

End of a Miracle?

Crime, Faith, and Partnership in Boston in the 1990's

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March 2002

This research was supported by grants from the Smith Richardson Foundation and the National Science Foundation. The author is grateful to Anthony Braga, Jeffery Fagan, James Jordan, David Kennedy, and Drew Smith for comments on an early draft of this paper.

Introduction

The '90's were a remarkable decade for Boston. Not only did Boston enjoy a period of nearly unprecedented economic prosperity, but it was also a time of historically low crime rates and unusually good police-community relations. Most dramatically, the number of homicides plummeted over the decade. Whereas there had been 152 homicides in 1990, in 1999 there were only 31. Much of drop occurred for individuals twenty-four years of age and less. Whereas in 1990 there were 73 homicides in this age group, there were only 15 in 1999 and 2000. For the twenty-nine month period ending in January 1998, there were no teenage homicides victims.¹ Thus, the so-called Boston Miracle.

Much less discussed, though perhaps equally miraculous, is that the Police Department in the 1990's formed a partnership with a group of inner city black ministers directed at dealing with the problem of youth violence. This is remarkable at two different levels. First, in the early 1990's, the relationship between the Department and one of three core ministers in the coalition, Reverend Eugene Rivers, was openly and highly inimical. Second, and more generally, Boston's race relations have historically been highly antagonistic. The fact that the Police and any group of black citizens would be willing to work together is extraordinary.²

Not surprisingly, Boston's achievements have received considerable national attention, cumulating in a Newsweek cover story in June 1, 1998. On the cover was one of the Ten Point Coalition's key leaders, the Reverend Eugene Rivers. Inside, the story detailed both how a group of black inner city ministers had first come to work together as a coalition, and then to work with the police in dealing with the problem of gang-related youth violence.³

To date, the new century has not been so kind to Boston. In 2000, the number of homicides in Boston rose to 38 and in 2001 it exploded to 68, an increase of over 100% since 1999.⁴ An obvious question then is whether the so-called "Boston Miracle" has in fact ended.

Below I answer this question by breaking it down into several pieces. I first examine whether anything in fact miraculous occurred in Boston during the 1990's. The conventional wisdom is that what was miraculous was that homicide rates dropped 80% during the decade.

Although this drop was historically unprecedented, other cities and the nation as a whole experienced large drops in their homicide rates as well. This then raises the question as to whether the policies of the Boston Police Department were specifically responsible for the decline. I will argue below that although the evidence is mixed, the weight of the data strongly supports the contention that their policies have been important.

The next section of the paper briefly presents the historical context of the events of the 1990's. I examine the police and crime situation, and race relations more generally. The following section examines what occurred in the 1990's. I focus not only on trends in crime, but changes in the relationship between the police and inner city residents. Specifically I discuss the partnership that developed during this period between the police and the Ten Point ministers. I also briefly examine how racial politics in Boston changed during this period. The following section analyzes the causes of the drop in Boston's homicide rate. The subsequent section examines whether the achievements of the '90's have been lost. I conclude the paper by discussing Boston's prospects for the future.

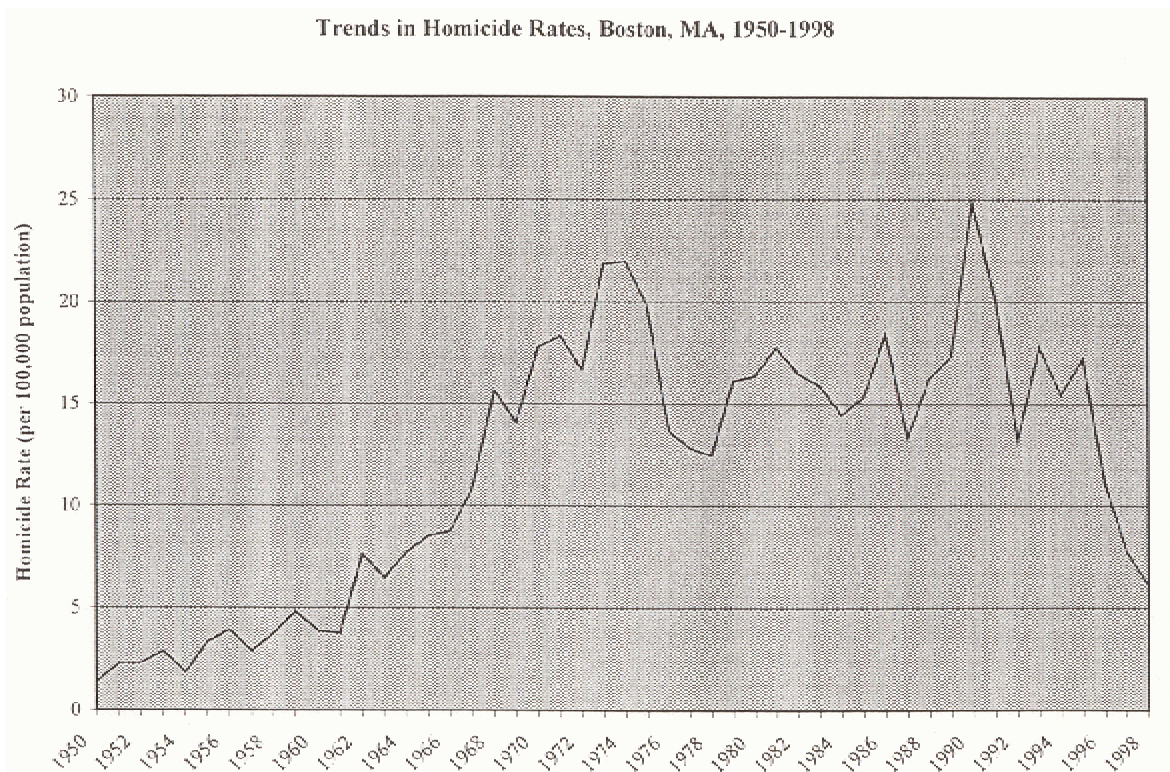
Historical Context.

