CHAPTER 11

Religion and the Boston Miracle: The Effect of Black Ministry on Youth Violence

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Despite concerns over the practicality and political expediency of "faith-based" anti-poverty programs, the success of organizations such as the Ten Point Coalition suggests that social welfare programs that lack the depth dimensions of faith may be inadequate.

During the 1990s, many large cities in the U.S. saw dramatic declines in their homicide rates.[2] Boston's rate of homicide has dropped further than has that of any other large city, a full 80 percent between 1990 and 1999, creating what is now termed the "Boston Miracle." Perhaps more impressive is that Boston has achieved this precipitous decline in homicides through a process involving a unique partnership of the city's police and probation departments with community leaders. This strong partnership has helped establish broad support for police actions. This is in sharp contrast to New York City, where the declines in homicide rates have also been impressive, a 72 percent drop over the same eight year period, but where there have been open and hostile conflicts between the police and community leaders over the methods that police have used to reduce crime.[3]

In Boston, the key community group working with the police has been a set of black churches known as the Ten Point Coalition. The coalition consists of more than 40 churches, though only three ministers, Reverends Jeffrey Brown, Ray Hammond, and Eugene Rivers, pursue its agenda on a daily basis. The coalition's major contribution, we have argued, has been to change the relationship between the police and Boston's inner city communities from one of open antagonism to one of partnership. This has allowed Boston to succeed in substantially reducing homicide rates without imposing a "police state," as some people fear has happened in New York City. Specifically, we suggest that the coalition

has created an "umbrella of legitimacy" for the police to work under. To the degree that the police pursue policies and activities that are beneficial to the community, the coalition provides public support and thus legitimacy for police efforts. If those efforts, however, are not constructive, the police are open to explicit public criticism in the press by the ministers; in short they may be put "out in the rain." Furthermore, we describe the ways in which church efforts to minister to at-risk youth complement work done by police. In particular, the ministers appear to increase police effectiveness by providing a "remote surveillance capacity" for neighborhoods. Finally, we detail the ways in which police and the ministers work together to determine which youths should be given a second chance and which ones pose such a threat to the community that it is best to get them off the street. This process both increases police effectiveness and the perceived legitimacy of the judicial system.

Boston is in many respects a most positive picture of police-community partnership. The critical question is whether the Boston experience can be replicated in other large cities. If so, a key secondary question is whether it is important, perhaps even critical, that the key community leaders in this partnership are ministers with inner city congregations. Specifically, if other cities were to attempt to replicate Boston's salutary experience, would it be essential to involve ministers, or might other community based strategies be as, or even more, effective? This question is key for two reasons. First, from a policy perspective, it is desirable to know what are the essential ingredients of the Boston story. Other cities, New York perhaps most notably, have also reduced their crime rates substantially but at the cost of curtailing the civil liberties of its citizens. Boston is being looked at by some as a model of how to reduce crime precisely because it has achieved success without such negative side-effects.[4] Second, as we have already briefly discussed, the Ten Point Coalition has possibly contributed to the Boston Miracle in a variety of ways. Examining whether their religious identities are important to these contributions provides a method for assessing the varied ways in which they have contributed.

After presenting the story of the Boston Miracle, we then examine why the Ten Point Coalition may have been an important contributor to reducing Boston's homicide rates. The importance of having ministers as community partners is examined from two perspectives. First, there is the question of whether and how the legitimacy and authority of the Ten Point Coalition ministers have been based on they're being ministers. Second is the question of whether their message, which often has been explicitly religious, has been effective precisely because of that religious content. Specifically, are there ways that Ten Point's religious based messages have allowed them to simultaneously influence both the police and at risk youth? We conclude by suggesting that although there are strong theoretical reasons why it has been important that the partnership between Boston's police and the community has involved ministers, the true empirical assessment of this importance awaits the development and analysis of other programs that do and do not include ministers.

The "Boston Miracle"

Guns, Drugs, and the Police Response. Although Boston has never been considered a violence-plagued city to the extent that Los Angeles or New York has been, in 1990 a record-breaking 152 homicides stunned Boston with the realization that it had a serious violence problem.[5] The roots of this violence took hold with the introduction of crack-cocaine into Boston's inner city in 1988, relatively late in comparison to other major U.S. cities. As the crack market developed, so did turf-based gangs. When they realized how much money they could acquire through crack sales, gangs became increasingly protective of turf divisions. Gang colors and geographically based gang names such as "Corbett Street Posse" all showed evidence of family-type loyalty and respect.

Rival gangs turned to firearms to protect and defend their turf and gang identity. One gang's disrespect of, or show of aggression towards another, would inevitably be followed by retaliatory attacks. The extent of gang ties and turf delineation often led individuals who formerly avoided the temptation of gangs and the drug trade to pursue membership for protection and camaraderie. With firearms serving as the primary means of aggression, the level of violence grew to a rate and severity never before seen in the Boston area.

Since Boston law enforcement agencies had little experience with turf-based violence and criminal gang activity, their initial response to the situation in the late 1980s and early 1990s was disorganized. Until 1990, a department-based policy directed police officers and administration to publicly deny the existence of a "gang problem." In interviews, many current Boston police officers vouched for the fact that the department truly had no policy for dealing with the problem of violence in certain Boston neighborhoods in the late 1980s. Rather than creating a plan of attack to address the specific characteristics of gang-related violence, the police engaged in a fallback to the aggressive riot-oriented tactics of the 1960s. In addition, because homicide traditionally has been handled on an individual case basis, the police department became primarily focused on making the "big hit" and arresting the "big player," rather than addressing the significance of the group-based quality of gang violence.

