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## COMMUNITY POLICING GOES SOUTH: POLICY MOBILITIES AND NEW GEOGRAPHIES OF CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY

MAX MÉNDEZ BECK and RIVKE JAFFE\*

*Policymakers seeking to design more effective crime control strategies increasingly reference ‘best practices’ developed in other contexts, enabling the translocal mobility of ‘zero tolerance’ or ‘hotspot policing’. Recent work on policy mobilities shows that such policies, and the conceptual models underlying them, are often contested and modified as they travel. Connecting emergent scholarship on crime control policy mobilities to recent calls to extend criminological theorization outside the global North, this article seeks to understand what happens when community policing travels. Specifically, it unpacks the often-implicit models of urban governance underlying community policing, examining the mobilities and mutations of these conceptual models as community policing is exported from cities in the United States to inner-city neighbourhoods in Kingston, Jamaica.*

**Key Words:** community policing, policy mobilities, criminological theory, urban governance, Jamaica

### *Introduction*

National and urban policymakers seeking to design more effective crime control strategies increasingly make reference to successful policies and ‘best practices’ developed in other contexts. Specific political and commercial actors, networks and infrastructures enable the translocal mobility of policies such as ‘zero tolerance’ or ‘hotspot policing’, enabling their popularity across a range of highly diverse sites. As recent work on policy mobilities has emphasized, such policies, and the conceptual models underlying them, are often contested and modified as they travel from one context to another (Peck and Theodore 2010; Temenos and McCann 2013). Connecting emergent scholarship on crime control policy mobilities to recent calls to extend criminological theorization outside the global North, this article seeks to understand what happens when such policies travel outside of North America and Europe. Specifically, it does so by unpacking the often-implicit models of urban governance that underlie community policing policies, examining the mobilities and mutations of these conceptual models as community policing is exported from cities in the United States to inner-city neighbourhoods in Kingston, Jamaica.

As Kerry Carrington, Russell Hogg and Máximo Sozzo note, knowledge production on issues relating to criminology has usually followed a process whereby theorization based on contexts in the Global North is ‘imported into the periphery’ (Carrington *et al.* 2016: 2; see also Aas 2012; Fraser 2013; Sozzo 2018). This process of universalizing

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criminological knowledge is not restricted to academic circles; it can also be identified in the North–South movement of crime control policies following the efforts of security consultancies, development agencies and a variety of knowledge brokers (see e.g. Swanson 2013; Blaustein 2016; Newburn *et al.* forthcoming). We seek to problematize these forms of knowledge production by focusing on community policing, which is promoted in countries such as Jamaica by bilateral and multilateral aid organizations.

Community policing, which emerged as a conceptual strategy in the United States from the 1970s onwards, has developed based on specific assumptions about the relations between residents of marginalized neighbourhoods and different governance actors. Such conceptual models—developed across fields of policy, practice and academia—assume a particular role for the state, the police and citizens, based on Weberian theories of legitimate authority and specific normative frameworks regarding governance dynamics. What happens to context-specific models of crime control and urban governance, when the policies they inform are implemented in new settings outside of North America and Europe? How might studying local challenges to these conceptual models contribute to globalizing criminological knowledge, or in fact reverse established geographies of theorization by providing new perspectives on crime control in the global North?

We seek to address these questions by studying the challenges to models of urban governance presented by the implementation of community policing in Jamaica, drawing on policy analysis; interviews with senior police officers, politicians, policymakers and NGO workers; and neighbourhood-level ethnographic fieldwork. The research on which this article is based involved five months of fieldwork conducted in 2016–17 by the first author, focusing on community policing in two inner-city neighbourhoods that we refer to by the pseudonyms of Brick Town and Maypole, and 14 months of fieldwork by the second author over the period 2010–15, concentrating on extra-legal leadership in Brick Town and on broader developments in Jamaican security and policing policies. The first author conducted five interviews with local police officers (ranging from Assistant Superintendent, to Sergeant, to Constable), five interviews with high-level security officials and experts (including current and former officials in the Jamaica Constabulary Force [JCF] and the Ministry of National Security) and 28 semi-structured interviews with community residents. The second author interviewed 28 officials and experts (including a broad range of security professionals, politicians, government officials and private sector members), 10 Brick Town residents and two high-ranking members of criminal organizations, and organized three focus groups (one with former gang members and two with security guards). Ethnographic research involved ‘deep hanging out’ with neighbourhood residents, observing and taking part in everyday activities, from watching television together, to sharing drinks and meals and shopping at the market, to attending occasional festive occasions. Neighbourhood access was facilitated by different gatekeepers, while interviews with professionals were facilitated by the first author’s ties to a USAID-funded project, COMET-II, and by the second author’s personal and professional networks. Our position as a White-identified foreign researchers had ambiguous effects on our reception, generating suspicion and apprehension on some occasions and increased interest on others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>While we are or have been affiliated with research institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, we explicitly recognize the paradox of White-identified researchers, with affiliations to or credentials from European universities, seeking to decolonize knowledge production (see also Esson *et al.* 2017).

