20 Crime and fear in Hollygrove—building neighborhood resilience

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20.1 Introduction

> Back then, this was one of the most murderous neighborhoods in the country.… And we still have serious problems. The difference is, now we are doing something about them.
>
> (Edmondson, 2010, para. 7)

In this chapter we present a case study of a neighborhood in New Orleans, Hollygrove, a place formerly suffering high crime, violence and fear of crime. Using an Action Research (AR) case study, we showcase how a group of residents can achieve lasting improvements in their neighborhood when empowered to do so. Our case study centers on an AR cycle in which we equipped local residents with problem-solving skills and then empowered them to take ownership of their problems and act to resolve them.

We begin by describing the high-crime conditions in Hollygrove, the resulting impact on livability and how the residents' fear of crime disengaged them from their neighbors. While the residents were determined that they did not want to return to this kind of environment after Hurricane Katrina, these conditions persisted following the hurricane, thus signaling they needed assistance in learning how to address safety and livability concerns.

This chapter covers 2008 to 2018, however, even today programs continue to emerge and evolve. We rely on basic descriptive statistics, site observations, and accounts from residents and members of the AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) to assess how conditions changed from the early years. Finally, the work reported here draws theoretically from the famous Chicago School of Human Ecology at the University of Chicago in the 1930s (Chicago School of Sociology, n.d.).

The choice of the Hollygrove neighborhood emerged from consulting work in New Orleans by a SafeGrowth consulting team led by one of the authors (Saville), in collaboration with the Louisiana chapter of AARP, a few years after Hurricane Katrina. This presented unique circumstances in which Hollygrove provided a natural AR case study in collective efficacy and CPTED programming.

20.2 Theoretical framework

Social ecology is the theoretical framework that informs community capacity building, a concept known in the crime prevention literature for decades, however methods to implement it have remained piecemeal and understudied. This is true even during the successful work of the Chicago Area Project, the earliest example of social disorganization and community capacity building starting in the 1930s (Burgess, Lohman, & Shaw, 1937).

By the 1980s a group of criminologists began to write more consistently on the topic, especially in regards to how local community organizations prevent crime (Kohfeld, Salert, & Schoenberg, 1981; Lavrakas & Herz, 1982; Lewis, Grant, & Rosenbaum, 1988; Skogan, 1988). The most notable recent example of this work is the collective efficacy research of Robert Sampson (Sampson, 2004, 2012; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2001). We term this process *neighborhood activation* (Mihinjac, 2018). To illuminate the intricacies of this process this chapter provides a case study on some action research in one neighborhood of New Orleans that implemented such an approach, a neighborhood planning process now termed SafeGrowth (Saville, 2009).

The final theoretical component of this study is a neighborhood planning system called SafeGrowth. Emerging out of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) projects during consulting work in the early 2000s (Saville, 2009), it incorporates basic First Generation CPTED, such as crime opportunity reduction using natural surveillance, territorial control and area clean-ups. It also adds Second Generation CPTED, such as social programming like community events and activities for youth, to help reinforce crime prevention effectiveness. Second Generation CPTED ties social programs to specific neighborhood problems and areas, which in turn reinforces physical opportunity crime reduction strategies (Cleveland & Saville, 1997). It is now well represented in the crime prevention literature as part of a broader program for community development (Abramovic & Van Dusen, 2004; Cozens, 2007; DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer, & Schwartz, 2009; Letch et al., 2011; Olajide, Lizam, & Adewole, 2015; Saville & Cleveland, 2013) and, as a method to enhance collective efficacy, is the mainstay for SafeGrowth planning.

Background—the problem of disengagement

The neighborhood of Hollygrove is a low-income community west of the New Orleans central business district (Figures 20.1(a) and 20.1(b)). The neighborhood assumes the geographical area of 0.627 square miles with a population of 5,851 residents in 2016 (The Data Center, 2018). The majority (95 percent) of residents are African-American and in the years following Hurricane Katrina, seniors above 50 years in age comprised over 31 percent of the Hollygrove population (The Data Center, 2018). Despite its median income level of