In 1988, the City Wide Anti-Crime Unit, which was traditionally responsible for providing intense, targeted support across district boundaries of the city, was permanently assigned to the most violent neighborhoods of Boston's inner city. In 1989, the police department issued a policy statement that any individual involved in a gang would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Thus the department finally acknowledged the existence of a "gang problem." According to one current police captain, the unit, known as the CWACU, was expected to "go in, kick butts, and crack heads," and it adopted a mentality that "they could do anything to these kids" in order to put an end to their violent activity. This mentality resulted in highly aggressive and reportedly indiscriminate policing tactics.

Community Backlash. Two events in 1989, the Carol Stuart murder investigation and the Stop-and-Frisk scandal, focused community attention on the po-

lice department's initial approach to the violence crisis. Carol Stuart, a pregnant white woman, was murdered in the primarily African-American neighborhood of Boston's Mission Hill. Her husband, Charles Stuart, who was with her at the time of her death, reported that a black male committed the crime. Relying on Charles Stuart's account, the Boston Police Department "blanketed" the Mission Hill neighborhood looking for suspects. There were widespread reports of police abuse as well as coerced statements that implicated a black male suspect, William Bennet. Charles Stuart himself was later identified as the alleged perpetrator of the crime, but committed suicide before an investigation could be completed. The Boston Police Department's unquestioning acceptance of Charles Stuart's story about a black assailant, and subsequent mishandling of the murder investigation, created an atmosphere of extreme distrust of the department within Boston's African-American community.

This community suspicion was further intensified by the Stop-and-Frisk scandal, which also occurred in 1989. A public statement by a precinct commander that labeled the then-current police approach to gang-related violence as a "stop-and-frisk" campaign shocked the community and solidified the public's suspicion of the Boston Police Department.[6] There is some dissension within the police department about the extent to which their policy was to indiscriminately stop-and-frisk all black males within high crime areas, a policy known as "tipping kids upside down." According to several officers, they targeted individuals who either were previously spotted performing some illegal activity or were known gang members. However, officers also acknowledged that this approach was critically flawed because it was often very difficult to "distinguish the good guys from the bad guys." In addition, current members of the police force agree that there were "bad seed" cops who acted far too aggressively and indiscriminately. Accusations of unfairness about the stop-and-frisk tactics led to a court case in the fall of 1989 in which a judge threw out evidence acquired in what he viewed as an instance of unconstitutional search and seizure.[7]

As a result of the Stuart case and the Stop-and-Frisk scandal, the CWACU was disbanded in 1990. The department, however, began to see significant rewards from their aggressive street policies as Boston's homicide rates fell from 103 in 1991 to 73 in 1992.[8] This drop reinforced belief in the efficacy of their heavy-handed tactics. The police continued to view their actions as simple compliance with departmental orders. Despite this success, however, most officers acknowledged that the department's aggressive actions during this time brought community mistrust to an extreme level.

These two scandals, combined with smaller-scale, less visible incidents, eventually led the Boston press to question the police department's capacity to effectively handle even basic policing activities. In 1991, the *Boston Globe* published a harshly critical four-part series called "Bungling the Basics,"[9] that detailed a succession of foul-ups by the Boston Police Department during the previous few years. The series reported serious failings in the department's Internal Affairs Division. Misguided investigations, problematic policing and bad

press eventually led to the appointment of the St. Clair Commission to conduct a thorough review of the Boston Police Department and its policies.[10]

At this point, the Boston Police Department was in desperate need of an overhaul in order to deal with all the negative publicity. Steps were taken to publicly exhibit a changeover in law enforcement policy in Boston. "Bad-seed" cops were weeded out. The disbanded CWACU was reorganized into a new unit, the Anti-Gang Violence Unit, or AGVU, which took a "softer" approach. The aggressive and indiscriminate, but effective street tactics of the past were sharply curtailed. Apparently as a result, the decrease in homicides during 1991 and 1992 were followed by a sharp increase in 1993.

The St. Clair Commission Report, released in January 1992 after a yearlong investigation, cited major corruption within the department and recommended major changes[11]. In 1993, Mayor Flynn resigned, and Bill Bratton, then head of the New York transit police, replaced Police Commissioner Mickey Roache.

Innovation in Law Enforcement. Bratton brought a new philosophy and a commitment to innovation to the Boston Police Department. Fundamental shifts occurred in its overall operations. According to current police officers, the neighborhood policing tactics, that formerly "just existed on paper" and had never been implemented under Roache, were actively pursued under Bratton. Many officers also agreed that the new administration was simply more open-minded and willing to break away from the institutionally embedded policing practices.

Street-level officers had learned from their constant exposure to the complexities of gang-related violence. They realized the need for innovative law enforcement strategies to address the current problem specifically and intelligently. The reorganized Anti-Gang Violence Unit looked for new ways of managing gang activities. First, it realized the need for community support and thus was determined to exhibit "squeaky-clean" policing strategies. Previous strategies had also failed to include collaboration with other agencies, so the AGVU began to pursue an increasingly multi-agency approach to combat youth violence. In 1993, the AGVU was renamed the Youth Violence Strike Force, retaining the same key members.[12]

Other agencies within Boston's law enforcement network were concurrently revamping their activities. Certain individuals within the probation department in particular became quite disillusioned with the "paper-shuffling" nature of their job. Fearful of the extreme levels of violence in certain Boston districts, probation officers had abandoned street presence and home visits. Consequently, there was no enforcement of probation terms such as curfew, area, and activity restrictions. Without enforcement of probation restrictions, a term on probation became viewed as a "slap on the wrist" within the law enforcement community and was essentially ineffectual in combating youth violence.

