I. Introduction

This memorandum explores the challenges faced by the city of Boston to combat gang violence through an analysis of a gang violence reduction initiative called “Operation Ceasefire” (OC), and proffers recommendations for how the city of Boston can sustain successful initiatives such as OC which is heralded by academics and law enforcement experts as a best-practice. To that end, it identifies the salient issues and formulates a framework for institutionalizing and sustaining effective initiatives that reduce gang violence, and expand life changing opportunities to people of Boston marginalized by generations of poverty.

Effective programs for reducing gang involvement and gun violence among youth must include a comprehensive approach focused on root-drivers of crime and systemic problems within the community. All viable solutions must be transparent, facilitate equity, and enhance public safety. The focus of this analysis is on problem-solving strategies to help guide your administration and public safety agencies to utilize the most appropriate interventions.

The analysis begins by reviewing the contextual basis of gang violence in Boston between 1989 and 2006. Next, I will analyze and discuss key public sector issues and offer specific recommendations to resolve the problems. The issues I will address in this memo are 1) the lack of trust and poor race relations between the Boston Police Department (BPD) and inner-city African American communities (legitimacy and procedural justice), 2) the failure to institutionalize effective strategies and modalities from Operation Ceasefire, 3) the lack of
proactive initiatives to address the root-drivers of gang involvement, and 4) sustainability challenges of BPD initiatives.

II. Summary of Gang Violence in Boston

As the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980’s exploded, Boston experienced a surge of inner-city gang and youth violence. The arrival of crack brought an influx of guns, as gangs marked and protected their territories (Scott, 2007; Blumstein, 1995; Cork, 1999). As guns flooded the streets, homicide rates in Boston soared. By the end of 1990, Boston recorded 152 homicides. Nearly half of the victims were under the age of 24.

Homicide rates and gang violence among Boston’s youth remained high through the mid-1990’s, highlighting the ineffectiveness of traditional aggressive policing strategies (Scott, 2007; Kennedy, 1997). Desperate for a more efficacious homicide reduction approach, in 1996 Boston instituted Operation Ceasefire. It was founded on the principles of community-policing, strategic-partnerships, opportunities for youth, focused deterrence, transparency and built legitimacy in inner-city black communities (Scott, 2007; Meares, 2009; Kennedy, 1998).

The program, also known as Ceasefire, approached gang violence in an innovative way. It combined an interagency collaboration, community partnerships, an academic/practitioner working group, the implementation of a city-wide interagency strategy, and measured its effects (Kennedy, Piehl, & Braga, 1996). The core of the program was founded on the suppression tactic known as “pulling levers”, a policing technique intended to deter gang violence. A key component involved convening gang members then setting clear standards for their behavior—no violence. If gang members did not heed the message, then every available legal “lever” was pulled, resulting in lengthy sentences. For those who chose to change their
ways, comprehensive social services were provided to help them move out of the gang life (Scott, 2007; Kennedy, 1997; Kennedy 1998).

Ceasefire proved successful. Youth homicides—age 24 and under—dropped from 46 in 1995 to 25 in 1996. In 1997 the number of youth killings dropped to 15, 80% lower than the peak of the surge in 1990. By 2000, the number of youth killings remained constant at 15 (Scott, 2007). Touted nationally as the “Boston Miracle”, BPD’s partnership with the Ten Point Coalition (a group of inner-city black ministers) provided an “umbrella of legitimacy” which improved race relations between the police and the inner-city communities of African Americans (Scott, 2007).

The OC modalities of focused enforcement, social services, and interventions of at-risk youth decreased crime by 67% (Scott, 2007; Schnur, 2010). As the gang crisis appeared to subside, OC lost momentum and the police shifted their attention. New initiatives unrelated to gangs were launched. Between 2000 and 2005 gang violence once again climbed. Returning to the aggressive policing strategies of the past, the BPD squandered the legitimacy built with the black communities during Ceasefire. The homicide total for 2005—75—was at a 10-year high (Scott, 2007). Research by Braga, Hureau, and Winship (2008) concluded that the Boston model of the 1990’s did not fail, rather the city and BPD failed to continue the strategies and fundamentals of OC.