Like many major cities, Boston saw a rapid surge in drug activity in the late 1980's with the development of crack markets. As also occurred elsewhere, the new drug markets brought increased violence as gangs sought to establish control over their geographical areas and to maximize their market shares.⁵ Not surprisingly, the number of homicides in Boston erupted during the 1980's going from a previously stable level of approximately 80 to 100 per year to 152 in 1990. This increase was due almost entirely to increased youth violence, with the number of homicides involving individuals under twenty-four going from approximately 30 per year in the mid 1980's to 72 in 1990. The increase was also almost entirely due to gun-related homicides. Most of this increase also appears to be gang related, though further analysis is needed.⁶

Figure 1 shows the long term trends in the homicide rate from 1950 to the late 1990's.

At first, the Police Department policy was to deny that Boston had a gang problem.⁷ However, the fact that shots were being fired on a nightly basis, that there were multiple shootings, and a host of funerals, eventually made it impossible for the police department to ignore that there was a gang problem. After the peak number of shootings in 1990, Boston adopted a heavy-handed strategy of policing. The homicide rate dropped, but the policy was unsustainable, due to events of the immediate past, which I now describe.⁸

Figure 1



In 1989, Carol Stuart, a pregnant, white woman, was shot and killed as she and her husband returned from Lamas class. The husband was also shot in the abdomen and nearly died of his wounds. He described the assailant as a young black male. Given the tensions surrounding the sharply escalating levels of youth violence in the city, it is perhaps not surprising, though certainly not acceptable, that police aggressively investigated the crime, constantly stopping young black males for questioning. At one point, the police even had arrested a suspect.

In the end, however, it was the husband, not a black assailant who had murdered Carol Stuart. The primary motivation had been an insurance policy. The husband had shot himself in order to cover up the crime. He jumped off Boston's Tobin Bridge before he could be arrested.⁹

An event such as the Carol Stuart murder and its mishandling by the police would have the potential to inflame racial tensions in any city. Because of Boston's particular history, the effects were dramatic. First, Boston was still in the process of recovering from the previous decade of racial protest and violence over court-mandated school busing. Busing had split the city in two as the courts and the white school board fought over whether the policy would ever be implemented. When it was put into effect, there were frequent racial confrontations and black children were repeatedly attacked on their way to school. Although by the mid 1980's efforts were being made to heal the racial divide, the wounds were still deep.¹⁰

In the mid-1990's, Boston also had to deal with a series of potentially volatile racial issues. With respect to the police department itself, there were at least three difficult situations. First, in March of 1994 there was the death of a retired black minister, Accelyne Williams. The police carried out a drug bust with a SWAT team. They broke into the wrong apartment – Reverend Williams'. Williams became hysterical, had a heart attack, and died.¹¹ During the following year police mistakenly took a black undercover cop, Anthony Cox, to be a fleeing suspect. He was caught and beaten by a racially mixed group of police.¹² In the same year, an assistant district attorney, Paul McLaughlin, was shot and killed as he sat in his car at a subway stop as he was returning home.¹³ Eventually, it was determined that the killer was a notorious black gang member. Each of these incidents received considerable attention in the press. Each could have resulted in racially explosive situations. Instead, the police department and the Ten Point ministers worked together to insure that each case was properly investigated and that those responsible were held accountable.¹⁴

More broadly during the 1990's Boston had to deal with other racially sensitive issues. When the Boston City Hospital was sold to Boston University, there was considerable concern that it would no longer adequately serve the needs of Boston's inner city community.¹⁵ Most

potentially contentious, in 1996 there was an effort supported by one of Boston's key black politicians, Diane Wilkerson, among others, to have Boston's school board revert back to being elected. The school board had been the locus of the fiery school busing controversy of the previous decade.¹⁶ In 1989, the then mayor, Ray Flynn, at the insistence of a different group of black ministers, had led a legislative effort to have the school board be appointed. In the subsequent eight years, although Boston's schools were still quite weak and faced many challenges, education issues had not been defined primarily in racial terms. In both the case of Boston City Hospital and the School Board, the Ten Point Coalition played a central role in working out a resolution of the issue in a way that minimized racial hostility and that was beneficial to Boston's inner city minority community. In each case, consensus was reached by avoiding defining the issue as essentially racial.¹⁷

