BRIEF REPORT

MEASURING URBAN PROBLEMS: A BRIEF REPORT
ON RATING GRASS COVERAGE¹

This study describes an objective measure of one factor contributing to the appearance of a neighborhood, the proportion of each lawn covered by grass, and reports the reliability of the measure when it was used by residents of a low-income housing project in Kansas City, Kansas. The measure consisted of observers' ratings of lawn grass coverage on a 0 to 10 scale: 0 for no grass; 10 for a lawn completely covered with grass. Detailed instructions for determining the lawn area to be rated, judging the amount of grass present, and using the recording forms were prepared and tested, first by trained observers and, after modification, when interobserver reliability coefficients were consistently above 0.90,

by community residents. A training procedure was also developed, in which volunteer tenant-observers trained by reading the prepared instructions were found to be highly reliable in both the generally bare yards in a low-income neighborhood and the well-covered yards in a middle-income neighborhood. Thus, this measure is available as a tool for community research and may also be effectively utilized by residents of urban communities concerned with improving the appearance of their neighborhoods.

DESCRIPTORS: rating grass coverage, behavioral recording, community setting, methodology for rating grass coverage, urban living conditions

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¹The full text of this manuscript is deposited with the National Auxiliary Publications Service (NAPS). For copies, order NAPS Document #02524. Order from ASIS/NAPS Co., c/o Microfiche Publications, 440 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Remit with order for each copy \$1.50 for microfiche or \$5.00 for photocopies. Make checks payable to Microfiche Publications. Preparation of this paper was partially supported by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare grant MH-18542-03 to the Bureau of Child Research and the Department of Human Development at the University of Kansas. The package of instructions for observers is available from The Living Environments Group, c/o Todd R. Risley, Department of Human Development, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045.

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