A few probation officers began to respond to this crisis of ineffectiveness and took strong, proactive measures to readjust their approach. Informal conversations between probation officers and police officers who regularly attended

hearings at Dorchester District Court led to an experimental effort in agency collaboration. A strategy labeled "Operation Night Light" was developed that enabled probation officers to resume the enforcement component of their job.

On the first outing of the Night Light team, three probation officers and two police officers went out in a patrol car on the night of November 12, 1992. With protection provided by their police companions, probation officers were able to venture out after dark and enforce the conditions placed on their probationers. Youths began to realize that they could no longer blatantly disregard the terms of their probation because their "PO" might be out on the streets, at their house, or at their hangouts after curfew to check on them. Probation violations would have repercussions, such as lengthened probation sentence, stricter probation terms, or ultimately time in jail. Operation Night Light eventually became an institutionalized practice of Boston law enforcement agencies that has been heavily praised by policy experts and the media across the country.

Inter-agency collaboration to address the issue of youth violence has become standard practice in Boston. Participation of policy researchers (primarily David Kennedy and his associates at the John F. Kennedy School of Government) also served a vital role in bringing about the fundamental overhaul of Boston's policing strategies. The Boston Gun Project, begun in 1995, was a three-year effort that brought together a wide range of agencies including the police department, the city probation department, the Boston School Police, the Suffolk County District Attorney, a federal agency, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and many others to address youth violence.

The Boston Gun Project was innovative, not only for its collaborative nature, but also because it utilized research-based information to address the youth violence problem from a new angle. The gun project coalition was able to attack the problem at the supply side by cracking down on dealers of illicit firearms. On the demand side, gun project research led to the specific targeting of 1,300 individuals who represented less than 1 percent of their age group citywide but were responsible for at least 60 percent of the city's homicides.[13]

This type of inter-agency collaboration helped implement a variety of additional innovative strategies. In 1994, "Operation Scrap Iron" was initiated to target people who were illegally transporting firearms into Boston. Gun trafficking within certain areas of the city was shut down. Additionally, "area warrant sweeps" were used to target dangerous areas. For example, police would arrest all outstanding warrants within a particular housing project. Multi-agency teams of youth and street workers then came in to provide follow-up after police presence subsided. As one police officer noted, these strategies made sure that "everyone was involved and brought something to the table. Everyone had a piece of the pie and, therefore, would get the benefits."[14] Even more impressive is that, according to this same police officer, not one civilian complaint was filed in response to the warrant sweep tactic.

In May 1996, this collaboration culminated in Operation Cease-Fire. Operation Cease-Fire fully institutionalized inter-agency collaboration among

Boston's crime-fighting agencies—the city's police and probation departments, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, special agents from the federal Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, among others. Key community members, primarily from faith-based organizations were also involved in the operation's development and implementation. These groups worked together to identify gangs responsible for violence in specific hot spots around the city. Subsequently the group executed a forceful intervention by developing "zero tolerance" enforcement within the specific targeted area and sending an explicit message to gang members themselves that violence will no longer be tolerated.

Ten Point Clergy and Community-Level Intervention. Individuals within Boston's religious community were some of the most vocal critics of the police department's aggressive tactics during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Rev. Eugene Rivers, in particular, became a controversial figure in the media during these years because of his harsh criticism of both local law enforcement agencies and the city's black leaders. Remarkably, these same religious leaders later became active participants in law enforcement agency strategies such as Operation Cease-Fire. This turnaround suggests that the Boston Police Department has been effective in improving community relations. It is also likely that Boston's faith-based leaders experienced a shift in their own attitudes toward the police.

Boston's faith-based organizations did not begin working together as a group until 1992. Until then, most African-American clergy leaders in Boston had been following separate agendas. Their activities did not generally involve much street-oriented action to address youth violence within their communities. Although Rivers was on the street establishing strong outreach to gang members and other community youth, his constant criticism of other clergy leaders made his effort a partnerless endeavor.

A tragic event in May 1992 finally spurred collaborative action among Boston's African-American clergy.[15] Violence broke out among gang members attending a funeral for a youth murdered in a drive-by shooting. The shootout and multiple stabbing in the Morning Star Baptist Church threw the service and the congregation into chaos.

The brazenness of this attack, taking place within a church sanctuary, inspired many of Boston's black clergy to take action. They realized that they could no longer effectively serve their community by remaining within the four walls of their churches and ignoring the situation on the street. Instead, youth and others in the surrounding troubled neighborhoods needed to become extensions of the church congregations.

This incident led to the founding of the Ten Point Coalition, a group of some forty churches, with Reverends Ray Hammond, Eugene Rivers, and Jeffrey Brown as key leaders. A "Ten Point Proposal for Citywide Mobilization to Combat the Material and Spiritual Sources of Black-on-Black Violence" was drawn up and published as a call to churches to participate in the effort to address the

violence crisis in their communities. The creation of the Ten Point Coalition represented a major step towards active collaboration within Boston's African-American religious community.

As of 1992, however, the relations between the African-American community leaders and Boston's law enforcement agencies were still very strained and often antagonistic. Rivers was constantly "in the face" of Boston law enforcement and was viewed as a "cop basher" in police circles. He established a constant presence in the troubled streets of Dorchester and made repeated contact with the same kids as the Anti-Gang Violence Unit. As an aggressive advocate for local youth, both in and out of the courts, Rivers had many confrontations with members of the AGVU and other patrol officers.

Eventually this antagonism subsided and was replaced with effective collaboration. The turnaround resulted from a combination of influential events and the strong effort made by key law enforcement officials to show that the Boston Police Department had a new attitude. In 1991 shots were fired into Rivers's home in Four Corners, one of the most violent areas of Dorchester, making him painfully aware of the dangers of carrying out a solitary campaign against youth violence. He has acknowledged that seeing the lives of his wife and children placed in jeopardy caused a shift in his attitude. He became more open to the possibility of allying with both other ministers and individuals in the law enforcement community.

