

Welcome!

Advances in Community Measurement Webinar



OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND
EVALUATION

Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE 

***We'll get started in just
a couple of minutes.***

***Please be sure to
access the Audio by
clicking the speaker
icon above.***

Introductory Remarks

Advances in Community Measurement Webinar



OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND
EVALUATION

Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE 

Dr. Mary Hyde
*Director, Office of Research
and Evaluation, CNCS*
mhyde@cns.gov

**Corporation for National and Community
Service**

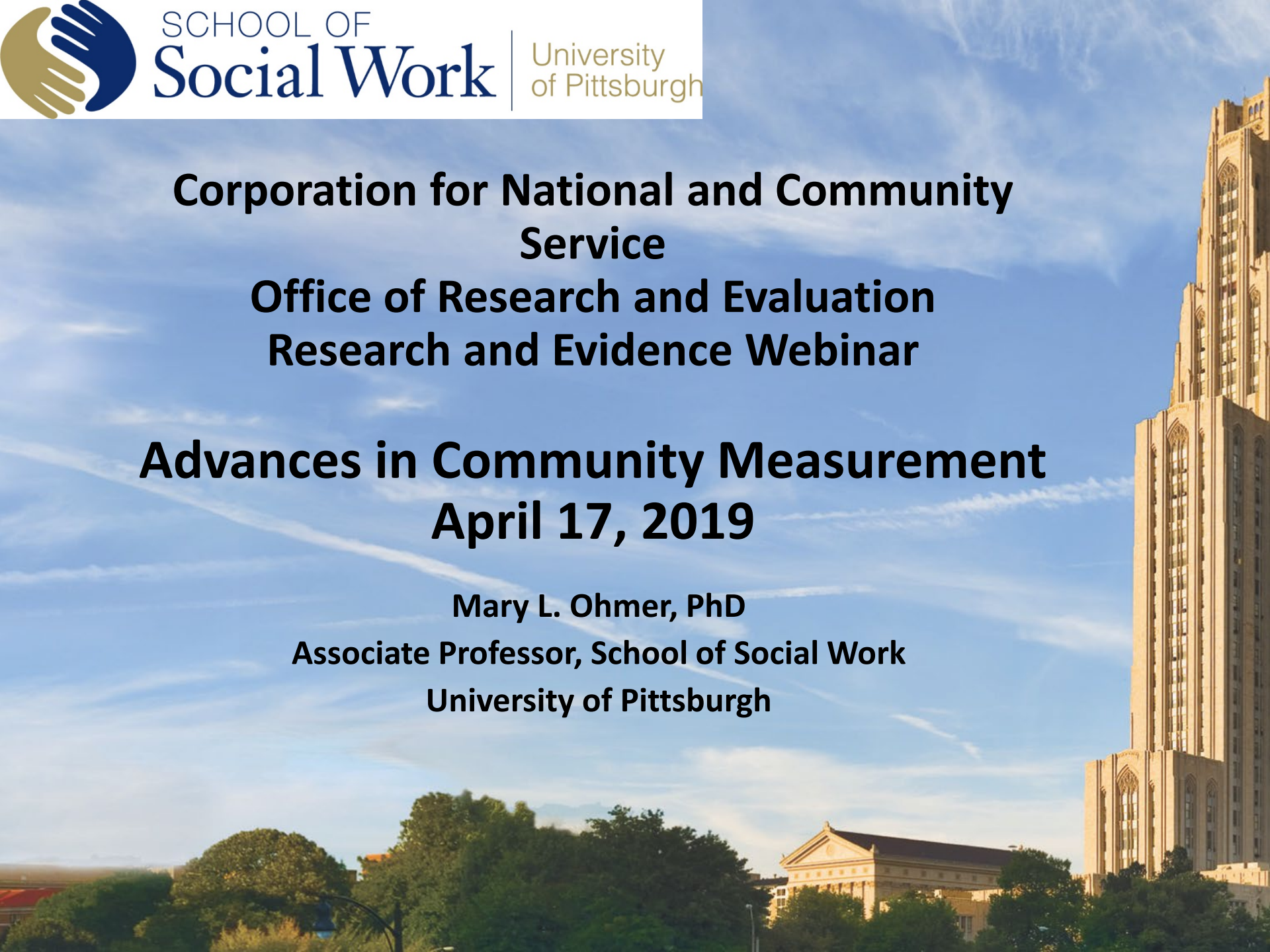
**Office of Research and Evaluation
Research and Evidence Webinar**

