

Community Profiling in Participatory Action Research

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The primary goal of social and health policies is to improve the well-being of local communities. Insofar as every plan of action requires knowledge of the research object—in this case the community—then getting to know the local context under study is the starting point of a successful intervention (Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2000; Forrest & Hill, 2013). Hawtin, Hughes, and Percy-Smith (1994) described the essence of the intervention through the following four steps: needs assessment, community consultations, social audits, and community profiling. Needs assessment is the preliminary goal for a researcher approaching a new social context. Knowing what local people are doing, how often, and with whom is a tool for auditing any dimension of community life at any given time. Within the framework of a community audit, Taylor and Burns (2000) focused specifically on local participation aided by such tools as baseline mapping, specific checklists, and measurement scales, in order to investigate and assess people's needs and their local participation. Moreover, Kirsten and Holt (2008) highlighted the benefit of involving the community in the decision-making process in assessing health priorities through community profiling.

Hawtin et al. (1994) described and discussed the procedure of community profiling as one approach to obtaining local participation. They highlighted its different aspects as follows: "A comprehensive description of the *needs* of a population that is defined, or defines itself, as a *community*, and the *resources* that exist within that community, carried out with the *active involvement* of the *community* itself, for the purpose of developing an *action plan* or other means of improving the quality of life of the community" (Hawtin, Hughes, & Percy-Smith, 2007, p. 5). In this chapter we shall first present the theory behind, and the steps involved in, community diagnosis and community profiling. We will then offer a case study illustrating the application of community profiling in an urban community.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY DIAGNOSIS AND COMMUNITY PROFILING

Community diagnosis based on community profiling constitutes a means for getting to know local communities (Arcidiacono, Sommantico, & Procentese, 2001). This is, indeed, a mindful and participatory way of reading people's needs. As such, it is a valuable aid for providing information related to the weaknesses and strengths of health, relational, and economic aspects of a community. At the same time it is a preliminary tool for community building and social change (Arcidiacono & Procentese, 2005).

Community diagnosis can be framed as a tool within the broader picture of participatory action research (PAR), a well-known methodology for identifying and solving common problems for individuals, groups, and organizations within a given community (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). This tool is designed to help people assess the quality of the place where they live, as well as to take action toward their betterment.

In PAR the understanding of social and psychological phenomena entails a thorough observation of the dynamics at stake in a given context.

Transformative theory and practice come together in a reciprocal process of mutual implementation in which hypotheses steer actions and the latter, in turn, stimulates and modifies theorizations. Cooperation between researcher and community member is crucial, and this can be built only on the mutual understanding of needs, competencies, and resources. PAR hinges on a process whereby local knowledge and professional expertise are merged to promote social change. Involving the very recipients of the intervention makes it possible to negotiate with the social actors to which the intervention is directed (Arcidiacono & Procenzese, 2010). As a consequence, it helps to make important decisions more easily accepted by the members of the larger community. This technique plays an empowering role, in that its power to raise awareness and involve people in decision-making processes leads them to take action for social change.

Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, and Siddiquee (2011) attempted to define the most relevant dimensions of community life that should be investigated in order to draw up a community profile, namely, characteristics of the population, local views and priorities, housing, education, environment, facilities and services, crime and safety, physical environment, transportation and communications, and health. They also drew up a list of different tools and methods to collect information for each dimension. Maps, data, and other forms of information from both local and national sources are considered, together with participant observations, community walks, focus group, interviews, diaries, video films, creative writing workshops, and services waiting lists. The aim is to investigate the characteristics of the community and, at the same time, to discover, together with the inhabitants, its cultural and symbolic representations, social structures, and eventually its own historical roots, "which still inform the contemporary understandings of what community means" (Kagan et al., 2011, p. 79). Cheong (2006) also highlighted the need to carefully recognize physical, psychological, sociocultural, economical, and technological domains. He specifically emphasized the importance of taking into account the relational features of the community, that is, the communication within and between different individuals and groups. Moreover, Kagan et al. (2011) introduced power as a further dimension to be considered. Related to this power dimension, the authors'

experiences (Arcidiacono, 1996, 2004) in community profiling at the town level have made us aware of the importance of reflexivity among researchers and of trust between the latter and local bodies.

Community profiling informs knowledge about a certain territory, including its characteristics, people's needs, resources, and the shortcomings of institutions and services, as proposed by Martini and Sequi (1988, 1995) and further developed by Francescato and Ghirelli (1988). Francescato and Zani (2013, p. 3) defined it as "structured participatory action research, that can be used to find out what particular problems and strengths characterize a local community in the eyes of different groups of residents and what are their most desired changes." It is regarded (Francescato, Arcidiacono, Albanesi, & Mannarini, 2007; Francescato, Gelli, Mannarini, & Taurino, 2004) as a participatory tool usually solicited by local administrations interested in more than mere temporary, extemporary, and stopgap measures. In their guidelines for procedures and data collection for community profiling, these authors proposed the construction of an interdisciplinary research group (IRG) that is formed by those members of the community who display a high level of expertise with respect to the profile analysis to be carried out. The group then carries out a preliminary analysis through brainstorming, that is, a technique aimed at bringing out those strong points and critical aspects that the members of the discussion group regard as being the most important. This is one of the reasons why the IRG should be formed by stakeholders of the community who vary on such dimensions as age, social status and role, profession, and degree of knowledge of the local community. This preliminary analysis helps to plan the next steps more clearly by, for instance, highlighting which aspects will be further investigated, as well as identifying other local stakeholders who might best be contacted. The second step is to develop in more detail this preliminary and rough community diagnosis by collecting data, thereby providing a more complete community profile, that is, those aspects that characterize the community in this model (territorial profile, demographic profile, services profile, institutional profile, productive activities profile, psychological profile, anthropological profile, and profile of the future).

Tables 35.1 and 35.2 provide an example (Tuoazzi, 2013) of community profiling in the town

TABLE 35.1: COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

	IRG (Interdisciplinary Research Group)	Focus Group	Interviews	Questionnaires
Territorial	Natural resources Geographic location Cultural and artistic heritage	Natural resources Geographic location Cultural and artistic heritage	Natural resources Geographic location Cultural and artistic heritage	Natural resources Geographic location Cultural and artistic heritage
Demographic	Medium-high educational level	Young population	Young population Demographic growth	Young population
Productive activities	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Food Tertiary activities: bank
Services		School services Spa treatments Community-based projects Soccer field Catholic youth center		School services Soccer field Catholic youth center
Institutional		Administrative activities Police station Courthouse	Police station Courthouse	Administrative activities Police station Courthouse
Anthropological	Openness/ solidarity/family	Openness/solidarity/ family Traditions	Openness/solidarity/ family Traditions Hard-working people	Openness/solidarity/ family Traditions
Psychological		Social support	Cohesion	Sense of belonging Social support

Source: Adapted with permission from *Profilo di Comunità di Carinola: Risorse e Potenzialità* [Community Profiling of Carinola: Resources and Opportunities] by T. Tuozzi, 2013, pp. 29–31.

of Carinola based on the guidelines of Francescato and her colleagues. In this work, the preliminary brainstorming among the IRG regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the community was followed by a series of data collection activities, involving individual interviews, focus group interviews, and semistructured questionnaires. The IRG was composed of eight citizens: one majority politician and one opposition politician who were members of the city council, a representative of community associations, a teacher, an elderly retired person, an unemployed youth, one precariously employed young worker, and a craftsman. Following the IRG's brainstorming, 18 key informants—the mayor, four city councillors, a city councilwoman, one majority politician, one opposition politician, the chief of the municipal

police, the chief of the police station, the director of the local prison, five parish priests, an elderly man, and an immigrant—were involved by means of individual interviews. Subsequently, there were 12 focus groups composed of local inhabitants (varying in neighborhood, age, and gender) involving a total of 87 people, including young students, workers, unemployed persons, and retired elderly.

The semistructured questionnaires were distributed to 89 citizens of Carinola. They included, in addition to questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the community, some specific items investigating respondents' satisfaction with respect to the services offered by the territory and the work of institutions. Some questions also inquired into the sense of belonging and social support perceived by citizens. Finally, there were questions on the perception of the

TABLE 35.2: COMMUNITY WEAKNESSES

	IRG (Interdisciplinary Research Group)	Focus Group	Interviews	Questionnaires
Territorial	Scarce promotion of the cultural and artistic heritage	Scarce promotion of the cultural and artistic heritage		Scarce promotion of the cultural and artistic heritage
	Scarce promotion of the local area	Scarce promotion of the local area		Scarce promotion of the local area
Demographic	Scarce homogeneity between groups of different factions	Demographic degrowth/population aging	Demographic degrowth/ population aging	Demographic degrowth/ population aging
Productive activities	Scarce promotion of tourism	Scarce promotion of tourism		Scarce promotion of tourism
	Scarce promotion of agriculture	Scarce promotion of agriculture	Scarce promotion of agriculture	Scarce promotion of agriculture
Services	Inadequate school structures	Inadequate school structures		Inadequate school structures
		Inefficient social and health services		Inefficient social and health services
	Lack of recreational structures	Lack of recreational structures		Lack of recreational structures
Institutional	Administrative shortcomings	Administrative shortcomings	Administrative shortcomings	Administrative shortcomings
		The local church not very involved in the community life		
Anthropological		Influence peddling		Influence peddling
	Citizen apathy/scarce participation	Citizen apathy/scarce participation	Citizen apathy/scarce participation	Citizen apathy/scarce participation
Psychological	Separatism	Separatism Neglect	Separatism	Separatism Neglect

Source: Adapted with permission from *Profilo di Comunità di Carinola: Risorse e Potenzialità* [Community Profiling of Carinola: Resources and Opportunities] by T. Tuozzi, 2013, pp. 31–34.

future and the Scale of Italian Sense of Community (Prezza, Costantini, Chiarolanza, & Di Marco, 1999). The questionnaire data were supplemented with data obtained through the movie technique (see later), drawings, and participant observation, all of which were shared subsequently in community meetings with the IRG, local administrators, and research participants. These discussions allowed us to develop a more comprehensive psychological profile of Carinola. The detailed information collected through the individual interviews, focus groups,

questionnaires, and supplemental data produced a fairly complete picture of the area, outlining all of the different profiles noted earlier.

Once this preliminary analysis of Carinola was completed, the next step consisted of the development of a shared idea of what that community was like and what changes were to be hoped for. The researchers used frequencies analysis to highlight those aspects most widely shared by Carinola's citizens. The results were then presented by the IRG in a final meeting in which citizens of Carinola

proposed specific issues that they considered to be priorities for change.