III. Issues and Recommendations

Issue # 1: The lack of trust and poor race relations (Legitimacy and Procedural Justice)

As the BPD shifted away from the Ceasefire tactics in 2000, the return to traditional aggressive policing strategies created an even deeper lack of trust and poor race relations between the inner city blacks and the police. Perceptions of the BPD as an agency that cared
about people and public safety diminished, undermining their legitimacy (Braga, Hureau, & Winship, 2008; Schnur 2010; Berrien & Winship, 2002). In the context of policing, legitimacy refers to the reasonable application of the procedures used by the police to exercise their power (Mentel, 2012).

Historically, disparities in sentencing in the criminal justice system caused a great disconnect between government agencies and the marginalized inner city poor people. On the other hand, Ceasefire cultivated an environment of procedural justice and legitimacy through strategic-partnerships, communication campaigns, and transparency. Procedural justice is defined as the trust which citizens have in the regular operations and formal processes of law enforcement (Meares, 2009). Simply put, citizens must perceive the police as treating everyone reasonably and equally, not just targeting individuals based on race.

Procedural fairness heightens legitimacy, and strict adherence to its tenets directly correlates to improved community relations. A procedural justice-based methodology enables the police to regulate crime without alienating or profiling the inner-city black community (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004; Meares, 2009). Public perception of the police is based on personal experience, which then impacts individual interpretation of fairness in the system. The Ceasefire initiative exemplified legitimacy and procedural fairness for inner-city residents.

Underprivileged young black men suffer the highest concentration of police contact. By the mid-1990’s, nearly one in three black men between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine were involved in the criminal justice system (Mauer & Huling, 1995; Meares, 2009; Mentel, 2012). To young black men, having police contact, getting arrested, and going to prison was an expected occurrence. This presents the BPD with a unique opportunity to touch the lives of these young men.
When citizens have more contact with law enforcement than any other government agency (excluding possibly schools), it can enable police to make early identifications of at-risk youth. As a community relations tool, the BPD has daily opportunities to promote procedural fairness and improve relations with traditionally targeted groups (Decker, 2008; Mauer & Huling, 1995; Meares, 2009; Tyler & Sunshine, 2003). Operation Ceasefire was one such tool.

Throughout Ceasefire constructive engagement between the BPD and the urban poor established trust, legitimacy, and a fair process. The consequent building of social equity begins by building trust and legitimacy between citizens and government (Denhardt, 2010; Frederickson, 2010; Meares, 2009). In this context social equity pertains to addressing the needs of the most distressed populations. It entails the correction of existing disparities in the system and emphasizes just treatment by providing services to the inner city poor (Denhardt, 2010; Frederickson, 2010).

The ethical concern for social equity also relates to the needs of all citizens to benefit from society, not just the entitled few. “Social equity is a normative standard that makes equity in the delivery of public services the criterion for judging the value of administrative policy” (Cronkhite, 2012, p. 52). The attitudes, beliefs, values, and customs of African Americans have been defined by generations of racism; this shapes their perception of, and disposition toward, law enforcement and the criminal justice system at-large (Denhardt, 2010; Dobel, 2005; Pynes, 2009).

For Boston, enforcement-heavy, arrest-driven aggressive policing reinforced the inner-city residents’ belief in police illegitimacy (Scott, 2007). To effectively deliver public safety programs or initiatives, your administration must rebuild legitimacy and promote procedural
fairness. Not only will building trust enhance community-policing models, it will also foster institutional legitimacy (Goldsmith, 2005).

The focus must be on policing models known to work in inner-city communities, while assessing the influence their practices have on its residents (Fischer, 2014; Hough et al., 2010; Meares, 2009; Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Sunshine, 2003; Wills, 2010). Moreover, a community relations campaign, defining a commitment to fight all forms of discrimination and racial profiling will set a definitive agenda for your new Police Commissioner, Edward Davis. The following is a list of recommendations known to build legitimacy and improve race relations between the police and the inner-city black communities.