**Advances in Community Measurement
April 17, 2019**

Mary L. Ohmer, PhD

Associate Professor, School of Social Work

University of Pittsburgh





Webinar Overview

- Welcome and Introductions
- Objectives
 - Discuss a framework for understanding the dimensions of community and neighborhood measurement.
 - Describe methods for delineating the community as a unit of analysis and some of the practical aspects of community data collection.
 - Review and discuss community and neighborhood measures
 - Work on a case scenario to delve more deeply into community research problems and questions and identify appropriate measures.
 - Discuss how you might use and apply what you learned today
 - Questions and final thoughts

Conceptual Definitions of Community and Neighborhood

- Communities and neighborhoods are defined as identifiable geographic locations or places.
- Place-based communities have specific geographic, social and psychological meanings as well as consequences for the people who live and work there (Chaskin, 1997; Coulton, 2005).
- Communities and neighborhoods can be agents of change, targets for change or the context within which change happens (Coulton, 2005, p. 74).
- Sampson (2013) conceptualizes “neighborhood in theoretical terms as a geographic and, hence, ecological section of a larger community or region that usually contains residents or institutions and that has socially distinctive characteristics” (p. 8).



Conceptual Model for Research with Communities and Neighborhoods



Our Conceptual Model for Community and Neighborhood Research

- **Domains**

- Individual engagement and efficacy in the community
- Collective engagement and efficacy in the community
- Community resources and amenities
- Community economics
- Community safety and security
- Built/natural community environment
- Community inclusivity

- **Ecological Settings**

- Individual
- Collective
- Community
- Societal

- **Emergent Properties**

- Community well-being
- Culture
- Power

Ecological Settings

Individual

- Measures of people's relationship to and/or perception of place, neighborhood, and community
- Target the *individual-level* focus on attitudes, cognitions, beliefs, skills, and behaviors
- Examples: psychological empowerment, leadership efficacy, civic engagement

Collective

- Measures of community organizations and institutions
- Target the *collective level* and provide tools for evaluating actions of collectives or collaborative partnerships
- Examples: collective action, coalition functioning, representation in collective efforts

Ecological Settings

Community

- Measures of the social unit of the community, neighborhood, or place as a whole
- Target *community level* characteristics, resources and other attributes
- Examples: collective efficacy; housing vacancy; the built environment; inclusivity.

Societal

- Measures of the community or place in relationship to the external region of which the community is a part
- Target factors that support or hinder communities and neighborhoods.
- Examples: access to transportation or jobs; inequality

What is Your Research Orientation and Focus?

Where do you position your Community Research?

Settings/ Focus	Qualitative Methods				Quantitative Methods			
	Interviews	Focus Groups	Ethnography	Other	Surveys	Spatial Dynamic	Nested Models	Other
Individual								
Collective								
Community								
Societal								

Domains

Individual engagement and efficacy

- bolsters personal empowerment and skills
- shifts power and influence from formal or traditional sources to citizens or residents
- Includes: individual-level participation, perceptions, and behaviors related to the processes and/or outcomes of citizen engagement in one's neighborhood or community.

Collective engagement and efficacy

- work together to solve common problems or issues.
- These measures assess a collective units' perceptions and behaviors related to the processes and outcomes of engagement in a neighborhood or community.

Domains

Community amenities and resources

- important for identifying assets and opportunities for change
- Leads to more precise community-level interventions.
- Includes perceptions and objective measures of community and neighborhood resources and public amenities and services

Community economics

- encourages the use of economic tools to analyze elements of communities that impact residents' ability to access things such as housing, employment, and public financing
- Includes measures of economic disparities in communities and neighborhoods, such as unequal access to jobs and resources, including housing market strength

Domains

Community safety and security

- one of the central concerns in communities
- intersection of individual, collective, community, and social contexts as targets for intervention
- perceptions and objective indicators of crime and violence, and residents' fear of crime in their neighborhood

The built/natural community environment

- the human-made or natural surroundings in a community setting that impact people
- physical capital of neighborhoods and communities
- Examples: quality of housing; access to healthy food, walkability, and resources

Domains

Community inclusivity

- Promotes equality of access to resources, treatment and opportunity of all people in a community.
- Measures assess the geospatial distribution of the population and resources across communities and
- Includes the impacts of social exclusion and segregation and unequal access to resources, as well as gentrification and diversity.