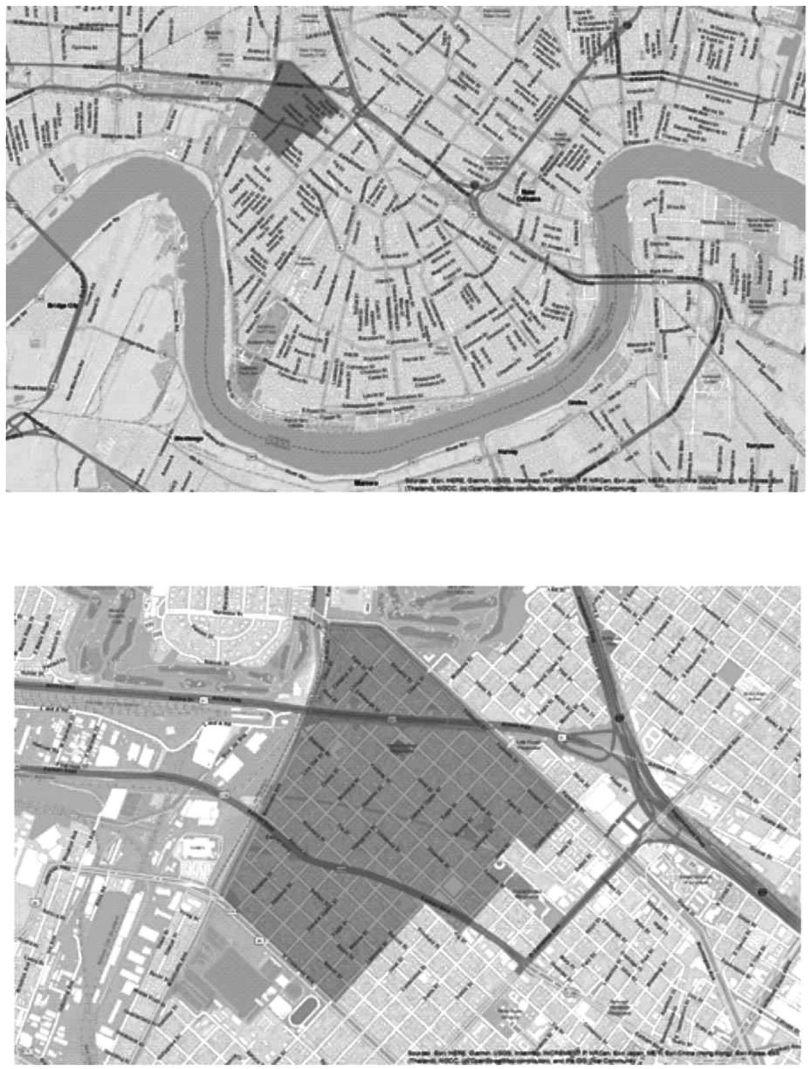

Figure 20.1 (a) Hollygrove neighborhood in relation to New Orleans CBD. (b) The Hollygrove neighborhood boundaries.

Source: Extracted from ESRI (2019).

$59,424 in 2016 being higher than the New Orleans' median income ($38,681), 39 percent of Hollygrove population still lives below the poverty level (City-Data.com, 2016).

Hollygrove homes had front porches where residents once socialized with each other, but by 2005 much of that social activity had dissipated due to

high crime and fear. Each year there were over a dozen murders in the community, shootings were common and drug dealing was rampant (Childs, 2009).

For many years Hollygrove was a community where residents were too fearful to go outside to enjoy their neighborhood due to illicit drug dealing and shootings. In particular, children were vulnerable from gang activity and seniors were trapped inside their homes too fearful to regularly use the nearby convenience store or parks. Fear is a powerful motivator for residents to remain aloof and alienated from local life and they are not likely to work together to resolve their own problems in such conditions. In such a place, residents remove themselves from their environment and resort to calling municipal authorities to respond and repair problems that arise.

Unfortunately, the quality of New Orleans municipal services is ranked among the lowest of 150 major US cities (McCann, 2018), it has a consistently high municipal debt (City of New Orleans, 2015a), and the murder rate is among the highest in the country (FBI, 2015). This results in a municipality that cannot fully service areas such as Hollygrove, leaving the neighborhood with decades of infrastructure and service neglect. Roads and sidewalks are in disrepair, street lights are out of service, abandoned homes remain blighted and police services have been sub-standard. Additionally, until recently, the police department had a long history of corruption and distrust by residents (Ramsey, 2015; Walker, Alpert, & Kenney, 2001).

In such conditions, fear, understandably, becomes the common denominator among residents which both limits their enjoyment and safety, and also traps them behind the walls of their homes. The socio-cultural backcloth coupled with decades of neglect, led to local attitudes of mistrust and apathy towards municipal government; people simply did not think anyone was going to help improve their quality of life. In addition to these poor livability conditions, in 2005, Hollygrove was also devastated by a severe natural disaster.

Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in August, 2005 creating a disaster of major proportion with over 1,800 deaths and 108 billion US dollars in property damage (Zimmermann, 2015). Prior to the hurricane, the neighborhood had 6,919 residents living in 2,655 households (The Data Center, 2018), mostly small, raised bungalow homes (Tudor, 2018). Approximately 1,000 (17 percent) residents permanently left their homes in the aftermath of the storm and with population rising to around 5,851 residents and 2,116 households by 2016, Hollygrove never regained its pre-hurricane population levels (The Data Center, 2018).

Since hundreds of Hollygrove residents never returned in the years following the hurricane, hundreds of homes in the neighborhood were either condemned as unlivable or left with significant storm damage. Moreover, when residents returned to rebuild their neighborhood, the violence, gangs and fear that existed prior to the Hurricane also returned. That is the historical context in which AARP chose Hollygrove as a place to apply their new livability policy and the SafeGrowth program as a means to accomplish that.

20.3 Methodology

Research design

Case study

A case study is both a research design and method of analysis (Yin, 2012). It represents a common methodology in social sciences especially for examining poorly understood phenomena such as neighborhood capacity building in disadvantaged communities. In our study we integrated surveys, site observations, informal interviews, field research, and fear and crime data to analyze in detail the Hollygrove residents' journey of building resilience.

