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REVIEW OF APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

CENTER FOR APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

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(Editor's Note: This issue of the Review is devoted to research contributed by students in the Urban Studies Program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha while participating in applied urban research projects at CAUR during the past semester with members of CAUR's staff. The results of their research are presented in two articles. The first article, "A Case Study of Crime at the South Side Terrace Housing Development," is based on a CAUR research project undertaken in response

to recent news media publicity given to crime in that area. The second article, "An Analysis of Community Needs: A Study of Three Areas in East Omaha," grew out of a CAUR research project for the Salvation Army evaluating alternative locations for a Salvation Army Community Center. All of the students involved received full credit in Urban Studies 499 for completing the research projects.)

A CASE STUDY OF CRIME AT THE SOUTH SIDE TERRACE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

BY

KEN OVERTURE
MARK SCHUMACKER
RICHARD TIMBERLAKE

ROY VAUGH
RUBEN YOUNG

Introduction

The purposes of this study were to determine the crime rate within the South Side Terrace Housing (SSTH) development, the rate of reported and unreported crimes within the development, the security measures affecting the crime rate, and the characteristics of those victimized.

The housing development is located in the 30th and Q Street vicinity in Omaha, Nebraska, and was opened for occupancy on April 1, 1940. It is located on approximately 34 acres within a ten square block area. The surrounding area has experienced an estimated 95 percent loss of industrial and business enterprises within the past five years, making this an economically deprived neighborhood. The SSTH is comprised of a total of 55 separate, two-story, row-type buildings. With the exception of the one-bedroom, upstairs units, all dwellings contain front and rear entrances. The development has 522 potential dwelling units averaging 4.35 rooms per dwelling unit. SSTH has some 542,226 square feet of play space for children, and an additional

play field that measures 76,212 square feet. There is an additional 44,826 square feet of garden space and 37,300 square feet is used for parking.¹

Approximately 58 percent of the families residing in SSTH are white, about one-third of the residents are elderly, and a total of 465 children (ages 3 through 12 years) live there. The average annual income per family is \$2,157 and the average monthly rent paid is \$42.²

SSTH was selected as the subject of the study because of the news media publicity given to crime in that area. The high crime rate has been viewed by some officials as one of the major reasons for the high vacancy rate (over 150 units) in that development.

Methodology

Personal interviews were conducted with 61 randomly selected households which represents a 20 percent sample of the occupied dwelling units. (Although there are a total of 522 dwelling units in the development, 24 have been combined with other units to provide enlarged apartments, an additional 50 units are used for community services purposes--e.g., senior citizen meeting rooms--and there are 150 vacancies.)

*The authors of this report wish to extend their appreciation to David Hinton and Murray Frost for their assistance in research design and analysis.

The sample was based on a 33 percent sample--i.e., 97 households were selected by drawing a random starting point and contacting every third household with one call back made when the occupant was not at home. Interviews were conducted during the period of February 17-24, 1975 during the morning, afternoon, and early evening periods, and on the weekend.

The sample accurately reflected the racial mix of the residents (61 percent of the sample were classified as white compared to 58 percent for the total population of the development). However, the elderly were under-represented (20 percent of the sample were over 60 years of age versus 31 percent of the total population) being classified as elderly.

Survey Results

Out of a total of 61 households surveyed, 37 (61 percent) of the respondents were white, 20 (33 percent) were black, and 4 (6 percent) were from other minority groups. Forty of the respondents (65 percent) had resided there for over two years, while 6 (10 percent) had resided there from one to two years, 8 (13 percent) were in the six months to one year category and 7 (12 percent) had lived there less than six months.

Of the 61 respondents, 24 (39 percent) reported being victims of crime during the previous year (all but one of whom had been victimized at the housing development). The classification of the crimes is as follows:

Larceny	63%
Vandalism	14%
Robbery.	12%
Auto Theft.	7%
Assault	2%
Rape	2%

There were a total of 43 crimes against person and property of 24 respondents, 33 of which were reported to the police. On the basis of reported Part 1 crimes (robbery, larceny, auto theft, murder, rape, and aggravated assaults), the crime rate at SSTH shows that about 47.5 of every 100 people were victims. This rate compares to 6.4 per 100 for the City of Omaha.³

Most of the crimes occurred in the home, and at night. The stolen property was rarely recovered, according to the victims.

A comparison of the characteristics of those indicating they were a victim of a crime at the housing development with those who said they were not victims indicate, unexpectedly, that the elderly were least likely to report being victims of crime (only 17 percent); half of the respondents between 35 and 60 reported being victims. This suggests that the elderly, aware of the crime problem in their area have adopted protective measures which have reduced their likelihood of being victimized. It was noted during the survey that several elderly residents displayed "Operation Identification" decals of the Police Crime Prevention Program on their windows. These measures apparently also included not opening their door to strangers. Interviewers reported several instances in which they heard activity within the apartment but still failed to receive any response to their knock at the door. And in fact, although the sample accurately reflected the racial mix of residents, elderly were under-represented. This also suggests that the actual crime rate in the housing project could be higher since previous experience as a crime victim would increase the likelihood of cautious behavior (and therefore the victimization rate among non-respondents could be expected to be higher than for those agreeing to an interview).

Similarly the data on the racial composition of the victim and non-victim groups can be interpreted in several ways. The interview data indicated that virtually half (49 percent) of the white respondents said they had been a victim of a crime in the housing area in the past year, while only 15 percent of the blacks

reported they had been victims. Previous victimization studies have found underreporting by black respondents. For example it was estimated that the national survey conducted for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration in 1967 uncovered only half of the crimes committed against blacks.⁴ It is not clear whether this underreporting is due to a lack of rapport between the black respondent and the white interviewer, or is due to different perceptions of what constitutes a crime. Some support for the latter explanation may be seen in the experience of the interviewers who reported that it was not uncommon for respondents to ask for a definition of "crime". Other explanations are also possible.⁵

These comments suggest that the crime rate reported in victimization studies, although higher than reported to police, is still an underestimate of illegal activity. Other caveats are worth noting too. Previous victimization studies suggest that respondents are more likely to report crimes in which they were a victim than those in which other members of the family were the victim. Similarly, recall errors result in crimes occurring at the beginning of the period being underreported.

About 3 of every 4 crimes said by the victims to have occurred in the SSTH area were reported to the police according to the respondents. In addition respondents were asked whether they had witnessed any crime in the housing area and whether they had reported it to the police: 16 respondents said they had seen a crime and 6 of these indicated they had reported it to the police (one other respondent reported it to the victim, and another indicated he did not report it because he knew that another witness was already calling the police). Previous victimization studies have suggested that the proportion of crimes reported to police will vary with income, race, seriousness of the offense, attitude towards the police, and perceptions of their effectiveness, among other reasons. The rate in the SSTH development has been bolstered as a result of the Housing Authority policy encouraging all crimes be reported to the police.

Of all persons interviewed, only 39 percent (24 respondents) felt that security measures in SSTH were adequate. The respondents' experience with crime in the area was the primary explanatory factor. Those who had been victims of crime in the project were least likely to feel security measures were adequate (only 9 percent or 2 of 23 victims); of those who had witnessed crime in the housing area but had not been a victim themselves, half (50 percent or 5 of 10) felt secure; while 61 percent (17 of 28) of those who were neither a victim of a crime nor witnessed any at the project felt security measures were adequate.

Victims and non-victims alike listed inadequate securing devices for their doors and windows along with police patrols and police response as specific security measures that most need improvement. In fact, of the total responses received to security measures, 33 percent referred to windows, 25 percent referred to locks, 19 percent to police patrols and response, 12 percent to protective lighting, with the "other" comments receiving 11 percent. Specifically mentioned in a number of interviews was the fact that the doors of the dwelling units contained large mail drops, large enough to permit a person to unlock the door by inserting an arm through the slot from the outside.

Conclusions

Generally, the survey results indicated a substantial crime rate in the South Side Terrace Housing development. The victimization rate (almost 4 of every 10 households) would probably have been higher if interviews had been conducted before 150 vacancies occurred, if all residents in the sample would have been interviewed, and if problems of recall were not present. The results indicate the greater proportions of crimes occurred in the home, during the hours of darkness, against white families, and those under 60 years of age. Most of the

crimes were reported to the police. The respondents cited windows and locks as security measures in need of improvement.

¹Statistics on South Side Terrace Homes were obtained from an application for Target Project Program funds submitted by the Housing Authority of the City of Omaha to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY NEEDS: A STUDY OF THREE AREAS IN EAST OMAHA

BY

JO LYNN ADENIJI
CAROLYN DENHAM

PAT LAMBERTY
DON SPERANZA

Introduction

An analysis of community needs in selected portions of east Omaha is presented in this report.¹ A total of 411 area residents were contacted by telephone and interviewed concerning their thoughts on community needs.

Methodology

Three locations were the object of study: (a) 21st and "M" Street, (b) 33rd and Madison Street, and (c) 24th and Pratt.² A fourth area was also considered--30th and Ames--but was not specifically researched because it overlapped with the 24th and Pratt sector. Additional interviews were allocated to the 24th and Pratt study area to offer more data on the attitudes for both areas. Each study area was defined as consisting of the population residing in a one-half mile radius from each of the proposed sites. The sample sizes were based on the population sizes of the study areas as reported in the 1970 Census. Residents were then randomly selected from Omaha's Street-Address Telephone Directory.

Fifty-three percent of those contacted on the telephone and interviewed were in the two study areas south of Dodge Street, with 73 interviews completed in the 21st and "M" Street sector and 145 conducted in the 33rd and Madison Street area. Interviewers completed 193 interviews in the 24th and Pratt Street study area. This was somewhat larger than necessary, but the additional interviews were intended to be thorough to account for the overlapping nature of the 24th and Pratt and 30th and Ames sectors.

Interviews were conducted during both the daytime and evening hours and throughout the week (i.e., Saturday and Sunday interviews were conducted as well as interviews Monday-Friday). Follow-up phone calls were made until the selected resident was contacted. To prevent interviewer bias, at least three interviewers made phone calls in each of the areas.

Sixty-three percent of the persons interviewed were Protestant while 30 percent were Catholic. These rates varied considerably by sector, with the 24th and Pratt having 81 percent Protestants versus 46 and 45 percent respectively for the 33rd and Madison and 21st and "M" locations.

Survey Results

The survey included questions on community needs for each of the three sectors. Respondents were asked which age

^{*}The authors of this report wish to extend their appreciation to David Hinton and Paul Lee for their assistance in research design and analysis.

²*Ibid.*

³City of Omaha Police Department, 1974 crime data.

⁴See Roger Hood and Richard Sparks, "Citizens' Attitudes and Police Practice in Reporting Offenses", in Israel Drapkin and Emilio Viano (eds.) *Victimology* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1974), pp.163-173.

⁵*Ibid.*

group (under 5, 5-17, 18-59, 60 and over) needs the greatest improvement in community services in their neighborhood. Once this was determined, respondents were given a list of activities and/or programs for the respective age group and asked which were most needed. For those choosing the under 5 age group, respondents were asked to choose among: (a) day care center, (b) nursery school, (c) free hot lunch program, and (d) health clinic. For the 5-17 age group the alternatives were: (a) recreation programs, (b) shop facilities such as woodworking, (c) homemaking classes, (d) drug and sex education, and (e) after school care for children whose parents work. For the 18-59 age group, the alternatives were: (a) social clubs, (b) basic adult education, (c) recreational programs, (d) activities for the single parent, and (e) low-cost housing, while the alternatives for the 60 and over age group were: (a) hot lunch program, (b) recreational programs, (c) low-cost housing for the elderly, (d) health clinic, and (e) better transportation services. More than one answer was accepted for the programs.

Almost one-half (49 percent) of the respondents indicated that the 5-17 age group was most in need of improvement in community services. This was followed by the 60 and over age group (27 percent), the 18-59 age group (19 percent), and the under 5 age group (five percent).

As Table 1 illustrates, the variation by location was relatively small. There was a difference, however, by age as those over 60 tended to vote for their age group while those under 60 registered the largest proportion of their votes for the 5-17 age group. It is significant that respondents under 60 also placed many votes for the 60 and over age group. Females tended to be more concerned than males with needs of the 5-17 age group. Protestants, also, appear to be slightly more concerned than Catholics with the needs of the 5-17 age group.

Programs and Services for the Under 5 Age Group. Since only five percent chose this age group as most in need of improved services, the total vote registered for programs and services was small. As Table 2 points out, the votes were highest for the day care center and health clinic.

The strongest support for a health clinic for children under five came from the 24th and Pratt location. While strong support for day care centers came from the 33rd and Madison location.

Programs and Services for the 5-17 Age Group. This age group was considered most in need of improved services and programs. Of the five alternatives given the respondent, 45 percent of the 231 votes were for more and better recreation programs. Respondents in the 33rd and Madison sector placed the most emphasis on recreation (58 percent of the 60 votes). Overall, the younger respondents and the Catholic respondents also stressed recreation as the most needed of the alternatives. The remaining votes were about equally divided among the other four categories--shop facilities, homemaking classes, drug and sex education, and after school care for children with working

TABLE 1
AGE GROUP NEEDING THE MOST IMPROVEMENT IN NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY SERVICES

Category	Number of Respondents ^a	Under 5 Age Group	5-17 Age Group	18-59 Age Group	60 & Over Age Group	Total
		Percent				
Total	375	5.3	49.3	18.4	26.9	100.0
21st & "M"	64	4.7	50.0	14.1	31.2	100.0
33rd & Madison	136	8.1	44.9	21.3	25.7	100.0
24th & Pratt	175	3.4	52.6	17.8	26.2	100.0
Under 35	105	8.6	57.1	23.8	10.5	100.0
35-60	172	4.6	52.9	19.8	22.7	100.0
Over 60	98	3.1	34.7	10.2	52.0	100.0
Male	112	5.4	41.1	22.3	31.2	100.0
Female	263	5.3	52.9	16.7	25.1	100.0
Protestant	233	3.0	52.3	17.2	27.5	100.0
Catholic	115	9.6	42.6	19.1	28.7	100.0
Other	27	7.4	51.9	25.9	14.8	100.0

^aThe total excludes 36 who either did not know or did not reply.

parents (see Table 3).

Many respondents emphasized that teenagers need more community services. Comments were made that teenagers need to learn manners and respect. They also are too rough and need to be off the streets. Respondents who made these comments indicated any program for them would be beneficial. These comments were received in general from all three study areas.

Programs and Services for the 18-59 Age Group. This age group received the second fewest votes as being in need of services most and, consequently, the total vote for programs and services was small. Low-cost housing received 32 percent of the 74 votes with the remaining votes scattered among the other four alternatives--social clubs, basic adult education, recreation programs, and activities for the single parent.

Recreation programs received strong support in the 21st and "M" location. Low-cost housing seemed to be a need in all three locations. Because of the small total vote, totals by characteristic (e.g., sex, religion) were also small. It is noted, however, that the older respondents and females who chose this

TABLE 2
COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED
FOR THOSE UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE^a

Category	Total Votes	Day Care	Nursery School	Free Hot Lunch	Health Clinic
		Percent			
Total	26	42	11	15	31
21st & "M"	3	33	33	33	0
33rd & Madison	16	56	6	12	25
24th & Pratt	7	14	14	14	57
Male	8	37	25	0	37
Female	18	44	5	22	28
Under 35	11	54	9	9	27
35-60	12	33	8	25	33
Over 60	3	33	33	0	33
Protestant	10	30	10	10	50
Catholic	14	50	14	21	14
Other	2	50	0	0	50

^aRepresents 20 respondents.

TABLE 3
COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR PERSONS IN THE 5-17 AGE GROUP^a

Category	Total Votes	Recreation	Shop Facilities	Homemaking Classes	Drug & Sex Education	After School Care
		Percent				
Total	231	44	13	12	14	15
21st & "M"	50	40	16	8	16	20
33rd & Madison	60	58	15	6	8	12
24th & Pratt	121	40	11	17	16	15
Male	65	38	15	12	12	21
Female	166	47	13	13	15	13
Under 35	75	53	8	9	11	19
35-60	106	47	11	13	17	11
Over 60	50	26	26	16	14	18
Protestant	163	40	14	14	16	15
Catholic	54	57	13	9	11	9
Other	14	43	7	7	7	36

^aRepresents 185 respondents.

age group tended to stress basic adult education relatively more than the younger respondents and males. On the other hand, younger respondents and males tended to stress activities for the single parent (see Table 4).

Programs and Services for the 60 and Over Age Group. A total of 101 respondents indicated those 60 and over were most in need of more and better community services and programs. Of these, one-third chose better transportation service as the top priority. Low-cost housing and a health clinic were second and third, respectively (see Table 5).

Housing seemed to be more of a need in the 24th and Pratt area, while the health clinic received stronger support in the two southern sectors.

Although not specifically asked for, many respondents offered that elderly people will need transportation to take part in any community activity. A mini-bus would be a valuable asset for the success of any community program located in the three areas. In addition, several respondents stated that elderly people are lonely and need visitors. Of the three areas, these comments were especially prevalent in the 21st and "M" sector, where there seemed to be a larger percentage of elderly people.

The majority of the people contacted (74 percent) would utilize a new community center in their area. This varied from 77 percent in the 24th and Pratt study area, to 75 percent in the 21st and "M" study area, and to 68 percent in the 33rd and Madison area.

Several comments were also made that scheduling should be flexible at community centers. For instance, some respondents indicated they would use a center only on weekends. Others indicated that there were not enough programs scheduled at the community centers now in operation.

In addition to these comments, several stated that community centers need adequate supervision. This was especially true at the 24th and Pratt and 33rd and Madison locations which were considered to be "rough" areas.

Finally, there was an expressed desire by several people for a swimming pool and bowling alley at the 24th and Pratt location and for a movie theater at 21st and "M".

Conclusion

The survey results indicate a strong preference for improve-

ment in neighborhood community services for the 5-17 and 60 and over age groups. Although the age ranges vary considerably, it should be pointed out that the 18-59 age group, which had the largest age range also had a majority choosing the 5-17 age group as most in need of more services. Because this age range is an important stage of development, the immediate concern should be with providing services for young adults. Finally, although recreation received the most votes for the 5-17 age

group, many comments were related to the overall goal of the social development of young adults.

¹The contents of this report are to be found in an earlier unpublished paper that considers alternative locations for a Salvation Army Community Center.

²The delineation of the three study areas was based on recommendations made by the Salvation Army.

TABLE 4 COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR PERSONS IN THE 18-59 AGE GROUP ^a						
Category	Total Votes	Social Clubs	Basic Adult Education	Recreational Programs	Single Parent	Low Cost Housing
		Percent				
Total	74	17	19	19	12	32
21st & "M"	11	18	9	45	0	27
33rd & Madison	28	14	21	18	14	32
24th & Pratt	35	20	20	11	14	34
Male	25	24	8	16	20	32
Female	49	14	24	20	8	33
Under 35	28	25	11	21	21	21
35-60	36	14	19	19	8	39
Over 60	10	10	40	10	0	40
Protestant	46	19	13	22	13	33
Catholic	22	9	27	18	14	32
Other	6	33	33	0	0	33

^aRepresents 69 respondents.

TABLE 5 COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR PERSONS IN THE 60 AND OVER AGE GROUP ^a						
Category	Total Votes	Hot Lunch	Recreational Activities	Low Cost Housing	Health Clinic	Better Transportation Service
		Percent				
Total	121	9	11	26	20	34
21st & "M"	26	8	15	11	27	38
33rd & Madison	41	7	7	27	22	36
24th & Pratt	54	11	11	33	15	30
Male	39					
Female	82	10	12	26	13	39
Under 35	20	5	15	25	20	35
35-60	45	9	7	24	22	38
Over 60	56	11	12	28	18	30
Protestant	78	9	14	29	17	31
Catholic	37	11	5	19	27	38
Other	6	0	0	33	17	50

^aRepresents 101 respondents.

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Center for Applied Urban Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Box 688
Omaha, Nebraska 68101