The article starts by tracing the development of community policing policies in the United States over the last half century, focusing on shifts in the models of urban governance informing these policies. We identify, first, what we call the ‘police legitimacy’ model, a set of assumptions about the impact of police behaviour on police–community relationships. This has more recently been adapted towards a ‘competing orders’ model, which recognizes gangs as local governance actors and presents the police and more broadly the state as competing with criminal organizations for legitimacy and territorial control. A third model, that of ‘nodal governance’, assumes a system of governance that is polycentric but not necessarily competitive. The concept of nodal governance has become established in broader policing theory and practice and also influenced discussions on community policing more specifically. In a next section, we examine how Jamaican policymakers and street-level bureaucrats interpret and negotiate these specific assumptions, as community policing has become a dominant policy within the JCF. This is followed by a discussion of how these understandings of urban governance resonate with inner-city residents targeted by the policy. Drawing on these findings, we propose an understanding that combines insights from the second and third models, recognizing criminal organizations as localized decision-making centres with intractable linkages to other centres of authority. We end by drawing out the implications such a model might have for crime control policy both in Jamaica and the United States, suggesting that North–South policy mobilities might be characterized by a less unidirectional flow.

### *Community policing and urban governance models*

#### *Police legitimacy model*

Police studies generally locate the emergence of community policing in the United States in the 1970s, when the failure of police forces to control the spread of uprisings in major cities led to institutional self-reflection and attempts to develop policing methods based on building closer ties between police officers and residents of marginalized neighbourhoods (Cordner 2014).<sup>2</sup> Scholars and police officials felt that the early 20th-century professionalization of the force, which had standardized practices, created a top-down bureaucratic structure and transformed police officers into outside security experts, had weakened police ties to the communities they patrolled. The recalcitrance and distrust of large population groups was interpreted as representing a ‘legitimacy crisis’ that required a basic rethinking of what it meant to police low-income, racialized communities (Greene 2000).

These circumstances laid the foundations for a new policing strategy that emphasized three main components: consulting with members of a community to ‘define, prioritize, and address crime problems’; flattening the traditional police hierarchy and delegating decision-making to ‘the frontline officers who directly engage the community’; and prioritizing the identification of the larger underlying patterns associated with individual criminal incidents (Gill *et al.* 2014: 401). In other words, community

<sup>2</sup>Alternative genealogies are of course conceivable, for instance those that connect community policing to (colonial) counterinsurgency practices, or those that connect community involvement in policing to neoliberal policies that responsibilize citizens for security.

policing involved moving towards preventative and proactive strategies, in order to encourage and empower local officers to collaborate with residents to identify and resolve the primary causes of the most pressing community issues.

This strategy of community policing strategy assumes that effective policing is based on residents perceiving the police, and more broadly the state, as possessing legitimate authority, as this enhances willingness to cooperate with the police and general compliance with the law (e.g. [Hawdon \*et al.\* 2003](#); [Tyler and Fagan 2008](#)). Conversely, police work is seen as much more challenging in communities where the legitimacy of the state is called into question. Numerous studies have explored the mechanisms through which the police acquire or lose legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In general, these studies have focused primarily on factors such as procedural justice (the fairness of the procedures guiding the police's exercise of authority), distributive justice (whether citizens believe laws are enforced similarly between different groups), legality (whether citizens believe the laws themselves are legitimate) and police performance as expressed in effective crime control ([Mazerolle \*et al.\* 2013](#)). Community policing is seen as influencing some of these factors, such as procedural justice and police performance. For example, [Hawdon \(2008: 4\)](#) describes the mechanism that links community policing to legitimacy as follows: 'community-policing tactics increase resident perceptions of procedural justice ... [which] enhances perceptions of police legitimacy ... [and] residents who perceive the police as being legitimate are more likely to cooperate with the police and comply with the law'.

In its simplest form, this argument for community policing involves a normative model with, at maximum, three actors: the community, the police and the state. Research on community policing and legitimacy rarely questions the link between the state and the police, assuming a relation where the police enforces a social and legal order posited by the state. The model attributes disruptions to this state-based order largely to a breakdown in community–police relations, which in turn is attributed to a police force perceived as performing poorly and acting unfairly. The failure to provide

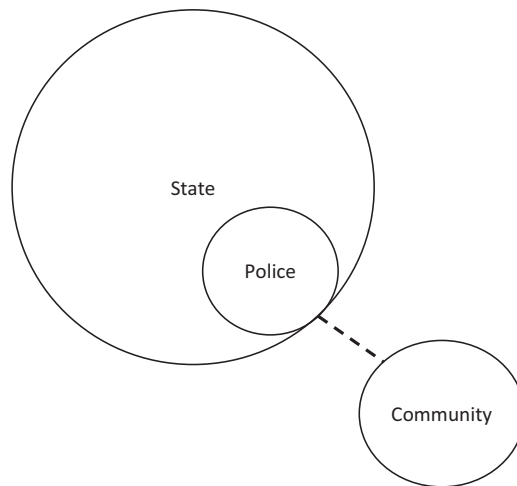


FIG. 1 The police legitimacy model.

effective policing services according to fair procedures leads to a crisis of legitimacy that affects the police and, by implicit extension, state authority: the legitimacy of the police is tied directly to that of the state (e.g. [Herbert 2006](#)). Much of the literature we refer to here depicts the state and the community as more or less unitary agents, with the police channelling state aims in a straightforward manner.<sup>3</sup> [Figure 1](#) illustrates this model: the tenuous relationship between a poorly performing police force and community members (represented by a dotted line in the figure) leads to diminished police legitimacy; by reforming the police towards more effective and fair behaviour, legitimacy can be restored.