There are numerous benefits in using profiles for community diagnosis. The technique depicts an accurate picture of the community; also, it does not restrict the analysis to mere data collection but also includes the feelings and thoughts of the members of the community collected through focus group and interviews. Indeed, the combination of objective (e.g., demographic and economic information) and subjective (provided by the stakeholders, informants, and questionnaire respondents) data allows for the identification of opportunities and deficiencies of the local community, as well as how these are perceived by the local people. However, along with the objective and subjective features, we should add a third one, the symbolic level, which emerges from involving local citizens in the use of free expressive tools, such as taking and discussing photographs (photovoice), making a drawing of the neighborhood (the “draw your neighborhood” technique), and developing a plot for a movie script about the community. The latter, called “the movie” technique, is a creative participatory tool that allows participants to “pick a genre of movie (e.g., historical, science fiction, comedy, or detective) and come up with a title, a plot, main characters, and dramatization, if they wish, for particular relevant scenes” (Francescato & Zani, 2013, p. 4).

The active participation of the local people in this type of research is crucial because, in addition to a mere diagnosis of the community’s state of affairs, it enables an intervention of development and promotion of community life that hinges on confrontation, communication, and exchange of knowledge. In this light, community profiling allows for a self-sustained and self-determined process of social change (Martini & Sequi, 1995). Table 35.3 summarizes the data and the tools that were employed in the work done in Carinola.

The community profiling technique, however, does require a considerable amount of time and resources. This is especially important if the researcher aims at recruiting a representative sample by resorting to all of the instruments required for a complete community profile (Prezza & Santinello, 2002). With regard to this, a number of shorter community profiling versions are under development. In some of these, for instance, only some representative groups of local people are

involved in the preliminary analysis and in the “movies.” In some cases, it is advisable to carry out the research by focusing only on some key dimensions and issues that particularly concern the local community (Messer & Townsley, 2003). This is true for our case study, which we present next.

CASE STUDY

Background

Porta Capuana is one of the most ancient gates of the City of Naples and gives its name to the surrounding district. Its geographical location lies next to the central train station, the airport, and the port and, therefore, presents a high logistical potential together with a high tourism impact (enhanced by the presence of churches, as well as its architectural and monumental heritage). However, today Porta Capuana stands out as a pocket of urban degradation. For instance, it does not take advantage of its culinary heritage, the labor market is unregulated, and organized crime is widespread and deceptively concealed. This urban deprivation is also coupled with the presence of groups of migrants lacking in resources.

Psychology Loves Porta Capuana is a project developed by a research team of the University of Naples Federico II. The initiative is part of a broader endeavor championed by the I Love Porta Capuana project, which is a body of associations and institutions working together on participatory and sustainable urban regeneration. The organization has the goal of “developing a synergic network of local people, entrepreneurs, and social actors of the neighborhood of Porta Capuana in order to give value to the monuments as well as the local culinary and artisan heritage” (<http://www.portacapuana.it>). Invited by the I Love Capuana organizers, the authors were able to engage in community profiling of the area, with the aim of uncovering its needs and requests, both explicit and implicit. Given our awareness of the importance of reflexivity among researchers and trust between the latter and local bodies, we developed a research strategy enabling rich interaction and discussion among various stakeholders, associations, and researchers.

Research Procedures and Instruments

Small (i.e., two- to five-member) groups of undergraduate students from the University of Naples Federico II were invited by the researchers to

TABLE 35.3: COMMUNITY PROFILES: DESCRIPTION OF AIMS, THEMES, AND INSTRUMENTS

Profile	Description	Instruments
Territorial profile	This includes data regarding the characteristics of the local area, such as geographical extension, physical composition, climate, natural resources, infrastructures, environmental degradation, space allocation (e.g., housing, working environment, free time), and their usability.	Maps Town plan Tourism leaflets Photographs Observations “Community walk”
Demographic profile	This refers to the population size, distributed by age, sex, education, growth/degrowth rate, migration waves, and social mobility. Data on immigration/emigration are also included.	List of data provided by competent offices Data analysis
Productive activities profile	Productive activities are broken down into <i>primary, secondary, and tertiary</i> . Activities are to be sourced, taking into account the occupation of the people in all aspects (e.g., job security, unemployment, crisis in the labor market, illegal labor), as well as the rate of environmental pollution related to given productive activities.	Data collecting and analysis Semistructured interviews Questionnaires Observations
Services profile	Services include health services, socio-educational services, and cultural-recreational services. The data collected refer to the presence of these facilities, as well as their location, accessibility, user base, organization, and operation. Sometimes it is useful to draw a map of the connection between different structures and services.	Data collection and analysis Meetings Semistructured interviews Observations Focus groups
Institutional profile	This profile refers to the setup of the administrative and political organization of the local community, as well as the presence of its ideological landmarks and specific institutions, such as police stations, prisons, and churches, as well as the possible connection with social and community issues.	Data collection and analysis Interviews Analysis of institutional networks
Anthropological profile	This profile refers to the history of the community, its conception, value, traditions, individual and social responses to community issues, level of cohesion among its members, and their engagement in community life.	Books, booklets Statements Observations Interviews Photographs and videotapes Analysis of printed texts
Psychological profile	This profile indicates emotional dynamics, sense of belonging, and elements of collective identification. The data refer to the extent and density of social networks; the level of openness/closeness among various social subgroups within the community; and their level of participation, collaboration, and emotional safety.	Social support questionnaires and sense of community questionnaires Open and semistructured interviews Sociogram for small groups “Draw your neighborhood” technique
Profile of the future	This profile explores people’s expectations with regard to the perceived future of their community. It can also identify the influence of the media on the perception of togetherness and community life.	Focus groups “Movie” technique

participate in an ethnographic observation of the area—the “community walk”—at different times of the day. These groups were also asked to take photographs of places of interest and post them on a Facebook group page that had been previously set up with the purpose of sharing experiences and research material. Each group was also asked to write a short report of its observations, describing what its members had observed and including their own comments and feelings. A total of 750 photographs were subsequently posted online and discussed in the classroom.

Next, a team of four researchers carried out the thematic categorization of all of the observational texts and conducted a SWOT analysis of these observations’ reports by categorizing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (i.e., SWOT) that the student-researchers had attributed to the area (Arcidiacono, Grimaldi, Procentese, & Di Martino, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This categorization constituted a good starting point for the local association representatives and the researchers to finalize the research objectives, locate key people and stakeholders (i.e., institutional and association representatives, migrants, retailers, craftsmen, hoteliers, restaurateurs, service providers, and school representatives) to interview, and develop interview guidelines. We also included tourists and casual visitors, as they are key informants able to reveal the impact that tourism has on the area and offer their own comments and suggestions.

Based on our preliminary work and the observations of the student-researchers, we outlined a quick and comprehensive image of the local area. This highlighted that, despite its architectural beauty as well as cultural heritage, the district of Porta Capuana was in a state of high deprivation, uncleanliness, and neglect. Thus, in formulating our interview guidelines, special attention was given to narratives concerning relational habits, meeting points, significant traditions, well-known songs and mottos, and knowledge of events of the area. Our goal was, in fact, not only to collect information but also feelings, memories, and emotions connected to the area.

We thus identified thematic areas for the interview grids and trained our student-researchers in how to carry out focused interviews (that is, narrative interviews that delve into specific research areas of interest) with the aforementioned

stakeholders. In accordance with Arcidiacono (2015, in press), we constructed interview guidelines that would allow the interviewees to freely express their thoughts while at the same time focusing on the research questions. This method is a further development of the interactive structured interview proposed by Richards and Morse (2007), which is able to collect the “spontaneous voice” of respondents, thereby acquiring further knowledge on the topics of interest. Our aim was to collect data on the area’s livability, as well as possible plans of action and projects for the future.

Results and Discussion

The transcribed interviews were then analyzed by means of Atlas ti.7. Four main themes emerged from the analysis of the content of the 359 interviews conducted: degradation (89%), garbage and uncleanliness (83%), lack of security (87%), and tourism as a possible resource (70%).

It is interesting to note how the interviews highlighted that, although some of the objective issues of the community, such as degradation, dirt, and lack of institutional intervention, were widely recognized, perceptions of their causes, as well as identification of resources, varied greatly among stakeholders and key informants. Love, Boxelaar, O’Donnell, and Francis (2007) underlined the potential of community profiling in facilitating the expression of the diverse voices of a community. In our case, for example, the local school staff, unlike retailers and restaurateurs, considered migrants to be a resource for the district, while the collective perception appeared to point to migrants as being the scapegoat for all problems in the district, being blamed for the widespread sense of insecurity, the lack of livability, and the garbage. At the same time, such a massive denunciation of degradation coming from all the stakeholders and key informants suggested the necessity of collective actions to tackle the issue.

Following the analysis of the interviews, feedback meetings, which were conducted through a series of *discussant cafés* (i.e., small discussion groups between researchers and members of the community), allowed for virtuous circles to take place, in which the community members proposed a number of interventions for the betterment of Porta Capuana, such as the following: security, road maintenance, antique market, street lighting, car parks, cleaning, video surveillance,

interventions for the local deprived youth, meeting places, well-groomed playgrounds, and a research center. In these meetings, as well as in discussions with local associations and government authorities, an important communication tool that we used to discuss the main issues uncovered by the research were short videos summarizing the most significant results.

What are the distinctive features of this intervention as a whole? We believe that its success rests on the synergy that we have built with the associations operating in the district. Because of this, the research team could access the considerable amount of information required to cover the various profilings suggested by Francescato and Zani (2013) without a costly deployment of resources in terms of time and money. Conversely, in return, the associations obtained a thorough feedback analysis of the district's livability, which allowed for the making of plans based on the priorities of the local area. In fact, the network of associations has turned into an institutional body that has started to draw actively on new resources and power coming from the district of Porta Capuana. For example, the mayor of Naples, after attending some of our meetings, started a proactive collaboration with some of his council members in order to tackle some of the issues that were already well known to the various associations but were more clearly highlighted by the interviews. Also, the area of Porta Capuana has become included among the goals of the USEACT project, a European Union-sponsored program, on which the Porta Capuana municipality and the I Love Porta Capuana committee have begun to collaborate.

