

# Examining the Impact of Crime on Walking Frequency and Propensity in Low-Income and Minority Communities

Charles T. Brown, MPA

[charles.brown@ejb.rutgers.edu](mailto:charles.brown@ejb.rutgers.edu)

TNJ Institute: Pedestrian Safety Workshop

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

One Newark Center, 17<sup>TH</sup> Floor, Newark, New Jersey 07102

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# FOCUS GROUP APPROACH AND OVERVIEW

- Purpose: How does real and perceived crime affect walking frequency/propensity?
- Conversations explored crime, conceptualizations of safety, and overall experiences regarding walking within each community
- Probed the extent of confidence in police response and overall perceptions of safety
- Solicited reactions and perceptions of safety in response to select street images

# FOCUS GROUP APPROACH AND OVERVIEW

- Convened 6 focus groups in late fall of 2017
- Held two focus groups each in three towns: Newark, Bloomfield and Verona
- Grouped participants and facilitators by sex
- Held focus groups from 4:30PM-6PM & 6:30PM-8PM
- Gave \$50 cash, food and refreshments to each participant
- Recruited participants through three (3) CDC's
- 63 participants attended, 26 men and 37 women



# CONTEXT: BLOOMFIELD, NEWARK AND VERONA



Bloomfield Twp, NJ  
Population: 48,000  
Majority Non-white



City of Newark, NJ  
Population: 281,000  
Majority Non-white



Verona Twp, NJ  
Population: 14,000  
85% White

# ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

- Household Composition & Responsibilities
  - Bloomfield and Verona participants: more likely to be in households with two parents and children.
  - Newark participants: men reside in apartments with several members of their families; women had varied living arrangements.
- Primary Mode of Transport
  - Newark: rely heavily on transit, car share and bicycling & family members.
  - Verona and Bloomfield: more likely to drive and walk recreationally.



# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY



- Half of Newark participants have been robbed and half assaulted
- Two-thirds believe it's safe for them but isn't for others
- Almost half of Newark men stated that these events impacted their walking habits
- Verona & Bloomfield participants weren't concerned with crime
- Traffic is main concern for Verona and Bloomfield

## SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

“It’s the same people there for the last thirty years. It’s like family.”

“What goes on in the streets goes. I see but I don’t see.”

“I was mugged, saw a lady on the porch, and she didn’t help me.”

# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - WALKING HABITS & BEHAVIORS



- Newark: walking is done to complete daily task, regardless of season, although time of day plays a major role due to crime
- Newark: women drive to the nearest park to walk instead of walking to the park
- Newark: avoid numbered streets
- Bloomfield & Verona: higher access to cars; comfortable walking at anywhere and at all times. Traffic safety concern...



# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - WALKING HABITS & BEHAVIORS

“It’s Verona, there’s not much that can happen...”

“I don’t walk at night because I was mugged a few years ago.”

“It’s important as a senior to walk with a weapon.”

# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - IMPACT OF CRIME/SAFETY ON WALKING



- Newark: safety varies by time of day, by neighborhood, and street
- Newark: avoid place known for violent and property crimes
- Newark: women forced to strategize when, where and how they walk in different ways
- Newark: women's appearance and their need to avoid men impacts their walking habits
- Verona/Bloomfield: no impact

# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - IMPACT OF CRIME/SAFETY ON WALKING

“I’m up for grabs because I’m wearing lipstick.”

“I have to think about what I’m wearing. I can’t wear gym clothes while walking.”

# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES

## - CONFIDENCE IN LOCAL POLICE



- Newark: police are not approachable and not from the community
- Newark: not welcome in certain communities while walking
- Newark: feel safer with crime than around police; they have limited credibility
- Verona and Bloomfield: unanimous trust in police; also trust neighbors to help in time of trouble

# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - CONFIDENCE IN LOCAL POLICE

“I feel safer with the crime than around police.”

“I called the police and they didn’t come.”

# SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES - REACTIONS TO STREETSCAPE IMAGES



- Image 1: noted that it appeared safe and comfortable; noted streetlights, wide sidewalks, trees and people
- Image 2: noted safety and comfort; questioned walking during the night
- Image 3: Half of Newark men stated they would feel safe; all but one of the Verona & Bloomfield participants didn't feel safe

# PERCEIVED SAFETY OF OTHER FOCUS GROUP COMMUNITIES



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# POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Change the Culture of Policing and Improve Community and Police Relations
2. Encourage and Advocate for Quality Infrastructure Improvements
3. Change the Culture of Harassment
4. Build Community-based Leadership Capacity
5. Dedicate Infrastructure Funding to Environmental Justice Communities



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# THANK YOU

**Charles T. Brown, MPA**

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