### *Competing orders model*

Where the ‘police legitimacy’ model assumes that the state is the main governance actor, recent work on gangs and governance has resulted in an extension of this model, engendering what we term a ‘competing orders’ model. Rather than simply viewing the ‘crisis of legitimacy’ as the product of a poorly performing police force, this research points to the competing role played by extra-legal actors in policing and in providing other public goods and services. Criminal organizations may operate in a similar fashion to states: in many contexts, they arbitrate disputes within their territories, enforce economic transactions and protect private property, and may even distribute social welfare to the elderly and employment opportunities to the young. Following [Charles Tilly’s \(1992\)](#) seminal work comparing state formation to the consolidation of the use of coercion by a single gang, various researchers have emphasized that criminal organizations are not agents of chaos, but in fact emerge to provide order under conditions where central authority is weak (e.g. [Skaperdas 2001](#); [Rodgers 2006](#); [Stephenson 2011](#); [Lavezzi 2014](#); [Skarbek 2014](#)).

Such research points to the role of gangs and mafias in governance, suggesting that the role of these criminal organizations in providing protection and other public services allows them to compete with the police and the state as alternative order-generating actors. While much of this research is informed by an ‘economic’ rational-choice approach that understands criminal organizations as competitive service providers, other scholars explicitly emphasize the norms and values, or ‘culture’, they share with community residents.<sup>4</sup> [Akerlof and Yellen \(1994: 181, 174\)](#), for instance, argue that, beyond fear of gang retaliation and gangs’ ‘positive contributions to the community’ (including protection), residents’ lack of cooperation with the police can be explained by the fact that ‘the legal authorities [may] represent an untrusted, alien culture’, whose behaviour is considered illegitimate. As with the police legitimacy model, these authors we group under the competing orders model recommend community policing as an appropriate policy to combat the influence of gangs and to improve police legitimacy.

<sup>3</sup>See [Bierschenk \(2016: 155\)](#) for a critique of the assumed ‘mutual and closely reciprocating relationship between state and police’.

<sup>4</sup>This focus on norms, values and culture, of course, echoes influential if contested subcultural theories of crime.



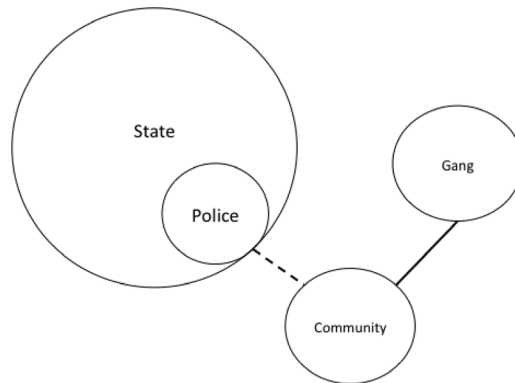


FIG. 2 The competing orders model.

With its focus on criminal organizations who provide protection and enforce social norms and values, we suggest that this ‘competing orders’ literature can be understood as an extension of the police legitimacy model. This work also tends to understand the police as directly representing the state and assumes a damaged relationship between the police and the community, but introduces an additional actor, the gang, which competes with the police and the state. As illustrated in [Figure 2](#), the gang provides the community with an alternative and competing governance relationship, offering a distinct package of services and social order from that of the state. Much of the literature we refer to here assumes the relationship between the community and different urban governance actors to be zero-sum: an improved relationship between the community and the police achieved through community policing can disrupt the relationship between the community and the gang.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Nodal governance model*

A third model, which has developed more or less separately from the competing orders model, and does not include criminal actors, also focuses on the existence of multiple governance actors but does not understand them to be necessarily competitive. The ‘nodal governance’ approach ([Shearing and Johnston 2003](#); [Wood and Shearing 2007](#)) has sought to theorize the privatization and pluralization of policing functions across the world. Authors associated with this approach have sought to bring broader developments in governance theory to bear on the realm of security and policing. Drawing on insights sometimes grouped under the heading of polycentric governance (e.g. [Ostrom et al. 1961](#); [McGinnis 1999](#); [McGinnis and Ostrom 2012](#)), nodal policing starts from the recognition that a political system or order may involve multiple, independent (if often overlapping) centres of decision-making, authority and responsibility. These centres or nodes include both state and non-state actors, and operate across different scales, from the neighbourhood to the global level. Crucially, the different

<sup>5</sup>See [Harbers et al. \(2016\)](#) for a discussion of this zero-sum interpretation in analyses of irregular governance actors.

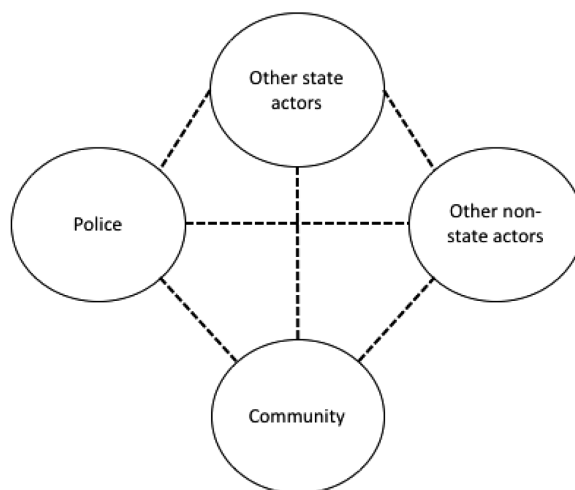


FIG. 3 The nodal governance model.

nodes do not form part of a uniform hierarchical structure; rather, the power balances between the centres are contingent on the claims being made and may vary from horizontal to vertical relations depending on the issue.