We also chose this method because findings from case studies provide a rich starting point for generating and testing the hypotheses relevant for real-life practice, an approach that helps advance theory (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 1978). Our study follows a long line of case study research from the earliest human ecology studies that employed site observations (Hughes, 1943), to interviews about resident attitudes and fears of crime (Whyte, 1943).

Action research

Because of its change-oriented methodology, Action Research (AR) was an ideal companion to this case study and a leading methodology for guiding and understanding the Hollygrove residents' journey towards building resilience. Action research is characterized as a systematic way to investigate and solve local problems that affect people in their everyday lives (Stringer, 2014).

In AR, researchers and participants (participants are those who reside and work in the study area) form teams to solve problems of direct relevance to participants while improving practice and advancing theory. The collaborative team process is inherently participatory and democratic (Carr & Kemmis, 1983) with team participants identifying their own problems and solutions that are relevant for them while the researchers help provide direction without taking over (Stringer, 2014).

As AR proceeds it is often necessary for teams to refine solutions, therefore the process is repeated in a cyclical fashion (Figure 20.2). Such an iterative approach helps enhance the team's understanding of the problem and deepens the commitment to engage in action.

The action-based form of research extends back to early theorizing in criminology, particularly work from the early ecological studies of the last century that signaled a shift from passive and non-interventionist studies to change-focused research in social practice (Lewin, 1946). In fact, references to ecological studies in criminology are not possible without some reference to studies from the University of Chicago's sociology program. Thus, our use of a case study with action research clearly aligns with the early ecological traditions in crime theorizing, and we concluded it was ideally suited to study the complex socio-cultural conditions that existed in Hollygrove prior to, and following, Hurricane Katrina.

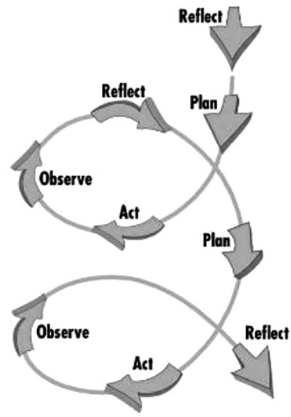

Figure 20.2 The basic action research cycle.

Source: Center for Education Innovation, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (n.d.).

Research procedure

The AR cycle, in SafeGrowth also termed action-based practice (Hodgkinson & Saville, 2018), provides a roadmap for both a research procedure and a method to apply problem-solving strategies. Action-based practice contains the objective of teaching the participants skills crucial for community capacity building.

The first opportunity to rebuild the neighborhood and tackle crime problems emerged when the residents were approached by the Louisiana chapter of the national non-profit organization, AARP. The AARP had recently expanded its mandate to help provide livable communities for seniors (AARP, 2018) and, in the case of Hollygrove, that meant reducing crime.

Of all the steps and actions the residents undertook throughout the process, one of the most important included collecting data and information continually throughout their project work, a process that helped them generate and then refine strategies to achieve the objective of safety and livability. This is an important iterative element of action-based practice since, due to the natural cycles in city politics, funding and land development policies, not all strategies will have permanent lifespans and may need modification. This was the case with a program called the Hollygrove Market and Farm, described below.

SafeGrowth in Hollygrove followed some research and action steps common for all AR:

1. REFLECTION on current environment by residents and AARP.
   Residents and AARP originally met and began to explore the extent of fears in the neighborhood and the perceptions of residents. The initial meetings allowed AARP to identify stakeholders for future planning and the kinds of

expertise required in the neighborhood. This included a realization there was very little knowledge of crime prevention programming, a crucial skill lacking in Hollygrove.

2. PLANNING initial meetings with neighbors to map out problems and strategies.
   AARP and residents worked together to identify strategies to improve livability. However, it became clear that the issues of high crime and fear were well entrenched and generic programs focusing only on quality-of-life, such as walkability and recreation, would not suffice. Thus, an analysis on crime and safety, and training in crime prevention, was critical prior to any programming on livability. A decision was made to implement both community leadership training (the Livable Communities Initiative) and also CPTED training (part of SafeGrowth workshops) as a part of livability programming.
3. ACTION: AARP launches the Livable Communities Initiative.
   To initiate the process, from November 2008 to April 2009, AARP partnered with Louisiana State University (LSU) and developed a "Livable Communities Academy". This comprised a series of short workshops to teach leadership and engage residents. The participants (i.e., "community of practice") voluntarily participated in these weekly workshops and were later pivotal in leading change in Hollygrove.

   Additionally, AARP reached out to one of the authors of this chapter (Saville) requesting CPTED training and they were advised how the social aspects of CPTED, termed Second Generation CPTED, were a crucial part of neighborhood change. The combination of First Generation CPTED, Second Generation CPTED, livability programming, and AR, helped further refine SafeGrowth as a neighborhood planning system.