When Rivers and other key clergy members such as Rev. Ray Hammond and Rev. Jeffrey Brown formed the Ten Point Coalition in 1992, their public stature and media influence increased. They wielded their power effectively for the purpose of maintaining a check on police practices in Boston. In 1992, the Ten Point Coalition partnered with another community based organization, the Police Practices Coalition to establish an organized, community-based police-monitoring group.

The Ten Point Coalition, and especially Rivers, had habitually criticized the Boston Police Department. Increasingly positive interactions with individual officers, however, began to convince the clergy group that the department could change their behavior. The ministers acknowledged the department's progress in an awards ceremony called the "People's Tribunal" initiated in 1992 to publicly honor "good cops." These positive steps eventually led to collaborative efforts like the previously mentioned Operation Cease-Fire. Cooperation among law enforcement agencies and clergy leaders, as well as various community-based groups, has continued to evolve and expand during recent years.

Current Relations. Currently, there is extensive inter-agency and community-based collaboration in Boston. A primary venue for this work is the Bloods and Crips Initiative. It was established in spring 1998 as an aggressive street-level mobilization of lay and pastoral workers to intervene in and prevent youth involvement in Bloods, Crips, or any other gang activity. By combining the effort of a wide range of agency representatives, the initiative aims to approach the problem comprehensively

Members of the clergy, the Boston Police Department, the Boston Probation Department, street and youth workers for the city, the state Department of Youth Services, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Police, the Boston School Department, and the school police met weekly to share information on important developments on the street. For example, several disturbing incidents of sexual assault and harassment occurred on the city's public transportation system. MBTA Police and city youth workers as well as clergy brought up the importance of addressing these incidents at the weekly Bloods and Crips Initiative meetings. A task force on sexual harassment and assault was established in order to address these issues effectively. School presentations on the subject are planned in the future.

Another objective of this collaboration is to exhibit strong, supportive and unified authority to the targeted youth. This is achieved through the participation of multiple agencies and clergy representatives in all of the initiative's activities: school visits and presentations, home visits to youth suspected of gang involvement, regular street patrols, and strong presence in popular "hang-out" areas during peak hours. The collaborative approach serves to notify youth of alternative options and brings them into contact with a network of resources designed to serve their specific needs.

More informal cooperation among the wide array of agencies and community groups participating in operations such as the Bloods and Crips Initiative plays an important role in achieving quick responses to tense situations, and effective distribution of resources to problematic "hot-spots" in the city. Recently, for example, a particular youth repeatedly instigated dangerous confrontations in Dorchester—holding a gun to another youth's head; firing shots in the air in the midst of young "trick-or-treaters"on Halloween night, shooting holes in parked cars—all within a period of a couple of weeks. Each incident had the potential to aggravate tensions among various neighborhood "crews" and destroy any sense of community security. Because of this risk, Rivers utilized his connections with law enforcement to ensure a quick and effective handling of the situation.

In this case, "handling" the situation meant getting the individual off the street, for a long time.[16] At the weekly Bloods and Crips Initiative meeting, Rivers identified this particular youth and made law enforcement officials aware of his threat to peace in the neighborhood. Rivers and a youth worker also spoke with the youth personally to explain to him why he was being targeted. The youth was arrested and the "noise" he was causing in the community was quieted. Clergy leaders and law enforcement officials have thus achieved an uncommon level of collaborative action in Boston.

Ten Point's Possible Contributions

How has the Ten Point Coalition been important to the Boston story? Is it critical that Boston's community leaders have been ministers? If so, has it been cru-

cial that they have been ministers of a particular type? Certainly, there are other cities that have substantially reduced their crime rates without the involvement of local ministers or other community leaders.

We suggest that there are four different ways that the Ten Point Coalition has contributed to the Boston Miracle: (1) ministering to youth; (2) adjudicating the outcomes of criminally involved youth; (3) increasing police efficiency; (4) creating an umbrella of legitimacy. In the following discussion we present each of these possible contributions. We then examine in each case how significant it is that the community leaders partnering with the police have been ministers.

Ministering. A recent article by Joe Klein analyzes Ten Point's contribution to Boston's efforts to reduce youth violence in terms of the ministering they do for at-risk youth.[17] Klein's article tells a series of stories about the Ten Point ministers confronting and dealing with youth involved in so-called gang-banging. He suggests that the ability of Ten Point ministers to work with these hard-core youths has been critical to Boston's success in reducing youth violence.

Brown, Hammond, and Rivers have been the principle ministers involved in working with at-risk youth. There are also several other ministers, less closely associated with Ten Point, who have their own youth programs. The three clergy work both individually with youths, as well as speak to groups of youths either identified or gathered together by the police or in schools. In these respects, the ministers' activities are not substantially different than those of a community or social worker.

The ministers' message to the youths, nevertheless, is quite different. In essence, when the ministers do home and school visits, they partner with police officers to play "good cop – bad cop." Ministers offer resources and support to youth, encouraging youth to make the right choice and avoid turning to violence. In this capacity, therefore, the ministers are the voice of compassion, hope, honesty, not of inevitable doom. On the other hand, the ministers advocate "tough love" after the model of Jesus and of the prophets who presented stark choices and painted vivid pictures of what would happen with each choice, but doing so out of compassion and hope, not sarcasm or nihilism. The ministers are quite explicit in telling youth that they have a choice about how to live their lives. To paraphrase their message: "You have a choice. Stop your gang-banging and we will help you—help you get back in school or get a job, help you deal with your family, your girlfriend; help you straighten out your life. Continue to gang-bang and we will work as hard as we can with the police to see that you are put in jail, both for your own good, and the good of the community. As long as you are gang-banging you are a danger to yourself and to others. What I ultimately want to avoid more than anything is presiding over your funeral."

