



### Resident Feedback on the Restore Rundberg Community Survey

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# Resident Feedback on the Restore Rundberg Community Survey

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*Yessenia Castro, Katie Casstevens, Barbara Garcia and David W. Springer*

A major goal of the Restore Rundberg project is to increase collective efficacy and community engagement, and community-level interventions are currently being implemented in this vein. In order to assess the effect of these interventions on collective efficacy and community engagement of Rundberg residents, researchers compiled a community survey that measures residents' perceptions of these factors before and after implementation of interventions. Consistent with professional and ethical standards of assessment in research and practice (American Educational Research Association [AERA], 1999), we began by selecting measures of collective efficacy and community engagement that have been empirically validated and systematically translated. However, best practice in culturally sensitive assessment and community-based research dictates that measures should be examined for their appropriateness with local populations, and this should be assessed with direct input from members of the community (AERA, 1999; Hunt & Bhopal, 2004; Mels, Derluyn, Broekaert, & Rosseel, 2010; Nichter, Nichter, Thompson, Shiffman, & Moscicki, 2002). As such, this paper describes the results of focus groups completed in partnership with a local community organization. These focus groups informed adaptations to the Restore Rundberg Community Survey made in order to make this large-scale survey more relevant and acceptable to the local area.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants were 14 adult residents of the Rundberg area who volunteered to participate in a focus group for providing feedback on the com-

munity survey items. Participants were recruited via in-person outreach by a community partner. Six participants (2 male and 4 female) participated in the first focus group, and the remaining 8 (1 male and 7 female) participants participated in the second focus group. No other demographic information was collected in order to protect participant's privacy and ensure confidentiality. This was particularly necessary given that participants were consumers of services provided by the community organization that assisted in recruitment. This alone could increase the odds that participants' identities could be revealed, and as such it was important to communicate to participants that researchers would not have access to any identifying information beyond the fact that they were known to the community organization.

### Procedures

Two focus groups were conducted with members of the priority population (i.e., current residents of the Rundberg area). One focus group was conducted in English and one in Spanish, and both were facilitated by the first author. Focus groups were held on the grounds of the community organization that had assisted with recruitment. Focus groups were held on a Tuesday and Thursday evening partly to accommodate participants' work schedules, but also to increase participation, as it was anticipated that many focus group participants would already be at or near locations around the time of the focus groups. Given that the groups were held near dinner time, light refreshments were provided to participants. Each focus group was audio-recorded with unanimous permission from every member of each focus group, and each meeting lasted approximately one hour.

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Participants were explained the purpose of the focus groups, were reminded that all feedback shared was anonymous and confidential, and that no information would be collected that could tie any focus group data with the identity of any participant. Participants were further reminded that participation was voluntary and they were free to leave at any time. Participants were next asked to complete the community survey, making note of any aspects of the survey that were unclear, confusing, or otherwise inspired comment. Once all participants completed the survey, the interview portion of the focus groups began.

### Measures

Restore Rundberg Community Survey is a compilation of validated measures that assess various aspects of individual perceptions of neighborhood functioning, perceptions of police, and community involvement. English and Spanish versions of the survey were tested here. The full survey is available from the authors upon request.

Community Survey Focus Group Guide is a list of 9 open-ended questions regarding specific aspects of the community survey about which the research team desired focused feedback. These questions range from concerns about clarity, appropriateness and preferences about individual items, to flow and organization of the overall survey. The complete set of questions is listed in Table 1. However, the results section will only highlight questions with the most substantive responses from participants.

### Focus Group Results and Survey Modifications

Regarding question 1 “what, if any, questions were difficult to understand?,” many participants expressed a lack of clarity or specificity in the term “neighborhood.” For example, one person stated she struggled with answering questions regarding perceptions of crime in her neighborhood because she did not feel well-enough informed to provide a meaningful answer for the entire “neighborhood” of Rundberg. Another person agreed, saying she was aware of crimes that occur on her block, but not beyond. In each focus group, it was suggested it was not ideal to ask about “neighborhood” because it refers to too

large an area. Participants stated they are much more conscious of incidents on their street than in “the neighborhood.” Participants stated that when answering neighborhood questions they essentially referenced their immediate neighbors and felt that the term “neighborhood” encompassed a much broader area around which they lived, about which they knew relatively little compared to their immediate surroundings (e.g., their street of residence). As such, all survey questions that referenced “neighborhood” were modified to reference “street or block.”

Regarding question 5, it is notable that participants in both survey groups had great difficulty identifying community organizations and institutions in the Rundberg area. The intent of this question was to generate examples of relevant community organizations to list as examples in a survey question designed to assess how many community organizations one belongs to as a proxy of community involvement. One focus group was able to name the community organization in which the focus group meeting took place (Gus Garcia Recreation Center) and one of that organization’s projects (Meals on Wheels). In addition, they were able to name another community organization (Asian American Resource Center). The second focus group was not able to provide additional suggestions, but one person stated they wanted to know if there are organizations that provide education on city resources and how to be more engaged with the city.

Question 6 of the focus group guide was in reference to a set of survey items that assessed perceived neighborhood violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). These items asked about the following forms of violence in one’s neighborhood: a fight in which a weapon was used; a violent argument between neighbors; a gang fight; sexual assault or rape; a robbery or mugging. Participants were asked if they believed there were certain forms of violence common in their area of Rundberg missing from this list that should be added, in order to make the survey more relevant to Rundberg residents. There was a major consensus in both focus groups to ask about car vandalism, as they believed this is pervasive issue in the Rundberg area. In addition, participants in both focus groups suggested ask-

ing about reckless or irresponsible driving. As such, questions about these two types of crimes were added to the survey.

Question 6 of the focus group guide was in reference to a set of survey items that assessed perceptions of police. Survey items asked about perceived effectiveness of police. Participants were asked if there were any other questions about police perceptions that would be relevant to Rundberg residents and should be included in the survey. One person suggest adding a question that asks about perceptions of police presence in their neighborhood, and one person suggested adding a question regarding perceptions of how quickly or effectively a criminal case is resolved. The second suggestion came out of the expressed frustration by members of one group that residents do not receive any follow up or any information regarding the status of a crime after they have reported it. As a result, the two suggested items were added to the survey, as was an item gauging perceptions of police communication about the status of reported crimes.

Finally, question 9 asked, "what, if any additional concerns or suggestions do you have about the items in this survey?" One person suggested adding a question assessing whether one rents or owns their residence. The participant explained that she feels researchers would get very different answers from owners compared to renters, as she believed that owners would be much more invested in the neighborhood compared to renters. This sentiment was endorsed by all other group members.

One person expressed the desire that "when people are filling out these that we could get an idea of the purpose behind it all," and could get feedback on "where are we at with Restore Rundberg." Thus, she suggested that the survey begin with a short rationale for its administration and a progress report on Restore Rundberg.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The focus group exercise reported here was extremely valuable in informing important and substantive adaptations to a survey instrument that will be a primary variable of interest in the overall Restore Rundberg project. All of the

measures that comprise the restore Rundberg Community Survey are established and validated questionnaires used previously in large scale population research. However, presenting the survey to community members for feedback allowed for valuable insights and suggestions that would not have otherwise been apparent to the research team. Adoption of these suggestions resulted in a survey that is more directly relevant to the priority population, while maintaining the integrity of a large scale scientific survey.

In addition, information gained from the focus groups provides further support for the need to address areas deemed by investigators, a priori, of critical concern to Rundberg residents. For example, participants' reports that they know very little about events outside of their street or block, and lack of familiarity with community organizations support the need for efforts to increase community engagement in the Rundberg area. Also, concerns about police presence, effectiveness and communication strongly support the need for systematic efforts to implement a community policing approach in the Rundberg area, which is a major goal of the larger study.

The first wave of survey administration occurred in the summer and fall of 2014, with the goal of having 400 surveys completed by December of 2014. Follow-up survey administration is expected to occur in the winter and spring of 2015.

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Table 1

### Restore Rundberg Community Survey Focus Group Guide:

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- 1 What, if any, questions were difficult to understand?
  - 2 What, if any, of the response options were difficult to understand?
  - 3 What, if any, items did you find offensive or did not feel comfortable answering?
  - 4 Regarding questions 5 and 6-10; these are two different measures to capture group/organizational membership or involvement. In your opinion, if you could only choose one of these two measures which would you prefer to complete as part of a community survey and why?
  - 5 Regarding item five on the questionnaire, what groups/organizations local to the Rundberg area are missing and should be added, in your opinion?
  - 6 Regarding items 29-35, these items are a measure of perceived neighborhood violence. In your opinion, if any additional forms of violence should be asked about?
  - 7 Regarding items 37-42, these items are a measure of perceptions of local police. What, if any, other questions regarding neighborhood residents' perceptions of police do you think could be added?
  - 8 Regarding the order of the survey sections: Each new set of directions represents the beginning of a new set of questions designed to measure something different. We are curious to know how you feel about the current order of the measures.
  - 9 What, if any additional concerns or suggestions do you have about the items in this survey?
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