   One positive result from this early work involved problems with official crime reporting. As the AARP began to provide initial programming it became clear under-reporting of crime and distrust of police was a major issue. AARP assembled a Crime and Safety project team with local residents and this led to "hotsheets", one of the first initiatives to address crime:

> … a decades long history of mistrust in the local police kept residents from sharing information. The Crime and Safety project team developed what was called a 'Safe Drop' hotsheet that provided an anonymous method for sharing tips. The hotsheets were dropped at every door in the neighborhood with a stamped envelope that the residents could mail directly to their local police precinct or to churches that were participating. Within a month of the hot sheet program, the New Orleans Police Department collected enough evidence to identify an active shooter in the neighborhood and arrest him … With the arrest of the active shooter, residents said that gunfire in the neighborhood began to drop almost immediately.
>
> (Tudor, 2018, pp. 121–122)

4. ACTION: Technical assistance and crime analysis, prevention and CPTED training.
   One preliminary step for providing technical assistance in SafeGrowth/CPTED during the summer of 2009 was posting a research assistant to directly work with AARP in Hollygrove. This assistant worked on the ground to help analyze crime, and fear of crime, information. That research later produced fear of crime maps within Hollygrove that helped teams more effectively target their efforts onto high fear and crime areas in the neighborhood.

   In August of 2009, subsequent planning and training steps commenced in the form of training in First and Second Generation CPTED. The teams later used their skills to identify and tackle most pressing safety concerns and developed plans for improvement.
5. ACTION: Subsequent data collection, site visits and safety audits.
   Groups from the CPTED training were tasked with developing a series of field projects to build their capacity to solve crime and fear problems. The strategies they adopted included enhancing the physical environment with clean-ups, better lighting, and dealing with abandoned buildings. The physical changes were combined with social strategies, such as community events and recreational programs, to enhance both territorial control and emphasize collective efficacy.
6. OBSERVATION: On-going observation by residents.
   As implementation of various strategies proceeded, the residents' observations were crucial for informing the implementation process. In traditional crime analysis, researchers need to wait for reported incidents, for written police reports, and then data collection in order to analyze results. That process could easily take weeks, and often months. Of course, that means throughout implementation, if some strategy was ineffective, such as lighting outside a local bar, additional alcohol-related crime would occur and people would continue to be victimized. In the AR method, that is considered an unacceptable wait time and therefore daily site observation by residents, along with AARP staff, was crucial for assessing preliminary results.
7. REFLECTION: Reflection on results by residents and researchers, and subsequent planning and meetings to refine strategies.
   As observations were reported to various Hollygrove teams, the participants were able to reflect on the progress of their strategies. For example, in 2009 their recommendation for improved lighting by the city municipality was met with resistance and red tape. After a number of months, when no new lighting appeared on their streets (and a homicide took place at a high crime bar in the neighborhood), residents acted on their own. They obtained support from a local church to pay for a spotlight, installed their spotlight across from the high crime bar, and watched as night-time crime outside the bar subsided. In 2011 they refined their approach and solicited the help of local police and justice officials to raid the bar thereby uncovering an illicit drug operation, allowing them to permanently remove the bar license and close the property.

8. REPEAT CYCLE
   In Hollygrove, AR proceeds in a cyclical fashion and this was reinforced between first SafeGrowth/CPTED training in August 2009 and a second SafeGrowth/CPTED training in July 2010. Technical assistance was requested for both analysis and for promoting the work to the municipal leadership and, in December 2011, some of the new Hollygrove community leaders presented their results to the larger community. Repeating AR cycles in this way helped promote their successes, such as the Soul Steppers senior's walking club concept that ended up spreading through neighborhoods across the whole city (see description below).

Data and methods

Data and methods presented in Figure 20.3 show the types of information that were collected and analyzed by the residents and researchers.

Surveys

From the launch of project work in 2008, AARP conducted an independent survey to identify the extent of the problem since they could not rely on official statistics. They discovered that, as residents returned after the Hurricane, so too had the crime problems. In that year, there were eight murders and 28 shootings, slightly lower than pre-Katrina levels but still catastrophic for a community of fewer than 6,000 residents (Tudor, 2018, p. 122).

Site observations

As the residents became involved in Livability Academy and SafeGrowth training, they were tasked with taking ownership over observing the neighborhood

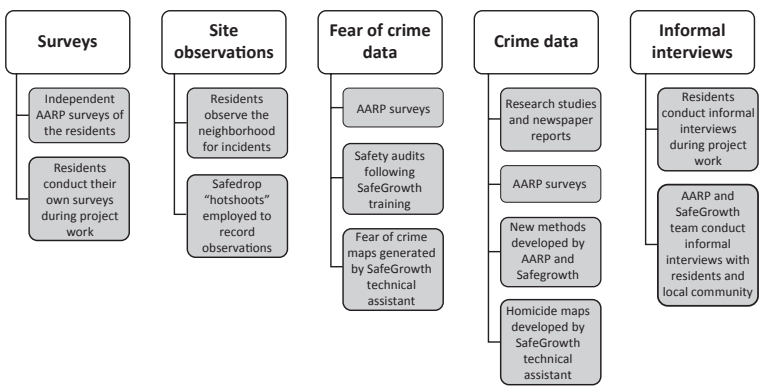

Figure 20.3 Data and methods used in Hollygrove.
Source: Authors.

for safety concerns so they could better understand and tackle the problems. They also developed safe drop hotsheets described above.