**Recommendations:**

1. Appoint a committee (working group) on youth violence which should include a vast array of stakeholders. Representatives from the front-lines of the police department, federal police agencies, ex-youth offenders, inner-city residents, academics, inner-city pastors, the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, the Probation and Parole Departments, and the Sheriff’s Department should be included. The goal of the working group is to identify and mitigate issues related to policing practices, race relations, crime, and violence, aligned with promoting procedural fairness, while building on the tenets of problem-oriented and community-policing. The collaborative approach to solving complex problems provides transparency and allows for a cohesive group of citizens to identify issues of importance and formulate strategies to address the problems (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004; Hickman, 2010; Kennedy, 1998; Kettl, 2002; Meares, 2000).

2. The working group should hold focus groups and town hall meetings in the inner-city communities to hear directly from the citizens in order to enhance citizen participation
(Thomas, 2012). This will give the citizens the platform to express their concerns and explain their needs. The focus should be on collecting data to analyze how the people being policed experience policing practices and policies. It should also identify what the inner-city residents feel are appropriate and fair police practices (Fischer, 2014; Thomas, 2012; Tyler & Sunshine 2003).

3. Once all the data is gathered, the working group should report their findings to your administration, and present a detailed plan that addresses the discussed issues, incorporates academic research, and provides your administration with evidenced-based best practices. (Dempsey & Forst, 2008)

4. In conjunction with Police Commissioner Edward Davis, develop a strategic plan, based on evidenced-based best practices presented to you by the working group, which details more effective policing policies in Boston (Kearns, 2000). The practices and programs should highlight legitimacy, procedural justice, reconciliation, and should include ways for building social equity in distressed neighborhoods and communities. A strategic plan is a process that puts meaning to a strategy and directs a way to implementation (Worth, 2014). It is an intentional process that renews organizational identity—through its vision and mission—and details specific goals and objectives an agency wants to achieve (Berry, 2007; Bryson, 2011; Worth, 2014). Strategic planning is a tool used to redefine and vitalize an agency (Mittenthal, 2002). If residents of Boston perceive the police are fair and treat everyone equally, it will cultivate the process of building legitimacy and trust in inner city communities (Meares, 2009; Tyler & Sunshine, 2003). As the Chief Executive of Boston, you have the ability to use your position to set the agenda for your administration and public policy. Agenda setting, simply put, identifies the problem you wish to correct (Anderson, 2011; Kingdon, 1995; Kingdon, 2013).
5. All facets of law enforcement in Boston should buy-in to the strategy and engage in a collaborative community outreach effort with community-based organizations. The outreach should include information on social services, focus on moral engagement, and present alternatives and pathways to living a crime-free life (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004; McGloin, 2005; Meares, 2009; Mentel, 2012).

**Issue # 2: The failure to institutionalize strategies and modalities of Operation Ceasefire**

An issue central to the resurgence of gang violence in Boston was the ineffectiveness of BPD administration to institutionalize the policing strategies of Ceasefire that had effectively reduced youth violence. The failure of the BPD to institutionalize the ethos and programs of OC led to inner city instability and a resurgence of gang violence. Institutionalization occurs when strategies become integral to an agency’s operations by embracing new norms, values, and structures (Cummings & Worley, 2000; Ikerd, 2010; Kimberly et al, 2001). For institutionalization to take hold in policing, the philosophy of the strategy must become a way of conducting day-to-day police business (Ikerd, 2010; Kimberly & Miles, 1980; Oliver, 2000).

In 2000, as Boston and the BPD celebrated the success of OC, the BPD shifted its focus away from gangs. As such, the program fizzled and gang membership increased again. Youth homicides rose 400% over the next 5 years (from 15 in 2000 to 75 in 2005). Ceasefire brought with it a new paradigm—community-policing, transparency, and community engagement. As a multidimensional policing strategy, the overarching philosophy embraced problem solving, innovation, partnerships, and collaboration. Boston was able to mitigate the surge of youth violence in the 1990’s through innovative, cutting edge tactics.