Applied to community policing, a nodal governance approach emphasizes the relations between police and non-police nodes.<sup>6</sup> As Wood and Shearing (2007: 39, 61) note, where in the first wave of community policing, 'police reinforced their identity as icons of sovereign authority while becoming more community-oriented and community-based', in later decades 'the police role has been refigured in ways that imbricate police within nodal relationships'. Rather than automatically assuming a key hierarchical position, the police is increasingly embedded within more flexible nodal partnerships with communities and other non-police security actors, from non-police state agencies to private security companies. The literature that connects nodal governance approaches to community policing, however, tends to be disconnected from the gangs-as-governance-actors literature discussed above.

Figure 3 illustrates the nodal governance approach to community policing. Here, all actors are connected to each other, but in contrast to the previous models, these connections are not completely subordinate and hierarchical, but contingent and diffuse (represented by the dotted line). The police and the community represent two nodes, while two additional centres are introduced, one representing other state actors (which we model as separate from, rather than subsuming, the police) and the other representing other non-state actors, such as businesses or civic organizations, which may collaborate with the other nodes in policing or broader governance initiatives. In contrast to the previous two models, the nodal governance approach assumes a much more diverse and fluid field of power, as opposed to a rigid structure where power emanates specifically from the top (the state) and flows towards the bottom (the

<sup>6</sup>Some literature taking a polycentric approach to community policing focuses on the plurality of government police agencies across different community, city, state and national levels, rather than on the multiple private as well as public policing nodes (e.g. Boettke *et al.* 2016).



community). The relationship between actors is not necessarily horizontal or vertical, but varies depending on the situation. Though not made explicit in [Figure 3](#), the model also assumes that the actors are less unitary, since there is always the possibility for new decision-making centres to emerge within the centres that are outlined. For example, ‘the community’ may represent a variety of independent decision-making centres, but for the sake of the analysis, we still focus on one contingent stylized actor.

In the next section, we review the implementation of community policing in the Jamaican context and discuss how the different models of governance described here resonate with local perspectives. We suggest that Jamaican police perspectives on community policing clearly draw on the competing orders model, while residents’ perspectives align more closely with the nodal governance model.

### *Community policing and urban governance in Kingston, Jamaica*

Though community policing in the United States originated as a response to a particular set of issues faced by local police departments in marginalized urban neighbourhoods, over time the approach has been promoted and gained popularity around the world. Part of the purpose of this article is to understand what happens to security policies when they travel to new urban contexts, specifically by studying changes in the assumptions that underpin the policy. Analysing the roll-out and implementation of community policing in Kingston, we seek to compare the assumptions regarding urban governance, articulated by Jamaican policymakers and police officers, with those discussed in the previous section. Our findings suggest that Jamaican policing professionals embrace a competing orders model, albeit one that they elaborate in terms of cultural values and a focus on youth-at-risk. We follow this analysis of police perspectives with a discussion of residents’ interpretation of community policing and urban governance. We found that residents understand gangs and police not so much as competing orders, but as connected to each other and to other (state and non-state) centres of authority, such as political parties and the business sector. Drawing on these neighbourhood-level findings, we propose an adaptation of the nodal governance model that locates criminal organizations as an additional node in an urban governance system characterized by multiple, not necessarily competitive decision-making centres.

### *Implementing community policing in Jamaica*

Community policing first appeared as a formal strategy in Jamaica in the early 1990s, as the JCF began testing a modest pilot programme in two downtown Kingston communities. Though the efforts were initially sparse, they were a direct response to general calls for a comprehensive programme of police reform, intended to address a perceived legitimacy crisis that involved an exploding crime rate, a colonially derived authority structure, and entrenched corruption and abuse of power ([Harriott 1997](#)). While these early attempts arose due to internal political pressure, by the turn of the century international donors had become the primary funders of a reform agenda meant to professionalize the force. Along the way, community policing was transformed from a specialist policing tool employed by experts in specific contexts to an institution-wide ‘philosophy’ intended to guide the behaviour of all officers ([Chambers 2014](#)).

The pace of implementation picked up in the late 2000s with the creation of a separate branch charged with leading and coordinating community policing efforts (the Community Security and Safety Branch, or CSSB), the publication of the *Manual for Community Policing Services Delivery*, and the launch of the first phase of a country-wide community policing initiative. According to the manual, the newly assigned community police officers would be tasked with, among other things, regularly walking the beat and establishing relationships with community members, identifying strategic community stakeholders and mediating disputes (see [Chambers 2014](#)). In our interviews, high-ranking police officials and local beat officers described the priorities of the CSSB as centring on three specific programmes: the neighbourhood watch programme, police youth clubs (PYCs) and the safe schools programme. Of the three, the neighbourhood watch programme was the least active and appeared to be focused on higher income areas. Officers placed most importance on reaching out to young people in inner-city communities, with a particular emphasis on the successes of the PYCs.

The PYC programme involves interested young people convening a few times per month, usually at the local police station, and participating in discussions and activities organized by officers. Their official goal is to steer young people ‘in the direction of being worthwhile and productive citizens of Jamaica’ and to ‘contribute in developing [their] administrative skills, etiquette and other value systems’ ([JCF 2015](#)). A high-ranking CSSB official depicted the programme as offering a safe space that tries ‘to keep the young people away from the negative influence’.<sup>7</sup> Officers also saw the PYCs as an opportunity to improve their image among the youth and even as a recruitment tool; one of the young constables we interviewed had himself been inspired to join the JCF by participation in the programme.<sup>8</sup> In general, officers depicted the youth clubs as emblematic of the community policing strategy. The Safe School programme is a complement to the PYCs, sending CSSB officers to schools and conferring on them the title of School Resource Officers (SROs). The SROs are assigned to several schools in their division and tasked with monitoring and addressing disturbances while simultaneously creating bonds with the youth through lectures and participation in school events. Part of SROs’ job is to soften young people’s preconceived notions of the police.