The message here is multi-faceted. First, there is the strong implicit message that the youths can live their lives in different ways. Second, it is a demand that youth take personal responsibility for their lives. Third, it is a message of the possibility of redemption. If you choose to give up gangbanging and "go with

God," your life will be redeemed. Fourth, if you choose incorrectly, you will be punished. In essence, you must choose between life and death.

There are clear parallels between this message and specific Bible passages. For example, consider Deuteronomy 30: 17–19 where Moses says to the Israelites:

> But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.[18]

Some black Pentecostal clergy use ideas rooted in Christian scripture and teaching to justify "worldly" activism on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Ten Point clergy use religious ideas in similar ways. Rather than confining them to narrowly religious activities, these clerics' understanding of "salvation" involves the satisfaction of the entire spectrum of human needs, including physical and social, as well as spiritual ones. This "whole person" interpretation of faith demands that the ministers recognize the ways that societal structures limit the life opportunities of poor people. Such faith underlies the clergy's early criticisms of the law enforcement and criminal justice communities.

At the same time, though, the clergy subscribe to traditional Christian tenets that emphasize the sanctity of human life, the divine offer of personal salvation and the necessity of making a fundamental choice. Therefore, individuals are required to take clear responsibility for their own lives before God. The ministers demand moral accountability from individuals and specifically from youth in the community as they would from members of their own congregations. Indeed, these clergy have extended the ordinary intra-congregational community ethic to support neighborhood and metropolitan-wide community building.

The notion of a highly committed faith-based community serves as a kind of middle point between congregation-based religious practice and community-based activism. Within the community, moral consistency, trust, and mutual respect provide a basis for collective survival, as well as unity against perceived adversaries, such as unresponsive criminal justice agents or repressive police. Thus, while the Ten Point clergy began by critiquing power structures, it was natural for them also to acknowledge and try to check *individual* behaviors that threaten community well being, particularly the violent behaviors of a minority of young people.

The moral authority of the Ten Point Coalition *qua* ministers is obviously critical to their ability to hold individuals in the community personally accountable. Their authority is further enhanced by the fact that much of their work with at-risk youths consists of street ministry. These are a particular kind of inner-city ministers. They often work by walking neighborhoods both during the day and at night. This is important in for two reasons. First, it provides them with

an understanding of the streets, which lends greater legitimacy to their actions and positions *vis-a-vis* those streets. When the ministers act in concert with the police, youths know that the ministers are doing so in an informed way. Second, the ministers' street work with youths sends a strong, visible message to the community that they truly care about these children and are committed to helping them live a good life. When the ministers advocate that a particular youth should be arrested and/or sent to jail, all know that the ministers are doing this out of concern for the youth as much as for the sake of the community. Thus, the ministers' one-on-one work with youths contributes legitimacy to their work with the police department. Of course, any community worker can increase their legitimacy by being knowledgeable and by visibly working in the open in the community. The ministers, however, intrinsically hold significant authority and legitimacy, because of their clerical status. Their knowledge of and work in the streets acts to further reinforce their moral status.

Adjudication. When a young male is potentially violent, an inner city community faces a vexing problem: Should the youth be given a "second chance," supported and helped with the hope that he will be able to turn his life around? Or, for his own safety and that of the neighborhood, should he be put in jail? The conflict here is between the desire for safe streets and the desire to keep one's children out of jail. These are difficult questions, ones that will provoke disagreement in many cases. Often there is no "right" answer. Rather the issue of concern is whether or not the decision is made in a way that is considered fair and just.

But how can this be accomplished? The police are seen as being, and are likely to be, too concerned with having safe streets. The judicial system as a whole may also be suspect. Social workers, street workers, parents, and relatives are likely to identify too closely with the youth's interests.

In Boston, the Ten Point ministers have come to play an informal role in determining how particular individuals will be treated by the judicial system. In some circumstances this means that the ministers contact the police and ask for certain youths to be arrested. The ministers will encourage judges to sentence these troubled youths to alternative programs or regular check-ins at their churches, rather than serve time in jail. In other cases, it means that the ministers appear in court to argue either for leniency or for a stiff sentence. An example was related above in which Rivers contributed to the arrest of the young man responsible for repeated incidents of violence during Halloween 1998.

The fact that Ten Point consists of ministers here is critical. As noted previously, clergy are seen as being able to discern the "right" answer for particular youths because they are directly involved in the lives of young people. More unique is the ministers' status as *independent* youth advocates. That is, the clergy are not parole officers, social workers, or other agents with formal connections to the state. This leads young people and their families to trust the motives of the clergy more than they might trust some other agent. In other words,

their status as independent leaders as well as ministers grants the Ten Point clergy legitimacy among a population that has grown cynical of the politics of crime prevention.[19] Such legitimacy not only enables the clergy to serve as effective adjudicators, but also creates broad community acceptance of the particular specific cases.

Effectiveness. Both the police and the ministers believe that only a small number of youths are responsible for most of the violence. There is empirical evidence to support this assertion. David Kennedy estimates that 1 percent of the city's youth age group—1,300 youths—constitute the core group of youth at risk for serious violence.[20]

One of the critical aspects to the partnership between the police and the ministers has been the willingness of the ministers to help the police concentrate their efforts on this small group of youth. This happens in two ways. First, ministers help screen which youth are out of control and present a danger to themselves and the community. The ministers may then identify a particularly dangerous youth to the police and indicate the need for the youth to be arrested. Since most of these youths will have outstanding arrest warrants, they will be arrested even if the minister's call has not been precipitated by an actual crime. In this regard, the ministers and those working with them have come to provide a type of remote surveillance capacity for the police.