Fear of crime data

AARP collected fear-of-crime data during their initial surveys of the residents. This approach was then expanded through the use of safety audits and that allowed collection of micro-spatial information. A SafeGrowth research assistant was able to help analyze this information that culminated in a number of crime fear maps such as the one in Figure 20.4.

Crime data

Area-specific homicide data were very difficult to obtain for the Hollygrove neighborhood. There were serious problems with under-reporting (Tudor, 2018), and the New Orleans police did not use geocoding prior to Hurricane Katrina.

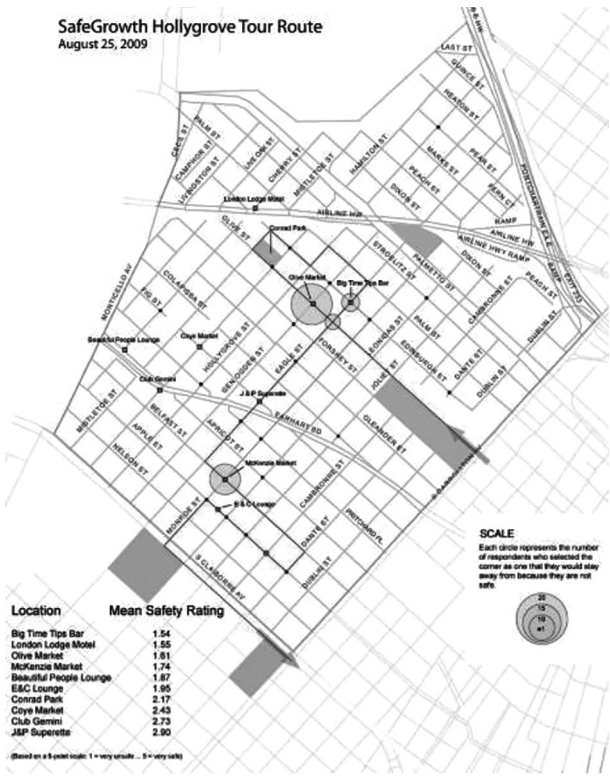

Figure 20.4 Map showing locations of high fear levels.
Source: Authors.

However, one research study (Childs, 2009) did offer some insight regarding homicides in the years immediately preceding the hurricane. From that study we extracted partial homicide data for both New Orleans and Hollygrove for the three-year period prior to the hurricane, from 2002–2004. For 2015–2017 (the three most recent years following the majority of the capacity building work) we referred to the New Orleans Police Department's public data (City of New Orleans, 2019). With such a limited dataset of small sample sizes we cannot use parametric methods with any confidence to assess the shape of data distribution.

Prior to the hurricane, Hollygrove suffered high crime and it seemed to be getting worse. This is reflected in Table 20.1, showing a 15 percent increase in homicides in Hollygrove compared with a 2 percent increase in the rest of the city. It also suggests that Hollygrove generated a significant homicide hotspot (5 percent of all city homicides), when Hollygrove's population was only 1.4 percent of the whole city (Plyer, 2016).

We also examined crime and homicide statistics available on the City of New Orleans' website to observe for homicide trends in the years 2015–2017. We report these finds in the results section in Table 20.1.

Other crime data specific to Hollygrove were also collected through the initial AARP surveys and later through implementation of hotsheets and through the assistance of a SafeGrowth technical expert who also analyzed and graphically represented the data (Figure 20.5).

Informal interviews

Informal interviews with the residents revealed they were fearful of going outside their house for everyday tasks such as walking to complete errands or to use public transport. One of the training participants following the hurricane said, "you can't be healthy if you're afraid to go outdoors", revealing that fear of crime has much wider implications for quality of life. This realization later culminated in one of the first projects—Soul Steppers—a senior's outdoor walking club.

Informal interviews were also a suitable method for gathering information about the success stories following the completion of SafeGrowth programming. By hearing from the residents either directly or through AARP

Table 20.1 Reported homicides for New Orleans and Hollygrove neighborhood 2002–2004

Reported homicides	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*% change*
New Orleans (City)	258	274	264	+2
Hollygrove	13	11	15	+15

Note

Data extracted from "A New Orleans state of crime: spatio-temporal analysis of shifting homicide patterns in post-hurricane Katrina New Orleans, LA" by L. Childs (2009).

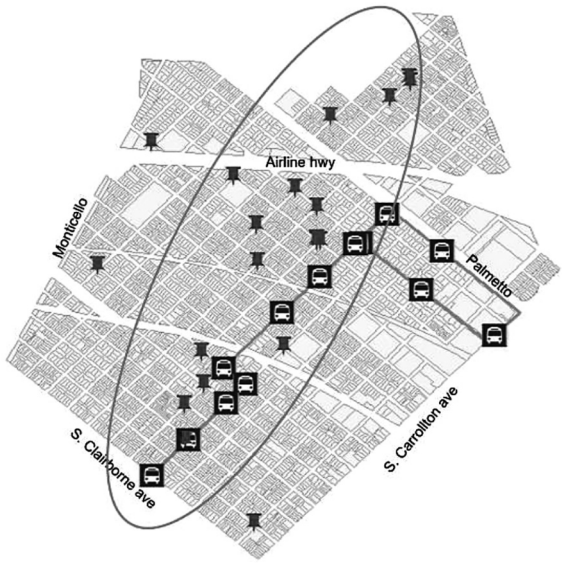

Figure 20.5 A map showing bus stop–homicide correlates.
Source: Authors.

we were, for example, able to obtain information about the residents' resistance to the city's proposed rail development, described below in the results section.