The inability of the BPD to institutionalize OC was due to one factor in particular: the failure to incorporate a strength-based, community empowerment ethos into the
organizational culture. Organizational culture, and the decision making of its employees, creates the identity of an organization (Denhardt, 2010; Simon, 1997). Police departments are resistant to change, making implementation and program longevity challenging (Braga & Weisburd, 2006). Many of the related causes are organizational, which explains the failure of the BPD to institutionalize proven policies.

The generational gap—both within BPD administration and front-line officers—also impacted decision-making and commitment toward the ethos of OC. Older officers committed to the aggressive policing models of the past were disinclined to comply with the community-policing model. Whereas those hired during the mid-1990s— the era of problem-oriented and community policing—were quicker to embrace the modality. To gain a deeper understanding of police officer behavior, one must understand the process by which they make decisions and comply with authority.

Officers’ responses are routine and they solve problems based on past experiences and practices, limiting the search for alternative solutions (Perrow, 1986). Bounded rationality is a theoretical framework which puts forth explanations for such behavior. This frame holds that in decision making, individual rationality is limited by past-practices, information, “the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make decisions” (Simon, 1997, p.291). These limits are defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and values. In addition to bounded rationality is the prospective willingness of a subordinate to comply with a superior’s authority or the goals of an organization (Denhardt, 2010; Simon, 1997).

As a public safety organization, the BPD is tasked with protecting its citizens and detaining those who violate the law. As an institution, the BPD is subject to the external environment—pressure from citizens, as well as local and state government. A lack of
collaborative interest has hindered the BPD from clearly identifying organizational objectives and strategies, mitigate internal factions, and effectively guide the organization’s operations in a direction that supported more dynamic practices and community-policing strategies (Denhardt, 2010; Perrow, 1986).

As key actors in the creation of Ceasefire moved on, the program became moribund. For example, after Lieutenant-Detective Gary French—the leader of the working group—was transferred from the gang unit to the sexual assault unit, the working group stopped meeting (Scott, 2007). Ceasefire was personnel dependent, not process secure. Policing policies should be part of the fabric of the organization, not dependent on individual actors. The culture of the BPD failed to operationalize OC as its public safety modality. The problem-solving philosophy and practices were not spread through the organization. However, the methods and apparatus which built and implemented OC brought teleological change to an agency once viewed as impermeable.

Teleological theory is an organizational change theory in which the level of analysis rests within one organization or group. The process of change is emergent and embraces goal setting, implementation, evaluation, modification, and setting new goals post evaluation if necessary. Change is enacted purposefully and guided by the organization’s goals toward a desired outcome (Hickman, 2010). The BPD’s creation and implementation of Ceasefire was a teleological change that Hickman (2010) describes as “second order—a break from the past” (p.47).

The following recommendations, based on best-practices, will help your administration guide the BPD to institutionalize and operationalize successful strategies by realigning officers’ behavior with organizational goals. This will create a new organizational culture which allows
programs to exist in perpetuity (Shafritz & Russell, 2003). According to Ikerd & Walker (2010), essential elements to institutionalizing police reform include 1) assessing the current organizational culture and 2) engage in efforts to garner support from front-line staff and mid-level management.

**Recommendations:**

1. The BPD needs to establish clear organizational objectives and guidelines in order to readopt and institutionalize the successful strategies of Ceasefire. This will provide your administration and the BPD with a framework from which to create, adopt, and evaluate policies in-line with the objectives of the culture of the BPD. This allows for programs/policies to exist in perpetuity—not dependent on individual actors (Cotton, 2007).

2. The BPD must develop a consolidated manual which clearly defines and explains public safety strategies, programs, and reforms. This manual will outline all reforms, standard operating procedures, and expectations of officers (Gormley & Bala, 2012). These guidelines will allow knowledge to be transferred from top levels of management through the rank and file front-line staff, and assimilated by all employees (Argote et al., 2003; Levine & Gilbert, 1999). This document will serve as a template for expectations and conduct of the BPD.