In sharp contrast to the 1970's and 80's, various political and policy issues in 1990's were not defined and debated in racial terms. Boston changed from a city that had a reputation for being one of the most racist in the country to a city with a working multiracial coalition. Some might argue that the Ten Point ministers have sold out and that there are many issues in Boston that should be racially contested. For better or worse, though, Boston has gone through a radical transformation in how it deals with race and politics. A second dimension of the Boston Miracle, then, has been the development of a multiracial coalition between the Ten Coalition ministers, the police, and city government more generally, and the resulting dramatic transformation in the way that Boston deals with racially sensitive political issues.

Another challenge faced by Boston at the beginning of the 1990's was the competency of the police. As had been true throughout much of Boston's history, the upper levels of the police department had been staffed through cronyism. The department lacked professionalism and had a reputation of being unconcerned with improvement.¹⁸ The Carol Stuart murder was the catalyst needed to set off a public outcry over the quality of Boston's department. *The Boston Globe* ran a lengthy eight part series between April 7 and 10, 1991, disparagingly entitled "Bungling the Basics," that unmercifully critiqued the Department's day to day procedures. Further pressure was

put on Mayor Flynn to act when in the summer of 1991, a Dorchester teen-ager was fatally shot by a Boston Police Officer resulting in a one million dollar wrongful death suite.¹⁹ The Mayor was then forced to appoint a commission to investigate the police department.²⁰ This commission, headed by a Republican and former Nixon Watergate counsel, Charles St. Clair, issued a broad-ranging and very damning report. The report stated that the only way for Boston's police department to be reformed was for the police commissioner, Mickey Roache, to be fired.²¹

Roache was not in fact fired.²² Rather, in February of 1992, William Bratton was brought in as the number two person and given the mandate to create a professionally oriented police department. Bratton then became commissioner in July of 1993, but by October of 1993 he had effectively left to become commissioner for New York City.²³ Although his tenure in the Boston Police Department was short, Bratton had had an important impact – he had started a process of change. He also had the wisdom to appoint Paul Evans, the man who would succeed him as commissioner, to the number two position. Evans was both a favorite of the police union and had a strong commitment to working closely with the community. Reform in the department would proceed under the dual banners of professionalism and community relations.²⁴

What Miracle?

Whereas Boston began the 1990's with the racial animosities of the past rekindled and its police department under broad attack, at the end of the decade Boston was seen as a model for effective crime control based on a community-policing model (San Diego would be the other city that would also have a strong claim to this title). As already noted, homicides had declined by 80% during the 1990's. More remarkably, as time went on, a key component of effort to deal with youth violence was a partnership between the Police Department and a group of black inner city ministers known as the Ten Point Coalition. Not only did homicides drop precipitously, but complaints against police dropped by over 60% during the 1990's.²⁵

The Ten Point Coalition was formed after a tragic event in May of 1992 at the Morning Star Baptist Church in Mattapan, one of the three core neighborhoods in Boston's inner city.

During a funeral for a gang member, individuals from another gang entered the church and attempted a stabbing during the service. The minister fell on the intended victim in order to protect him from further harm. Pandemonium broke out, and four hundred individuals attempted to flee the church.²⁶

The Morning Star Baptist Church incident was a wake-up call to many black clergy that they needed to get involved in the streets.²⁷ And so the Ten Point Coalition was created. Although the Coalition membership has varied over time from 45 to 72 members since its inception, at its core for most of the 1990's has been three ministers – Reverends Jeffery Brown, Raymond Hammond, and Eugene Rivers.²⁸ In the past Rivers had a very hostile relationship with the police. He was quoted in the *Globe* series cited above making very derogatory comments about the police, and was generally known as a “cop basher.”²⁹ He reports that for many years the police were convinced that he was one of the major drug dealers in Boston’s inner city. More generally, the early 1990's were a nadir in the relationship between the Police Department and Boston’s black community.³⁰

The Ten Point Coalition did not initially work directly with the police, hardly surprising given the difficult relationship that existed between the Department and Rivers. What is surprising, given the past relationship, is that the partnership between the groups became one of the core components of the effort to deal with the problem of violence, particularly youth violence, in the 1990's. This partnership continues to this day. This was a second miracle that occurred in Boston in the 1990's. The story of how it occurred is complex and cannot be detailed here.³¹ The short version is that both police and ministers came to realize that they had a common goal – “to keep the next kid from getting killed” and over time they came to recognize that their efforts could complement each other. The relationship between the Police and Ten Point became formalized when towards the end of 1996 the ministers became regular participants a series of “gang forums” that the police had initiated earlier in the year as a part of a city-wide strategic plan to deal with youth violence.³² Gang members would be “invited” to the forums. “The police, ministers, and other individuals from various criminal justice and social service agencies would