### *Police perspectives on community policing*

In our interviews with police officers on community policing, we identified assumptions about the effectiveness of this crime control policy that largely aligned with what we have called the competing orders model. Rather than emphasizing a general lack of police legitimacy, or pointing to issues of procedural or distributive justice, they tended to stress the zero-sum competition they faced from criminal organizations led by so-called ‘dons’. Dons are local leaders whose role in providing neighbourhood-level protection and social services means they often enjoy significant local legitimacy. This role has led to comparisons to the Sicilian mafia and to other areas around the world that operate under entrenched extra-legal rule (see e.g. [Johnson and Soeters 2008](#); [Jaffe 2013](#)). In stressing their attempts to combat don-based order, police officers placed a

<sup>7</sup>High-ranking CSSB official, interview, October 2016.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Brick Town constable, interview, December 2016.

strong emphasis on culture-oriented explanations, privileging ‘competing values’ over a more straightforward economic explanation of ‘competing services’.

Throughout our discussions with different police officers, the role of criminal organizations in the communities was a recurring theme. Jamaican officers depicted a breakdown in the police–community relationship, followed by the rise of criminal dons as extra-legal governance actors. As the dons’ power began to grow, officers explained, community residents began to withhold cooperation with the police—a somewhat rose-coloured narrative suggesting a previously cooperative relationship. This competitive, zero-sum explanation was evident, for instance, in an interview with a former Commissioner of Police, who described many inner-city Kingston communities as operating under a completely different social order, where the laws of the government did not apply. Here, according to him, ‘everyone [is] stealing light, everyone stealing water, they are not paying rent, not paying for cable service’, because everything was being provided free or at subsidized rates by criminal organizations. He went on to describe some of these communities as representing a ‘state within a state’.<sup>9</sup> Such depictions imply a tug of war between the state and the criminal organization, with the community in the middle being pulled closer to one end or the other, depending on who wields more power. In this scenario, community policing functions as a way for the JCF to induce the local population to switch its allegiance from criminals to police officers.

The narrative we encountered amongst JCF officers did not frame low-income urban residents’ shift from the ‘legal’ to the ‘illegal’ authorities as a response to failing state institutions (much less police brutality and corruption), but rather interpreted this as a conscious choice made by corrupted citizens. Many officers’ conversations with us had a clear moralizing tone, with residents’ individual bad choices explained through a perceived moral decay in inner-city communities. In explaining the challenges the JCF faced in implementing community policing, the former Commissioner of Police spoke disparagingly of inner-city areas as deficient communities in many respects. Blurring social, economic and political factors, he argued that these neighbourhoods lacked ‘stable functional, strong families; stable economic environment; stable political environment; and a range of ... locally-based citizens groups which can then integrate into [the police’s] efforts at problem-solving’. He saw such a lack of what he called ‘community-based structures’ as a primary obstacle to effective policing: ‘if the police are in there and these structures are non-existent, or exist but are non-functional, then there is pretty little that the police can do’.<sup>10</sup>

While officers understood structural economic constraints such as unemployment to play a role, they often also interpreted crime and insecurity as manifestations of cultural flaws passed on from generation to generation. One of the clearest examples of this view came from a CSSB officer in his explanation of why inner-city communities suffered from such high levels of violence. The officer offered two causes: ‘one, lack of proper parenting, and two, lack of employment’. He proceeded to expand on this analysis by describing what he viewed as the community’s cycle of poverty:

<sup>9</sup>Former JCF Police Commissioner, interview, September 2016.

<sup>10</sup>Former JCF Police Commissioner, interview, September 2016.

Children are having children. [Children as young as] 14, 15, 16, 17 years old are having babies. So, it's like their cycle. Leave school [and] you have a baby. Most of the times, there's no father there. I don't know who got them pregnant ... So, the poor mother and father who is struggling with that child, will have to struggle with the child and the grandchild now. So it's a cycle, a never-ending cycle, and because of that no one will employ somebody from this side with three or four kids.<sup>11</sup>

Children featured centrally in many interviews, while the emphasis on youth programmes in the implementation of Jamaican community policing also highlights their centrality in JCF explanations of criminal-community 'alliances'. Many officers viewed the PYCs and SROs as preventative measures. The former Police Commissioner suggested that 'many of the youngsters who are getting in trouble now, if they had started the social intervention programs ... six years ago, these 18-year-olds would not be there firing guns and creating problems for the police'.<sup>12</sup> Various officers emphasized the importance of the police intervening in the lives of 'the children' to facilitate the development of what they saw as appropriate social norms. As the head of one police department put it: 'I come to realize that, it's years of activities that draw out culture. And [for] some of them, the children grow up to see [violence] as the norm. So the children is our concern. Really. Children is our concern'.<sup>13</sup> In these interviews, police officers often suggested that young people from these communities had to be 'saved' and their paths 'corrected' in order to avoid them turning to violence.

Narratives centring on bad parenting and youth-at-risk, we suggest, tie to long-standing notions about low-income African-Jamaicans' social norms and 'culture'. [Deborah Thomas \(2011\)](#) has mapped the roots of the Jamaican state's obsession with 'deviant' family structures, such as female-headed households. She shows how this preoccupation with gender and sexuality formed part of mid-twentieth-century culturalist explanations of, first, poverty and, then, violence, with cultural deviance being 'framed in terms of a faulty masculinity that results in an aberrant matriarchy that, in turn, prevents black populations from fully participating in society according to the terms of modern citizenship' ([Thomas 2011](#): 79). The 'culture of violence' trope that Thomas identifies is firmly entrenched in Jamaican political and popular discourse, and is, we suggest, translated into policy by the Ministry of National Security and the JCF.

The fixation on a Jamaican 'culture of violence' is evidenced, e.g., in legislative efforts to ban violent songs from the airwaves (see e.g. [Campbell 2013](#)) and is made explicit in the Ministry of National Security's 2010 National Crime Prevention and Community Safety Strategy, which states that 'crime, violence, anti-social and anti-State behaviour have been normalized in [inner-city communities] and have influenced the consolidation of a *culture* and institutions that are oppositional towards the State' ([GOJ 2010](#): 4, emphasis added).

The police narrative and more broadly that of Jamaican state actors, we suggest, is a version of the competing orders model that represents the relationship between criminal organizations and the community as symptomatic of a larger issue of cultural deviance. Police and other state actors do not interpret the fact that the criminal organizations may be 'winning' (persistently playing a prominent role in governing marginalized

<sup>11</sup>Brick Town police sergeant, interview, December 2016.

<sup>12</sup>Former JCF Police Commissioner, September 2016.

<sup>13</sup>Interview with Brick Town area Assistant Superintendent of Police, November 2016.

urban areas of Kingston) as an indictment of underperforming state institutions including the police, as implied by the original US-centred model of community policing. Rather, they read this as a sign of residents' deviant social norms and values.

This perspective leads to an emphasis on youth programmes in the Jamaican implementation of community policing, meant to alter these norms and values before they become entrenched. This narrative also ignores any suggestions that high levels of violence may be a product of an ineffective police force, or that the police may in fact contribute to this 'culture of violence', e.g. through their use of excessive force or their delegation of authority to dons. Rather, as the next section underlines, by placing the blame on inner-city residents, this narrative serves to shield the institution from public criticism over issues of corruption or incompetence and occludes the role of elected officials in shaping dons' governance role.

### *Residents' perspectives on policing and governance*

Our interviews with residents and more broadly our longer-term neighbourhood-level fieldwork complicate the simplicity of the competing orders model. The assumptions about policing and urban governance that we grouped under this model—held by police, policymakers and academics<sup>14</sup>—posit criminal organizations and police as autonomous, antagonistic entities and assume little to no interactions between them. Yet, as we discuss below, residents' perceptions of deep ties between criminals and the JCF not only affect their willingness to cooperate with police officers, but also challenge the assumptions about urban governance on which Jamaican implementation of community policing is based. These neighbourhood-level findings disaggregate 'the state' and point to the roles of multiple state and non-state actors intervening in the relations between police, community and criminal organizations. The findings also point to dynamics *within* criminal organizations, rather than effective policing per se, as key to understanding shifts in local governance and levels of violence.

Brick Town and Maypole are two low-income, high-crime Kingston neighbourhoods. Brick Town is situated in a bustling, commercial area, near a large open-air market and a bus terminal, while Maypole is a relatively secluded and more spacious community nestled between the ocean and an uninhabited forested hill. The communities are comparable in population size (around 6,000 residents and 2,000 households in each community) and share a history of violent rule by dons. In both Brick Town and Maypole, community policing campaigns have been deployed with the implicit aim of undermining dons' authority, complementing the government's concerted effort to topple 'big name' dons. This reflects a broader twin strategy of removing 'kingpins' in police-military operations and asserting a positive state presence through community policing and social initiatives. This combined approach has led to different results in the two research areas: while Brick Town has continued to suffer from inter-gang conflicts, Maypole has seen a marked improvement in the security situation, according to residents. Where the situation in Brick Town points to the potentially negative effect of removing dons, and to the entrenched involvement of police officers in criminal

<sup>14</sup>For academic versions of the competing orders framing of Jamaican criminal governance, see e.g. Charles (2002); Manwaring (2008).



activities, research in Maypole emphasized the role of other governance actors—specifically politicians—in mediating relations between dons, police and the community.

According to the residents of Brick Town that we interviewed, police–military operations in 2010 that removed several powerful dons in the wider area resulted in unpredictable periodic violence and a sense that incidents of theft and other petty crimes were on the rise. Rather than the smooth transition, envisioned by the government, of criminal rule giving way to a triumphant legal order, the local power structure remains, but has splintered and weakened following the fall of the local don. Various residents pointed to the don’s formal role in providing employment for ‘the youth’ and policing their behaviour. The combination of youth unemployment and a lack of the don’s rule enforcement, residents suggested, had caused a proliferation of independent violence entrepreneurs who specialize in extortion rackets and petty theft and who compete violently over extortion turf and profits. Wayne,<sup>15</sup> a former gang member and community elder, observed that young people had always had the potential to run wild ‘but because order set down a certain way, the man couldn’t step out of the order’.<sup>16</sup> Other residents also explained the proliferation of violence in relation to the lack of a strong don, arguing that where once there was only ‘one order’, now there were many.

Residents saw the police as incapable of resolving these issues, in part because they understood them as connected to the larger system of donmanship. Residents continued to complain about the lack of police presence during critical periods and their general ineffectiveness, while also taking issue with the way they treated residents during interactions. Many of the residents we interviewed believed, as Samantha, a female resident, explained, that the police are ‘mixed up with the bad guys or, you know, they *are* bad guys’.<sup>17</sup> Several characterized the police’s behaviour as no different from that of gangs, with economic interests outweighing any institutional mission. As Paul, a male resident, put it, ‘The police them a thief and a murderer. Them not going into work to do their job, they going into work to get rich!’<sup>18</sup> Some residents suggested that police officers’ response to the end of the former don’s regime was not entirely dissimilar to that of the neighbourhood’s young violent entrepreneurs. While the don’s top-down approach involved a more stable system of corruption in which police got their cut, these residents understood the dismantling of the system as unleashing a chaotic and violent scramble for territory between a slew of independent profit-seeking actors, including police officers.

Whereas Brick Town saw constant competition and shifting alliances between illicit entrepreneurs seeking access to the economic opportunities offered by the nearby market, in the more isolated Maypole criminal organizations were linked much more to territorial claims and disputes over status and honour.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the scarcity of independent economic opportunities in the community created a more clientelist relationship with local politicians. For instance, Jeremy, a male resident, described these politicians as passing through quite often to hand money out to ‘their friends’, the criminals.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup>All neighbourhood interlocutors are referred to by pseudonyms.

<sup>16</sup>Interview, September 2016.

<sup>17</sup>Interview, November 2016.

<sup>18</sup>Interview, November 2016.

<sup>19</sup>More than one resident mentioned ‘girls’ as one of the reasons for the occasional outbreak of violence between the groups.

<sup>20</sup>Interview, December 2016.



The relationship between politicians and dons dates back to the formation of Jamaica's two main political parties during colonial rule. Early dons were local strongmen, enlisted to defend the street mobilizations and recruitment drives of the two competing labour unions that laid the foundations for the political parties, who soon gained more prominent roles in the working-class areas of greatest contention. After Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962, a clientelist system emerged in which these local leaders acted as political brokers, delivering votes to political parties in exchange for access to government funds. Over time the relationship evolved, with independent sources of revenue, such as transnational drugs trafficking, offering the dons different levels of autonomy (Sives 2010).

In Maypole, this patron–client relationship seemed to have remained more or less intact; the political party representatives for the community featured prominently in residents' descriptions of local governance dynamics. For example, according to residents Randall and Jeremy, one of the main causes of the gang violence, aside from honour and territory, was politicians' unequal distribution of government funds and of employment on public works projects.<sup>21</sup> Residents spoke regularly of a devastating 'war' that had pitted different sectors of the community, each with an armed faction, against one another as they competed for the support of the local political representative. The bloodshed had largely abated in recent years, and while the JCF presented the neighbourhood as evidence of the success of community policing, residents tended to give greater credit to the area's political dynamics than to improved policing performance.

A resident named Andre, e.g., offered an explanation for the end of 'the war' that suggested the extent of the local politician's influence over both criminal organizations and the security forces. According to Andre's account, the local political representative's intervention and the threat of police and military action if the high levels of violence continued were key to ending the conflict.<sup>22</sup> Other residents mentioned the recent death (of natural causes) of a don who had created tensions within the community by attempting to forcibly impose his authority on the community's various armed groups. Brianna, a female resident, stated that the don's death had allowed the community to start anew, and that attempts at violence were no longer tolerated by the residents, who would now call the JCF—an explanation that did point to the importance of police legitimacy in addition to politicians' intervention into criminal leadership dynamics.<sup>23</sup>

The case of Maypole shows how different governance actors played distinct roles. Criminals interacted directly with the local politician, in the context of a clientelist relationship centred on the distribution of government funds and employment. The police, meanwhile, attempted to mediate disputes that arose from competition among the community's different armed groups for those state-provided resources. As in Brick Town, the police were not seen as representing an alternative order, but rather as deeply connected to both donmanship and party politics. As we suggest in the next section, viewing both the police and dons as actors within a complex network of legal and extra-legal nodes of decision-making might also help explain the instability that followed the don's removal in Brick Town.

<sup>21</sup>Separate interviews, December 2016.

<sup>22</sup>Interview, December 2016.

<sup>23</sup>Interview, December 2016.

*Situating criminal organizations within the nodal governance model*

Our research findings point to residents' deep distrust of JCF officers, supporting the importance ascribed to police legitimacy within both Jamaican and US community policing policies. Our findings also emphasize the significance of the governance role of criminal organizations, supporting this important dimension of the competing orders model of community policing. However, the long-standing ties between criminals and different state actors (both police officers and politicians) undermine assumptions of competition in terms of either service provision or values. Depending on the access of different actors to economic resources, violence and control over local votes and labour, the relationship between 'the state' and 'the gang' may be one of outsourcing, collusion or even co-governance. The nature of this relationship connects more directly to nodal governance models that emphasize the role of multiple governance actors, or nodes, in providing security in urban areas.

Drawing on these findings, we suggest that the nodal governance approach to community policing could usefully be adapted to explicitly recognize the governance role of criminal organizations. Where the competing orders model does highlight this governance role, the literature we associate with this model tends to ignore the diversity of actors and the varied and complex (and not necessarily competitive) relationships between them. The Jamaican case suggests the importance of acknowledging the importance of extra-legal, violent non-state governance nodes, and the 'equilibrium relationships' (Bailey and Taylor 2009) they may develop with different state agencies. Gangs interact with the police, e.g., by collaborating to delineate territories of authority or by exchanging information in order to capture or punish rule violators (see e.g. Jaffe 2013; Arias 2017).

