

FR1.45.17 Neighborhood Safety Interventions: Treating Symptoms or Transforming Community?

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We examine the west Charlotte, NC neighborhood of Enderly Park to explore the spatial concentration of safety concerns and its direct connection to multiscale power dynamics rooted in inequality. This neighborhood has been flagged as 'fragile' in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study since it first began collecting data in 2002. Despite being just minutes from the central business district, an increase in policing and city safety programs, and an aggressive pursuit of local troublemakers, Enderly Park suffers from high and rising crime rates. We hypothesize this is a result of reactionary safety initiatives focused on the containment of crime, rather than an empowerment of residents to move towards just and sustainable solutions. City led safety interventions in low-income neighborhoods are rarely transformational, but better described as system maintenance (Fischer & Forester, 1993). By emphasizing reactionary responses such as increased arrests, and not the consequences of concentrated poverty, blame and responsibility is effectively put on residents rather than addressing structural causes. In contrast, we implement a community driven intervention designed to uncover the root causes of perceived and actual safety concerns in this low-income, predominantly African American neighborhood. Our approach includes the use of the women's safety audit (WSA), a tool that engages residents in a novel method for reducing neighborhood crime by providing an alternative framework to the current city-led model. The Enderly Park WSA (as adapted from Whitzman, 2009) is an effective grassroots approach to investigate how communities can begin to raise consciousness about the deeper structural issues impacting neighborhood safety. Through participatory methods, we refine the audit tool to facilitate data collection relying on local knowledge to guide the process. We outline herein the planning and implementation of the WSA, discuss results and reflect on lessons learned.

TH9.15.03 Participatory Action Research: Transitioning from service recipient to service provider

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Reid Park is a low-income black community in Charlotte, NC and home to the K-8 public school Reid Park Academy. In 2012, leaders from the school, county, and faith-based community began implementing the Reid Park Initiative (RPI), a program designed to improve student outcomes for school youth. Like many initiatives implemented on behalf of low-income communities, outsiders were driving the RPI and they had overlooked the assets of Reid Park and viewed the residents as service recipients. This article explores the contribution of PAR in the development of power for a marginalized group as they transition from service recipient to service provider. Pulling from an asset-based model of community development (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993), we implemented a participatory action research (PAR) project that engaged youth and residents in documenting the rich stories of

the Reid Park community. PAR is a form of research that engages marginalized groups in the research process for the purpose of emancipation and transformation. Data collection includes participant observations over a six-month period and a focus group at the conclusion of the research project. Although we encountered many challenges during this project, the results suggest a positive contribution to three primary variables that were analyzed: capacity; transformation; and empowerment. This article concludes with a brief discussion on how the community intends to use these oral histories that were collected as a part of this project to inform a creative place-making initiative in the neighborhood.

Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets. Institute for Policy Res