Our next step for the project involves responding to the local needs that we have identified through this research. To this end, we are outlining some guidelines for the future urban plans of the city council and will work in synergy with the local organizations to apply for regional and European funds for urban regeneration. In the framework of participatory action research, the employment of community profiling has acted as the driving force for the outlining of shared objectives and plans of action.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate how community profiling can provide a three-way interpretation of a local area, that is, through (a) practical facts and data (e.g., socioenvironmental and

structural data), (b) perceptions and representations (e.g., the voices of residents, practitioners and providers of services, representatives of institutions, and tourists), and (c) symbolization (e.g., photos and videos). With respect to the specific aim of symbolization, for example, in Porta Capuana our students made short movies about the area with respect to impact, advantages, and threats, which were also useful in helping to understand the mood of the context. Throughout the chapter, we have emphasized the importance of interaction with local organizations and bodies as a tool to obtain information from stakeholders and key informants.

Community profiling can help us answer many questions arising from a local context by taking into account social, relational, and symbolic features of that context. The work that we have described in the case study took into consideration individual feelings and desires, the interests of stakeholders, and information from key informants. Public officers, employees, and health and social personnel dealing with people living in the area on a daily basis are, indeed, "raw experts" with respect to the local context, and their non refined data provide a ready indicator of what is occurring in a community, as well as the reasons for what is occurring. We encourage those seeking to conduct action research to consider seriously community profiling as a methodology for providing a quite comprehensive understanding of the communities in which they are working.

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AFTERWORD

Over the past 30 years, the number of statistical methods has burgeoned. Whereas once it was sufficient to receive training in basic methods (e.g., probability theory, analysis of variance, factor analysis), this is no longer the case. Currently, graduate programs are pressed to teach classes where students learn more advanced methods, which are considered de rigueur for the doctoral degree and future research careers. Existing scholars and practitioners must also keep abreast of the latest trends. The current volume is a compendium of cutting-edge statistical techniques currently used in community science and community-based research. The utility of this book is that each chapter provides a thoughtful overview of a specific method so that the reader can understand its usefulness and, if necessary, pursue additional resources to build on this basic knowledge. In addition, the examples in each chapter demonstrate to the reader the application of the methods as well as how they advance community science and practice. Of course, the book is not an exhaustive compendium, and, yet, there are 11 qualitative approaches, 10 quantitative approaches, and 13 mixed methods approaches included. One feels humbled by all there is to learn.

But why should we care about newer methods? Why aren't the older methods good enough? One often encounters the notion that somehow newer methods are unnecessary, or, worse, that they can obfuscate and unnecessarily complicate the findings. In other words, many feel that older methods are sufficient for answering the crucial questions in a particular field. Therefore, it is important to ask: Do newer methods advance science? The

methods described in this book indicate that the resounding answer to that question is "yes."

Greenwald (2012), in an incisive article, argued that one of the most important roles of methods is that they often lead us to good theory. He tracked the history of Nobel Prizes in the sciences between 1991 and 2011 and found that the overwhelming majority of the awards were for methods (82%). This same trend held for the field of psychology. Although only nine awards have been made to psychologists since World War II (in medicine and economics, given that there is no Nobel Prize for psychology), 78% were for methods. Clearly, research methods, as defined by Greenwald, cover a broad range of activities, not necessarily statistical. However, the significance of Greenwald's article is that methods are important, and this importance is documented and recognized by the organization that honors the "best" in a field of study. I believe the same case can be made for the importance of statistical methods.

Greenwald argued that there are two main reasons that the preponderance of Nobel Prizes focus on methods. The first is that "existing theories often provided the basis for design of awarded methods" (p. 106). The second is that "awarded methods had served to generate previously inconceivable research findings, which, in turn, led to previously inconceivable theories" (p. 106). If, in part, the latter is the case, to the extent that we privilege theory over methods, we run the risk of not discovering interesting and important theories. That is, the theories we cannot imagine now are waiting to be illuminated by the sophisticated methods we bring to bear as we engage in our research endeavors.

I would also argue that generating new theories in the field of community science (or any field of inquiry) is a rare event. Perhaps, then, it is also fair to say that methods often lead us to ask better research questions or develop more interesting models of the phenomenon under study. There is a synergy, as Greenwald suggested. Sophisticated statistical methods allow us to ask different research questions, and the research questions we ask cannot be answered without the sophisticated methods at our disposal. That is, methods can provide a framework for conceptualizing the research we conduct and the theory we generate.

In recent years, I have been thinking and writing about the issue of methods as it relates to a person-oriented approach to psychological research. Most published research is not only quantitative but also variable oriented—theoretical and/or statistical approaches that describe relationships between one or more variables (e.g., as income goes up, depression goes down). The variable-oriented approach focuses on finding differences (or sameness) on the specific dimension under measurement. It also focuses on finding universal laws that allow us to predict behavior, broadly defined. Most of the quantitative methods chapters in this book fall under this broad rubric. There is much to recommend this approach, as it has been the dominant paradigm in psychological research since the early part of the 20th century. However, there is another, complementary quantitative approach that does not focus on linear relationships or the search for generalizable, universal laws of behavior. Similar to qualitative research methods, person-oriented approaches can be more context specific. Person-oriented research focuses on finding patterns or profiles of individuals (or communities or organizations; see Bogat, 2009; Bogat, Zarrett, Peck, & von Eye, 2012) within a sample that take into account more than one variable. In other words, individuals, communities, organizations, and so on are complicated and multifaceted and cannot be described with one variable. It is the pattern of variables that, taken together, constitutes the individual, community, or organization. By taking such an approach, the researcher can discover subgroups within the larger group that are not necessarily the *a priori* subgroups the researcher might have expected to find. As Williams and Kibowski note in Chapter 15 in this volume, latent class analysis and latent profile analysis are two techniques that can

be employed to find such subgroups. Statisticians are working on other approaches, including modifications of variable-oriented statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling and log-linear modeling (see, e.g., Bogat, von Eye, & Bergman, *in press*), to facilitate person-oriented research.

There are always difficulties incorporating new methods into mainstream science. For example, in her overview to the mixed methods section, Anderson in Chapter 23 notes the inherent difficulty in understanding when to use mixed methods and how to integrate them (she mentions at least 35 different types of mixed methods designs). She also notes that mixed methods have both benefits and challenges. This is true of all approaches and is something for professionals to keep in mind as they attempt to match theory/research questions with statistical methods.

One of the problems inhibiting the integration of new methods into the professional mainstream is the gap that exists between the scientists and practitioners using the new methods and the audience reading the research. The problem starts with reviewers who may or may not be familiar with various statistical techniques. Recently, my colleagues and I submitted an article to a biologically oriented journal. The analysis used was structural equation modeling—a fairly standard statistical approach used in many fields of psychology. However, the comments indicated how poorly the individual reviewers understood this statistical method—its purpose as well as what our particular findings were and their interpretation. Both reviewers repeatedly asked us to conduct several analyses of variance (ANOVAs), even though such analysis would not have thoroughly answered our research questions and doing so would have violated the basic assumptions of ANOVA. I am purposely using an example from a journal that was not in the field of community science, but I am sure that similar issues arise regularly in all journals. If the problems exist with reviewers not understanding structural equation modeling, then what happens when authors use one of the numerous newer techniques presented in the current book?

As professionals, we have a responsibility to be cognizant of the different methods available for data analysis, and this responsibility starts with those who review manuscripts for journals. As stated earlier, reviewers should understand the statistical techniques for the manuscripts they review. Otherwise, situations like the one described in the prior

paragraph result. It should not be incumbent on the paper's authors to write a treatise on a specific statistical technique in order to educate reviewers or editors.

But there is also another, more positive, role that reviewers may play. The best reviewers understand that authors may have collected important and interesting data but that the data analyses have not fully realized the potential of that data to answer the stated research questions, especially if the methods do not match the questions. Reviewers can aid the entry of newer statistical techniques into the mainstream by making suggestions about alternative statistical methods the authors might use for data analysis. The current book provides a vast panoply of the newest statistical methods that authors can use, and reviewers can suggest, as we advance the field of community science.

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June 2015

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INDEX

Page numbers followed by *f* or *t* indicate figures or tables.

- AA. *See* Alcoholics Anonymous
abductive reasoning, 107
- ABM. *See* agent-based modeling
accretion, 16
action research, 8, 243–51. *See also* community-based participatory action research; participatory action research; youth-led participatory action research
bridge research and action with, 246–47
collaboration in, 244, 247
interviews in, 245
PAR and, 53–54
pragmatism and, 244
theory and, 247
activism, 69–70, 81
Actor-Partner Interaction Model, 225
Adams, A. E., 139–41
adjacency matrix, 209, 209^t
administrative research, on neighborhoods, 94–95, 96
adolescent suicides, 172–74
Afghanistan, qualitative methods in, 19–21
agent-based modeling (ABM), 7, 129, 197–206
 case study for, 202–5, 204^f
 heterogeneity in, 198
 methodological individualism of, 198
 modeling cycle of, 199–200
 simplicity of, 199
AI. *See* appreciative inquiry
AIC. *See* Akaike Information Criterion
AJCP. *See* American Journal of Community Psychology
Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), 144
Akinsulure-Smith, Adeyinka M., 3
Alaska Natives, 257–59
Alceste (software), 113
alcohol, 257–59
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), 222
Allen, J., 259
Allen, James, 8
Allen, Nicole E., 9
Altman, I., 103
Alvarez, J., 18, 180

American Journal of Community Psychology (AJCP), 5–6, 126–27, 128^f
American Psychological Association, 18
analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), 123–24, 127
analysis of variance (ANOVA), 122, 123, 125–26, 127
ANCOVA. *See* analysis of covariance
Andalusian fishing, 327–31, 329^f, 330^f, 331^f
Anderson, Valerie R., 7
ANOVA. *See* analysis of variance
APA PsychNET, 33
appreciative inquiry (AI), 4, 53–59
 case study for, 55–58, 57^t
 DP and, 346
 opportunity-based PAR and, 54–55
 problem-based PAR and, 53–54
 stakeholder analysis for, 58
Arcidiacono, Caterina, 10, 361
ARIMA. *See* autoregressive moving average
Arnstein, S. R., 253–54, 259
art
 photovoice and, 81
 for qualitative method data collection, 16
artificial intelligence. *See* data mining
arts, LCA for, 146–48, 146^t, 147^t
Ary, D., 178
Asparouhov, T., 149
Atkins, M. S., 208
ATLAS.ti software, 28
auditability, in grounded theory, 24
authenticity, 17–18
 ontological, 72
autonomy, 198, 265
autoregressive moving average (ARIMA), 179
axial coding, 25
Azelton, L. S., 258–59