Second, the ministers make the judicial system more efficient by helping the police identify which youths in fact are likely to get involved in violence. This allows the police to increase surveillance of these youth. Both the police and ministers let these youths know that if they are gangbanging they will be prosecuted for even small infractions of the law. One youth who was suspected of being involved in several homicides was given a twenty year jail term for having a bullet in his pocket. This story is now legend among Boston's inner city youth.

The danger to the ministers in working so closely with the police is that the community may believe that they have been co-opted by the police department. Here, the perceived moral authority of the ministers is critical. The fact that they are responsible to a "higher" power creates trust in the community that the ministers are not simply doing the police's bidding. Furthermore, as already discussed, depending on the case, they may advocate for leniency or severity of punishment. As a result, at least some of the time they are perceived as arguing against the position of local law enforcement.

The ministers have also engaged in activities that indicate their independence from and willingness to criticize police. Recently, in partnership is a law professor at Northeastern University, Debra Rameris, Ten Point has been working on the problem of racial profiling by the police department. Activities such as this send a strong message to the community that the coalition has not simply become surrogates for the police.

While the clergy's adjudicating role indicates a degree of *public* trust in the clergy, the relationship between the clergy and the police points to the *state's*

trust in the clergy. The law enforcement community perceives Ten Point clergy as indigenous leaders possessing a unique combination of street savvy and trustworthiness. This perception has led the former to have faith in the latter's ability to take on certain functions previously reserved for the police; namely, separating the proverbial wheat from the chaff among youth who are in trouble.

An Umbrella of Legitimacy. An enormous problem for the police force in any major city is the need to establish the legitimacy of their activities. As the Amadou Diallo killing in New York City in February 1999 has illustrated, the legitimacy of a highly successful and conscientious police force can be totally undermined by one tragic and highly visible incident of questionable police behavior.

In most major cities the police department has exceptionally poor relations with its inner city community. As Randall Kennedy has thoroughly documented in his book, *Race, Crime, and the Law,* this is due at least in part to a long history of racism in our country's judicial system.[21] As a result, in many cities, police activities are seen by many minority residents as illegitimate. This in itself can be an important instigator of criminal behavior. In *Why People Obey the Law,* psychologist Tom Tyler argues that an important factor in people's decisions to engage in criminal behavior is whether or not they see the judicial system as legitimate.[22]

If one were looking for legitimacy through a relationship, there could perhaps be no better partner than a group of ministers. Throughout society ministers have unique moral standing. It is assumed that they are fair and that they will protect the interests of the less fortunate. In the inner city, ministers and their churches are among the last formal institutions committed to the welfare of their neighborhoods. Within the black community, they often have been looked to for leadership. All three of the core Ten Point clergy are well known for their extensive work with inner city youth. These factors give Ten Point considerable credibility to speak for Boston's inner city community.[23]

In Boston, the ministers have created a context in which police can deal with the problem of youth violence without recrimination from the press or the community. We describe it as an "umbrella of legitimacy." It is an umbrella, however, that only provides coverage under specific conditions: (1) when police focus on the truly problematic youth; (2) when they deal with these youth in what is perceived as a fair and just way; and (3) when this is done in cooperation with the community through the ministers.

Activities that fall outside these boundaries will be publicly criticized in the media. The ministers' past criticism of the police in *The Boston Globe* is well remembered. Furthermore, Rivers, as the most outspoken of the ministers, is known for his willingness to criticize anyone, whether it is the police, the Urban League, or Harvard's Department of Afro-American Studies. The ministers thus provide informal oversight of police actions. They are able to do this in part because they are ministers, in part because they are community leaders and mem-

bers, and in part because they exhibited a willingness in the past to be highly critical of the police.

By providing an umbrella of legitimacy for police work, the ministers help legitimize the whole system. But this also makes their own legitimacy more precarious. If the ministers are too supportive of the police then they are vulnerable to being accused of selling out. If they also concur with the police or the district attorney in their recommendation with respect to the treatment of a particular youth, then they will be perceived as partial. It is critical that their relationship with the police be seen as being at "arm's length." The fact that they have advocated that some kids be given jail sentences and that others be put into alternative sentencing programs also contributes to their credibility in the community. However, their legitimacy in Boston in fragile. There are other groups of actors within the black community that would be thrilled to see them discredited. If a case of serious police abuse were to occur where the coalition could have done something to prevent it from occurring and did not, its standing with Boston's inner city communities could be short lived.

Discussion

In terms of whether it is important that the Ten Point Coalition consists of ministers, we have suggested that this may be significant in two ways. First, as a coalition of ministers, Ten Point enjoys important moral authority and legitimacy both within their particular communities as well as in greater Boston. We have argued that this is important to their adjudication efforts, their efforts to increase police efficiency, and most importantly, in their ability to bestow legitimacy to police efforts and the judicial system more generally.

Second, we have suggested that the religious theme in the coalition's message to youth in its ministering efforts has been important. The ministers have argued that youths need to take responsibility for their actions, and that they deserve support and the opportunity for redemption. In important ways this position cuts across political lines since it rejects the liberal position that these youths need to be solely thought of as victims, but also rejects the conservative position that these youths alone should be responsible for straightening out their lives. Their status as clergy, then, has allowed the core Ten Point actors to uniquely transcend antagonistic politics and reconcile contrasting interests. Meanwhile, religious ideas have provided an ideological toolbox with which to assemble the umbrella of legitimacy.