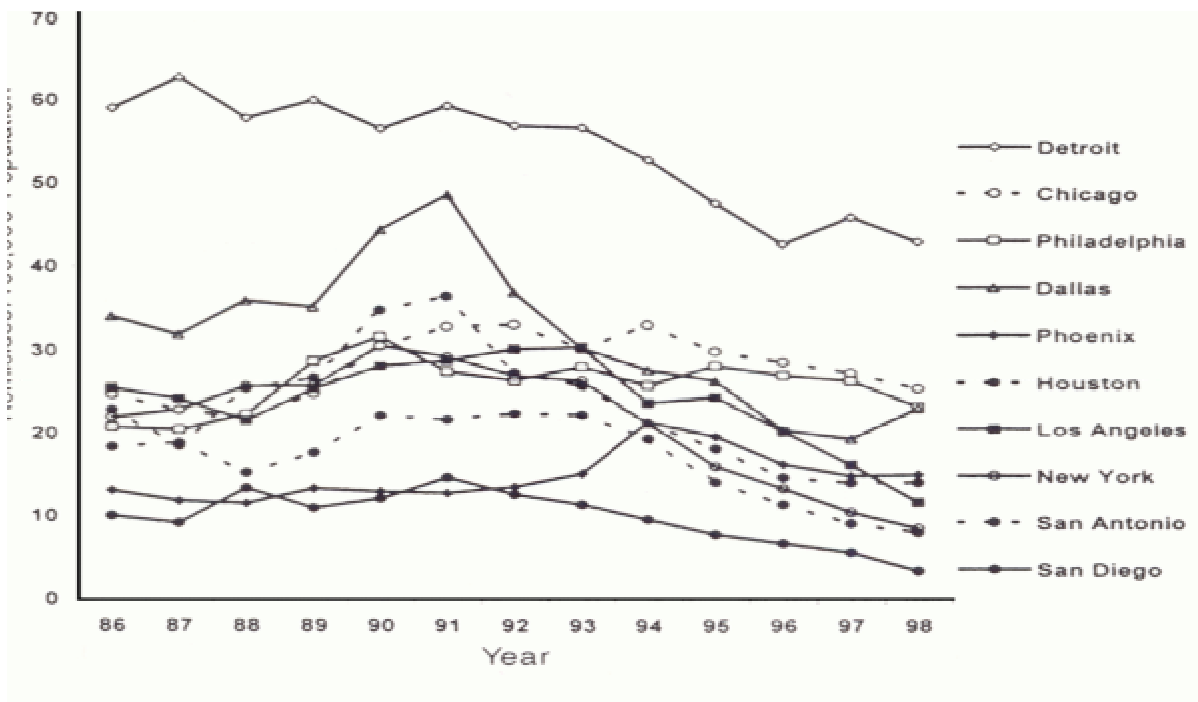
then demand that kids stop their gang banging, promise that if they did, they would help them out in any of a variety of ways – school, jobs, family, etc., but if they didn't they would work as hard as they could to see them put in jail; they were a danger both to themselves and to the community and the last thing that the ministers wanted to do was preside over their funeral; the police presence in these meetings was critical for letting the kids know that the ministers meant business. And in fact, a number of kids who continued gang banging were sent to jail.³³

Whose Miracle?

As noted above, the media has given the Boston Police Department Policy and their partnership with the Ten Point Coalition the majority of the credit for the sharp decline in homicides that occurred during the 1990's. This claim is made nowhere more strongly than on an extensive website created by the Boston's Police Department: www.Bostonstrategy.com. This multiple-page site provides the "official" version of the Boston story. There are a broad set of excerpts from statements by numerous individuals – patrol men, ministers, street workers, and police brass. Detailed information is provided on the accomplishments of the police department and their work with the Ten Point ministers. The website appears to contain more than a hundred separate pages. It is essentially a book on the web.

Whether in fact the Boston Police Strategy is responsible for the dramatic drops in homicide, particularly youth homicide, observed in the 1990's, is difficult to determine. There are arguments on both sides. Arguing against the importance of policing policy is the fact that homicide rates fell significantly across the country in the 1990's and dramatically in other cities in addition to Boston. Figure 2 shows the trends in the homicide rates for ten other cities:³⁴

Figure 2



From John Eck and Edward MacGuire, “Have Changes in Policing Reduced Violent Crime?”

As can be seen, dramatic drops in the homicide rates occurred over the 1990's in Detroit, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Antonio, and San Diego. In some cases, New York and San Diego in particular, dramatic drops occurred in cities that had adopted innovative policing policies, though policies distinctly different from those adopted in Boston. In the other cities, however, there were no explicit changes in policing policies that might account for the observed drops in homicide. Also note that in Figure 2, in some cities (Chicago, Phoenix) there were little or no drops. This is also the case in other cities not shown in the figure, such as Las Vegas, Baltimore, Washington, D.C, and San Jose.³⁵

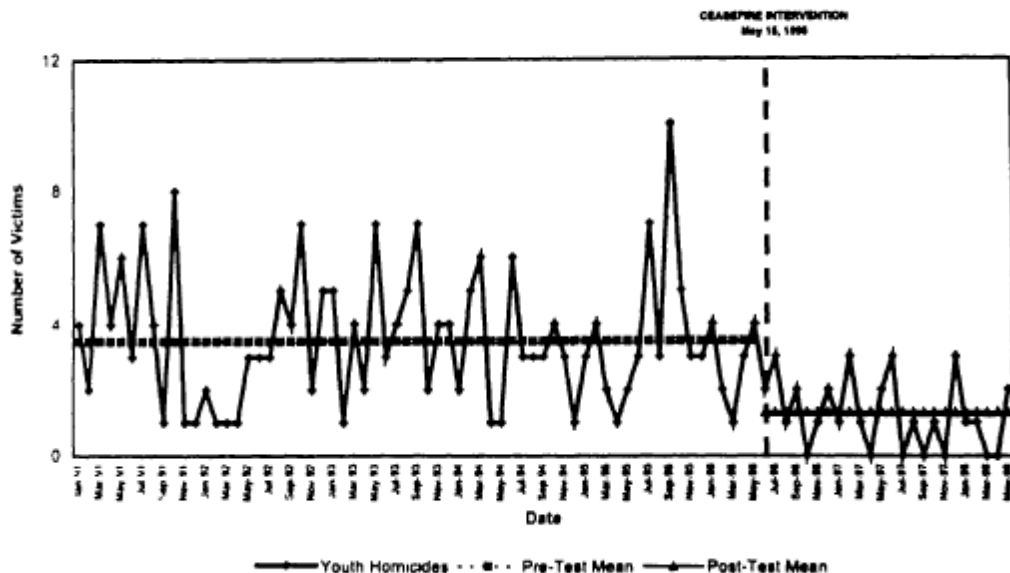
The fact that a number of cities experienced large drops, but that others didn't, suggests that there were a set of common processes shared by some but not all cities that has resulted in

drops in their homicide rates in the 1990's. Given the large drops in homicide rates in other cities, the drop in Boston may be simply a function of processes common to other cities. Alternatively, it is certainly possible that rates would not have dropped or at least dropped to the extent that they did without the innovative policies adopted by Boston.

The strongest evidence that the Boston strategy caused the observed drop in homicide comes from a paper by Anthony Braga and his colleagues at Harvard's Kennedy School that explicitly evaluates the impact of the Boston program.³⁶ The key piece of analysis is reported in Figure 3.

What is shown here is the monthly homicide rate for individuals age twenty-four and under from June of 1991 through May of 1998. The major program implemented by the Boston Police was an effort named Operation Ceasefire. Operation Ceasefire was an interagency problem-oriented policing intervention, which tightly focused criminal justice and social service attention on a small number of chronically offending gang-involved youth that were responsible for a majority of the city's youth violence problem. The forums involving police, ministers, and individuals from various social service agencies and other criminal justice agencies described above were a key part of this program. The program was initiated in June of 1996. As can be seen in Figure 3, there is a dramatic drop equaling a 63% reduction in the monthly youth homicide rate precisely at this point. Braga et al. investigate the robustness of their finding by estimating multivariate models that allow them to control for other variables that potentially could have affected the youth homicide rate. In addition, they examine data on other cities to see if there is any evidence of a break in youth homicide similar to that observed for Boston in 1996. Neither analysis provides any evidence that the reduction in the Boston rate is due to factors other than Operation Cease-Fire.³⁷

Figure 3. Monthly Counts of Youth Homicides In Boston



What are we to conclude? There is little doubt that the Braga et al. analysis provides strong evidence that Operation Ceasefire reduced the youth homicide rates in Boston. There are two issues, however. First, how do we reconcile the drops in homicide in other cities with the claim that it was the Boston policy that specifically reduced its homicide rate? Second, how much of the overall credit for the 80% drop in homicide does the Boston policy deserve? In another paper the Kennedy School group examines what they call the epidemic of youth homicides that occurred in Boston during the late 1980's and early 1990's. They conclude in part that:

1. "The epidemic was contained largely within Boston's young black male population."
2. "Virtually all the increase in homicide victimization was firearm victimization."
3. Was "consistent with a picture of growing and increasingly disorderly drug markets involving young people."

4. “Youth associated with firearms .. (had) extensive criminal records.”³⁸

If Kennedy and Braga are correct that disorderly drug markets were the initial cause of the youth gun violence that occurred in Boston in the late 1980's, this may allow us to reconcile the observed effects of the Boston Policing strategy and the observed decreases seen in other cities that didn't adopt similar policies. Just as drug markets and the streets more generally become disorderly they are also likely to go through periods where they become orderly and there is less violence. Orderliness is likely as markets and other activities move off the street and/or implicit understandings are reached as to who controls which neighborhoods.³⁹ If this is correct, then we would expect gun violence to subside as the streets would no longer be sites of contestation. One hypothesis about how the Boston Policing strategy may have reduced homicide rates is that it may have pushed gangs off the street and have caused drug markets to move indoors earlier and to a larger extent than would have occurred otherwise. In other cities gangs and drug markets may have moved indoors over time as well, but perhaps more slowly and to not as nearly as significant a degree. This would be consistent with the fact that in most other cities youth homicides did not fall nearly as fast or to as great a degree as they did in Boston. The one notable exception is New York, which also adopted a set of policies that made it very difficult for gang and drug activity to continue on the streets.