Baker, C., 121
Balcazar, Fabricio, 9
Banyard, V. L., 35
Barbados sexual health, 285–90, 287^f, 288^f, 289^f, 290^f

- Barile, John P., 6
 Barker, R. G., 198–99
 basis coefficients, in LGCs, 133
 Baxter Magolda, M. B., 336
 Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), 144
 Bazeley, P., 63
 behavioral systems science, 178
Behavior and Social Issues, 178
 behavior methods, 6, 177–84
 case study for, 182–83, 183f
 ecology and, 178–79
 external validity for, 179
 in GIS, 97–98
 behavior setting theory, 198–99
 Bentler, P. M., 159
 Berg, M., 13–14
 best-fitting solution, in LPA, 148
 Best Practices Club, 268
 biases. *See* worldview
 BIC. *See* Bayesian Information Criterion
 Biglan, A., 178
 Bishop, Brian J., 5, 107
 Blanco, Matte, 111, 112
 Block, E., 256
 BLRT. *See* Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test
 Blumer, Herbert, 69
 Boessen, A., 97–98, 100
 Boolean logic decision rules, 189
 Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test (BLRT), 144
 both/and logic, in DP, 345
 bounded empowerment, 264
 Boxelaar, L., 361
 Boyd, Neil, 4
 Brackett, M. A., 124
 Brady, Shane R., 4
 Braun, V., 34–35, 38, 39
 breakdown, 17
 Breen, Lauren J., 5, 107
 bridge research and action, 246–47
 Brodsky, Anne E., 3
 Bronfenbrenner, U., 29, 104–5
 Bucci, Fiorella, 5
 Buchanan, A. S., 220
 Buckingham, Sara L., 3
 Burke, J., 307
 Burns, D., 355
 Burris, M. A., 285
 Burt, R. S., 211
- CAIC. *See* Consistent AIC
 Callahan, Sarah, 7
 Campbell, D. T., 256
 Campbell, R., 236–37
 CAN. *See* child abuse and neglect
 Canadian Clinical ME/CFS, 192
 Caracelli, V. J., 335
 Carbone, Agostino, 5
 Cardazone, Gina, 8–9
 Cardenas, Z., 267
 Carli, Renzo, 5, 113
- CART. *See* Classification and Regression Tree
 case studies
 for ABM, 202–5, 204f
 for AI, 55–58, 57t
 for behavior methods, 182–83, 183f
 for CBPAR, 257–59
 for CLA, 106–9
 for CM, 308–11, 310f, 311f, 312t
 for community narratives, 46–50, 48f
 for community profiling, 359–62
 for critical ethnography, 73–76
 for cross-cultural and cultural research, 278–81, 280f
 for CRTs, 172–74
 for data mining, 191–95
 for data visualization, 298–301, 299f, 301f
 for Delphi method, 63–66
 for DP, 347–53
 for dynamic social networks, 222–25, 224f
 for ETA, 114–16
 for functional analysis, 317–22, 319t
 for GIS, 99–100
 of grounded theory, 27–31, 31f
 for house meetings, 87–89
 for LCA, 146–48, 146t, 147t
 for LGCs, 139–41, 141f
 for LPA, 149–50
 for mixed methods, 237–40, 337–42
 for MSEM, 158–62, 161t, 162f
 for multisetting research, 337–42
 for neighborhoods, 99–100
 for network analysis, 327–31, 331f
 for photoethnography, 285–90, 287f, 288f, 289f, 290f
 for photovoice, 87–89
 for qualitative methods, 3
 of qualitative methods, 19–21
 for SNA, 212–15, 213t, 214f
 for stakeholder analysis, 327–31, 331f
 for thematic analysis, 37–40
 for YPAR, 267–69
 categorical coding, for LCA, 144
 causal layered analysis (CLA), 5, 103–9
 case study for, 106–9
 coding for, 107, 108t, 109
 contextualism in, 103–4
 interviews for, 107
 layers in, 104–6, 104t, 109
 thematic analysis for, 105, 107
 themes in, 105, 108t
 cause-and-effect relationships, 2, 121
 CBPAR. *See* community-based participatory action research
 CBPR. *See* community-based participatory research
 CDC. *See* community development corporation
 census units, 94, 95
 centering, in MSEM, 158
 CFA. *See* confirmatory factor analysis
 CFI. *See* Comparative Fit index
 CFP. *See* Common Fisheries Policy
 CFS. *See* chronic fatigue syndrome
 Chamberlain, P., 234
 changing variable, in LGCs, 134

- Charmaz, K., 17
 Chertok, F., 255
 Chicago School of Ethnography, 69
 child abuse and neglect (CAN), 298–301, 299f, 301f
 Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM),
 278–81, 280f
 chi-squared difference test, 137
 chi-square statistic, 156
 LR χ^2 , 144
 Christens, Brian D., 7–8, 14, 249
 chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), 191–95
 Chu, Tracy, 3
 chunks, of coding, 25–26
 citizen science, 294
 CLA. *See* causal layered analysis
 Claes, S., 295–96
 Clark, Brian, 4
 Clarke, V., 34–35
 Classification and Regression Tree (CART), 189, 193
 classification trees, 189
 classifiers, for decision trees, 191
 Clegg Smith, K., 285
 Cloutier, Katherine, 8
 cluster analysis, 122, 129, 307
 cluster-randomized trials (CRTs), 6, 124, 165–74
 adaptive designs for, 168–69
 case study for, 172–74
 covariates for, 167–68
 data collection for, 165–66
 internal validity in, 166, 169
 matching for, 167–68
 MLM for, 169–71
 power in, 167–68
 pretest-posttest control group design for, 166
 for prevention, 171
 sampling for, 166–67
 clusters, in ETA, 113–14
 CM. *See* concept mapping
 Cochran, S. D., 123
 coding
 for constant comparative method, 25
 for CLA, 107, 108t, 109
 dichotomous, 144
 for LCA, 144
 for qualitative method data analysis, 16–17
 for thematic analysis, 34, 38
 theoretical, 26–27
 cognitive social structures (CSS), 212
 cohesion, in SNA, 211
 Coleman, J. S., 211
 collaboration
 in action research, 244, 247
 in behavioral methods, 178
 in community psychology, 1
 in critical ethnography, 70–71
 defined, 70
 in DP, 346, 350
 power and, 71
 in qualitative methods, 3, 16
 with photovoice, 81, 83
 collusive dynamics, ETA and, 112, 113
 Coman, E., 13–14
 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), 327–31, 329f,
 330f, 331f
 Communities Organized for relational Power and Action
 (COPA), 89
 community-based participatory action research (CBPAR),
 253–60, 283–90
 case study for, 257–59
 conscientization and, 255
 as paradigm shift, 256–57
 photoethnography in, 283–90
 community-based participatory research (CBPR)
 functional analysis of, 315–22
 performance ethnography within, 8
 photovoice with, 284
 with PAR, 253–60
 as worldview, 253, 256, 259–60
 community building, 1
 community development corporation (CDC), 64–65
 community narratives, 4, 43–51
 case study for, 46–50, 48f
 data analysis for, 45–46
 empowerment and, 44, 45
 interviews for, 45, 47–48
 logic model for, 45–48, 48f
 stakeholder analysis for, 45–46
 whole communities and, 43–46
 community needs assessments, 316
 community partnerships, cross-cultural and cultural
 research and, 275–76
 community profiling, 10, 355–62, 356t, 360t
 case study for, 359–62
 “draw your neighborhood” technique in, 359
 interviews for, 361
 “the movie” technique for, 359
 PAR and, 355–56
 photographs in, 359
 stakeholder analysis in, 362
 transformative theory and, 356
 community psychology, 1, 43
 behavioral methods and, 177–78
 CBPAR in, 256
 critical ethnography and, 70
 qualitative methods and, 3, 13
 Comparative Fit index (CFI), 156, 159
 compilation variables, 157
 complementarity, 336, 340–41
 composition variables, 157
 concept mapping (CM), 9, 305–13
 case study for, 308–11, 310f, 311f, 312t
 cluster analysis in, 307
 ladder graphs in, 307
 MDS in, 306–7
 rigor for, 308
 steps in, 305–7, 306f
 Concerns Report Method (CRM), 9, 316–17, 317f,
 318, 320–22
 confirmability, 18, 36–37, 40
 confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), 143–44

- conflict. *See also* dialectical pluralism
 Delphi method for, 62
 Connell, Christian M., 5–6
Connexion, 112
 conscientization, 255
 consensus
 in Delphi method, 63, 65–66
 in grounded theory, 26, 28
 in qualitative methods, 17
 in YPAR, 268
 Consistent AIC (CAIC), 144
 constant comparative method, 24–25
 constructivism, 33–34, 37, 233, 274
 constructivism-interpretivism, 14
 contextualism
 in CLA, 103–4
 data analysis and, 122
 functional analysis and, 320
 in MLM, 153–54
 in qualitative methods, 341
 in SNA, 211–12
 contradictions, mixed methods and, 336–37
 Cook, T. D., 167
 Cooper, Daniel, 4
 COPA. *See* Communities Organized for relational Power and Action
 Copeland-Linder, N., 148
 Corbin, J., 63
 correlation, 122
 covariance matrix, in SEM, 156
 covariates
 for CRTs, 167–68
 time-invariant, 134
 Crabtree, B., 13
 Craven, R. G., 237
 credibility, 18, 36, 39
 Creswell, J. W., 63, 235, 256–57, 285
 criterion-based sampling, in critical ethnography, 71–72
 critical consciousness, 81, 84, 243, 265
 critical discourse analysis, 72, 73
 critical ethnography, 4, 69–77
 case study for, 73–76
 collaboration in, 70–71
 data analysis for, 71–72
 data collection for, 71–72, 73
 ethics in, 72
 PAR with, 73
 positionality in, 70, 73–74
 power and, 70, 71
 psychopolitical validity in, 72
 quality in, 72–73
 reflexivity in, 70, 73–74
 representation in, 72
 sampling in, 71–72
 social justice and, 69–70
 stakeholder analysis in, 71–72, 74
 critical-ideologism (criticalism), 14–15
 critical race theory, 70, 255
 critical theory, 81, 255
 CRM. *See* Concerns Report Method
 cross-cultural and cultural research, 8, 273–81
 case study for, 278–81, 280f
 cultural advisory boards and, 276
 KMb and, 276
 power and, 276
 triangulation in, 279
 cross-level interactions, in MLM, 155–56
 CRTs. *See* cluster-randomized trials
 CSS. *See* cognitive social structures
 cultural advisory boards, 276
 cultural analysis, for critical ethnography, 72
 cultural research. *See* cross-cultural and cultural research
 culture, LCA for, 146–48, 146t, 147t
 curvilinear time-series analysis, 44
 CYRM. *See* Child and Youth Resilience Measure
 Darnell, A. J., 138
 dashboards, 294–96, 298
 data analysis. *See also* social network analysis
 coding for, 16–17
 for community narratives, 45–46
 contextualism and, 122
 for critical ethnography, 71–72
 for data visualization, 293–94
 for Delphi method, 65–66
 for ETA, 115
 for functional analysis, 318–19
 for grounded theory, 28–29
 for qualitative methods, 16–17
 for thematic analysis, 36, 38–39
 data collection
 for critical ethnography, 71–72, 73
 for CRTs, 165–66
 for Delphi method, 62–63
 for ETA, 113
 for functional analysis, 318–19
 for grounded theory, 28
 photographs for, 81–85
 for qualitative methods, 15–16
 sequential design in, 9
 for SNA, 207–9
 data mining, 6–7, 187–95, 188f
 case study for, 191–95
 decision trees for, 188–91
 machine learning for, 188–89
 data visualization, 8–9, 293–301
 case study for, 298–301, 299f, 301f
 dashboards for, 294–96, 298
 data analysis with, 293–94
 for decision making, 294–95
 PAR and, 293
 with infographics, 295–96
 David, E. J. R., 8
 Davis, M. I., 18
 DCP. *See* Developing Communities Project of Greater Roseland
 decision making
 data visualization for, 294–95