These analyses point to the unique position of the black church within inner city communities. Here the role of faith is critical, albeit in ways that have little to do with explicit proselytization. On the one hand, the concerned public and agents of the state alike have faith in the good intentions and political purity of the most visible Ten Point clergy. Such faith has been well documented in previous scholarship. In *A Bridging of Faiths*, Demerath and Williams argue that or-

ganized religion wields far less influence over urban politics than it used to. The power of religion, nevertheless, persists in part through the public activities of the clergy.[24] The clergy are able to influence local politics largely because of the moral authority they bring to the public arena. In her review of *A Bridging of Faiths*, Nancy Ammerman eloquently sums up this residual, yet consequential, impact: "[T]he clergy (and other religious professionals) retain a kind of symbolic moral power that can be invoked in the public arena. Their presence reminds citizens and officials alike of the moral realities that transcend their individual interests, of a 'sacred' realm that stand over against mere profane considerations."[25]

Public awareness of such "moral realities" translates into a special variety of political capital that allows clergy to transcend stale partisan political debates, even while injecting their political views into those debates. This special legitimacy has little to do with public belief in specific religious tenets, although not all religious clergy can be assumed to enjoy it equally. Sikh and Rastafarian leaders, for example, do not carry as much moral weight in the American public arena as do Jewish and mainline Christian clergy. Nevertheless, the clergy have special political power because they are clergy. When Rev. Jesse Jackson recently announced his decision to forgo a third bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, he indirectly admitted that his power as a moral authority might be better used outside of the formal political process. The formal political arena, he noted, would continue to be a critical one. Yet,

> . . . we also need people who are willing to wage the moral fight that lies beyond politics. We need people who are willing to go wherever that moral cause takes them: to corporate boardrooms, to sweatshops overseas, to Appalachia, to the Delta, to Wall Street and LaSalle Street, to shop floors and picket lines, to the ghettos and the barrios. We need people willing to speak the truth. We need people willing to push the envelope. We need people willing to give voice to the voiceless. . . . I'm not going to run for President. But I am going to act. I am going to march. I am going to roll up my sleeves and work as hard as I know how to work. I am going to speak out. I am going to raise uncomfortable issues. I am going to be an unabashed advocate for the least of these in our society. I am going to demand accountability from those with power and wealth and clout.[26]

Similarly, the Ten Point Coalition has used the moral capital of the clergy to create the umbrella of legitimacy so crucial to the Boston story. The Ten Point clergy's moral authority rests in two forms of public trust: the black community's trust in the independence and integrity of clergy, and a public administrative recognition of the centrality of religious institutions to the concerned public. Such dual trust has enabled the Ten Point clergy to proclaim a sort of divine pragmatism, which ignores partisan debates and unites traditionally opposing social views.

Among black churches, in particular, there is ample precedent for this model of public religion. The tradition is rooted in the central, yet independent, status

of the historical black church in African-American life. As Aldon Morris notes, "Scholars of the black church have consistently argued that it is the dominant institution within black society. It has provided the organizational framework for most activities of the community—economic, political, and educational endeavors as well as religious ones."[27] In addition, the black church provided an independent, black-controlled alternative to the institutions of white society, which overtly and systematically excluded blacks well into the twentieth century. The combined independence and centrality of the black church produced a cadre of charismatic, often educated, religious leaders, particularly in the urban North and South. These leaders proved critical to the black Civil Rights Movement, not only because they were charismatic voices, but also because they were independent voices. That is, they were beholding not to the white political structure, but to an indigenous, autonomous black institution. Their simultaneous independence and centrality allowed them to mediate between the black masses and the agents' oppressive institutions.

The Ten Point Coalition perpetuates the tradition of the black cleric as independent, indigenous critic of powerful institutions. To be certain, these clergy have explicitly pointed the public toward "moral realities" beyond profane political debate. It is clear, nevertheless, that the public's dual faith in Ten Point clergy has little to do with a public subscription to specific religious beliefs. Rather, this faith has mostly to do with the historic structural role that the clergy has played in the black community. In other words, Ten Point clergy have been successful in their public activity not so much because they are perceived as holy by all parties involved, but because their unique structural position as black church leaders has granted them the opportunity to serve as intermediaries.

The clergy themselves interpret their religious faith in such a way as to demand social activism on behalf of the disadvantaged, while demanding moral accountability from the same. Their interpretation of religious ideas demands that they, as clergy: a) get involved with the struggles of disadvantaged people, while critiquing structures of power; and b) demand moral accountability from the communities they represent.

The first factor implies that the Ten Point clergy believe in their own mission and are willing to "walk the walk" as well as "talk the talk." More importantly, though, they construct the idea of "the walk" in ways that demand activism as well as ministering from within church walls. This aspect of faith is crucial, for it distinguishes the core Ten Point clergy from those who limit their ministry to more traditional forms of evangelism. Meanwhile, the second factor obliges clergy to hold young people responsible for their own behavior, and to present clear and viable opportunities for personal transformation.

In traditional political discourse, emphases on structural determinacy and individual responsibility are at odds. Yet, the clergy, through an application of their personal religious faith, are able to represent both of these perspectives simultaneously. So, just as public faith in the clergy gave the latter the political capital to reconcile conflicting social groups, the clergy's own religious faith al-

lows them to hold contrasting political opinions in tension. Both are central to the umbrella of legitimacy. In fact, the umbrella in question can be thought of as consisting of two "halves": a political half that reconciles potentially opposing constituencies (police and the inner city community), and an ideological half that accommodates contrasting social views (the need for individual responsibility and outside assistance).

Conclusion

The New Testament demands action on behalf of others.[28] Hundreds of organizations around the country, including the Ten Point Coalition, have taken this mandate seriously, developing a plethora of "faith-based" responses to human suffering in urban cores. Much of the current debate over the practicality and political expediency of "faith-based" anti-poverty programs, nevertheless, revolves around the possibility of that social welfare programs that lack the depth dimensions of faith may be inadequate.