By applying such insights to the nodal governance model, illustrated by Figure 4, we can understand criminal organizations emerging as centres of authority and responsibility

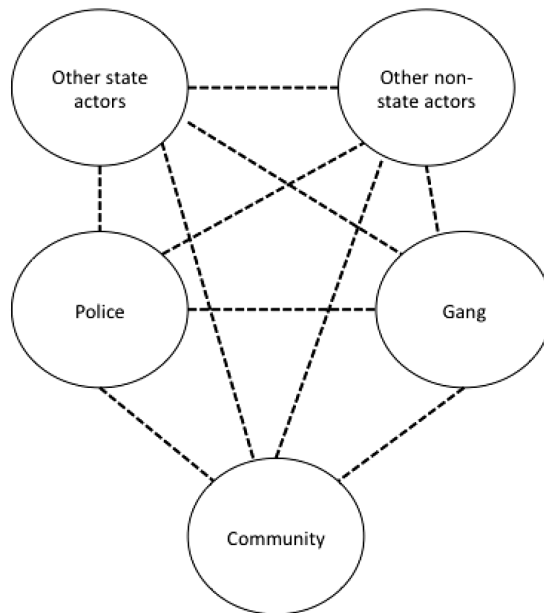


FIG. 4 An adapted nodal governance model.

in order to address specific local problems, including security, functioning semi-autonomously from other governance actors while also forming part of the larger overall governance system. From a nodal, polycentric perspective, the criminal organization or the gang is not necessarily antagonistic to state actors and institutions, but rather represents an additional governance actor within an overarching system that includes a variety of actors, such as the police and politicians, who may both compete and complement each other.

The implications of this adapted model for community policing efforts are mainly the understanding that attempts to combat the influence of criminal organizations, and to (re)establish the police's legitimacy and their primacy in community security provision, will be ineffective without coordinating with the rest of the actors. This polycentric model suggests that seeing community policing as a battle for the 'hearts and minds' of residents may fail to disempower gangs if, e.g., their sources of power go beyond the allegiance offered by the community to include the backing of other actors within the system, such as politicians, businesses, civic organizations and large segments of the police force itself. Furthermore, such a strategy could even produce adverse effects by destabilizing the overall governance structure, especially where 'kingpins' are removed but no other actors are able to take over their role in brokering community access to resources, as arguably occurred in Brick Town.<sup>24</sup>

### *Conclusion*

As community policing travelled from the United States to Jamaica, the assumptions feeding the embrace and implementation of this policing strategy shifted. Where the 'police legitimacy' theories underlying early community policing strategies emphasized fair and effective policing, in Jamaica, the strong role of criminal organizations in community governance has fed what we have termed a 'competing orders' model, which presents community policing as an intervention into a zero-sum tug of war between dons and the state. Such (self-serving if apparently sincere) assumptions have led the Jamaican police to concentrate their effort on reaching out to young people, hoping to alter the social values of a community that the police view as aligned with an alternative, deviant order. However, the long-standing ties between criminal actors and a range of other governance actors in providing community safety and other public goods and services suggest a polycentric system more in line with the 'nodal governance' model of policing. Drawing on these Jamaican findings, we have proposed that the nodal governance model needs to be expanded to recognize the role of extra-legal organizations as decision-making centres connected to other established actors within a dynamic governance landscape.

This adapted nodal governance model might inform community policing attempts aimed at improving police legitimacy and combatting crime, both in and beyond Jamaica. It implies that the process of introducing community policing into an urban area must include a careful analysis of all actors involved in both violent activities and public service provision, and an honest assessment of the networks and alliances that sustain those actors. Such an analysis must take into account perspectives that go beyond those of state security agencies or international donors to include residents.

<sup>24</sup>Research in Mexico has similarly found that capturing or killing 'kingpins' (a strategy sometimes dubbed 'leadership neutralization') exacerbates violence, whether due to violent succession struggles, renewed turf wars between drugs-trafficking organizations, or weakened chains of command that discipline local criminal predation against civilians (Calderón *et al.* 2015).

By focusing on the North–South export of community policing and the conceptual assumptions underlying this approach, we have sought to contribute to recent criminological work on crime control policy mobilities. More broadly, we seek to use this case to intervene in emergent debates on the geographies of criminological theory. Our Kingston-based findings might be understood as countering the universal pretensions of US-centric theories of community policing and nodal governance, and as an example of ‘globalizing’ theory to take into consideration the international variation of crime and crime control. Indeed, both United States and Jamaican cities are marked by specific historical trajectories of crime, policing and urban governance. While Jamaica’s dons may have parallels in other contexts, their emergence relied on very particular political developments.

Yet we are not inclined to use the Jamaican case study to illustrate how polycentric maps take on certain characteristics in the Global South compared with the Global North. Our research findings shed light on a phenomenon that can be observed in many countries where extra-legal entities function as governance actors, from Italy and Russia to Colombia and Brazil. Understanding our analysis as applicable only to Jamaica, or to ‘the global South’, risks ‘ghettoizing’ criminological theory generated on the basis of cases outside of Europe and North America.

Our stakes in considering the mobilities of ‘Northern’ policies and concepts go beyond arguing for increased precision in applying them in ‘Southern’ contexts. A binary division within criminological knowledge production—based on assumptions that crime and governance differ in kind, rather than for instance in degree, or more idiosyncratically, across the geopolitical spheres of global North and South—may obscure more than it reveals. Indeed, North American and European crime control policies would do well to take the established relations between criminal organizations and legal governance nodes into account more explicitly. An adapted nodal governance model, we suggest, might shed new light precisely on the underexamined role of extra-legal, violent actors within the complex and dynamic urban governance systems of the global North.

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