Walk the Talk: AEA Conference 2016

Join the Community Psychology TIG in a visit to the Georgia Justice Project in historic Old Fourth Ward for a discussion with their staff. Georgia Justice Project (GJP) strengthens the Atlanta community by demonstrating a better way to represent and support individuals in the criminal justice system and reduce barriers to reentry. They promote innovative change through direct legal representation, policy advocacy, education and coalition building. With over 25 years of experience, GJP has pioneered something unique: legal services combined with social services and employment support for the neediest among us, poor people accused of a crime. Join us to talk with staff about the role of evaluation in the important work that GJP is accomplishing. As part of the session, participants will ride on the new Atlanta Streetcar and make a brief visit to the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site.

This session will be held on Friday, October 28th. Registered participants will meet in the main lobby of the Marriott hotel at 1:45 PM. We will return back to the Marriott around 4:15 pm. The Georgia Justice Project is accessible from the conference location by a quick ride on the Atlanta Street Car (approximately 15 minutes).

Participants should expect to purchase light rail tickets ($2.00 round trip), dress for warmer Atlanta weather, and wear comfortable shoes as some light walking will be required. Sign up to join us today!

NOTE: Space is limited to 25 attendees, so please consider carefully if your schedule will allow you to participate. If you should need to cancel, please let us know ASAP at wilkins.natalie@gmail.com

Thanks and we hope to see you in Atlanta!
Additional TIG Sessions

Wednesday, October 26th

• More and Better: Inclusive, Community-Driven Evaluation, 6:15 – 7:00 p.m., L403

Thursday, October 27th

• Conceptualizing Three New Models and Concepts for Social Justice Evaluation: Research Justice, Evaluation Justice, and Alternative ways to operationalize race in evaluation design, 7:00 – 7:45 a.m., M104
• Strategies to Build Evaluation Capacity with Nonprofit Community-Based Organizations, 11:00 – 11:45 a.m., M302
• Designing your evaluation practice: Essential skills for working with communities, 1:00 – 1:45 p.m., International South 2
• Participatory development and use of empirical case studies to support implementation and evaluation of community health effort, 2:00 – 2:45 p.m., M304
• Evaluation + Design: Empowerment Evaluation in Action, 4:45 – 6:15 p.m., International North B
• Community Psychology TIG Business Meeting, 6:20 – 7:10 p.m., L406

Friday, October 28th

• Designing AEA’s Collective Impact: An AEA Think Tank, 8:00 - 9:30am, L505
• Enhancing implementation using a mixed-method readiness evaluation strategy, 8:00 – 9:30 a.m., M304
• Design thinking for collaboration and decision making: case studies of health promotion, and homelessness social action; and an analysis of “design thinking” as framework for collaboration between evaluation and behavioral science, 11:00 – 11:45 a.m., A702
• Useful Social Network Designs: The Need for Iterative Questions & Analysis, 3:30 – 4:15 p.m., M101
• Mind the Gap: Bridging Evaluation Literacy, Design, and Use to Strengthen Community Programs, 5:30 – 6:15 p.m., M302
Community Psychology: Foundations for Practice, a recently published volume edited by Victoria Scott and our TIG chair, Susan Wolfe, and available from Sage Publications, compiles the wisdom of various field leaders around core competencies for effective and transformational community psychology practice. Competencies detailed include foundational competencies (like ecological systems and cross-cultural competency) and technical competencies (including discussions of community capacity-building, advocacy, and evidence-based interventions, among others). Written in a user-friendly format that includes definitions, discussions of approaches for competency development, real-world applications, and suggested resources, this volume offers valuable ideas for evaluators, whether familiar with community psychology or not.

Evaluators not as familiar with community psychology can find an orientation to the field and explanation of fundamental concepts and community psychology practices that can benefit one’s evaluation work. Early chapters in the book:

• Describe the values of the field – individual and family wellness, sense of community, respect for human diversity, social justice, citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths, and empirical grounding – which may spur evaluators’ thinking about what values they do or should embed into their work.

• Detail the orientation towards ecological understanding that undergirds much community psychology practice. This description of the ecological perspective and how it is integrated into professional work could expand the lens of evaluators to consider the broader system in which programs or initiatives are situated and promote more comprehensive, useful, and transformational evaluations.

• Discuss how to effect social change in diverse contexts. While conversations about cross-cultural competency, diversity, and pursuing social justice are not uncommon in evaluation, evaluators may find the explicit ties to social change that community psychology make especially instructive. Practical guidance in how to build knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices to serve these ends may be particularly helpful to those of us who want to do better in our work in diverse communities but are uncertain how.
Evaluators with backgrounds in community psychology will also find much of value in this volume. In particular, several chapters offer guidance in how to cultivate and refine practical skills that are important to community psychologists’ work in evaluation:

- Chapters on **participatory approaches** for community needs assessment, **organizational and community capacity building**, and building and strengthening **collaborative community partnerships** offer application ideas and competency development strategies that carry over well to evaluation endeavors. Enhanced competency in these areas can help realize the unique value-added of the community psychology evaluator.