20.4 Results

Project work to address crime and fear

Soul Steppers

One of the first and most impactful strategies included an often-forgotten population—seniors. A group of Hollygrove Seniors on the Health Committee realized the importance of walking to ensure physical activity and also for reclaiming their streets. They formed a senior's walking group called "Soul Steppers" and they started with the Walks Against Crime program as a way of addressing open-air, street drug dealing. The residents quickly realized there was an association between health and safety. They observed that the walkers dissuaded drug dealers from selling drugs at street corners and therefore took back ownership over the streets (Edmondson, 2010).

The initiative began in 2009 with fewer than a half-dozen participants, but then quickly grew in size and scope to over 100 people, not only in Hollygrove, but across the entire city. By 2012 there were 14 Soul Stepper groups throughout New Orleans (Sisco, 2012).

Clean-ups and abandoned buildings

Abandoned buildings were a significant blight on the neighborhood, especially following the hurricane when owners were unable to afford home repairs. As a result, properties fell into further disrepair, grass and weeds were overgrown in their yards, and dealers would use such properties to sell illicit drugs. There were two different strategies residents used to address clean-ups and abandoned buildings.

First, residents simply began sharing resources such as lawn mowers, and began mowing the overgrown lawns on abandoned properties. They collected litter on these properties until owners eventually managed to make repairs or the city tore down the building. This helped clean up unsightly landscaping on their streets and contributed to a stronger sense of territorial control.

The second strategy concerns abandoned buildings used for illicit drug dealing. The Crime and Safety team located one derelict drug house and decided to have it demolished. They were able to launch a process to have the building officially demolished. Three months later, when that finally occurred, one resident commented:

> We've been trying for years to get the house demolished next to me, and AARP came in and we went down to City Hall in groups … cause it was a big crack house and I lived next to it. And I thank God and AARP for helping to get it [torn] down.
>
> (The Policy Research Group, 2010, p. 16)

Today, residents use the property to host block parties and picnics.

Local crime hotspot

For many years a local bar known as "Big Tips" had been a drug dealing location and a violence generator. In 2009 there were three shootings and one murder (Tudor, 2018, p. 123). The neighborhood made several unsuccessful attempts to get the city to repair a streetlight across from the bar where street fights from the bar would occur. The Trinity Community Center, including a local church Pastor who participated in the CPTED trainings, obtained funds and then installed their own sodium light pointing at the offending location.

Violence and fights significantly declined at that location. However, when another shooting occurred in the following months, residents followed up and collaborated with the Federal District Attorney and the Louisiana Alcohol and Tobacco Department, and a police raid led to the revocation of the bar license (Eggler, 2012). When the bar finally closed permanently, shootings and violence around that corner were eliminated (Tudor, 2018).

Other projects for long-term redevelopment

All the early project work triggered dozens of other short and long-term initiatives in the years following the first team projects. In one case, the Economic

team obtained temporary use of an independently owned, community farm, turning it into a learning and money-generating center named Hollygrove Market and Farm for a Hollygrove weekly vegetable market that was sought out by patrons from across New Orleans (Kato, Passidomo, & Harvey, 2014). The farm lasted a decade and created numerous economic and learning opportunities for families and children in Hollygrove (McNulty, 2018). Eventually, the land was sold for other purposes by the land owner, however, by that point there were dozens of initiatives and programs underway and, as yet, there seems to be no negative impact on crime.

One of the most dramatic projects was the residents' effort to save an historic seniors' center. In the years immediately following the hurricane, there were few facilities or amenities open for residents. This was especially acute for seniors who once had access to a seniors' center that was now derelict and slated for demolition. The Hollygrove Livability teams, as well as groups throughout the neighborhood, chose to petition the municipal government to save the center and allocate funds for repairs. While there was initial resistance, as the capacity of local groups expanded into a more sophisticated influence on municipal politics, it became clear that ignoring Hollygrove yet again was not going to happen. As a result, municipal politicians rallied behind the initiative and, in 2015, a new $3.4 million dollar, Carrollton Hollygrove Senior Center opened with 11,600 square feet of space with dining rooms, library, computer room, classrooms, arts and crafts, and medical facilities (Webster, 2015).

Rebuilding for long-term resilience

The cumulative effect of these various Second Generation CPTED projects was to gradually transform a high-crime neighborhood into a more livable community for residents. There has been a marked improvement in fear and violence, as indicated in Table 20.2.