3. All BPD employees should be surveyed to test their knowledge of new reforms, attitudes toward the reforms, and to measure if their attitudes, actions, and behaviors reflect the reforms and new norms of the departments. This will assess the BPD’s capacity to absorb change. It will also enable the BPD to quantify areas where staff requires improvement. Staff improvement will be addressed through training sessions, educating them on the added value of the programs (Denhardt, 2010; Hickman, 2010).
4. All new BPD employees need to be educated on the new reforms and objectives of the department. This can be done through extensive training and seminars. The trainings should incorporate the benefits of community-policing, thereby providing officers’ greater insight to the department’s public safety strategy (Dempsey & Forst, 2008).

5. The department should modify performance measures to reflect community-policing activities and reward officers for embracing the model. By modifying employee performance evaluations to measure officers’ community-policing effectiveness will allow mid-level management to use this as a tool to correct and adjust performance (Ovretveit, 2005; Wells & Maguire, 2009).

6. To promote a favorable organizational culture, the BPD should involve the community and the department in the change process. This can be accomplished through focus groups, community-meetings, trainings, and educational sessions. To change the culture, the BPD needs to hear from the underserved communities so officers can gain an understanding of how their actions affect the lives of those they serve and protect (Wells & Maguire, 2009).

7. New recruits of the BPD should be assessed as to their aptitude and commitment to embrace the reforms and all standard operating procedures and expectations of the department. This will provide valuable insight as to their ability to integrate into the new organizational culture—a component of strategic workforce planning (Cotton, 2007).

8. The BPD needs to incorporate the reforms into the department’s policies, procedures, and training manuals. This tactic will operationalize strategies, transfer knowledge, provide a feedback loop for continuous improvement, and define the framework of the organizational culture.

**Issue #3: The absence of proactive initiatives to address the root-drivers of crime/gangs**
A key component missing from Boston’s strategy to eliminate youth violence were proactive initiatives to address the root-drivers of crime and gang involvement. Although Ceasefire, and its forerunner, Operation Gun Project, were successful policing strategies, they were reactive policies in light of the surge of gang violence. Youth homicides in Boston peaked in 1995 and 2005 presenting a bimodal distribution which correlates with the reactive policing strategies put forth by the BPD as a crisis management tool to address the issue (Kennedy, 1997; Meier, Brudney & Bohte, 2012; Scott, 2007).

Crisis management is an organizational strategy by which an imminent threat to the public, stakeholders, or the organization itself is addressed (Pearson & Clair, 1998). The 1996 Ceasefire intervention was a focused deterrence strategy, while the 2006 “truce talks” (implemented by a Ceasefire-like working group) strategy highlighted coercion and bribery. Both strategies were a reaction to the turbulent and violent environment, and the need to mitigate the effects of gang violence.

As a public safety measure, the intention of the 2006 “truce talks” was to stop the killings between the H-Block and Heath Street gangs. The mechanisms utilized by the BPD convoluted the process and impacted the reputation of the police and your administration. The media firestorm by the Boston Globe emphasized police actions—bribing gang members with corporate box seats at Patriots football games, Celtic tickets, tickets to Boston College football games—and the ineffectiveness of addressing systemic problems in the neighborhoods. The public, as well as officials within the BPD, criticized the strategy for rewarding and bribing criminals (Scott, 2007). Not only was public perception of the police tarnished, but the actions by your police department raised ethical concerns (Menzel, 2012).
Unethical actions typically arise from the norms of the organizational culture, and enable officers to rationalize their actions. Essential to effective crime control and public support is the public’s expectation that law enforcement will always act in an ethical manner (Goldsmith, 2005; Kettl, 2002; Menzel, 2012). Although reactionary strategies can directly impact and solve short-term community problems, research demonstrates they are not practical long-term solutions. A viable solution to crime and gang violence would address the root-drivers of crime—proactive in nature. Research shows that most youth join gangs between the ages of 12 and 15, have family members in gangs, and that gang life is intertwined into the culture of everyday life for these youth (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001).

