, e.g., Gladwell 2000) who exert strong influence over the workings of Boston's networks of capacity to prevent youth violence.

It is important to note here that our findings are complementary to Sampson's (2012) observation that the density of churches in neighborhoods does not necessarily translate into enhanced collective efficacy. Our qualitative study suggests that what churches do matters in stimulating collective efficacy and provides some much-needed depth to our empirical understanding of how parochial social institutions contribute to neighborhood well-being. The TPC black churches attempted to control youth violence in Boston by promoting collective action, supervising and delivering services to high-risk youth, and strengthening the connections among residents, nonprofit/private organizations, and government agencies. These activities enhance the capacity of residents to exert public control over their neighborhoods (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson 2011). Rather than applying simple church density measures, future investigations of the ability of churches to deliver collective community-based action should strive to account for the embeddedness of churches within local and citywide social networks and the types of services churches deliver to neighborhood residents.

The mere presence of black churches in disadvantaged neighborhoods is clearly not a sufficient condition for enhancing collective action against youth violence. Indeed, many inner-city churches, in Boston and elsewhere, are singularly focused on supporting the spiritual needs of their parishioners. Our interviews also suggested that some neighborhood ministers were overly focused on politics and garnering media attention rather than investing their time enhancing the wellbeing of the neighborhoods they served. Nevertheless, our research suggests that black churches, if properly oriented, could be important producers of collective efficacy in disadvantaged neighborhoods. We contend that clergy members seeking to establish initiatives similar to those of the TPC should commit to being a constant presence within distressed communities where they seek to facilitate change. However, Boston, and other municipalities seeking to promote these kinds of faith-based coalitions to prevent violence, face the common problem of bringing innovative and effective programs "up to scale" (see, e.g., Welsh et al. 2010). Given the promise of these faith-based coalitions, more work needs to be done to understand how collective action led by local clergy can be stimulated and broadened to include a wider range of participants from a diverse set of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

The ongoing work of the Boston TPC is currently being promoted as a model for faith-based community violence reduction coalitions by the Rebuilding Every Community Around Peace (RECAP) initiative (http://www.recapevents.org/), led by Reverend Jeffrey L. Brown. RECAP has sponsored national conferences to disseminate the lessons

learned and best practices from cities around the United States. Recently, RECAP partnered with faith-based organizations and the police department in Las Vegas and to launch a "Season of Peace" campaign that attempts to have "homicide-free" periods of time (usually a week) by engaging community walks, street-side memorial services, community meals (barbecues, spaghetti dinners), and developing "ceasefire" agreements with gang leaders to halt shootings during an agreed-upon time period. We will continue to monitor these efforts and look for opportunities to develop further scientific evidence on the efficacy of these community-based violence reduction efforts.

Notes

[1]The TPC website notes that, "Ten Point Plan [1992] calls upon churches and faith-based agencies of Boston to work collaboratively to develop the following action plan aimed at reducing violence and helping youth to develop more positive and productive life-styles:

Adopting youth gangs.

Sending mediators and mentors for Black and Latino juveniles into the local courts, schools, juvenile detention facilities, and the streets

Commissioning youth workers to do street level work with drug dealers and gang leaders

Developing concrete and specific economic alternatives to the drug economy.

Building linkages between downtown and suburban churches, and inner-city churches and ministries.

Initiating and supporting neighborhood crime watches

Developing partnerships between churches and community health centers that would, for example, facilitate counseling for families and individuals under stress, offer abstinence-oriented prevention programs for sexually transmitted diseases, or provide substance abuse prevention and recovery programs

Establishing brotherhoods and sisterhoods as a rational alternative to violent gang life.

Establishing rape crisis drop-in centers, services for battered women, and counseling for abusive men.

Developing a Black and Latino curriculum with an additional focus on the struggles of women and poor people as a means of increasing literacy and enhancing self-esteem in young people."

[2]We interviewed all three reverends and assigned them pseudonyms.

[3]http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/SPT/Programs/43.

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

[5]A voluminous literature exists regarding the relationship between religion and individual offending (see, e.g., Freeman 1986; Hirschi and Stark 1969; Johnson et al. 2000a, 2000b). 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 (2011:78) 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."

[6]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.

[7]The Results section features quotes from five of our six female pastors (i.e., Reverends Birdsong, Montague, Shegog, Taylor, and Triplett).

[8]This study draws from a broader investigation of Black clergy–BPD partnerships. Specifically, a subset of questions directly examining ministers' motivations for and mechanisms through which they engaged in crime reduction efforts produced insightful results:

What are the names of the neighborhood(s) where you most recently worked?

How long have you worked there? Years Months

How much time did/do you spend working in specific neighborhoods?

What are you usually doing while there?

Are there any programs available for neighborhood residents?

IF YES: What kind(s)? Are there any programs specifically available for youths?

IF NO: What kind(s) of programs would you like to see in the neighborhood(s) where you work?

In the neighborhood(s) where you work, is crime a big problem, small problem, or no problem at all?

IF YES: What kinds of crime? How serious of a problem is it? How are neighborhood residents dealing with crime problems?

When a crime such as a beating or shooting occurs, do you think that some people in the neighborhood would rather deal with it themselves, instead of calling the police?

IF YES: What makes you say that? Would this be the same for young and older people?

Has anything ever happened in the community where you could have called the police but decided against it?

IF YES: What happened and what was your reason(s) for not involving the police?

Besides crime, are there other kinds of problems in the neighborhood(s) where you work?

IF YES: What kinds of problems are there? How often do these types of things occur?

[9]Clergy recognized the "fine-line" that they were required to walk in partnership with the police. Specifically, they were mindful that if neighborhood residents came to view clergy as merely an extension of the police, ministers might no longer be able to mobilize communities and interact with offenders in meaningful ways. However, the clergy understood that the police benefited from the community viewing ministers as having a strong, independent, and legitimate voice, especially in clarifying questionable police conduct.

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