The Ten Point Coalition's work with the Boston police represents one type of faith-based intiative. In this paper we have argued that police ultimately cannot be efficacious in a community that does not view their activities as legitimate. Furthermore, over the long run it is difficult if not impossible for police activity in the inner city to be successful unless it is seen as legitimate and supported by local residents. In this respect, police efforts to curtail youth violence are inherently problematic. Communities want safe streets but they also want their kids to stay out of jail. Difficult choices need to be made that are likely to be seen as unjust by some. In this environment, it is difficult to establish legitimacy for police actions, no matter what those actions are.

The Ten Point Coalition has evolved into an institution that has at least partially ameliorated this dilemma. By supporting police activity that the coalition believes is beneficial to the community and being critical of activities that are not, they have created what we have called an umbrella of legitimacy for police to work under. This in turn has allowed the police to effectively deal with youth violence by pursuing a focused strategy targeting truly dangerous youth. This situation, which is far different from most major cities, has significantly contributed to the spectacular drop in homicide rates observed in Boston.

Our analysis provides a particular interpretation of what has happened in Boston. If it is correct, it suggests that police need to create strong community partnerships. These partnerships should involve both a cooperative effort to deal with youth violence and a delineation of what constitutes legitimate police behavior. Police strategies can only acquire true legitimacy within inner city communities if the community partner is willing to both support police tactics when they are appropriate and provide harsh, public criticism of activities that are not.

Ministers may possibly be ideal partners. Because of their moral authority and the nonpartisan nature of their message and actions, they enjoy both con-

siderable legitimacy themselves and are able to confer, when and where appropriate, much legitimacy on the police and the judicial system more generally. Other community leaders may be able to play this role. This is something that will need to be analyzed in the context of other cities. However, given the ubiquitous presence of churches within most inner city neighborhoods and the considerable moral authority enjoyed by black clergy, coalitions such as the Ten Point Coalition arguably should be the partners of first choice.

Notes

1. Brent Coffin provided us with useful criticisms as did participants in the Kennedy School's Summer Institute and Social Inequality seminars. We want to thank Reverends Jeffery Brown, Ray Hammond, and Eugene Rivers of the Ten Point Coalition for providing information and insight as well as a variety of members of the Boston Police Department. This research has been support in part by National Science Foundation grant and a grant from the Smith Richardson Foundation.

2. Between 1990 and 1996, the homicide rate dropped 58.7% in New York, 27.9% in Los Angeles, 54.0% in Houston, 15.9% in Washington, D.C., and 17.7% in Philadelphia. Other cities, however, have not experienced similar drops in their homicide rates; for example, Baltimore, Phoenix, and Las Vegas have seen rises of 7.5%, 45.3%, and 103.8% respectively.

3. Tensions in New York between the police and community leaders have been long standing. In February of 1999 they mushroomed after the killing of an unarmed black immigrant and street vendor, Amadou Diallo by four policemen. The four policeman have been indicted for second degree murder, a first in the history of the NYC police force. Subsequently they were found innocent of all charges by a mixed race jury.

4. Orlando Patterson and Christopher Winship, "Boston's Police Solution," *New York Times*, March 3, 1999.

5. The Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports state that 143 homicides were committed in Boston in 1990. However, current Boston Police statistics and current police officers report 152 homicides for the record breaking year.

6. Globe Staff, "Events Leading to St. Clair Report," *Boston Globe*, January 15, 1992.

7. The question of causality and timing here are complex. The most aggressive period of stop-and-frisk tactics stopped in 1990. Yet the homicide rate continued to fall in 1991 and 1992. If one believes that the causal connection is contemporaneous, then this is evidence of a lack of a causal effect. However, if the causal effect of police enforcement is lagged, then this is evidence for a causal effect.

8. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 1991–1992.

9. Globe Staff, "Boston Police: Bungling the Basics," *Boston Globe*, April 7, 8, 9, 10, 1991.

10. Globe Staff, "Events Leading to St. Clair Report."

11. Ibid.

12. Conversation with David Kennedy, October 1997.

13. Conversation with David Kennedy, October 1997.

14. Jenny Berrien, "The Boston Miracle: The Emergence of New Institutional Structures in the Absence of Rational Planning," Harvard University Department of Sociology Senior Thesis, March 20, 1998.

15. Robert A. Jordan and Globe Staff, "Clergy's Anger Can Bring Hope," *Boston Globe*, May 16, 1992.

16. Information concerning this Halloween incident is based on a conversation that took place during the Bloods and Crips Initiative Wednesday meeting in November of 1998.

17. Joe Klein, "Can Faith-Based Groups Save Us?" *The Responsive Community* (Winter 1999/98).

18. *New American Standard Bible: Reference Edition.* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1973).

19. It should be noted that the Ten Point Coalition's legitimacy as a representative of the black community has been challenged. Both prominent black politicians and political leaders have questioned Ten Point's authority.

20. Conversation with David Kennedy, October, 1997.

21. Randall Kennedy, *Race, Crime and the Law* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

22. Tom Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

23. This is not to say that the Ten Point Coalition is universally seen as the legitimate representative of the black community within Boston. There have been numerous conflicts between Ten-Point, particularly Reverend Rivers, and other representatives of Boston's black community.

24. N.J. Demerath, and Rhys H. Williams, A Bridging of Faiths: Religion and Politics in a New England City (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

25. Nancy Ammerman, "Books in Review: *A Bridging of Faiths*," *Society* 31 (November 1993): 91.

26. "Jackson Decision" 03/24/99 Press Release.

27. Aldon Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change (New York: Free Press, 1984).

28. *King James Version*, James 2:20: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"