- Similarly, chapters on **advocacy and social justice** and **dissemination and sustainability** can help the community psychology evaluator extend the learning and insights gained from evaluations to broader audiences and important societal conversations.

- Also, an **empowerment evaluation** chapter by **David Fetterman** speaks most directly to the intersections of community psychology and evaluation practice. This chapter not only offers a concise overview of empowerment evaluation and how to build one’s competency in this area, but also explicitly examines how community psychology and evaluation can synergistically work together to enhance organizational and community efforts.

Evaluators of all backgrounds can find in this volume ideas and practical suggestions for the kind of professional development that many of us seek after our education and first career experiences. Additionally, those who teach evaluation may find this volume to be useful in expanding students’ thinking of the orientations, values, knowledge, and skills that one should bring to evaluation to maximize its authenticity, significance, and capacity for positive social impact. Indeed, if more evaluators can artfully integrate community psychology perspectives and practices into evaluation work, we can push our field towards more transformational, social just ends.

*Amy Hilgendorf*
*Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison*
New Book: Diverse Careers in Community Psychology

Judah Viola and Olya Glantsman, the editors of the *Diverse Careers in Community Psychology* (in press with Oxford University Press), slated to come out next year, set out to help prospective, current, and former students in community psychology and related fields as well as professionals interested in expanding or changing their careers find an ideal career path. The book highlights the diversity of career options across government, nonprofit, education, healthcare, and consulting and provides details about the extent to which different types of careers use community psychology competencies for practice and a list of steps one can take to develop skills and position themselves for a career of their choice. The volume includes 23 chapters authored by 30 different community psychologists with various backgrounds, interests, and areas of expertise, who provide examples of what it is like to work in their settings. *Diverse Careers* also includes a summary of a first of its kind career survey of over 400 individuals in the field.

One of the book’s contributing authors is Michelle Bloodworth, an AEA member and a program evaluator at Apex. In her chapter, Dr. Bloodworth discusses how she increasingly brings both her community psychology competencies and values into her work at a small evaluation and consulting firm. Michelle also stresses how community psychology competencies are indispensable in her line of work and lists many of the Community Psychology practice competencies that she found especially important such as taking an ecological perspective; community inclusion and partnership; ethical reflective practice; program development, implementation and management; small and large group processes; consultation and organizational development; and collaboration and coalition development. In summary, we are sure that members of AEA CP TIG will find this an interesting and a useful resource.

Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice: Special Issue on Theory and Community Psychology

Visit our website for access to the articles including the initial paper, *Theories in the Field of Community Psychology* by Lenard A. Jason, Ed Stevens, Daphna Ram, Steven A. Miller, Christopher R. Beasley, and Kristen Gleason, and ten reaction papers.

http://comm.eval.org/communitypsychology/tigresources
My name is Anna Turosak and I am a third year graduate student in the Wichita State University Community Psychology doctoral program. The current evaluation I am working on is a project for the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute and is a collaboration between the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation and the Center for Behavioral Health Initiatives. Kansas is a leading state for utilizing Certified Peer Specialists (CPS), individuals in recovery who provide peer support to those living with a mental illness. The main goals of CPSs are to help promote overall health and fight against stigma, among others. The proposed evaluation I’m working on will examine the perceptions of CPSs and their supervisors regarding the effectiveness of training in preparing CPSs for their roles and whether peer support is being implemented as intended. The end result will aim to make a case for why CPSs are a valuable asset not only to their clients, but to the organizations and healthcare settings they work in. We’ll also look at the impact on CPSs themselves and hope to use what we find as an evaluation model for other states.

As a graduate student, I have learned in great detail about evaluations and this project has been the first opportunity to take the next step and apply that acquired knowledge into action. It’s been particularly exciting because it’s an area of research I am very passionate about. One of the most interesting (and challenging) aspects of creating an evaluation has been working through each of the steps, large and small, within the evaluation process. It can be easy to get ahead of myself and begin to visualize the end product, but there are crucial goals to address along the way that lend to the success of the overall evaluation. Each of these goals approached and highlighted the process in a slightly different way. Not only has this project helped me gain skills in evaluation work, but it was also intertwined with several principles of the community psychology field. Beyond program evaluation, this process emphasized the importance of empowerment within the mental health population, health promotion techniques to develop the program, and resource development by recognizing the capacity for success with CPSs. These are all tools that I will without doubt be applying to my future work in the field. It is my hope this project proves just as valuable for the field of Certified Peer Specialists and helps to highlight the great work they do.