But how much of the overall drop in youth homicides can be attributed to the Boston policy? This may be indeterminable. Braga et al.'s analysis suggests most of it, but a scenario that would be consistent with their findings is that a sizable drop might have occurred after June of 1996 even in the absence of Operation Ceasefire. An analogy might be an expanding balloon that is popped with a pin. In a real sense, the pin caused the balloon to pop. Yet the balloon might also have slowly deflated on its own accord soon thereafter with a small amount of residual air remaining in the balloon. Counterfactual questions of this type can often be extremely difficult to answer. Braga et al.'s analysis provides clear evidence Boston's policing policy had a substantial effect. What is unclear is what would have occurred in the absence of this policy.

What the Boston Police and the Ten Point Coalition clearly deserve credit for is their decision to work together to deal with the problem of youth violence and the effects that this has had on police-community relations specifically and racial politics in Boston more generally. As detailed above, because of their partnership, Boston has been able to deal with a number of incidents and issues, both within and outside the criminal justice system, which could have been racially explosive. To understand what might have occurred in the absence of their partnership, one only needs to look south to New York City. New York's homicide rate dropped nearly as much in the 1990's as Boston's. However, New York pursued a heavy-handed form of policing under the banners of fixing broken windows and of zero-tolerance.⁴⁰ What this meant was that young minority males were frequently stopped and, from their perspective, harassed. Furthermore when police mishaps occurred such as the Diallo shooting or criminal acts such as the Louima case, there has been enormous racial protest.⁴¹

Is the Miracle of the 1990's Over?

As noted at the beginning of the paper, homicides shot up in Boston in 2001. After hitting an all-time low of 31 in 1999, they increased to 39 in 2000, and then exploded to 68 in 2001. Although 68 murders is still below the historic level over the last several decades (prior to the mid 1990's) of 80 to 100 homicides a year, it does raise the question as to whether the miracle of the 1990's is over. More importantly, it raises the question of whether the Boston approach is still effective.

In his farewell speech as mayor of New York, Giuliani, ever sensitive to the criticism his police department has received for its heavy handed style (and perhaps because of the historic competition between Boston and New York in terms of baseball and so many other dimensions), declared his city's methods "triumphant." Giuliani used as evidence the fact that the homicide rate had risen dramatically in Boston in 2001, but had fallen slightly during the same time period in New York. Many in the Boston establishment bridled at Giuliani's remarks and the implicit assumption that Boston's miracle was over, or even worse had never occurred.⁴²

The issue of comparative effectiveness of New York's and Boston's policing policy, however, goes beyond civic pride. It speaks to the question of how our cities should best be policed. Interestingly, as noted earlier, William Bratton was police commissioner of both cities at different times during the 1990's and deserves some, if not much of the credit for changes in the 1990's in both departments.⁴³ Under his leadership, both departments moved to a more proactive form of policing where the goal was not simply to solve crimes after they occurred, but also to prevent crime from happening in the first place. In addition, both cities set up procedures for identifying crime hot spots where police would intervene immediately and aggressively.

Despite these similarities, there are also critical differences in the two cities' policing philosophies. Boston has worked very hard to develop a program that is community friendly, particularly with regard to its inner city residents.⁴⁴ The cornerstone of this effort has been the already referred to partnership between the police and the group of black inner city ministers known as the Ten Point Coalition. Both the Coalition and partnership will be described below.

New York, however, has seen the authority of the policing as residing in their professional status. As such, police and the policies they pursue are determined by the police hierarchy, and significant community involvement in decision making is eschewed. The consequence of this has been that when mishaps and tragedies involving the police occur in New York, there has been enormous protest by the minority community over police practices.

In part, the question of which city has a better policing policy has implicitly become a moral debate as much as it is a debate about effectiveness. The legitimacy of the Boston approach is based on its working with the community, strikingly with a group of black ministers. The legitimacy of the New York approach is found first on the police's relationship to the state and second on its effectiveness. The fact that Giuliani, who had just been named man of the year by *Time* magazine, would comment on the ineffectiveness of Boston's policing practices in his farewell address to the public is remarkable. It indicates how much is both politically and morally at stake in the support for policing policies that involve very different postures with respect to a city's minority community.

The question of whether the Boston model is flawed raises the question of whether effective policing policy can be community-oriented and friendly. Although one could certainly imagine other community-friendly approaches than Boston's, the failure of the Boston model would have significant political consequences. Specifically, it is likely that it would be used by some to justify more heavy-handed approaches to dealing with violence in the inner city.

Providing a satisfactory answer to these questions is difficult given that we have only observed a large increase in homicides for a single year. As can be seen in Figure 1, the homicide rate in Boston varies considerably over time, both on a year to year basis, and over longer term cycles. A one year increase does not make a trend. Without knowing what will occur in the future, it is difficult to know whether 2001 is an aberration or the beginning of a long term upward increase in Boston's murder rate.

Despite this caveat, a number of observations provide insight into the causes of the large increase in 2001. In contrast to the upsurge in the homicide rate that occurred in 2001, the number of crimes committed with firearms (homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault) increased only modestly from 1,096 to 1,212, a change of a little less than 11%. More generally, the perception among police, ministers, and street-workers is that there has been not a substantial increase in day to day, street violence. How do we reconcile these observations with the large increase in homicide rates?

Reports from police officers and street workers indicate that many more shootings are occurring indoors and that the shootings appear to be premeditated with specific individuals as targets. Furthermore, much of the increase has occurred in a single age group. In the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 the number of homicide victims ages 14 to 19 were respectively 5, 7, and 10. During the same period, the number of homicide victims between the ages of 20 and 24 were respectively 9, 10, and 14. For individuals 33 and older, the number of victims were respectively 11, 10, and 19. In sharp contrast, for this period the number of victims ages 25 to 32 increases from 4 in 1999, to 10 in 2000, to 22 in 2001.⁴⁵ What is driving these large increases in homicides in this older age group?

In the last two years there has been a large increase in the number of felons returning to the community from prison. Estimates are that as many as 250 individuals a month are returning to Boston neighborhoods.⁴⁶ Many of these individuals were previously involved in the gang conflicts. The belief is that many recent killings involve retribution and/or attempts to retake drug markets that were lost when individuals were sent to prison. Whereas the early 1990's might be characterized as a period of hot-blooded street shootings, 2001 has seen mostly targeted cold-blooded murders.

If homicide rates fell in Boston during the 1990's because relationships between gangs, within gangs, and drug dealers became more stable, it may well be the case that they are being destabilized now by the large increase in returning felons, the upsurge in the number of young people, and by a flood of guns. If this is in fact the case, it may explain not only why homicide rates have increased in the 25 to 32 year old age group, but in adjacent age groups as well. External shocks to the system may well be undermining the peace that was established in the 1990's resulting in increased homicides in all age groups.

If the above analysis is correct, it suggests that Boston is faced with a new type of problem. Whereas the problem individuals of the 1990's were often young, immature, hot-blooded and had never been to prison, those in the 2001 are prison-hardened criminals. In many cases they are the same individuals who are now returning to the community after a stint in jail where they have acquired an "education" in how to effectively employ violent means. A simple message from ministers and police to knock off the "noise" or go to prison is likely to have little effect, especially since these individuals no longer fear prison. Rather, what will be needed is a focus on "impact players"--- individuals seen "as having a negative effect in neighborhoods regarding gang activity, drug trafficking, and firearm violence."⁴⁷ The task will be to identify these individuals and, assuming that they are committing crimes, to insure that they are put in or return to jail as soon as possible.

The Response

As one might expect Boston is working hard to deal with its new violence problem. The Police Department has launched what it calls Boston Strategy II.⁴⁸ The Department states that the key component of the new effort is “the collaboration and partnerships between the police, community, and clergy.”⁴⁹ The new effort has three components: focused efforts on enforcement, intervention, and prevention. The enforcement effort involves warrant apprehension efforts, efforts to disrupt firearm trafficking, and gang and drug investigations. Intervention comprises: prison reentry programs run jointly by police, clergy, and individuals from other agencies; revitalization of an earlier police/probation program, Operation Nitelite; Operation Homefront which involves visits to the home of high-risk individuals by teams of police and clergy; and revitalization of Operation Ceasefire program discussed above. As in the past, the current effort has involved forums where police and clergy meet with gang members and demand that they end their conflicts. In addition, it has involved major sweeps where members of one particular gang are arrested for drugs and guns, often on Federal charges. Prevention efforts involve a host of new and existing programs including youth service officers, summer jobs, a junior police academy, and summer camps.⁵⁰

Conclusion – Looking Towards the Future

The Boston Police Department’s mission statement reads:⁵¹
We dedicate ourselves to work to fight crime, reduce fear and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Our Mission is Neighborhood Policing.

Given this statement, it would seem superfluous to ask whether the police’s partnership with the clergy of the Ten Point Coalition will continue to be important. It is, however, meaningful to ask whether they will be important beyond their “PR” contribution.

A number of events that occurred while this paper was being drafted (the winter of 2002) have provide an important test of whether Boston will rise to the occasion and respond aggressively and cooperatively to the new violence it faces. On January 24th, 3 year old Malik

Andrade-Percival was shot dead in his home. His father Ian Percival ten years earlier had been involved in the infamous Morning Star Baptist Church incident described above. The shooter was dressed in a police uniform. He had knocked on the door at approximately at nine in the event, saying that he had been called to investigate a disturbance. The shooter and Ian Percival scuffled and in the process little Malik was shoot and killed.⁵² The public claim is that the shooter, knowing that the father was a major drug dealer, planned to rob him of drugs and money.⁵³ Word on the street, however, was that shooter had coldly planned to execute the father in front of his family.⁵⁴