Proactive policies not only enhance public safety, but shift enforcement-only efforts to policies that emphasize a balanced approach, blending prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies, while creating public value (Bennington & Moore, 2011; National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, 2010). The expression of public value through public services is not merely addressing market failure, but adds ethical value to society through equity, as well as the building of social capital. Essentially, public value is defined as a socially significant contribution to society (Moore, 1995).

To enhance public safety, a proactive initiative should address the lack of opportunity in education and employment, generations of poverty, unstable domestic environments, and substance abuse. It should also target gang and offending reduction strategies (Adams & Balfour, 2009; Kennedy, 1998). The basis of gang violence is multi-faceted and constantly evolving. Although it may be a daunting task, addressing the root-cause of gang membership is the only way to impact behavior and provide alternatives for at-risk youth.
A transformational leader with foresight, experience, and commitment to mitigate the effects of gangs, must lead the change effort that also provides opportunities for Boston’s inner-city youth, increases public safety, promotes health, and reduces violence (Hickman, 2010). Change in the community context is driven in response to a threat to the well-being of the community. The threat to the community in this analysis is two-fold 1) public safety and 2) the welfare of at-risk youth (Hickman, 2010).

It is essential to use a cross-disciplinary approach that brings public safety and public health partners together to work collaboratively to promote community change (Hickamn, 2010; Riccucci & Morse, 2010). This perspective allows for a comprehensive strategy to help keep kids out of gangs and promote complementary roles that public health (health promotion and violence prevention) and law enforcement (public safety) must play to stop violence before it starts. (Haegerich, Mercy, & Weiss, 2013). The following recommendations are based on a multidisciplinary approach of public health, economics, and public safety, your administration can use to address the root-drivers of crime/gang involvement.

**Recommendations:**

1. To begin, your administration needs to launch a public education campaign on crime prevention. This first step is a public health approach and important for several reasons. First, it will help the police win support and give you the ability to ask for an increase in police resources to provide comprehensive services to the city’s most underserved which addresses root-drivers of crime. Second, it will allow the police to provide information to residents on how to keep neighborhoods safe, and in the case of youth, how to avoid gang life, criminal behavior, and access social services (Leap, 2013; Ritter, 2009).
2. Put forth a public safety initiative to address gang violence in the inner-city. The initiative should address the root-drivers of crime and contain short-, mid-, and long-term strategies. Short-term strategies would be used to interrupt the violence. This can be done by re-implementing OC, developing community watch groups, identifying the high crime areas through crime mapping (automated crime analysis), the use of cameras in known gang territories, and by putting more officers on the streets. By utilizing proven strategies and technology, the BPD will be able to rapidly respond to crime—enabling the police to interrupt lawbreakers (Dempsey & Forst, 2008).

Mid- and long-term strategies should be directed at the drivers of gang involvement and crime. Economic deprivation and unstable domestic lives should be the focus of your programs. Create job-training programs for youth ages 16 to 24 and after-school programs for youth between the ages 8 and 15. The rationale for these two programs is to prevent gang involvement and provide employment opportunities to inner-city youth. Data demonstrates that most youth join gangs between the ages of 12 and 15. If youth are engaged in after-school programs, research reveals that they are more apt to learn, apply themselves in school, set goals, and learn pro-social behavior, and not join gangs (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001; National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, 2010). The following is critical to the success of this initiative: continually seek out partnerships to increase education and employment opportunities for youth as an alternative to joining gangs; intensive intervention of at-risk youth; strategic partnerships between the city of Boston and community-based organizations and local clergy; developing apprenticeship programs for youth; and promoting after school programs in the inner-city (Kettl, 2002; Skeltcher, 2005).
3. Through a community renewal initiative (economic perspective), create enterprise zones within Boston’s most distressed neighborhoods. Enterprise zones incentivize businesses, through tax breaks, to relocate to zoned areas and hire locally within those areas. This will create employment opportunities and economic advancement for Boston’s poorest residents. Economic development will reduce poverty, enhance family life, and provide opportunities for Boston’s inner-city residents (Bondonio & Engberg, 2000).