- Delphi method for, 62
mixed methods and, 278f
- decision trees
for data mining, 7, 188–91
overfitting of, 189–90
- degree centrality, 211
- Delany-Brumsey, A., 123
- Delphi method, 4, 61–66
case study for, 63–66
consensus in, 63, 65–66
data analysis for, 65–66
data collection for, 62–63
questionnaires for, 62
recruitment for, 64–65
thematic analysis for, 63
- demarcation, in mixed methods, 235
- dense words, in ETA, 111, 113–14, 115
- dependability, 18, 36
- dependent variable (DV), 123, 127
- descriptive/interpretative approaches, to qualitative method data analysis, 16
- design effect, with CRTs, 167
- DeSouza, K. C., 294
- Developing Communities Project of Greater Roseland (DCP), 258–59
- Dewey, John, 61, 69, 244
- dialectical pluralism (DP), 9–10, 345–52
AI and, 346
case study for, 347–53
collaboration in, 346, 350
empowerment and, 352
stakeholder analysis in, 349, 351–52
validity in, 351
- dichotomous coding, for LCA, 144
- discover, dream, design, and destiny (4-D cycle), 55, 56–58
- The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss), 23
- dog feces, behavior methods for, 182–83, 183f
- Dolcetti, F., 115
- domestic violence (DV), 37–40
- Donmoyer, R., 337
- doubly latent models, 157–58
- DP. *See* dialectical pluralism
- Draper, N. R., 199
- “draw your neighborhood” technique, 359
- drug abuse and addiction, 222–25, 224f
- Dugard, P., 180
- Dutta, Urmitapa, 4
- DV. *See* dependent variable; domestic violence
- Dworkin, Emily, 9
- dyad-level measures, for SNA, 210t, 211
- Dymnicki, A. B., 259
- dynamic social networks, 7, 219–27
case study for, 222–25, 224f
friendship and, 221–22
mentoring and, 221–22
personal networks and, 219–20
whole networks and, 220–21
- Dzidic, Peta L., 5, 107
- EBP. *See* evidence-based practice
- ECAs. *See* educational catchment areas
ecobehavioral, 178
- ecological analysis, 2
- ecological systems theory, 104–5
- ecology
behavior methods and, 178–79
in community psychology, 1
LGCs and, 138
- edges strategy, for NR, 49
- educational catchment areas (ECAs), 94, 95
- EFA. *See* exploratory factor analysis
- egohoods, 99, 100
- Elliott, R., 121
- Ellis, L. A., 237
- embedding data, in mixed methods, 257
- emotional symbolization, 112
- emotional textual analysis (ETA), 5, 111–16
case study for, 114–16
data analysis for, 115
data collection for, 113
dense words in, 111, 113–14, 115
- empowerment
AI for, 58
bounded, 264
community narratives and, 44, 45
DP and, 352
house meetings for, 85–86
in PAR, 243
photoethnography and, 285
photovoice for, 81, 84
- entropy value, in LCA, 144
- epistemic validity, 72
- Epstein, J. M., 198
- equal-status mixed methods, 347, 351
- erosion, 16
- ESM. *See* experience sampling method
- ETA. *See* emotional textual analysis
- ethics, 18
in critical ethnography, 72
in CRTs, 166
in photovoice, 83
in SNA, 212
- ethnography. *See also* critical ethnography; cross-cultural and cultural research; photoethnography
network analysis and, 325–27
- evidence-based practice (EBP), 35, 348
- expansion, mixed methods for, 337
- Expectation Maximization algorithm, 144
- experience sampling method (ESM), 98
- exploratory factor analysis (EFA), 279–80
- external validity, 179
- Fabes, R. A., 208
- Facebook, 208–9, 209t
- Fals Borda, Orlando, 255, 315
- Families and Schools Together (FAST), 237
- Family Violence Councils (FVC), 337–42
- Faris, R. W., 97–98

- Farrell, A. D., 138
- FAST. *See Families and Schools Together*
- Faust, Victoria, 7–8
- Fawcett, S. B., 178, 316
- FCWA. *See Food Chain Workers Alliance*
- FEDEJAL, 317–22, 319t
- female juvenile offenders, mixed methods for, 237–40
- feminist theory, 70, 255, 285
- Ferdowsi, Z., 187
- Fernández, Jesica Siham, 4–5
- Ferrari, J. R., 18
- Fidell, L. S., 122–23, 125
- Fine, M., 71, 265–66
- fishng, network and stakeholder analysis for, 327–31, 329f, 330f, 331f
- Fiske, D. W., 256
- fit indices, 156
- Flanagan, C., 265
- Flaspohler, P. D., 265
- flat track roller derby, 106–9
- Florido del Corral, David, 9
- focus groups, 3, 14, 28
- Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA), 245
- formism, 103
- Fornari, F., 112
- for thematic analysis, 37–40
- Foster-Fishman, P. G., 237
- 4-D cycle. *See discover, dream, design, and destiny*
- Fowler, Patrick J., 6, 125
- Francescato, D., 356, 362
- Francis, J., 361
- Frazier, S. L., 208
- Freud, Sigmund, 111
- friendship, dynamic social networks and, 221–22
- Fukuda, K., 192
- functional analysis
- case study for, 317–22, 319t
 - of CBPR, 315–22
 - contextualism and, 320
 - CRM and, 316–17, 317f, 318, 320–22
 - data analysis for, 318–19
 - data collection for, 318–19
- Furst, Jacob, 6–7
- futurism, 103
- fuzzy composition variables, 157
- FVC. *See Family Violence Councils*
- Gaddis, Jennifer, 7–8
- GaFCP. *See Georgia Family Connection Partnership*
- gains followed by maintenance, in LGCs, 135, 135f
- Galea, S., 126
- Galloway, F., 337
- Garcia, A. P., 267
- Garo Hills, India, 73–76
- GBV. *See gender-based violence*
- Geertz, Clifford, 69
- Geiser, C., 149–50
- gender-based violence (GBV), 288–89
- generalizable findings
- in Delphi method, 61
- in quantitative methods, 2
- in YPAR, 266
- generalized linear mixed models (GLMM), 127
- generativist's question, 198
- geographic information systems (GIS), 5, 93–101, 121–22, 129
- behavior methods in, 97–98
 - case study for, 99–100
 - ESM for, 98
 - grid methods for, 98–99
 - hierarchical linear modeling for, 93
 - for neighborhoods, 93–101
 - network analysis for, 97–98
 - quantitative methods for, 93, 98
 - for SOC, 99–100
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), 158–62, 161t, 162f
- gestalt theory, 111
- Ghirelli, G., 356
- Gibson, J. E., 265
- Gielen, A. C., 307
- Giovagnoli, Fiammetta, 5, 115
- Girls Moving On (GMO), 238
- GIS. *See geographic information systems*
- Glaser, Barney, 23, 24, 25, 26–27
- Glenwick, David S., 2, 6, 153
- Glesne, C., 18
- GLMM. *See generalized linear mixed models*
- global-local dichotomy, critical ethnography and, 71
- GMO. *See Girls Moving On*
- Goman, C. K., 350
- Goodkind, J. R., 237
- Goodman, K., 336
- Gottman, J., 225–26
- Graham, W. F., 335
- grand tour question, 15
- Grannis, R., 96
- Grano, C., 149–50
- Greene, J. C., 335, 351
- Greeson, Megan R., 6, 139–41
- Gregory, A., 124
- grid methods, for GIS, 98–99
- Grills, C., 267
- groundedness, 23–24, 27
- grounded theory, 3, 23–31
- case study of, 27–31, 31f
 - constant comparative method for, 24–25
 - consensus in, 26, 28
 - data analysis for, 28–29
 - data collection in, 28
 - groundedness in, 23–24, 27
 - iterative examinations in, 3
 - memoing in, 26
 - reflexivity in, 23–24
 - rigor for, 27
 - sampling in, 24
- group level, in MLM, 154
- Guba, E. G., 13, 36, 39, 351
- Guerra, N. G., 237

- Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI), 46–50
 Hagelskamp, C., 124
 Hall, B., 315
 Hammersley, M., 72
 Hänel, M., 219
 Hanish, L. D., 208
 Hanley, G., 315, 316
 Hawaii Children's Trust-Fund (HCTF), 298–301, 299f, 301f
 Hawtin, M., 355
 HCTF. *See* Hawaii Children's Trust-Fund
 health impact assessment (HIA), 248–49
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 61
 Heller, K., 2
 Henry, D. B., 208, 259
 Hernández-Ramírez, Javier, 9
 heterogeneity
 in ABM, 198
 DP and, 346
 LGCs and, 137–38
 HFHI. *See* Habitat for Humanity International
 HIA. *See* health impact assessment
 hierarchical linear modeling, for GIS, 93
 high school participation, YPAR for, 267–69
 Hill, Mara, 8
 Hipp, J. R., 97–98, 100
 HIV/AIDS
 CBM for, 200–202
 focus groups for, 14
 photoethnography for, 285–90, 287f, 288f, 289f, 290f
 Hoepner, B., 179–80
 Hoffman, L., 124
 Holgado, Daniel, 9
 Holliday, J., 221
 Holt, M., 355
 Horner, P. S., 256
 Horwitz, S. M., 234
 house meetings
 case study for, 87–89
 for empowerment, 85–86
 in PAR, 85–87
 Hox, J. J., 158
 Hu, L., 159
 Huang, F., 124
 Hubacek, K., 326
 Hurlburt, M. S., 234
 hypothesis testing
 in evidence-based practice, 35
 for LGCs, 137
 in quantitative methods, 121
 ICC. *See* intraclass correlation
 Icenogle, M. I., 346
 Ikram, A., 274
 incubation, in LGCs, 135, 135f
 independent variables (IVs), 123, 127
 India, 73–76
 indicator variables, 144–45
 indigenous methods
 CBPAR and, 255
 critical ethnography and, 70
 infographics, 295–96
 informed consent, 166
 Ingold, K., 326–27
 injured workers' rights, 55–58, 57t
 interdisciplinary research group (IRG), 356
 intermethod mixing, 349
 internal validity, 19, 166, 169
 International Pilot Study of Schizophrenia (IPSS), 273
 International Resilience Project (IRP), 278–81, 280f
 interrater reliability analyses, 25–26
 interrupted time-series designs, 2
 interviews
 for action research, 245
 for CBPAR, 258–59
 for CLA, 107
 for community narratives, 45, 47–48
 for community profiling, 361
 for critical ethnography, 73
 for cross-cultural and cultural research, 275
 for ETA, 114–16
 for functional analysis, 318
 qualitative, 3
 for qualitative method data collection, 15–16
 for thematic analysis, 34, 38
 intimate partner violence (IPV), 29, 139–41, 141f, 288–89
 intraclass correlation (ICC), 155, 159, 167, 171
 intramethod mixing, 349
 Inzeo, Paula Tran, 7–8
 IPSS. *See* International Pilot Study of Schizophrenia
 IPV. *See* intimate partner violence
 IRG. *See* interdisciplinary research group
 IRP. *See* International Resilience Project
 iterative examinations, 3, 83
 IVs. *See* independent variables
 Iwata, B., 315
 Jaccard similarity coefficients, 212–15, 213t, 214f
 Jafri, S. Z., 274
 James, William, 244
 Jason, Leonard A., 2, 6–7, 18, 153, 179–80, 182–83, 219, 255
 Javdani, Shabnam, 9
 Jiang, S., 187
 Johnson, R. Burke, 9–10, 346, 348
 Johnston, J. M., 179
 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 286
 Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 178
 juvenile offenders
 DP for, 247–353
 mixed methods for, 237–40
 Kagan, C., 356
 Kant, Immanuel, 61
 Katz, E., 211
 Kelly, C. M., 307
 Kelly, J. G., 258–59
 Kennedy, A. C., 139–41

- Keys, C., 255
 Kibowski, Fraenze, 6
 King, P. M., 336
 Kirsten, J., 355
 Klassen, A. C., 256–57, 285
 knowledge mobilization (KM_b), 276
 Knox, L., 237
 Koenen, K. C., 126
 Kohfeldt, D., 264
 Kornbluh, Mariah, 7, 219
 Kral, Michael J., 8
 Kratochwill, T. R., 179
 Kroeker, C. J., 14
 Kurien, D. N., 350
- ladder graphs, 307
 Landsverk, J., 234
 Langhout, Regina Day, 4–5
 language-oriented approaches, to qualitative method data analysis, 16
 latent basis model, 136
 latent class analysis (LCA), 6, 124–25, 143–48, 145*f*
 case study for, 146–48, 146*t*, 147*t*
 coding for, 144
 posterior probabilities in, 144–46, 145*t*
 for time course of events questions, 126
 latent class growth analysis (LCGA), 126
 latent growth curves (LGCs), 6, 133–41
 advanced extensions of, 138–39
 case study for, 139–41, 141*f*
 delayed change in, 135, 135*f*
 gains followed by maintenance in, 135, 135*f*
 incubation in, 135, 135*f*
 linear change in, 135, 135*f*
 lost gains in, 135–36, 136*f*
 nonlinear change in, 135–39
 research question for, 139–40
 variation in rate of change in, 136, 136*f*
 latent profile analysis (LPA), 6, 148–50, 149*f*
 best-fitting solution in, 148
 case study for, 149–50
 latent transition analysis (LTA), 124–26
 latent variables, 156
 Latinos, 87–89
 Latkin, C. A., 220
 Lawlor, Jennifer, 7, 129
 LCA. *See* latent class analysis
 LCGA. *See* latent class growth analysis
 Leech, N. L., 235, 277
 Level-1 error term, for CRTs, 170
 Level-2 error term, for CRTs, 170
 Lewin, Kurt, 53, 243, 244, 255
 Lewis, K., 208–9
 LGCs. *See* latent growth curves
 Liebenberg, L., 278
 Liener, J., 326–27
 life story methodology, 4, 44
 Light, John M., 7, 208, 219
 Likelihood Ratio chi-square (LR χ^2), 144
 Lincoln, Y. S., 13, 36, 39, 351
 Linked Difference Equation, 225–26
 Litany, 104, 104*t*, 109
 Live Oak Family Resource Center, 87–89
 LMR-LRT. *See* Lo-Mendell-Rubin adjusted Likelihood Ratio Test
 local culture, 111
 Locke, John, 61
 Lohmann, Andrew, 5, 97
 Lo-Mendell-Rubin adjusted Likelihood Ratio Test (LMR-LRT), 144
 lost gains, in LGCs, 135–36, 136*f*
 Love, S., 361
 Lowe, S. R., 126
 LPA. *See* latent profile analysis
 LR χ^2 . *See* Likelihood Ratio chi-square
 LTA. *See* latent transition analysis
 Lüdtke, O., 150
 Luke, D. A., 122, 126, 129, 153, 211
 Maas, C. J., 158
 machine learning, 188–89
 Madison, D. S., 69
 Malterud, K., 14
 MANCOVA. *See* multivariate analysis of covariance
 manifest variables, 156
 Mannarini, Terri, 3
 MANOVA. *See* multivariate analysis of variance
 Marsh, H. W., 150, 157, 237
 Martín-Baró, I., 75
 Martini, E. R., 356
 Masyn, K. E., 148, 149
 Mathews, R. M., 316
 Mattaini, Mark, 6
 Maya-Jariego, Isidro, 9
 Mays, V. M., 123
 McAdams, D. P., 44, 45
 McCord, B., 315
 McDonnell, K. A., 307
 McIntyre, M., 266
 McLinden, Daniel, 9, 307
 McMurran, G., 97
 MDES. *See* minimum detectable effect size
 MDS. *See* multidimensional scaling
 ME. *See* myalgic encephalomyelitis
 measurement and structure questions, 125
 measurement invariance, 156–57
 memoing, 26
 mentoring, 221–22
 Menzel, H., 211
 Mercken, L., 221
 merging data, in mixed methods, 257
 metaparadigm. *See* dialectical pluralism
 methodological individualism, 198
 methodological pluralism. *See* mixed methods
 Mexican community, 317–22, 319*t*
 Miller, K. E., 35
 Miller, W., 13
 minimum detectable effect size (MDES), 168

- Minkler, M., 267
 Mitchell, S. J., 145
 mixed methods, 7–10
 action research in, 8, 243–51
 benefits of, 236–37
 case study for, 237–40, 337–42
 CBPAR in, 253–60, 283–90
 CBPR in, 8, 315–22
 challenges of, 236
 CM in, 9, 305–13
 community profiling in, 10, 355–62, 356t, 360t
 for complementarity, 336, 340–41
 connecting data in, 257
 contradictions and, 336–37
 CRM in, 9
 cross-cultural and cultural research in, 8, 273–81
 data visualization in, 8–9, 293–301
 decision-making framework for, 278f
 demarcation in, 235
 DP in, 9–10, 345–52
 embedding data in, 257
 equal-status, 347, 351
 for expansion, 337
 introduction to, 233–40
 merging data in, 257
 multisetting research in, 335–42
 network analysis in, 9, 325–32
 participatory, 8
 performance ethnography in, 8
 photoethnography in, 283–90
 pragmatism and, 121
 qualia in, 256
 quanta in, 256
 reclassification in, 235
 stakeholder analysis in, 9, 325–32
 transformatism in, 352
 triangulation in, 235, 236, 336, 338–39
 types of, 234–36
 YPAR in, 8, 263–70
 mixture modeling, 144
 MJCC. *See* Mobile Juvenile Court Collaborative
 MLM. *See* multilevel modeling
 MLQ-Presence. *See* presence of meaning in life
 Mobile Juvenile Court Collaborative (MJCC), 347–53
 modeling cycle, of ABM, 199–200
 Moere, V. A., 295–96
 Mohatt, N. V., 259
 Monte Carlo simulation, 143
 Moore, L., 221
 Moos, R. H., 227
 Morin, A. J., 150
 Morse, J. M., 235, 361
 “the movie” technique, for community profiling, 359
 MSEM. *See* multi-level structural equation modeling
 multicultural theory, 255
 multidimensional scaling (MDS), 306–7
 multigroup LGCs, 137
 multilevel modeling (MLM), 6, 122, 124, 127, 129
 contextuality in, 153–54
 cross-level interactions in, 155–56
 for CRTs, 169–71
 LGCs with, 133
 for measurement and structure questions, 125
 MSEM and, 153–56
 multi-level structural equation modeling (MSEM), 6, 153–62
 case study for, 158–62, 161t, 162f
 for measurement and structure questions, 125
 MLM and, 153–56
 sampling in, 158
 SEM and, 156–57
 multisetting research, 335–42
 case study for, 337–42
 multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), 124
 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), 124, 127
 Murray, D. M., 166–67, 170
 Murray, J., 225–26
 Muthén, B. O., 149
 myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), 191–95
 Myth Metaphor, 104, 104t, 109
 Naivinit, W., 202
 narratives. *See also* community narratives
 for critical ethnography, 72
 house meetings and, 86
 photovoice and, 81–82
 naturalistic sampling, 15
 natural resources, network analysis and stakeholder analysis for, 326–27
 Neal, Jennifer Watling, 7, 129, 197, 203–4, 208, 212, 219
 Neal, Zachary P., 7, 197, 203–4, 208
 Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NR), 46–50, 48f
 neighborhoods
 ABM for, 202–5, 204f
 administrative research on, 94–95, 96
 behavior-defined methods for, 97–98
 boundaries of, 94, 95f
 case study for, 99–100
 as census units, 94, 95
 defined, 94, 96
 existing data on, 95–96, 96f
 GIS for, 93–101
 meaning of, 95, 95f
 operationalization of, 94, 95f
 phenomenological research on, 94–95, 95f
 resident-defined mapping for, 96–97
 SOC for, 99–100
 Nelson, G., 273
 nesting units, in MLM, 154
 NetLogo, 200
 network analysis, 9, 325–32, 327f. *See also* dynamic social networks; social network analysis
 case study for, 327–31, 331f
 for GIS, 97–98
 for natural resources, 326–27
 organizational networks and, 329–31
 personal networks and, 328–29
 network studies, 7
 Newman, Greg, 294