In ways analogous to the Morning Star Baptist church incident this killing has become a rallying cry for the clergy and Boston more generally to reengage in the working to deal with the problem of inner city violence.⁵⁵ Boston's newspapers ran stories for weeks on the incident covering not only the shooting and investigation, but the small boy's funeral as well. On February 3 a "peace march" was held demanding an end to the violence.⁵⁶ More recently, the brazen shooting at a bus by a sixteen year old during afternoon rush hour at a MBTA train station has raised further concerns that the violence is back⁵⁷

Subsequent to this later event, at 4 am on the morning of February 13, Willie Murray, a black thirty-seven year old, while sitting in the drivers sit of his car, was killed by a black Boston police officer, Shawn West. This was the sixth police killing of a civilian in Boston in fifteen months. More typically, there is one killing by police in a year. As in the case of many police shootings, the circumstances of the Murray killing were unclear. The only witness to the shooting was an individual who was in the backseat of Murray's car. It is said that West has claimed that his life was threatened by Murray's actions and as a result the shooting was justified.⁵⁸

The Boston Globe immediately raised the question, a question that almost certainly was in the minds of many community members, black and white, as to whether the Murray killing was indicative of the fact that police were using excessive force in Boston's inner city.⁵⁹ The police commissioner Paul Evans responded to these charges by attending on the day after the shooting a joint meeting of the Boston Ten Point Coalition and the Black Ministerial Alliance, Boston's

more traditional organization of black churches. At this meeting, he explained what he knew about the circumstances of the shooting, indicated that the shooting was being thoroughly examined by internal investigations, indicated that there well might be problems with the shooting (i.e. that it was not justified), and recognized the clergy's, as well as the city's more generally, concern about the number of recent killings by police. The approximately thirty-five black clergy had no questions for the commissioner.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the police department has sent the case to a grand juror, an essentially open admission that they believe that the shooting was not justified. Five days later, *The Boston Globe* published an Op-Ed piece by Reverends Ray Hammond and Wesley Roberts, the respective heads of the Boston Ten Coalition and the Black Ministerial Alliance that called for the renewal of efforts against violence. Further they claimed that the partnerships of the past were now fully active and necessary if Boston was to effectively counter its new crime problem.⁶¹

Boston's new resolve, however, has been tested once more. On January 4, 2002, District Attorney for Suffolk County, the country where Boston is located, Ralph Martin, a black, and the most important Republican in elected office in the state next to the Governor, resigned his position to go into private practice. A group of ministers from Boston Ten Point and the Black Ministerial Alliance requested a meeting with the Governor in order to both discuss the issue of who would replace Martin and their more general concerns about the rising crime rates in Boston's inner city. A meeting was set, but then canceled, and the Governor announced the appointment of Dan Conley, a white Irish city council member from the Hyde Park neighborhood as the new DA without ever conferring with the black ministers. Supposedly at the request of some of the ministers, the black *Globe* columnist, Adrian Walker wrote a piece titled "The miracle is now dead" that lambasted the white establishment for their handling of the DA appointment.⁶²

Walker's column was, however, far from prescient. Immediately, the new DA was making the rounds, meeting with different groups of black ministers including those in Boston Ten Point Coalition and the Black Ministerial Alliance.⁶³ The ministers had a long list of demands

and the DA was acceding to their requests. He needed to get elected several years hence. The ministers suddenly realized that they now had more leverage over the new DA, than they ever had over Ralph Martin.⁶⁴ Perhaps, most ironically, the Governor has announced that she will not run for election this coming fall, in part in recognition that since moving from Lieutenant Governor to Governor the previous year when the elected governor, Paul Celucci became Ambassador to Canada, she has made a number of political blunders including the way she appointed the new DA.

The Police Department has shown no such tendency to politically bumble things. The front page of the city section of *The Boston Globe* on March 1st, above the fold, recently provided a detailed story about how the police department intended to deal with a spate of shootings in Boston's Cape Verdean community. It described how a vastly disproportionate share of Boston's homicides both recently and in the past had involved conflicts in the Cape Verdean community. It also discussed how various efforts had failed and the department believed that it now had to crack down on some of the more violent prone individuals in the community.⁶⁵ Clearly, the story could not have been written without the full cooperation of the Police Department. The story represented both a new level transparency and new level of communication between the Police Department and Boston's various communities.

Endnotes

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- ¹⁴ Berrien and Winship Forthcoming. Also see *The Boston Globe*. “Police, clergy working to avert racial tension.” 9/29/1995: 004.
- ¹⁵ Informant Interview.
- ¹⁶ Informant Interview. Also see *The Boston Globe*. “Menino ups ante on school vote; Seeks link to political future.” 11/4/1996: B1.
- ¹⁷ Informant Interviews.
- ¹⁸ Bratton, William, *Turnaround: How America’s Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic* (New York: Random House, 1998); also see Flynn.
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- ²¹ St. Clair, James. *Report of the Boston Police Department Management Review Committee*. January 14, 1992.
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- ²⁸ Other ministers in the city, such as Bruce Wall and Michael Haynes have also been involved in intensive street ministry. However, they have not had the same publicity as the three key Ten Point ministers.
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