Emergent Properties

Community well-being

- overarching concept and goal that many community activists and researchers seek to achieve and measure in their work.
- Used interchangeably with concepts of community satisfaction, quality of life, and happiness.
- Research studies ask: Is the community thriving? Are residents satisfied with their neighbors, amenities, and networks for leading a fulfilled life?

Culture

- a characteristic of societies, communities, and organizations
- The traditional anthropological concept of culture is defined as shared assumptions, values, beliefs, rules, and customs of conduct of a group or community of people.
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2015) recently launched a Culture of Health Program conceiving of culture as a meta concept

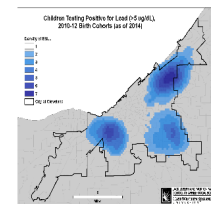
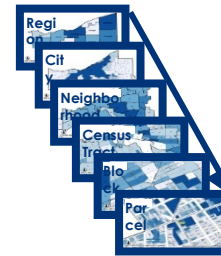
Emergent Properties

Power

- A concept that may facilitate or inhibit community development and sustainability
- Often understudied in community research
- Power has both positive and negative aspects (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).
 - Power aids in the ability of individuals and communities to achieve goals evidenced through a sense of mastery and control over circumstances.
 - Power may be used to inflict harm or maintain inequity.

Methodological Considerations in Community and Neighborhood Research

- **Defining community/neighborhood as a unit for measurement**
 - Administrative Boundaries
 - Residents' Perceptions of Neighborhood Boundaries
 - Geospatial Boundaries



Methodological Considerations in Community and Neighborhood Research

- **Objective and subjective measures**
 - Surveys
 - Observations
 - Administrative data
- **Community engagement**
 - In measurement selection
 - In developing and validating new measures

Administrative Boundaries

- The vast majority of studies use administratively defined units as proxies for neighborhoods or place-based communities.
- Most are established for statistical or programmatic purposes and do not necessarily coincide with individuals' experience with regard to their neighborhoods.
- Census tracts are the most commonly chosen units for research
 - May be redrawn every ten years
 - Vary widely in terms of size.
- A key question to consider is the degree to which administrative boundaries fit the purpose of the research and its conceptualization of neighborhood or community.
- Most of these boundaries were not designed for research and statistical analysis and are unlikely to represent the actual neighborhood or community experience for most residents

Resident Perceived Neighborhoods

- Resident perceptions are an alternative basis from which to define neighborhood boundaries that have the advantage of representing the areas that are relevant to their everyday lives (Matthews, 2011).
- Residents' perceptions of neighborhood boundaries can be used to craft neighborhood units based on consensus.
- It is also possible to create bespoke neighborhood units that are customized for each individual based on their unique boundary specifications.

Geospatial Boundaries

- Defined using spatial buffers or physical features.
- GIS tools can be used to draw individualized neighborhood boundaries centered on each person's location.
- Egocentric or sliding neighborhoods:
 - Buffers of varying sizes can be drawn around each household's location, and neighborhood measures are calculated for these buffers (Chaix, Merlo, Evans, Leal, & Havard, 2009; Guo & Bhat, 2007).
 - The buffer may be specified by distance, population size, or some other geographic features (Chaix, Merlo, & Chauvin, 2005).

Objective vs. Subjective Measures

- **Objective Measures:** The field of neighborhood measurement has moved to favoring objective measures of neighborhood environments: such as administrative data and systematic social observations.
- **Subjective Measures** are typically derived from survey items that assess individuals' perceptions of their neighborhood.
- There are strengths and weaknesses for both methods
- When deciding whether to use objective or subjective measures of relevant neighborhood attributes, researchers must be clear about what they are trying to understand
- However, practical matters are also important (e.g., time, funding, expertise, etc.)

Engaging Community Partners

- Community Sensitivity to being “objects” of research because of past practices by social scientists
- Thus community researchers must strive to conduct community-driven research. This approach is being advanced by CNCS and other institutions.
- Community-based participatory research “is a collaborative, partnership approach to research that equitably involves . . . community members in all aspects of the research process” (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 2001, p. 184).
- This includes measurement selection and development.