4. Seek both state and federal revenue to help promote and grow small businesses, fund health centers, develop and implement job training and education programs for youth, create affordable rent opportunities, and revitalize distressed neighborhoods. These recommendations will enhance employment opportunities, stabilize families, and create an environment in which youth can thrive.

**Issue #4: Sustainability challenges with BPD initiatives to eradicate gang violence (1996-2006)**

Both responses to the uptick in gang violence—1996 (Operation Ceasefire) and 2006 (Truce Talks)—lacked the critical components of sustainability and effective change management. Despite the BPD’s ability to recognize needed reforms geared toward reducing gang violence as a crisis management strategy, and given the diffusion of collaborative partners carrying out the reform, key elements to attain long-term success were missing (Decker, 2005). To achieve lasting and effective reform, the BPD needed to tackle issues of sustainability and leadership. Both are crucial to implementing crisis management tactics, leading to long-term viable strategies. In the context of gang violence in Boston, a sustainable initiative should address the immediate public safety threat, and establish long-term sustainable solutions isolated from threats of budget cuts.
Criminal justice research demonstrates that sustainability issues of police strategies are the result of challenges associated with institutionalization. As implementation of a program is hindered, often times, so is the program’s longevity and sustained success (Kennedy, 2007). Sustainability issues are complex and have long bedeviled police department reform initiatives. For Ceasefire, budget constraints and competing programs hindered the sustainability of the interagency initiative. The 2006 “truce talks” lacked funding, public support, and institutional partnerships with inner-city black churches (Lipsky, 1980; Scott, 2007; Tillyer, Engel, & Lovins, 2010). Both strategies failed to address the systemic problems in targeted neighborhoods.

In the interim, between Ceasefire and the Truce Talks (2000-2006), the BPD also experienced numerous trials making the implementation of any reform difficult. Events of 2001 proved extremely challenging. The onset of the recession eliminated philanthropic donations, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 shifted the federal authorities’ attention from youth gangs to Homeland Security. The aforementioned events constricted federal government and private sector monies available to Boston for youth violence programs. Additionally, between 2001 and 2005 the BPD was forced to decrease its patrol force by 200 officers due to city and state budget cuts (Scott, 2007).

In 2004, numerous events consumed BPD personnel; the 2004 Patriots Super Bowl victory, the Democratic National Convention, and the Boston Red Sox World Series victory, all presented the new BPD Commissioner, Kathleen O’Toole, with public safety threats (Scott, 2007). In 2005, as the media reported youth homicides at a ten year high, O’Toole reacted with Operation Neighborhood Shield, Operation Homesafe, and Operation Red Zone. All three initiatives were intensive sweeps to rid the streets of so-called criminals (Scott, 2007). Yielding little to no results, the community deemed these aggressive strategies as racial profiling.
Many attributed the ineffectual response by O’Toole a byproduct of her deterrence only approach and distance from day-to-day operations. Practitioners of deterrence theory believe that people rationally maximize their utility and shape their behavior in response to incentives and penalties (Meares, 2009). O’Toole left decisions to Superintendent Dunford (Bureau of Field Services) and Superintendent Joyce (Bureau of Investigative Services). Infighting between Dunford and Joyce divided the department, making sustainability of any program a challenge. Throughout O’Toole’s tenure, she never intervened to form synergy between the factions in the BPD.

Another factor closely tied to both sustainability and institutionalization is change management. Change management is a tactic used by leadership to transition employees and agencies to a desired state. Organizational development and planned change initiatives are directly linked to leadership and the success of implementation and sustainability of public programs (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Rainey & Chun, 2005). In both instances, Ceasefire and Truce Talks, leadership within the BPD did not effectively develop the agency for needed change in organizational culture.

