

Preface

This book is based on a research study conducted in Ferguson, Missouri prior to the shooting of Michael Brown in August 2014. The purpose was to investigate older adult's perceptions of crime in their community and examine how their quality of life was affected. Older adults were chosen specifically for the research study because they previously indicated that they felt crime had increased in their community and no longer felt as safe as they once did. At the time this research study was conducted, reported crime had not dramatically increased. However, during the past 20 years there has been a rapid transformation in many other physical and social aspects throughout Ferguson, possibly interpreted as an increase in crime to longtime community residents. Older adults in Ferguson have a strong connection to their home and community, but as they got older, their community began to change and evolve. They essentially became the only thing remaining constant in their ever-changing world.

This book presents some perspectives about life in Ferguson, Missouri which are much different than what was portrayed through the national media. On the other hand, some resident accounts describe community tensions, racial prejudice, and foreshadowing fears of the events that would occur. In particular, older adult's concerns regarding young people walking down the middle of the street and their apprehension with crime at the Canfield Green Apartment Complex became much more significant after the shooting of Michael Brown transpired.

This research study was not openly accepted throughout the community. Formal complaints were expressed by community members to the researcher and to the City of Ferguson. They feared that this study would draw negative attention to the community. At times, the challenges presented seemed monumental and almost impossible. However, in spite of the opposition, several individuals supported the continuation of this research study; affirming that any student research initiative drawing such community response was worth the perseverance.

My faculty advisor, Dr. Ronald Phillips and committee members guided me through every step of the research process. My friends, family, and colleagues encouraged my work; reading written drafts, discussing the implications of the outcomes, and offering their own insights and perspectives. Finally, this research

study would not have been possible without the support of Ferguson Mayor James Knowles III. Before the commencement of this initiative, I did not have a relationship with Mr. Knowles. Given the community attention generated by this research study, he could have asked that I suspend data collection. Instead, he asked to learn more so that he could better educate the residents of Ferguson. He was also interested in learning about resident's perceptions of crime and what the City of Ferguson could do to make their community a safer place to live.

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