- Neyer, F. J., 219
n-fold cross-validation, 191
 Nightingale, Florence, 293
 non-data link, 297
 nonequivalent comparison group designs, 2
 nonlinear change, in LGCs, 135–39
 nontangible development, 65
 non-tribals, in critical ethnography, 74–75
 normal abnormality, 75
 Novak, J. D., 305
 Nowell, B., 157
 NR. *See* Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative
 Nylund, K., 149
- observed variables. *See* manifest variables
 O'Campo, P., 307
 O'Cathain, A., 277
 ODC. *See* organizational development and change
 O'Donnell, J., 361
 OHs. *See* Oxford Houses
 Okun, M. A., 149–50
 Olazagasti, M. R., 14
 OLS. *See* ordinal least squares
 Olson, Bradley D., 4, 18
 O'Neill, P. T., 18
 ontological authenticity, 72
 Onwuegbuzie, A. J., 235, 277
 Onwuegbuzie, T., 346
 open coding, 25
 opportunity-based PAR, 54–55
 optimal design, 168
 Optimal Design Documentation, 168
 ordinal least squares (OLS), 156
 organicism, 103
 organizational development and change (ODC), 53–54
 organizational networks, 329–31
 overfitting, of decision trees, 189–90
 Oxford Houses (OHs), 222–25, 224f
 Ozer, Emily J., 8, 264, 265, 266, 267
- PABM. *See* participatory agent-based modeling
 Pakistan, qualitative methods in, 19–21
 Palinkas, L. A., 234, 236, 239
 Paniccia, Rosa Maria, 5, 113, 115
 PAR. *See* participatory action research
 paradigm wars, 233
 paradoxes, ETA and, 111
 parameter sweep, 202
 Park, Robert, 69
 participatory action research (PAR), 4–5. *See also*
 community-based participatory action research;
 youth-led participatory action research
 AI and, 53–59
 CBPR with, 253–60
 community profiling and, 355–56
 critical consciousness in, 243
 critical theory and, 81
 data visualization and, 293
 Delphi method for, 62
 empowerment in, 243
 house meetings in, 85–87
 opportunity-based, 54–55
 photovoice in, 81–85
 problem-based, 53–54
 with critical ethnography, 73
 participatory agent-based modeling (PABM), 202
 participatory photo mapping (PPM), 98
 PAS. *See* Promoting Academic Success Project
 pattern of change, in LGCs, 133
 Peak, G. L., 307
 peer coding, 107
 Peirce, C. S., 107
 Pennypacker, H. S., 179
 People Awakening, 257–59
 Pepper, S. C., 103
 performance ethnography, 8
 Perkins, D. D., 155
 personal networks, 219–20, 328–29
 Petty, R., 316
 photoethnography
 case study for, 285–90, 287f, 288f, 289f, 290f
 in CBPAR, 283–90
 research question for, 289
 photographs
 in community profiling, 359
 PPM, 98
 for qualitative method data collection, 16, 81–85
 photo novella, 284
 photovoice
 case study for, 87–89
 for CBPR, 284–85
 collaboration with, 81, 83
 ethics in, 83
 iterative examinations for, 83
 narratives and, 81–82
 for PAR, 81–85
 power and, 85
 SHOWED method for, 83
 for social change, 84
 for YPAR, 266
 piecewise models, for LGCs, 136
 Pistrang, N., 121
 Plano Clark, V. L., 235, 256–57, 285
 Polkinghorne, D. E., 103, 107
 Porta Capuana, 359–62
 Porter C., 267
 positionality, 70, 73–74
 positivism, 14
 action research and, 244
 CLA and, 103
 GIS and, 95
 quantitative methods and, 121
 posterior probabilities, in LCA, 144–46, 145t
 postpositivism, 14, 121
 posttest-only design, for CRTs, 170
 power. *See also* empowerment
 collaboration and, 71
 critical ethnography and, 70, 71

- cross-cultural and cultural research and, 276
 in CRTs, 167–68
 epistemic validity and, 72
 photovoice and, 85
 YPAR and, 264
- PPM. *See* participatory photo mapping
- pragmatism
 action research and, 244
 Delphi method and, 4, 61
 GIS and, 95
 mixed methods and, 121
- prediction of group membership questions, 124–25
- Prell, C., 326
- presence of meaning in life (MLQ-Presence), 279
- pretest-posttest control group design, 166
- Prilleltensky, I., 72, 273
- problem-based PAR, 53–54
- Procentese, Fortuna, 10
- Proeschold-Bell, R. J., 179–80
- Promoting Academic Success Project (PAS), 212–15,
 213t, 214f
- propensity score methods (PSM), 129
- psychoanalysis, 111
- Psychology Loves Porta Capuana, 359–62
- psychopolitical validity, 72
- PsycINFO, 34
- public policy, 62, 81–82
- purposive sampling, 15, 71–72
- qualia, 256
- qualitative interviews, 3
- qualitative methods, 2–5
 AI in, 4, 53–59
 authenticity in, 17–18
 case study of, 19–21
 challenges and benefits of, 19
 CLA in, 5, 103–9
 coding for, 16–17
 communities of interest in, 15
 community narratives in, 4, 43–51
 community psychology and, 3, 13
 confirmability in, 18
 contextualism in, 341
 credibility in, 18
 critical ethnography in, 4, 69–77
 data analysis in, 16–17
 data collection in, 15–16
 Delphi method in, 4, 61–66
 dependability in, 18
 ETA in, 5, 111–16
 ethics in, 18
 GIS in, 5, 93–101
 grounded theory in, 3, 23–31
 introduction to, 13–21
 PAR in, 4–5, 53–59
 participants in, 15
 photographs for, 81–85
 rigor of, 17–18
 sampling in, 15
- social justice and, 13
 thematic analysis for, 3–4, 33–40
 thick description in, 3, 69
 transferability in, 18
 trustworthiness in, 17–18
 for women's rights, 19–21
 worldview in, 14–15, 19
- Qualitative Methods* (journal), 34
- quanta, 256
- quantitative methods, 2, 5–7
 ABM in, 7, 129, 197–206
 agent-based simulations in, 7
 behavior methods in, 6, 177–84
 cause-and-effect relationships in, 2, 121
 CRTs in, 6, 124, 165–74
 current state of, 126–29, 128f
 data mining in, 6–7, 187–95
 degree of relationship questions for, 123
 dynamic social network in, 7, 219–27
 errors in, 13
 for GIS, 93, 98
 hypothesis testing in, 121
 introduction to, 121–29
 LCA in, 6, 143–48
 LGCs in, 6, 133–41
 LPA in, 6, 148–50
 measurement and structure questions for, 125
 MLM in, 6
 MSEM in, 6, 153–62
 prediction of group membership questions for, 124–25
 research question for, 122–26
 significance of group differences questions for, 123–24
 SNA in, 7, 207–16
 time course of events questions for, 125–26
 time-series methods in, 177–84
- Raicu, Daniela Stan, 6–7
- RAIS. *See* Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services
- randomized controlled methods, 35
- randomized field experiments, 2
- Rapkin, B. D., 153
- Rappaport, J., 44, 48, 177–78
- Rasmussen, Andrew, 3, 29
- Raudenbush, S. W., 125, 167, 170
- Rawls, John, 345
- Real Food, Real Jobs, 246
- Receiver Operator Characteristic (ROC), 189
- reclassification, in mixed methods, 235
- recruitment
 for Delphi method, 64–65
 for grounded theory, 27–28
- Reed, M., 326
- reflective understanding, for CLA, 107
- reflexive journaling, 107
- reflexivity
 activism and, 70
 in critical ethnography, 70, 73–74
 in grounded theory, 23–24
 in thematic analysis, 37, 40