Engaging Community Partners

- In order to successfully engage a community partner in the selection of measures, there are two essential considerations to take into account when establishing a truly equitable research partnership:
 - how a researcher/community practitioner communicates measurement issues and builds the community partners' capacity to participate in this aspect of the research process, and
 - the necessary steps to modify or develop measures to fit the context of the research study without compromising the validity and reliability of the measure

Engaging Community Partners: Example

- In one process implemented by Hausman and colleagues (2013), community members participated in focus groups where they were asked about youth violence in their community.
- These focus groups were coded, and with the input of community advisors, 43 indicators were identified. The community/academic team then went to a bank of psychometrically validated measures that had been used in a previous round of data collection and attempted to match the constructs identified in the focus groups with the existing measures.
- In this study, 17 of the 43 indicators were represented in the measures reviewed. The existing data was then used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the new scales that were developed based on the community's definition of factors that are crucial to youth violence.
- The results of the psychometric tests were then discussed with the community advisory board and further refinements were made

Community and Neighborhood Measures: Inclusion Criteria

- Measurement instruments or methods that are widely used and distinct, published and/or manualized, and fully documented in accessible publications.
- Instruments with replicable and discernable measurement methods that can be used by researchers and practitioners
- Where possible, measurement instruments or methods that have demonstrated evidence of reliability and/or validity.
- Published in English: the majority of the instruments were examined and tested in the United States; however, we also include measures from other countries if they are more widely used, available in English, and/or published in English journals or publications.

Community and Neighborhood Measures

Assessing the capacity for community change and the ability of communities to engage in collective action and collaborative efforts:

- **Community readiness and capacity for change:** readiness for change, capacity of community-based health and social initiatives, community and organizational capacity measures, and community ownership and preparedness.
- **Strategic collective action in communities:** participation and representation in collective efforts, the contexts affecting community organizing, power and influence in community based participatory research, and measures for examining the activities, functioning and characteristics of coalitions and partnerships.

Community and Neighborhood Measures

Assessing the nature of social processes and engagement in communities, including the impact on social connections, empowerment, and efficacy:

- **Social connections and processes in communities:** types of connections among residents and/or their relationships to a neighborhood or place, including: sense of community, social capital, social cohesion/ties and collective efficacy.
- **Community empowerment and engagement:** psychological empowerment among youth and adults, community empowerment, civic engagement, participation in neighborhood and community organizations, neighborhood activism, and sociopolitical control (leadership and political) among youth and adults.

Community and Neighborhood Measures

Measures that assess community characteristics:

- **Community resources and resident satisfaction:** observation based measures of neighborhood resources, survey based measures of community resources and amenities, and environmental indicators; awareness of and satisfaction with public services and facilities; perceptions of neighborhood quality and neighborhood and community satisfaction.
- **Built environment:** neighborhood food environment related to nutrition and food access, cost and quality, walkability, pedestrian and cycling assessments; and measures examining neighborhood green spaces, recreation and physical activity.
- **Housing and neighborhood change:** housing quality, affordability, and market strength; measures of vacancy and blight, residential mobility, and gentrification and displacement.
- **Community disorder, crime and violence:** observational and survey measures of physical and social disorder; measures of fear of crime and exposure to violence, as well as a methods and data sources used for indicators of crime and violence in communities.

Community and Neighborhood Measures

Measures that examine the overall quality and character of place-based communities:

- **Place-based social exclusion and unequal access to resources:** racial and economic segregation, negative environmental exposures, access to transportation and jobs, and access to services.
- **Community wellbeing and quality of life:** domestic and international survey measures examining resident perceptions of individual and community wellbeing, as well as indicators of wellbeing that use existing data sources, such as human development, quality of life and livability.

Scenario: Preventing Community and Youth Violence

- Research suggests that stronger social connections and cohesion in communities, shared norms and values, and resident engagement in addressing neighborhood problems is associated with lower levels of community and youth violence. Sociologists have done extensive research on this concept, which is called neighborhood collective efficacy.
- You are part of a team of social work researchers, neighborhood and youth serving agencies and the local police department who are working together to reduce community and youth violence using innovative approaches.
- The team is interested in assessing neighborhood levels of collective efficacy and their impact on indicators of community and youth violence, and in developing strategies to increase collective efficacy in targeted neighborhoods.

Scenario Questions: Preventing Community and Youth Violence

- How would you define your geographical unit(s) of analysis: what ecological settings is your study focused on? Individual, collective, community and/or societal?
- Reviewing the measures we discussed earlier, which ones would you select for this study and why?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the measures that you selected?
- What is the extent of community participation/engagement in the research study? And, how would you facilitate this engagement?

Application: Your Own Community and Neighborhood Research

- What do you need to consider when selecting community and neighborhood measures for your own research?
- How do methodological considerations relate to the selection of measures?
- What else might you consider?



Other Resources for Community and Neighborhood Measurement

- National Neighborhood Indicators Project:
<http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/>
- NeighborWorks America Success Measures:
<http://www.neighborworks.org/Community/Outcome-Measurement>
- Resources that provide content specific measures:
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's compendium of youth violence prevention measures:
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv_compendium.pdf

Purpose of Our Book

- Ohmer, M.L., Coulton, C., Freedman, D., Sobeck, J. & Booth, J. (2019). *Measures for Community and Neighborhood Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- To promote the use of reliable and valid measures for community and neighborhood research, including:
 - program evaluation
 - community-based and participatory research
 - community-level intervention research
 - research on neighborhood effects
- It can be used by multiple disciplines, including social work, sociology, urban and community development, public health, community psychology, etc.

Purpose of Our Book

- The book can also be used to train students as well as staff from community agencies and to promote services, programs, and interventions that benefit community residents and institutions, including:
 - neighborhood organizations
 - community development corporations
 - Foundations
 - Intermediaries
 - city planning and urban development agencies
 - Health departments
 - social services and other nonprofit organizations.

Wrap Up and Questions to Consider

- What was the most important thing you learned about community and neighborhood research and measurement?
- How will you use the information from this webinar in your own research?

Wrap Up and Conclusion

- I hope this webinar inspires you to conduct further research using the community research methods and measures we've discussed today.
- There is much work to be done, including engaging in further tests of reliability and validity as well as creating new measures in areas that lack sound community and neighborhood instruments.
- Let's all move forward to further research, strategies, and interventions that improve the lives of individuals and families in communities, creates community change, and builds strong, healthy, and sustainable communities.

Thank YOU!

- Mary Ohmer - mlo51@pitt.edu
- Phone: (412) 624-8214

References

- Chaix, B., Merlo, J., Evans, D., Leal, C., & Havard, S. (2009). Neighbourhoods in eco-epidemiologic research: Delimiting personal exposure areas. A response to Riva, Gauvin, Apparicio and Brodeur. *Social Science & Medicine*, 69(9), 1306–1310.
- Chaix, B., Merlo, J., Subramanian, S. V., Lynch, J., & Chauvin, P. (2005). Comparison of a spatial perspective with the multilevel analytical approach in neighborhood studies: The case of mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use in Malmö, Sweden, 2001. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 162(2), 171–182.
- Chaskin, R. J. (1999). *Defining community capacity: A framework and implications from a comprehensive community initiative*. Retrieved from Chicago: http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/old_reports/41.pdf
- Coulton, C. (2005). The place of community in social work practice research: Conceptual and methodological developments. *Social Work Research*, 29(2), 73–86.
- Guo, J. Y., & Bhat, C. R. (2007). Operationalizing the concept of neighborhood: Application to residential location choice analysis. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 15, 31–45.
- Hausman, A. J., Baker, C. N., Komaroff, E., Thomas, N., Guerra, T., Hohl, B. C., & Leff, S. S. (2013). Developing measures of community-relevant outcomes for violence prevention programs: A community-based participatory research approach to measurement. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 52(3–4), 249–262.

References

- Israel, B. A., Schulz, A. J., Parker, E. A., & Becker, A. B. (2001). Community-based participatory research: Policy recommendations for promoting a partnership approach in health research. *Education for Health, 14*(2), 182–197.
- Ohmer, M.L., Coulton, C., Freedman, D., Sobeck, J. & Booth, J. (2019). *Measures for Community and Neighborhood Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Matthews, S. A. (2011). Spatial polygamy and the heterogeneity of place: Studying people and place via egocentric methods. In L. M. Burton, S. P. Kemp, M. Leung, S. A. Matthews, & D. T. Takeuchi (Eds.), *Communities, neighborhoods, and health: Expanding the boundaries of place* (pp. 35–55). New York: Springer.
- Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. New York: Palgrave.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2015). *From vision to action: A framework and measures to mobilize a culture of health*. <https://www.cultureofhealth.org/en/about/how-we-got-here.htm;#twn-underlyingprinciples>
- Sampson, R. (2013). 2012 Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology: The place of context: A theory and strategy for criminology’s hard problems. *Criminology, 5*(1), 1–31.