A decade following the hurricane there is a significant decrease in crime in Hollygrove, which is partially reflected in Table 20.2 showing a 66 percent decrease in homicides for Hollygrove versus a 4 percent decrease in the rest of the city. Hollygrove no longer generates a homicide hotspot for New Orleans as it is currently less than 1 percent of all city homicides. Hollygrove residents also report in local forums dramatic declines in crime and violence (Morris, 2012).

Table 20.2 Reported homicides for New Orleans and Hollygrove neighborhood 2015–2017

Reported homicides	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*% change*
New Orleans (City)	164	174	157	–4
Hollygrove	3	4	1	–66

Note

Data extracted from "New Orleans police department: *Data and dashboards*" by City of New Orleans (2019).

Because this action-based practice employed a more holistic focus, there were lasting impacts on other types of neighborhood development that negatively impact their quality of life. For example, when a rail company proposed plans to government officials to significantly expand rail traffic through the Hollygrove neighborhood, residents took action (Mock, 2014). This rail expansion would have detracted from the quality of life in Hollygrove due to health issues from air and noise pollution, reduced property values and risks of derailments of hazardous materials. Hollygrove residents, already familiar with how to organize and develop action plans, were able to mobilize a campaign and stop the development.

Although the rail expansion initiative seems unrelated to crime and fear issues, it is notable for two reasons: first, prior to the capacity building work there were few such efforts by Hollygrove to mobilize for their own political health and safety. But once the residents presented a common voice to City Hall, the Council passed a resolution and stopped the new rail development (City of New Orleans, 2015b). Second, community crime prevention programs often stall when programmers fail to activate residents or when local groups lose interest. In Hollygrove, program work continued for years.

20.5 Discussion of the results

The case study here tracks changes in Hollygrove, New Orleans, following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It describes the journey of neighborhood residents as they aimed to repair their neighborhood, reduce crime and fear, and build their own capacity to solve future problems—a process of neighborhood activation.

This case study shows how community capacity building helped transform Hollygrove into a more resilient neighborhood due to a few determined Hollygrove leaders, the work of an engaged non-profit organization—the Louisiana chapter of AARP—and training in Second Generation CPTED and SafeGrowth by crime prevention specialists.

Lessons from Hollygrove

There are three essential lessons emerging from the Hollygrove study.

First, engaging residents and activating neighborhoods for crime prevention is not a straightforward process. When residents are fearful of their own streets and shootings are regular events, program development can stall and fail. In such an environment, simplistic strategies are at risk of failure, such as expanding police patrols without community engagement, or implementing simple and isolated CPTED tactics such as lights and access controls.

Social infrastructure is important, especially considering the critical role of social capital and social networks in driving resilience (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). Social infrastructure does not just happen; it requires social programming that provides ample opportunities for residents to work together and reduce opportunities and

motives for crime (Cleveland & Saville, 1997). In Hollygrove this became evident when crime continued to increase until the involvement of AARP and specialists in SafeGrowth and Second Generation CPTED who offered a systematic approach to problem solving and capacity building. Ohmer and Beck (2006) describe how neighborhood organizations can establish wide-reaching positive social relationships to building collective efficacy and establish informal social controls. In the case of Hollygrove, participants established a core for relationship-building that rebuilt social infrastructure for sustained success.

Second, Hollygrove's resilience and capacity for action emerged from an AR methodology. This proved crucial for understanding the crime and fear problems and for stimulating change in the neighborhood. Action-based practice relies on residents themselves and their native intelligence (Hodgkinson & Saville, 2018; Stringer, 2014). This is especially important in communities such as Hollygrove that struggle with inequality, socioeconomic and racial disadvantage, conditions that negatively influence collective efficacy and increase violence (Sampson, 2004; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2001; Steenbeek & Hipp, 2011).

The most effective way of addressing crime problems in a neighborhood such as Hollygrove is by directly engaging the residents and providing them with resources, such as funds and police support, and training in crime prevention. However, as the research literature and this case study demonstrate, those traditional practices are, in themselves, insufficient to produce sustainable results. The AR methodology ensures that the residents themselves, in partnership with researchers and practitioners, are the principal stakeholders in both research and action. For neighborhood programming to have an effect, the solutions need to address the problems identified by those affected by them (Mihinjac, 2018).

Disadvantaged communities are especially faced with challenges such as fear of crime, poor citizen participation and a lack of community organizing skills. For such places, participation in activities that build strong interpersonal relationships is crucial; only then can a group effectively work together on an ongoing basis (Speer & Hughey, 1995). Addressing specific problems is important; however, concurrently the teams also develop relationships to sustain their work. As the Hollygrove teams developed their projects they directly and indirectly addressed crime and fear problems while they concurrently built ownership, ongoing capacity and relationships.

Third, neighborhood activation occurred when small-scale projects served as a catalyst for long-term action, which is especially important in places of concentrated disadvantage. Hollygrove residents started with small projects, which amounted to big changes over time.

It became apparent that, following the hurricane, poverty and racial inequality in the city influenced recovery and the amount of resources invested in individual neighborhoods. Hollygrove was one of the neighborhoods that originally received little government support (Hobor, 2015), illustrating how concentrated disadvantage was a major factor contributing to increases in

violent crime in the first few years following the hurricane (Weil et al., 2019). The fact that disadvantaged communities cannot rely on local governments for assistance increases the impotence of neighborhood activation through empowerment and partnership strategies.

