Pre-Conference Workshop Title: From Community Narratives to Strategic Resistance: A Framework for engaging Equity-Centered Research in Challenging Times

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Workshop Description:
We are a group of psychologists and psychologists-in-training who conduct collaborative research that centers on multiculturalism, diversity, and justice in psychological processes, health disparities, and training experiences, and as such, we are facing unprecedented times and unprecedented challenges in our work. This strategy-building workshop is designed to a)highlight the historical context of challenges like our current time (i.e., our ancestors have illuminated this path before us), b) share our experience and response to these challenges through the development of our community-centered engagement framework ARC, and c) create space for reflection, skill building, and collective problem-solving in response to the challenges of today, particularly as they relate to conducting equity-centered research in increasingly restrictive sociopolitical environments.

The workshop is grounded in the work of the TEAM Lab (Counseling Psychology Training, Education, And Mentorship; www.teamlabcommunity.com), a research lab focused on equity-centered psychological science. Our lab is intentionally structured to support student development as researchers while advancing scholarship that interrogates traditional psychological constructs through equity and justice lenses. TEAM Lab emphasizes collaborative, values-driven research practices that center community voice, ethical reflexivity, and culturally responsive methodology across all stages of the research process.

This work is situated within the broader sociopolitical context of the state of Alabama, where recent legislative actions and policy shifts have created heightened scrutiny of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) language, programming, and scholarship. Anti-DEI laws and policies have introduced uncertainty and risk for researchers like us, whose work explicitly examines racism, structural inequity, and justice-oriented interventions—particularly those working in publicly funded institutions and community-based contexts.

The workshop will begin with an overview (historical, empirical, and sociopolitical) of the study of racism-related stress, justice, and equity (and related topics) in unsupportive sociopolitical climates. We will present both ethical and practical challenges that researchers have encountered, including pressure to depoliticize language, obscure identity-relevant variables, or reframe scholarship in ways that dilute its core purpose. We will highlight how these challenges are compounded by the emotional labor, uncertainty, and potential institutional vulnerability faced by researchers, trainees, and community partners committed to equity-centered work.

Presenters will then provide a brief summary of our work with the TEAM Lab as a present and current case example. We will share the direct challenges encountered over the past year in our ongoing research examining racism-related stress among rural Black patients living with Multiple Sclerosis. These challenges include institutional requests to alter or remove language related to race and racism, pressure to change descriptions of our work, unauthorized removal of

identity-affirming content from public media platforms and demands to explicitly demonstrate adherence to the shifting political and institutional landscapes. These experiences highlight the real-world tensions between institutional compliance and ethical responsibility to communities with which we engage.

In response, we draw on our community engagement and recruitment framework [ARC: (Access, Relationships, Community); Jones et al., under review], to lean into our values and resist pressures that undermine equity-centered science. ARC centers participant-driven engagement by identifying what is meaningful to communities, prioritizing outreach and relationship-building, and utilizing community connections and convenience clinics to support ethical and accessible research participation.

We discuss how ARC directly counters anti-DEI narratives by allowing communities to lead, define, and direct our research agenda. Specifically, ARC guides us to present our findings to communities first and prioritize the community voice as essential evidence. We then leverage that evidence to support principled resistance in conversations with institutional stakeholders pressuring conformity to sociopolitical demands misaligned with our research values and the community-engaged evidence.

The workshop concludes with an interactive, structured strategy-building session. Participants will engage in discussion of challenges they are facing in their work and sociopolitical context, learn practical strategy-building techniques, participate in group-based brainstorming and coalition-building, assess barriers to implementation, and develop networks of community support. The session is designed to foster collective resilience, shared learning, and actionable community-engaged resistance strategies.

Learning Objectives:
I.   Participants will be able to describe key ethical, practical, and institutional challenges associated with conducting equity-centered research within restrictive sociopolitical and policy environments.
II.   Participants will be able to apply the ARC (Access, Relationships, Community) framework to evaluate and strengthen community-engaged research practices, including participant recruitment, dissemination of findings, and decision-making in the face of anti-DEI pressures.
III. Participants will be able to identify and develop community-engaged resistance strategies that leverage community voice as evidence to support principled responses to institutional and sociopolitical pressures that conflict with research values and ethical obligations.

References:
1. Hunter, E., Meyer, J., Hanks, M., & Brown, G. (2023). Stress Indicators in Minorities with Multiple Sclerosis. *Multiple Sclerosis & Related Disorders,* online first. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msard.2023.104914.
2. Jackson, M. (2025). The impact of anti-DEI legislation on higher education pedagogy. *Journal of College and Character*, *26*(1), 61-73.
3. Jones, A., Hoard, L.*, Jang, H.*, Washington, L.*, & Horton, A.*, [+]Hunter, E., (2025). Racism is Not Getting Worse, It's Getting Filmed": Coping with Online Vicarious Racism. *The Counseling Psychologist.*
4. Jones, A., Hoard, L. R., Brown, G., Dean, M., Underwood, D., Jang, H. S., Antoniou Karademitrou, N., Vancol, A., Washington, L., Horton, A. J., Rexford, S., & Hunter, E. A. (2025). "Racism is not getting worse, it's getting filmed": Investigating online vicarious racism among Black students. *The Counseling Psychologist, 53*(4), 483–522.
5. Lee, Y.*, Hunter, E., McLaughlin, A., Coleman, J., DeBlaere, C., Owen, J., Tarziers, K., & Davis, D. (2024). Cultural Opportunities Involving Spiritual, Existential, Religious, or Theological (SERT) Themes: Three Practical Approaches. *Psychotherapy.*
6. Obenauer, W. G. (2024). Counteracting threats to DEI with good trouble and innovation. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *17*(4), 495-498.

Workshop Schedule:
1:00pm
 I.   Welcome, Framing, & Grounding   20 minutes
    a. Welcome & Introductions
    b. Pair-Share: "What pressures or uncertainties are shaping your work right now?
    c. Overview of Workshop Goals
 II.   Sociopolitical Context & Research Challenges 40 minutes
    a. Historical overview: We have been here before
    b. Overview of current sociopolitical and legislative context
    c. Anti-DEI laws and implications for research, training, and community engagement
    d. Ethical and practical challenges

2:00pm
 III. Break 1   10 minutes
 IV. TEAM Lab Case Example: Lived Challenges   10 minutes
 V.   Group Discussion 1: Your Lived Challenges   20 minutes
 VI. Introducing ARC: Access, Relationships Community 20 minutes
    a. ARC as a values anchored response

3:00pm
 VII. Break 2   10 minutes
 VIII. ARC as resistance to Anti-DEI Challenges   10 minutes
 IX. ARC in Practice: Small Group   40 minutes
    a. Mapping Current Challenges to ARC
    b. Responding to institutional pressure using ARC-aligned evidence
    c. Language practice for principled resistance

4:00pm
 X.   Break 3   10 minutes
 XI. Strategy Building & Coalition Development: Large Group 40 minutes
    a. Identifying challenges
    b. Strategy building techniques
    c. Coalition mapping and support identification
    d. Anticipating barriers and risks
 XII. Closing Thoughts   10 minutes