Based on the literature, sustainable police initiatives to reduce youth criminality requires the support of the inner-city African American churches as a collaborative partner, buy-in from the police force, and dedicated funding mechanism for BPD initiatives and youth programs. The leadership issues in the BPD have already been addressed since the appointment of Edward Davis as the new Commissioner. Davis, a long-time proponent of community-oriented policing has a proven history of developing the organizational culture reflected in effective change management. The literature suggests the following recommendations will enhance sustainability of police programs, aid your administration to
develop sustainable funding mechanisms, and build public-private partnerships to carry out your reforms.

**Recommendations:**

1. It is essential to diversify funding for BPD initiatives/programs and that you forge partnerships with community-based organizations, national non-profits, and private enterprise to address issues of public safety, inadequate funding and institutional support. One key partnership essential to the success of a gang reduction/youth violence initiative is with the inner-city black churches. The inner-city churches will help build trust within the communities they serve, enhance BPD legitimacy, and provide institutional support. Public-private partnerships (PPP) will enhance your ability to get funding, as well as in-kind support, and assistance. Community-based organizations can provide a variety of social services enhancing the BPD’s ability to reach public-safety goals. Another such PPP is the Boston Foundation, long known to work with your city to build equity in poor communities and fund youth development. The aforementioned are deemed building blocks to sustainable policing programs (Decker, 2008; Kennedy, 1997; Skelcher, 2005).

2. Propose a local tax initiative dedicated to providing funding for youth programs. The initiative would set aside a portion of property taxes collected annually—3 cents for every $100—dedicated to youth programs, services for children and their families, and building equity. The funded programs should be evidence-based, known to develop youth educationally, occupationally, and designed to keep youth from joining gangs. Additionally, the initiative would provide daycare for single parent households, and afterschool programs for families in which both parents work or can’t afford the cost of such programs. The funding
would be available to provide services for youth ages 0-24 years old. A similar initiative has been in existence in San Francisco called the “Children’s Fund” (Brodkin, 2014).

3. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to present to the city’s legislature which will quantify the financial costs and social benefits of providing youth services compared to the publics’ cost if nothing is done (i.e., public safety, jail and prison costs, crime rate). The detailed analysis should provide information of the benefits gained by investing in youth programs, comparison between the cost of prevention and the cost of incarceration/hospitalization (Brodkin, 2014; Weimer & Vining, 2010). The cost-benefit analysis can be used by your administration as a tool to advocate on behalf of funding for public safety measures and youth initiatives.

4. Create a public safety baseline budget for Boston, which will ensure that funding for public safety is not compromised in the future. Equity, effectiveness, and fairness are central goals for your administration and the BPD. Equity relates to local initiatives and strategies that demonstrate progress and positive results for underserved communities. Effectiveness is reflected by economically applying available resources to improve public safety. (Mikesell, 2011). The City’s budget should identify, support, and sustain commitments to impoverished communities, and effective strategies embraced by the BPD. “A budget is a community’s single most important reflection of its priorities – it’s where the rubber hits the road and is the reason that there cannot be change without addressing fiscal priorities” (Brodkin, 2014).

**IV. Conclusion**

There is much to be learned from the lessons of Boston’s history of repeated attempts to eradicate youth violence and gang involvement. Analysis demonstrates that violence reduction strategies require community-wide efforts and public-private partnerships committed to youth development and systemic problems in the inner-city communities. The
problem-oriented and community-policing models have proven successful in the past but lacked organizational development and effective change management to institutionalize and sustain the programs.

Boston’s inner city communities have been negatively impacted by the criminal justice system for generations. All strategies implemented by the city of Boston and the Boston Police Department must highlight reconciliation, promote procedural fairness, community building, legitimacy, and build social equity. Forming institutional partnership with the inner-city clergy will provide a pathway to building trust and improving race relations with those who have been negatively impacted by the system. Creating proactive initiatives to address the root-drivers of youth violence and gang involvement will provide a long-term viable solution, mitigate youth violence, and create equity in distressed neighborhoods. Endorsing a city-wide community-policing model will foster support from the inner city residents and promote community building.
References:


