

CNCS Transcription
Advances in Community Measurement Methods Webinar
April 17, 2019

DR. GOUGE: Good afternoon. And hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us today. My name is Dr. Melissa Gouge. I'm from the Office of Research and Evaluation at the Corporation for National & Community Service. Our office's objectives are to support our agency's mission by building knowledge on civic engagement, volunteering and national service. We conduct in-house research, but we also fund research through competitive grants through researchers, scholars and dissertators at institutions of higher education and support research and evaluation of our programs and grantees.

Our webinar series is one way that we share our ongoing research and findings. Today, we are very excited to host another research and evidence webinar titled Advances in Community Measurement Methods. But before we begin, we'd like to cover a few housekeeping items for Adobe Connect.

EMILY: Thank you everyone for joining today. We want to let you know this webinar will be recorded and posted online following the presentation. All audio will be

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done through your computer speakers over your internet connection. You can ask questions at any time during the presentation by using the chat boxes below. As I mentioned earlier, this webinar is being recorded, and if you have any questions or experience technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat box. I believe that takes care of our housekeeping items.

DR. GOUGE: Thank you, Emily. Our format today is going to be as follows: Dr. Mary Hyde, the Director of Research and Evaluation will provide some introductory remarks. Mary is not only the director of Research and Evaluation; she is also a community psychology. Dr. Mary Ohmer will then present. She's an associate professor in the Community Organization and Social Action concentration at the University of Pittsburg in the School of Social Work.

She has worked extensively as a community organizer and developer and community-based researcher. Her current research and teaching focus on community organization and development, and community-based

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intervention research, fair housing, youth engagement and international social and community development. She is also one of our 2018 Community Conversation research grantees who's utilizing participatory methods alongside her community partner, the Homewood Children's Village, to tackle community-identified issues.

Then after Dr. Ohmer's presentation, Gina Croft, acting director of NCCC will provide some closing remarks. She was a member of one of our first cohorts and has been involved with national service for many years promoting volunteering and strengthening communities. Then we will open a discussion for questions and answers. During the webinar, if you have questions, please feel free to ask them or provide comments in the chat box. We'll be tracking those and will address those during the discussion session. And I'll now pass this on to Dr. Mary Hyde.

DR. HYDE: Thank you, Melissa. Thank you everyone for joining us today. We're really excited about today's topic. I just have three brief remarks to make. One,

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is that I'm really excited about today's topic because of the mission of our agency, which for those of you who may not know it, is that we strive to improve lives, strengthen community and facilitate civic engagement through service and volunteering. session.

That strengthening community piece is really important and central to the work of our programs in this agency. And because of our role inside of the agency, which is to sort of measure our progress against this mission, today's topic is particularly exciting because assessing communities, measuring communities and measuring activities and impact within communities is a very challenging task, so I think Dr. Ohmer's work and the work that she's going to cover today is a significant resource not only to this agency but to everyone who is working in community and trying to do measurement in some way or another.

So I think today's going to be an incredibly valuable session and opportunity to learn about the resources

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that are out there, and then the last remark that I will make because I know Dr. Ohmer has a lot to cover today is that this is also exciting to me because it takes me back to sort of where I started my research career, and some of the materials that are included in her work is exactly how I started working on my dissertation and reflect some of the original work I did in community, developing indicators with them.

My first question, which you can answer at the end of this session, Mary Ohmer, is where was this material when I was writing my dissertation? It really probably would have saved me about a year's worth of [inaudible] review. With that, I'm going to pass it along to Mary and have her start.

DR. OHMER: Oh, that is hilarious, Dr. Hyde, because I with I had it as well when writing my dissertation. That's probably one of the reasons we decided to write this. I just want to thank CNCS, the Office of Research and Evaluation, Dr. Hyde, Dr. Gouge, Emily, [unintelligible] and Lauren. Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to do this today and thank

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you all those people, wow, from everywhere being interested in this topic, so I hope I meet your expectations.

I'm very excited. The reason we wrote - this is based on a book that I wrote with four of the colleagues and I'll tell you who they are in a minute, but, of our own frustration in finding measures for neighborhood and community research in one place and accessible place and having to just do so many literature searches and reviews and not knowing how to - there's some synthesis of some of these measures in some articles but not across the board and really thinking about it strategically and having one place, like a go-to place where practitioners, students, professors, researchers, people in the field could actually use it.

We're really looking at utilization. And so, unlike other kind of measures books that have just lists of measures in the items, we provide a conceptual framework, which I'll go over today, some methodological issues that you run into when you do

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community research, and also just in each chapter, a synthesis of the definitions, conceptual frameworks, prior research, et cetera of the measures that are in each chapter.

So this webinar's taken directly from - that's the citation [inaudible] in that book. My co-authors were Claudia Colton, who is a distinguished professor and founding director of the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, pre-eminent community research in especially social work, Darcy Freedman, associate professor of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences also at Case Western.

Joann Sobeck, Associate Dean for Research and director for the Center for Social Work Research at Wayne State University School of Social Work, and my colleague here, Jaime Booth [phonetic], who is a professor here in the school. We tried to make this as interdisciplinary in terms of the measures we include as possible. All of us in this field, I think

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you can agree, you have to be interdisciplinary. You have to look across disciplines. The measures in this book cross disciplines.

I'm gonna start out by talking about how we define place. We had to distinguish that our book was about community, but also about place. We're going to talk about that, we're going to talk today in the objectives about a framework for understanding these dimensions. Challenges we face in community research. I'm going to talk a little bit about the measures themselves, what our inclusion criteria were, and also go through those with you, and give you one case study on the slide, and I have a handout with other case studies to think about how we apply this information, and how might you apply.

What did you learn? What thoughts do you have? What are some of the challenges you still face in doing this work? We're talking about places here. And places matter, even though all of us use social media to connect and have relationships, or to community, email, or twitter, Instagram, places still matter. We

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have strong associations with place. We care about our place. They motivate us to act. They motivate us to do something. They influence the quality of our lives. They influence everything we do.

They still really matter. We need to be focusing on this in our work. These measures really help us to understand the effects of community on this, how people perceive communities, and there's not always clear definitions of what we mean by a specific community or neighborhood, but they do have very specific meanings for people, whether those be social, psychological, et cetera. They can be agents of change, targets of change in our work are the context within change happens.

And Samson, who was a sociologist, 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". Building off of the ecological framework, we need to be thinking about all the

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different ways we define community and all the different components of community.

Let's go to our lovely little diagram. The co-authors and myself, as we were writing the book, and we had draft chapters, we knew we had to have some context and a framework to give people to use this so we all got together in Cleveland in the winter, it wasn't snowing thank god, but we went to Cleveland, I'm in Pittsburgh, we had someone come from Detroit. Anyway we got together, we sat down all day talking about what's our framework, what are the methodological issues, what are the things we need to be considering and how did these concepts we're actually having measures for hang together?

That's our pretty little model. And it really is probably reflective of so many other models that people are using and looking at. We borrowed, obviously, from the conceptualizations people had of community to actually come up with our model. These are the different components I'm going to go through. We have ecological settings that we work in, we have

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domains that are impacted or impact community, and then we also think that synergistic relationships of these ecological settings and domains, there's also emergent properties that happen.

The ecological settings: social workers use the ecological systems theory and ecological framework a lot. There are multiple, multiple levels at the ecological settings. Individual, in our book we look at measures of people's relationships to or perception of their place, their neighborhood and their community. This could be their attitudes about their place, their cognitions, their believes, skills, behaviors, et cetera.

Some examples of those things we might measure psychological empowerment, leadership efficacy, civic engagement, which is really at the heart of CNCS, at the heart of your work. Those are things that measure individual level attributes. We also know that there's the collective, the community organizations, the institutions that we're trying to strengthen, this is the collective level. We can use these

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measures to evaluate the actions or the processes of collective and collaborative partnerships.

Collective action, how coalitions function, how representative they are, how well they include people in decision making. Those things are crucial to our work. And then community settings measures the social units of the community, neighborhood or place as a whole. It's community level, we're trying to impact the community level indicators like collective efficacy, resources, the built environment. These are measures that help people think about how to measure those community level indicators.

And then societal measures of the community or place in relationship to the external region of which the community is a part. We know the external region; we know the external factors impact communities. This looks at targeting those factors that extra support, or that may actually hinder the performance, the capacity, the strengthening of our communities and neighborhoods so we know access to jobs or transportation is important. And quality, measures of

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segregation, access to resources, et cetera, are really crucial in this framework.

Those are the ecological settings. I want you to think about your own research. All of us probably work at different settings. Do we look at individuals, collective, community, societal settings? How do we do that? Do we use qualitative methods to do that, do we use quantitative methods to do that, do we use a combination of both? But thinking about situating your own research is really important and it can help you determine as a first step which measurement methods are the most appropriate for your research.

I think that could be a tool that could help you think about where do you start in deciding measurement methods. Our model also has a series of domains and a lot of the measures are very much related to these domains. Individual engagement in communities as efficacy, the purpose is obviously to bolster personal empowerment and skills and to shift power and influence from formal or traditional

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sources to citizens or residents, again, at the heart of what CNCS is trying to do.

This includes individual levels of participation, patient perceptions of that process, of that community, behaviors related to engagement in one's neighborhood or community. There's also the idea of working together to solve problems, and that's collective engagement. And there's a series of things that can happen, obviously, to an organization to strengthen it at a collective level. Looking at the perceptions and behaviors related to the processes and outcomes of engagement in a community or neighborhood is also important.

We also think about what's in our community, the resources, the amenities. This is a strength-based perspective, looking at the amenities, looking at the assets and the opportunities for change. This [inaudible] leads to more precise community-level interventions if we can already identify what's actually strong in the community, what are the assets and target those assets for change. Perceptions and

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objective measures of community and neighborhood resources, public amenities, services, et cetera.

We know community economics also matters. This looks at encouraging youth economic tools to analyze the elements of communities that impact residents' ability to access things that they care about, things that make their lives better like housing, employment, financing. We need to understand the economic disparities in communities and we need to understand the access to jobs, resources, how strong the housing market is. There's measures that relate to community economics and really community development that we include.

Safety and security is one of the central concerns in neighborhoods that I've worked in, and I'm sure many of you have worked in. This looks at the intersection of individual collective community and social context as targets for change and intervention. All those ecological settings. And the perceptions and objective indicators of crime, of violence, but also residents' perceptions of crime and fear in their

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neighborhoods. And then the built-in natural environment has become so crucial to healthy living that we also have measures of the human-made or natural surroundings in a community setting that impact people.

Physical capital of neighborhoods, quality of housing, healthy food, walkability, those kinds of resources related to health in environment. Then finally we talk about community inclusivity as almost a meta-concept in a sense, but really thinking about equality of access. Equity is such an important issue, especially for vulnerable communities. Looking at equality of access, and treatment and opportunity, the distribution, the geo-spatial distribution of the population, of resources across communities and the impact of social exclusion and segregation and unequal access to resources as well as gentrification and diversity. Those are huge.

We tried to be as comprehensive as we could in the domains of community measurements. Next I'll discuss the emergent properties. These are things that we

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think have impact and effect and are related to all the settings, but also all of the domains. And these domains that I just described are deeply embedded in these complex social structures of community and well-being, culture and power. When these domains are studied together, these properties emerge that stem from an interaction between these components and the environment.

When the community is the focus of the research, new structures, and patterns and properties, including overall community well-being, culture, power, etc. are likely to appear. These structures influence the domain and also give us a multilevel understanding of the interaction and linkages among and between the various domains. For example, the [inaudible] Sector Action of Power emerges out of a complex interaction between collective engagement and community safety and security, which is supplemented by action and when bolstering a greater sense of engagement.

How do we define these? Community well-being is an overarching concept and goal that many community

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activists and researchers seek to achieve and measure in their work. It's often used interchangeably with concepts such as community satisfaction, quality of life, even there's measures of happiness. We didn't include those, but there's global measures of happiness that I've seen, especially in international research. Research studies ask, "Is the community thriving? Are residents satisfied with their neighbors, amenities and networks for leading a [inaudible] life?"

We all find that culture is really important, and this is a characteristic of societies, communities and organization. The traditional, anthropological concept of culture is defined as shared values, assumptions, beliefs, rules, customs. These things are weaved within things like collective efficacy and norms and values that people share influence their ability to intervene. We also know that national organizations and foundations have realized the importance of culture, for example, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health.

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Power is also really important. We know that our work often is looking at power and how to grow power, how to tap into power, how to change power. A concept it can facilitate or inhibit community development and sustainability, often understated, and is often not really taken into account. It's really an important - on the positive side, [inaudible] power can aid in the ability of individuals and communities to achieve goals, evidence through a sense of mastery or control over their circumstances.

On the negative side, we know power may be used to inflict harm or maintain inequity. That's the model. And we hope that helps people think about framing their work and not just a jump to measures, but to think about, "Where am I? Where is my research? Where is the community that I'm engaging in this? What are the most important concepts that I need to have to understand better before diving into doing my survey or my measure?" The other thing is there's a lot of methodological issues.

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And this is where Claudia Colton was amazingly helpful in understanding these methodological considerations, which she has dealt with throughout her career. Some of these are how do we actually define the community or neighborhood as a unit of measurement? I'm gonna talk to you about three different ways: administrative boundaries, residents' perceptions and geospatial boundaries. There's others, but I'm gonna highlight those. Do we use subjective or objective measures?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of those? And really central to, again, CNCS is how do we engage with the community in what we're doing in measure selection and maybe developing and evaluating the measures. Let's talk about administrative boundaries. I'm sure some of you use this. A lot of the studies use units for proxies for neighborhoods or place-based communities such as census data or tracts. They weren't established for us to do the kind of research we're doing but we use them because they are accessible and basically can really answer some of our questions, however they don't always coincide

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with the individual or resident's experience with regard to their neighborhoods.

And they may be re-drawn, they also vary in terms of size, they don't always fit residents' definition.

What we also need to be considering then is the degree to which these administrative boundaries really do fit the research and the conceptualization of the neighborhood and community. Again most of these were not decided for some of the analysis. And we use them but we have to just acknowledge that if we do. Also there's a thing called resident-perceived neighborhoods.

This is when you're actually working with the community and asking them, "How do you define your neighborhood? Where are the boundaries? What's relevant to you in your everyday life?" They can be used to craft the neighborhood boundaries for your study. There's even such a thing as in individual thing looking outside their home and saying, "This is my boundary for what I call a neighborhood." It's a

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close-knit neighborhood around where you live, the spoke neighborhood. Those also are really important.

There's also evidence that the magnitude of the conceptual effects of some health outcomes is greater when we consider some of these more specific measures of neighborhoods including geospatial boundaries.

These are defined by spatial bumpers or physical features. You can use geographic information system tools to draw the individualized neighborhood boundaries, center on a person's location, like we just talked about. And then there's something called ego-centered or sliding neighborhoods. These are buffers of varying sizes that can be drawn around each house's location and neighborhood measures are calculated to be buffers.

The buffer may be specified by distance, population size, geographic features. The good thing about this is when you're doing comparative work in neighborhoods, a whole neighborhood, if you want to do statistical analysis on effects, how many more - it's hard to find enough cases to do the analysis,

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but if you do these smaller buffers or zones you can actually get enough cases in the neighborhood you're working in and have a comparison neighborhood with the same kind of buffers and do comparison analysis. It allows for that.

Another thing is do we use objective measures? Do we use subjective measures? Objective measures, again, are things like administrative data, systematic social observation. And subjective measures are often derived from survey items that assess individuals' perceptions of their neighborhood, or qualitative data. There are strengths and weaknesses of both. And there's been a move in our field to favor objective measures, but we have to really think about what's the census come from, actually surveys. It is obviously more cases, more people, but they're also surveys and we need to think about how we approach this.

We need to think about when deciding whether to use an objective or subjective measure of relevant attributes in a neighborhood, we have to be clear

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what we're trying to do and what we're trying to understand. And so have our research question and goals frame the use of subjective and objective measures, and not necessarily what's considered favorable at the time. It's really important to do that. And practical matters, obviously, make a big difference because we only have so much time.

It might be good to have an administrative indicator. Your funding, your expertise, etc. I think that you need to think about when time and resource limitations dictate the decisions to use objective and subjective neighborhood-level measurement. It's important that you restrict your inferences to the type of measure employed. For example, perceptions of disorder cannot be used to infer crime rates unless prior research has shown that these measures are measuring the same construct. You have to almost have some administrative data on crime rates and then perception of crime, disorder and fear, potentially, and use all of that data to understand what's going on in the community around crime and violence.

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Again, my point is when possible to use both objective and subjective measures and have them tailored to your research goals and questions. Then the other thing we need to think about is how do we engage community partners in our work. We have a long history, social scientists, of conducting research on the community without getting their perspective or evaluating the usefulness of the findings to their everyday lives. The same thing has to do with measurement. We don't want people to feel like they're the objects or research who have been engaged in research.

Community-driven research is being advanced by CNCS and other institutions. Often it's called CBPR, or community-based participatory research, which is a collaborative partnership to research that equitably involves community members in all aspects. This, we believe, should include measurement selection. In order to do that there are two kind of considerations. How a researcher and community practitioners communicates measurement issues and builds a community partner's capacity to participate.

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And then the necessary steps to modify or develop measures to fit the context without compromising validity and reliability. A really, really important thing. This is a good example. In this example, community members participated in focus groups where they were asked about youth violence in their community. These focus groups were coded, and the input of the community advisors, 43 indicators were identified, the community and academic team went back to a bank of validated measures they had used in a previous round of data collection and match those with the focus group [inaudible] information.

And then 17 of those rose to the top as measures that crossed over. And they've used that data to evaluate psychometric properties of the new scale that were developed based on the community's definition of the factors that were crucial to [inaudible] youth violence. The results were psychometric tests that were then discussed with a community advisory board and further refined as were made. My own project here in Pittsburg that's funded by CNCS, we have a

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community advisory board and we're training them in all of the community-based research principles, methods, etc.

We developed a logical model with them. We are looking now at the measures and so we've gone over the validated measures, many from the book that I just wrote, to say these are the validated measures, here's what we're saying in the logic model that we're trying to achieve as outcomes. Do these make sense to you? You guys take the survey, let's talk through these measures. And then we're obviously looking at now that feedback. How do we actually use that feedback? We may not have to change any.

But if we do, then we have to have a process to validate this to test the reliability, validity, etc. I'm gonna now talk about in review the measures. We had to have some inclusion criteria for measures we wanted to [inaudible]. And so we wanted to use measures that had instruments, items, methods, etc. that were more widely used that were distinct, published or manualized, fully documented so people

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could access the articles, information, reach the researchers we have in the table of contact information for all the primary authors, etc., websites where applicable.

We wanted you to be able to replicate them and understand them. We want people in the field and researchers to use them. Clearly we wanted to have the best measures, the most reliable, valid, some research behind them, and so we looked at that, and also in English, published in English. The majority were examined and tested in the U.S. We also have measures for other countries if they are actually widely used and they're also in English. We did not include all the international measures that are being used in a lot of the fields that are in other languages, etc.

I also have as a handout I gave you a list of measures and tables that are in the book, and so these coincide with those. The community and neighborhood measures include two sets of measures, the capacity for community change and the ability of

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community to engage in collective action and collaborative effort. Chapter four talks about community readiness and capacity for change. There are ten measures in there, there's readiness for change measures, there's capacity of community-based health and social initiatives, there's community organizational capacity measures and community ownership and preparedness.

And then chapter five talks about strategic collective action in communities. And this is the collective looking at collective efforts, the contexts affecting organizing, power and influence in CBPR, measures examining activities, functioning and characteristics of coalitions and partnerships. And there's 11 measures in that chapter. Then we've got measures that assess the nature of social processes. We know how important social processes and engagement are in communities, often understudied before, often very hard to measure before, but people have come a long way in that.

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Social connections, empowerment, efficacy. Chapter six is about social connection and the processes in communities, social processes like the types of connections among residents, the relationships among residents in their neighborhood or place, sense of community, social capital, social cohesion ties, collective efficacy. When I get organizing, I always thought, "I think we're doing this." It's called social capital now, I think. We're building strong relationships, we're building bonds, but I didn't have any idea how to measure it until I actually understood the research later when I went back to school.

Making this available to people like who I was in the field could be really important to them now so they can measure the effects of their work. We always said we'd build community's empowerment or engagement. Now we can measure that. Psychological empowerment among youth, adults, community empowerment, civic engagement, community participation, activism, leadership in political efficacy and engagement among both youth and adults, and that's in chapter seven.

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We all care about what the characteristics are in our community. And we are looking at four different things. In chapter eight we have measures of community resources and resident satisfaction with those. A lot of these are observation-based measures, but some are survey-based. This is using both objective and subjective measures of community resources, amenities, environmental indicators, awareness of [inaudible] with satisfaction, perception of the quality of the neighborhoods, etc. And back to the built environment, the neighborhood food environment related to nutrition, food access, cost and quality, walkability, pedestrian/cycling assessments and the walkability of the neighborhood.

All these things have to do with encouraging people to be healthy. We need to know if the environment supports that. These measurements look at that, green space, recreation, all of that. And these are often things that are missing in vulnerable communities. Housing and neighborhood change. Our project with CNCS is focused on neighborhood change and equitable

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development. There's a measure in this chapter using Google Street view to look at neighborhood change. So we're going to train our [inaudible] and our community participates, our youth and adult participants in how to do that, how to use that Google Street view measure to look at neighborhood change.

Housing quality, affordability, vacancy, blight, mobility we know effects neighborhoods, people coming in and out of neighborhoods. That's all Claudia Colton, she did a great job with that. She's been doing that for years. And Darcy Freedman did a lot of the built environment because she's a health policy person. Community disorder, crime and violence. This is looking at both the observational and survey measures of physical and social disorder, looking at systematic social observations. That is a process of how you collect the data that was developed by a sociologist.

For measures of fear of crime and exposure to violence, and then methods and data for how you

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gather indicators of crime and violence in communities. That is really important. We also have measures that examine the overall quality and character of place-based communities. These are measures of place-based exclusions and unequal access to resources, racial and economic segregation, looking at negative environmental exposures and access to transportation, and jobs and services. And then our meta, global concept of community well-being and quality of life, there are some composite indicators, both domestic and international, looking at residents' perceptions of individual community well-being and then some that use, again, administrative data such as human development indicators, quality of life and livability.

I want you guys to think about this. This is one scenario and there's a handout with three other ones. We're working in a collaborative team and our goal is to prevent community and youth violence. There's a lot of research that shows that social connections and cohesion, otherwise known as collective efficacy, shared norms and values, and resident engagement in

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addressing neighborhood problems actually leads to lower levels of community violence. This is neighborhood collective efficacy. You're part of a team of social work and other researchers and neighborhood and youth serving agencies, local police department, while working together to reduce community 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 developing strategies to increase collective efficacy in targeted neighborhoods. What's the geographical unit of analysis? What's your ecological setting? What do you think? Is it individual, collective, community, societal? Is it a combination of both? It depends on your research question. I would actually look at individual and community level indicators in this. Look at the individual's perception, how safe they feel, their perception of crime and disorder, the community levels of collective efficacy and the community levels of crime and violence.

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We're reviewing the measures we discussed earlier, what would you do? What measures would you use? Why would you use those? How would you go about sampling people to be in your study or how would you collect that data? Would you try to do bespoke neighborhoods? Would you try to do buffers if you're gonna do [inaudible] design. One of the strategies could be recruiting participants to be engaged that represent different sections of the neighborhood so you actually have a representative sample to understand crime and violence across the neighborhood.

What are the strengths and limitations of the measures? And what's the extent of community participation and engagement in your study and how would you facilitate this engagement? Those are all really important things to think about and to answer as you begin to design your study and then also select your measures. What would you need to consider when selecting your measures? What levels of measurement? What ecological settings? What domains? What methodological issues or considerations? What else might you consider?

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There are other resources for community and neighborhood measurement that are out there that are helpful. The National Neighborhood Indicators project is one. NeighborWorks America, they do community development, they have success measures, and the CDC and other kinds of health institutes also have compendiums of measures. I'm sure there's more than this. These are just a few examples. Again, the purpose of our book was to really promote the use of reliable and valid measures for community and neighborhood research including people who are doing program evaluation, community-based participatory research, community-level intervention research, people just looking at neighborhood effects.

It runs the gamut. And we believe it can be used by multiple disciplines, people across social work, sociology, urban and community development, public health, community psychology, sociology practitioners in the field, health practitioners in the field, non-profits, community grassroots organizations, community neighborhood organizations. We think it

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also can be used to train students as well as staff from community agencies, to promote services, programs and interventions that benefit community residents and institutions.

From neighborhood organizations, community development corporations, foundations, city planning, health departments, etc. I just want to end with thinking about: what was the most important thing you learned today and how will you use this information? How do you apply this information? What is important to you in your research? And was this helpful, hopefully? I just want to again thank you guys, all 153 of you. Thank you so much. I'm just really looking forward to looking at all the chat. And Melissa is going to actually lead us in some Q&A for the rest of the time.

DR. GOUGE: Thank you so much, Dr. Mary Ohmer. We've got some very active discussions going on in the chat box already so I think our Q&A session's going to be great. Before we open the line for questions and

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answers, Gina Croft, the acting director of our NCCC program will give us a few closing remarks.

GINA: Thank you so much. And thank you Dr. Ohmer for the presentation, but more importantly, thank you for being a part of the technical panel for the work that we're going that's gonna move us to the next level. AmeriCorps and NCCC is a national service program for 18-24-year-olds. It's residential and team-based. We have about 26 years' worth of data because we've documented every tree we've planted, we've counted every sandbag we've laid down, and many, many other things we've been counting, [inaudible], pounds of debris removed, all kinds of things.

And the impact of the program, anecdotally, we feel we have a lot of success and the ability to describe that success. But the mission of NCCC is challenging because we don't know the value of the weight between us. We have two competing priorities. One is to develop our members who serve with us for ten months into future leaders and the competing part of it is

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the impact to the community and what we're actually doing and how well we're doing it.

Discussions like this, grant activities like this that is furthering the ability to one, give us more information to look at ourselves differently and ask ourselves the right kinds of questions with the right kind of framework that actually will help us one, define better what our community impact is and help us solve some problems with a mission that's pretty complicated like ours with competing priorities of where do we invest more, how do we make changes, what can we do to move our program's impact to the next level so that we are demonstrating through important pieces of evidence, and not just very basic counts, that validates where we're investing our time, energy and efforts.

I've challenged folks who work with me to make sure that we're doing a few very simple things, that we're recruiting the right kinds of people and helping to retain them, that we have the most relevant project base across the country to meet our nation's most

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critical needs so that we can build champions in and around the work we do. And those three things hopefully lead us to having the best business case for running a residential program like NCCC. Having this information and framework and all of the work that guides us that we heard today using these kinds of opportunities to help move our work forward has been extraordinarily valuable.

We're into it a year and a half, maybe I'm stretching the timeline a little bit, but we have a very long way to go, and this important work that you do, Dr. Ohmer, and that our colleagues can use to help us move the ball forward, not just in how me as the national director can use important data, and information and evidence to inform my decisions, but how do we then represent our work and the impact of our service opportunities and experience to the country at large to taxpayers that are interested on the ROI on what we're investing in programs like the one I oversee.

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It's a great appreciation that we have really great minds to put these things together and move up forwards. Thank you so much for being a part of this process, and I'm looking forward to all that is unlocked with the keys that will help move us forward in this direction. Thanks to Mary and all of your team here at CNCS, but more importantly for finding the right kinds of resources that build us the infrastructure to move forward so that we're demonstrating the best we can on behalf of one, being good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, but also doing the right thing through our national service opportunities. Thanks. This is exciting.

MARY: That's just a huge motivator for me for why I wanted to do this, is to show impact so that additional resources and support go into the communities [inaudible] to build those strong communities, to show the return, "Hey, there is an impact", how to measure that, how to demonstrate that and how to show how valuable is the work that you guys do and the work that I'm sure all of you guys listening today do, and to get additional resources

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into these communities and to change to build stronger and healthy sustainable communities.

FEMALE: Thank you. Thank you to Dr. Mary Ohmer, Dr. Mary Hyde and Gina Croft for such a wonderful, dynamic presentation. And we have a few minutes left to answer some questions. We have a couple of questions that have already come in and for example, how about we've got a question from Kristina Kobe [phonetic]: it doesn't happen often that both objective and subjective measures are used in these sort of data collection enterprises.

MARY: Does it happen often? I don't know. I think we're getting better at that. I know when I started doing some of this research it wasn't the case, but I think we need to move in that direction because even that case in an area I told you about community violence where I'd done some work. I had a little pilot study that gathered survey data from the participants that we trained in collective efficacy. I want to take it to the next stage of now we need to actually look at the data. We need to get administrative data, we need

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objective data, we need to combine that with survey data. That tells a better story. That gives us more information to understand if we're having an impact.

FEMALE: Thank you. Mary, can you review a sliding-scale comparative analysis of neighborhoods, and would it compose neighborhood boundaries that individual youth patterns compared to demographically-matched individuals in another neighborhood?

MARY: Yeah. I think you definitely need to be able to do that. You could. Claudia's the expert in this, but there are definitely ways to be able to comparative analysis and create those bumpers or boundaries, or bespoke neighborhoods, that actually you could replicate in a neighborhood you weren't doing an intervention in, and at least get administrative data from that or even do a survey. Do a stratified sample based on that stratification of using those buffers.

FEMALE: We'll take one more question from the chat box and one from the room here. Faced with limited

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resources, which would be your top measures to deploy in a community study. This comes from John Mollenkopf.

DR. OHMER: I'm going to back to the administrative data because that's not very expensive to access and to you, to start there, to maybe create a baseline to make an argument for further resources to do more on-the-ground data collection with people in a community. I would say, again, to make a case to get additional resources to do additional, more in-depth measurement, that might be a good place to start. And there are so many different tools you can use to do that, census data. In the book we have a lot of different ways to gather data that's objective to make a case for whatever you're trying to do.

FEMALE: That's a great idea that the limited resources consideration, you might begin to do some research using those methods that might allow you to build and to use other methods. Thank you. Do you have any specific examples of valid measures for neighborhood characteristics that you've seen and perhaps and data

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that's been collected in an accessible way for multiple audiences?

DR. OHMER: Some of the measures in our book actually if you look at the chapter on the community resources, community resources and resident satisfaction, and also the built environment influencing healthy living, there are some reliable and validated measures in there of different neighborhood indicators and characteristics depending on what the goal of your study is. Also if you look at the neighborhood change there's some validated measures using administrative data in there, as well there's some survey measures in those chapters also.

I would say those are pretty helpful. And you can assess and look at them and assess whether they fit your research questions clearly, but we tried to include things that had some research behind it or some validity and reliability.

FEMALE: Thank you. Thanks for directing us to exactly where we could find that answer in your book. We

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didn't have a lot of time for Q&A but we are getting close to 3:00 and we'd like to be respectful of everyone's time. Mary or Gina, do you have anything you'd like to add before we close?

DR. OHMER: I just appreciate everyone's time today. And I'm gonna go through your chat, but feel free to contact me or any of my co-authors. They all know about this today. If you have questions, I think somebody put Claudia's website up there. Please, I'd be happy to answer any questions you have and follow up to this webinar.

FEMALE: Wonderful, Mary. Thank you for offering your contact information. Thank you again so much to all of our speakers and our audience today. This has been a wonderful discussion. We'd like to thank Emily, Ramus [phonetic] and Connor Berkner [phonetic] for ICF International and their colleagues for all of their technical support that helps make this magic happen. And we'll be sending all of the folks who attended a post-webinar survey so please let us know your thoughts on the webinar and ideas for future

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webinars. We would love to hear what you have to say. We will be posting this recording within about a month on our website. If you would like any more information, you can find us there. Thank you so much for attending today.

FEMALE:

DR. OHMER:

FEMALE:

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