Despite official polices for empowering communities, this is poorly realized in practice (Head, 2007; Mowbray, 2005). Many authorities seem to fear transferring power to the community and are instead driven by higher level politics. As a result, citizen empowerment suffers, especially since governments usually rely on programs that do not focus on social relationships between the residents (Speer & Hughey, 1995) and fail to establish skills that lead to community capacity building (Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2001).

This is why community capacity building for resilient neighborhoods must focus on small-scale action-based projects based on residents' own neighborhood conditions. When authorities rely on actions from those outside the community, they create dependency relationships in which residents of disadvantaged communities repeatedly seek outsiders for action (Cuthill & Fien, 2005; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The Hollygrove case study illustrates how neighborhood activation happens when residents and prevention practitioners participate in intense levels of collaborative problem-solving (Mihinjac, 2018).

Our findings are echoed by both Brown's (2016) work on homicide in Hollygrove and by Sampson's (2012) collective efficacy research in Chicago:

> Sampson (2012) recommended that effective violence interventions, instead of being targeted toward individual offenders, should instead address efforts to restore at-risk communities by improving both the physical and social infrastructure.… These findings are similar to some of the homicide solutions proposed by Hollygrove residents.
>
> (Brown, 2016, p. 241)

Displacement and costs

There was no independent measure of crime displacement in this study, primarily because crime data early on were not in a form that allowed a pre-test/post-test examination. Consequently, the possibility of displacement does exist; however, in the larger municipality of New Orleans, city-wide crime rates for a majority of crimes in the past decade have either plateaued or experienced slight drops (Asher, 2016). Unfortunately, this is difficult to assess since recent research suggests that statistical methods of displacement analysis have been far from accurate and may even produce spurious results that distract from other crime prevention effects (Hodgkinson, Saville, & Andresen, 2020).

Regarding costs for the various Hollygrove capacity building initiatives over a decade, it is difficult to parse a specific figure for crime prevention strategies versus community development. However, some initial funding

during the launch of livability and SafeGrowth planning in the first few years included grants of $410,000 from AARP and a private, non-profit foundation (Tudor, 2018). Following that initial funding, resources flowed into the neighborhood from a wide variety of municipal agencies and community-based initiatives, from local economic strategies such as the Hollygrove Farm (that accrued over $1,000,000 in gross yearly revenue for use within the neighborhood), to municipal and education agencies that funded the reopening of an elementary school and community center (Tudor, 2018).

20.6 Conclusions and recommendations

This study has some important practical and theoretical contributions related to the use of capacity building to enhance collective efficacy. Hollygrove demonstrates the importance of methods such as SafeGrowth and Second-Generation CPTED for expanding social infrastructure and building collective efficacy. The test of such methods rests in Hollygrove where improved physical infrastructure, new and enhanced social programs, local economic development, and reduced crime and fear, remain part of the Hollygrove experience today.

Limitations

A SafeGrowth planning system was utilized in Hollygrove in the form of Second-Generation CPTED, the community training embodied in the Livability Academy, and other capacity building tactics employed through AR. However, adopting AR as a research methodology, or SafeGrowth as a way to implement neighborhood planning, presented some limitations worth considering in future studies:

- One limitation of the AR approach is that it has a much longer time-frame than many social science case studies. In the Hollygrove example here the project extended almost a decade.
- Another limitation was that existing police-based quantitative data were either non-existent for the New Orleans police department (which only after this study commenced collecting more comprehensive crime data), or problems with under-reporting due to poor community–police relations.
- A third limitation is that AR projects require specialized knowledge to establish an AR methodology in which residents and researchers collaborate to co-design the research and co-plan response strategies. Collaborative data collection, research, and planning with residents is not an easy process and in SafeGrowth a considerable amount of attention is spent on establishing effective action-based practice (Hodgkinson & Saville, 2018) and activating resident participation (Mihinjac, 2018).

20.7 Recommendations for future research and practice

The AR methods applied in Hollygrove, within the framework of the Safe-Growth planning system, offer the prospect of expanding existing theory while at the same time developing practical strategies for local neighborhood residents to improve conditions in their neighborhood.

The second recommendation, is that quantitative data analysis, while critical for evaluative and cross-sectional studies, remains an important, but not a necessary, pre-requisite within AR. There is no doubt quantitative data will greatly enhance the examination of ex post facto case study results, especially for measuring crime displacement. However, even without a rigorous quantitative data collection and analysis methodology, AR still provides researchers with the opportunity to collect different forms of data, assess theory, and implement real-world strategies to reduce crime.

A third recommendation is that funding for high demand, poor neighborhoods such as Hollygrove, rarely exists to collect independent quantitative data. This is the case in all kinds of research but the difference in AR is that a lack of quantitative data does not handicap researchers from working with residents on other forms of data, such as informal interviews and observations. Because the AR methodology is based on building networks from both those who reside in troubled neighborhoods and those agencies that service them, alternative resources for funding often emerge within the neighborhood and within the larger community.

Note

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