- refreezing, 53
- Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS), 275
- regression, 122, 123
CART, 189, 193
trees, 189
- reliability, of thematic analysis, 36, 39–40
- repeated measures, 169
- representation, in critical ethnography, 72
- research question
for LGCs, 139–40
for photoethnography, 289
for quantitative methods, 122–26
- resilience, cross-cultural and cultural research for, 278–81, 280f
- Resilience Research Center-Adult Resilience Measure (RRC-ARM), 279–80
- Restaurant Opportunities Center United, 245–46
- Revenson, T. A., 2
- The Revolutionary Optimists* (documentary), 270
- Richards, L., 361
- Riger, Stephanie, 3–4
- rigor
of CM, 308
of grounded theory, 27
of qualitative methods, 17–18
of YPAR, 266–67
- Ritterman, M., 264, 265, 266
- Rivers, S. E., 124
- RMSEA. *See* Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation
- Robinson, Rebecca Volino, 8, 275–76
- ROC. *See* Receiver Operator Characteristic
- Roccato, M., 154
- Rogoff, B., 103
- roller derby, CLA for, 106–9
- Ronzio, C. R., 145
- Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), 156, 159
- Rovine, M. J., 124
- RRC-ARM. *See* Resilience Research Center-Adult Resilience Measure
- Ruffner, A., 307
- rule for constant comparative methods, 25
- Russo, S., 154
- SACReD. *See* Santa Ana Collaborative for Responsible Development
- Sadiq, S., 274
- Salem, D. A., 237
- Salovey, P., 124
- Sample Size Adjusted BIC (SSABIC), 144
- sampling
in critical ethnography, 71–72
in CRTs, 166–67
ESM, 98
in grounded theory, 24
in MSEM, 158
in qualitative methods, 15
in thematic analysis, 38
- Sampson, R. J., 125
- Santa Ana Collaborative for Responsible Development (SACReD), 245, 247
- Santinello, M., 155
- Sarason, Seymour B., 14, 43, 44, 104, 264, 337
- Sarmiento, Carolina S., 7–8
- satisfaction surveys, 63
- Savala, Jorge, 4–5
- Savaya, R., 336
- Scale of Italian Sense of Community, 357
- Schaefer, D. R., 208
- Scheibler, Jill E., 3
- Schelling, T., 197–200
- Schensul, J. J., 13–14
- schizophrenia, 111, 273
- Schnetzer, F., 326–27
- Schwartz, D., 284
- SCRA. *See* Society for Community Research and Action
- Scriven, M., 347
- Seidman, E., 2
- Seifert, T. A., 336
- SEM. *See* structural equation modeling
- sense of community (SOC), 99–100
- sensitizing concepts, in grounded theory, 23, 27
- Sequi, R., 356
- SES. *See* socioeconomic status
- Sesto, C., 115
- setting-level measures, for SNA, 209–10, 210t
- sexual health, photoethnography for, 285–90, 287f, 288f, 289f, 290f
- sexually transmitted infections (STIs), photoethnography for, 285–90, 287f, 288f, 289f, 290f
- Shared Prosperity Campaign, 89
- SHATIL, 336–37
- Shatto, Erynné, 9–10
- Sherif, M., 221
- Shinn, M., 153
- SHOWED method, 83
- Shweder, R. A., 256
- significance of group differences questions, 123–24
- Sigurvinssdóttir, Rannveig, 3–4
- Sinclair, P., 221
- Singh, S. P., 274
- Skinner, B. F., 315
- slope, in LGCs, 133–34
- Sluzki, C. E., 31
- Smith, K. C., 256–57
- Smith, K. L., 294
- Smith, L. T., 72
- Smith, T. M., 155
- Smith, V. S., 296
- SMMR. *See* Somali Multidimensional Multilevel Resilience
- SNA. *See* social network analysis
- SNEM. *See* socio-spatial neighborhood estimation method
- snowball sampling, 15
- SOC. *See* sense of community
- Social Causal, 104, 104t, 109

- social change, 72, 84, 86
 social exchange theory, 221–22
 social justice
 CBPAR in, 256
 critical ethnography and, 69–70
 DP and, 345
 photoethnography and, 285
 qualitative methods and, 13
 social network analysis (SNA), 7, 121, 122, 129, 207–16.
 See also dynamic social networks
 adjacency matrix for, 209, 209*t*
 case study for, 212–15, 213*t*, 214*f*
 cohesion in, 211
 contextualism in, 211–12
 data collection for, 207–9
 degree centrality for, 211
 dyad-level measures for, 210*t*, 211
 ethics in, 212
 for Facebook, 208–9, 209*t*
 individual-level measures for, 210–11, 210*t*
 setting-level measures for, 209–10, 210*t*
 Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), 126
 socioeconomic status (SES), 155
 socio-spatial neighborhood estimation method
 (SNEM), 99
 Somali Multidimensional Multilevel Resilience (SMMR), 279–80, 281*f*
 Somali Resilience Project, 278–81, 280*f*
 Sparks, Shannon M., 7–8
 Speer, P. W., 14, 249
 SPSS Statistics software, 193
 SSABIC. *See* Sample Size Adjusted BIC
 stakeholder analysis, 9, 325–32, 327*f*
 for AI, 58
 case study for, 327–31, 331*f*
 for community narratives, 45–46
 in community profiling, 362
 in critical ethnography, 71–72, 74
 in DP, 349, 351–52
 for natural resources, 326–27
 Staller, K. M., 256
 Stamatakis, K. A., 129
 standardized measures, in quantitative methods, 2
 Stefurak, Tres, 9–10
 Steglich, C., 221
 Stevens, E., 219
 STIs. *See* sexually transmitted infections
 Stochastic Actor-Oriented Model, 220, 225, 226
 Stone, A., 219
 stories. *See also* community narratives
 house meetings and, 86
 photovoice and, 81, 85
 Strauss, Anselm, 23, 24, 25, 26–27, 38, 39, 63
 strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
 (SWOT), 361
 Strickland, D., 258–59
 structural equation modeling (SEM), 122
 fit indices in, 156
 LCA and, 143
 LGCs with, 133
 for measurement and structure questions, 125
 measurement invariance in, 156–57
 MSEM and, 156–57
 Suarez-Balcazar, Yolanda, 9
 substantive coding, 25
 Suhail, K., 274, 275
 suicide prevention, CM for, 308–11, 310*f*, 311*f*, 312*t*
 Sullivan, T. N., 138
 supervised data mining, 188
 Swanson, C., 225–26
 Sweetser, F. L., 94
 SWOT. *See* strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
Symbol and Code (Fornari), 112
 symmetrical logic, 111
 system science methods, 197
 Szaflarski, M., 307
 Tabachnick, B. G., 122–23, 125
 Tableau Public 8.0, 298
 TAD. *See* Treatment Alternative and Diversion
 Tandon, S. D., 258–59
 tangible development, 65
 Tashakkori, A., 235
 Taylor, M., 355
 Teddlie, C., 235
 thematic analysis, 3–4, 33–40
 case study for, 37–40
 for CLA, 105, 107
 coding in, 34, 38
 confirmability in, 36–37, 40
 constructivism and, 33–34, 37
 credibility in, 36, 39
 data analysis for, 36
 data analysis in, 38–39
 for Delphi method, 63
 dependability, 36
 interviews for, 38
 interview transcription in, 34, 38
 limitations of, 40
 reflexivity in, 37, 40
 reliability of, 36, 39–40
 sampling in, 38
 stages in, 34–35
 themes in, 34–35
 transferability in, 39–40
 transparency in, 37
 trustworthiness in, 39–40
 validity of, 39–40
 value of, 35–36
 worldview in, 37
 themes
 in CLA, 105, 108*t*
 in grounded theory, 3
 in thematic analysis, 3–4, 33, 34–35, 39
 theoretical coding, 26–27
 theoretical sampling, 24
 theoretical saturation, 24

- theory, 1–2
 action research and, 247
 DP and, 351
 in grounded theory, 3, 23
 LGCs and, 136
- theory-building approaches, 16
- thick description, 3, 69
- time course of events questions, 125–26
- time-invariant covariates, 134
- time-series methods, 177–84
- time-varying covariate, 134
- T-LAB (software), 113
- Todd, Nathan R., 6
- Todman, J. B., 180
- Tolan, P., 1, 255
- Tolman, R. M., 139–41
- Tolman, Ryan T., 8–9
- Toro, R. T., 237
- traditional action research, 53
- transferability, 18, 39–40
- transformatism, 352
- transformative theory, 356
- transformative validity, 72
- transparency, 37, 84
- Trautwein, U., 150
- Treatment Alternative and Diversion (TAD), 248–49
- triangulation
 in cross-cultural and cultural research, 279
 in grounded theory, 24
 in mixed methods, 235, 236, 336, 338–39
 in YPAR, 269
- tribes, 74
- Trickett, E. J., 259
- trustworthiness, 17–18, 39–40, 265–66
- t*-test, 127
- Tucker, S., 346
- Tufte, E. R., 297
- Tuozzi, Teresa, 10
- Type 1 errors, 13, 123, 124, 144, 167
- Type 2 errors, 13
- Type 4 errors, 13
- Type 5 errors, 13
- Uddin, M., 126
- unconscious, 111–12
- “The Unconscious as Infinite Sets” (Blanco), 112
- unfreezing, 53
- Ungar, M., 278
- United Nations Population Fund, 288
- UNITE HERE, 246, 247
- University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies, 247–50
- unsupervised data mining, 188
- Vaillant, G. E., 219, 227
- validity
 in DP, 351
 epistemic, 72
- external, 179
- internal, 19, 166, 169
- psychopolitical, 72
- in thematic analysis, 36, 39–40
- transformative, 72
- in YPAR, 265–67
- values. *See* worldview
- variation in rate of change, in LGCs, 136, 136*f*
- Vaughan, C., 266
- Vaughn, Lisa M., 9, 307
- verification, in grounded theory, 24
- victim-victimizer binaries, 76
- Vieno, A., 154, 155
- Viola, Judah, 4
- violence
 critical ethnography for, 73–76
 domestic, 37–40
 FVC, 337–42
 GBV, 288–89
 IPV, 29, 139–41, 141*f*, 288–89
- visual metaphors, 297
- visual noise, 297
- Vive Live Oak!, 87–89
- volunteering, 149–50
- WAFP. *See* West African Families Project
- Wagenaar, A. C., 178
- Wagner, J., 219
- Walden, Angela, 9
- Wang, C. C., 285
- Wang, J., 145
- Wanis, M., 264, 265, 266, 267
- Watts, V., 265
- Waysman, M., 336
- WCFI. *See* Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory
- Weerman, F. M., 221
- Wess, Y., 307
- West African Families Project (WAFP), 27–31, 31*f*
- WFTDA. *See* Women’s Flat Track Derby Association
- WHO. *See* World Health Organization
- whole communities, 43–46
- whole networks, 220–21
- Wiggins, B. J., 235
- Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (WCFI), 350
- Williams, Glenn, 6
- Williams, K. R., 237
- Wimmer, A., 208–9
- WISDOM, 247–50
- within-person change, 134
- Women’s Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA), 106
- women’s rights, 19–21
- women’s sports, 105–9, 108*t*
- working hypotheses, 17
- working the hyphen, 71
- World Health Organization (WHO), 273, 286, 289
- worldview, 14–15, 19
- CBPR as, 253, 256, 259–60
- in thematic analysis, 37

- Worldview Discourse, 104, 104*t*, 109
Wrzus, C., 219
Wyldbore, Denise, 4–5
- YCSP. *See* Youth Council for Suicide Prevention
Yennie-Donmoyer, J., 337
YLS/CMI. *See* Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory
Yoshikawa, H., 14
Youth Council for Suicide Prevention (YCSP), 308–11, 310*f*, 311*f*, 312*t*
youth-led participatory action research (YPAR), 8, 263–70
- case study for, 267–69
for critical consciousness, 265
photovoice and, 266
power and, 264
rigor for, 266–67
triangulation in, 269
trustworthiness in, 265–66
validity of, 265–67
- Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI), 238, 349
- YPAR. *See* youth-led participatory action research
- Zani, B., 356, 362

