

Newsletter for Educational Psychologists (NEP)

SPRING 2025 EDITION



EDITOR: DR. COURTNEY HATTAN

- 1 A Message From President Jessica DeCuir-Gunby
- 3 Division 15 at APA 2025
- 4 Journey Toward an Anticolonial Educational Psychology: This is a Bumpy Flight
- 10 Beyond the Labels: The Challenge of Defining and Navigating My Current Role Identities
- 12 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes & Educational Psychology Primer Video

Collective Action Keeps Us All Afloat in Uncertain Waters

by President Jessica T. DeCuir-Gunby

I chose my presidential theme, “Takin’ it to the Streets: The Power of Resistance and Collective Action,” as a call to action for the field to become more involved in defending the attacks on education. Since choosing my theme, the attacks on education have increased exponentially. Federal executive orders, often codified by state legislation, have enacted sweeping changes across education. These orders have called for the banning of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, the defunding of federal grant agencies, and the elimination of the U.S. Department of Education. Universities have been threatened with the withholding of hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funding unless they adhere to the various executive orders. Higher education has been attacked and vilified, leaving education leaders, researchers, and scholars feeling afraid and powerless to act.



Dr. Jessica T. DeCuir-Gunby

When I chose my presidential theme, I did not realize how prescient it would be to promote active resistance and collective action within Division 15. This is exactly what is needed during this pivotal moment and what we have been attempting to enact this school year. First, we awarded five grants to address the impact of anti-DEI policies and legislation on education and the experiences of marginalized groups. With the ban on DEI and the decrease in federal grant funding, providing a DEI-focused grant initiative has been a great way to support scholars who have been doubly impacted by recent executive orders. Second, our Division’s new journal, *Educational Psychology in Policy and Practice* (E3P), officially began soliciting submissions. This is the perfect place for scholars to submit work focusing on the impact of recent executive orders on education. Third, members of the executive committee and several standing committees have been busy creating relevant webinars to help inform the Division, including webinars on advocating for education and psychological science, countering anti-DEI policy, transitioning from a research to a policy agenda, and translating research (e.g. writing Op-Eds). To help counter disinformation and advocate for psychological science, we must move beyond the traditional means of disseminating information. The webinars will help provide the skills and tools needed to move our messages beyond the pages of research journals. Last, the program for the APA 2025 convention is designed to illustrate my presidential theme, highlighting research that pushes boundaries and challenges the status quo within the field. The convention will be a rejuvenating time for us to learn, network, and be in community. We

need to serve as sources of support during times of uncertainty. These various initiatives are just a few ways in which we, members of Division 15, are engaging in resistance and collective action.

It has been a challenging year, unlike any other. Although it is hard, I choose to remain hopeful about the future of psychological science and education. Derrick Bell (1992) reminds us that hope is needed when challenging systems of oppression because hope is not just an emotion; it is a call for collective action. We must continue to work together to enact change. We must resist and engage in collective action while *Takin' it to the Streets!*

References

Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York: Basic Books.

New Division 15 Podcast Episodes!

The Division 15 podcast series, “Emerging Research in Educational Psychology,” is thriving—with recent top ranks for Educational Psychology across major platforms such as Apple and Spotify. If you aren’t a subscriber yet, now is the time to get involved!

Below are a few of the recent episodes you may have missed to start 2024:

- Dr. Rachael Gabriel & Dr. Francesca López
- Dr. Elena Forzani
- Dr. Courtney Hattan & Dr. Panayiota Kendeou

With lots more on the way! Find links to each—as well as source material for each episode—on [the Division 15 website](#).



Join Division 15 at the 2025 APA Convention!

To Be Held August 7 - 9, 2025 in Denver, CO



The release of our Division 15 program for the 2025 APA Convention in Denver, CO is right around the corner! As a special sneak peak, we are excited to share the following events, which are already on the books. Be sure to secure your “Early Bird” registration for a significant discount (prior to June 4) at APA’s official convention page, [here](#).

A few sessions of note that we encourage all members to attend:

- **Our Opening Social (Thursday, August 7th):** Our Program Committee has secured space and exhibit access at the incredible [Meow Wolf](#)! The exhibit offers those interested with an immersive sensory experience packed with different themed rooms. Or, simply relax and enjoy time with colleagues in a special catered space we’ve reserved.
- **Award Sessions (Asst. Dates):** Come support Division 15’s Pintrich, Snow, and Career Achievement Award recipients throughout the convention as they present the research that helped secure these illustrious accolades.
- **The Division 15 Business Meeting (Saturday, August 9th):** Here, we’ll share important Division 15 updates, some trivia (with prizes!), and our vision for the year ahead. It’s a great time and very informative for those who want to be more involved.
- **Past Dionne Cross Francis’s Remarks (Saturday, August 9th):** Don’t miss hearing from our Past President Dionne Cross Francis, who officially ends a three-year term at this conference.
- **Our Closing Social (Saturday, August 9th):** Help us close out the 2025 Convention in style with great food and conversation at Denver’s historic [Ironworks](#)!

We hope to see many of you there! If you have any further questions, please contact Program Co-Chairs Angela White (awhite@jcsu.edu) and Whitney McCoy (whitney.mccoy@duke.edu).

Journey Toward an Anticolonial Educational Psychology

This Is a Bumpy Flight

By Tasneem L. Talib (Ball State University) N. Leigh Boyd (Passaic County Community College), Aletta M. Sanders (Ball State University), Neelam Rattan (San Jose State University), & Joseph I. Eisman (Temple University)

Corresponding Author: N. Leigh Boyd, ncboyd@pccc.edu

I am a woman of Southeast Asian descent. I am a white queer academic. I am a white woman. I am a Black woman. I am a white male graduate student. We represent a few of the distinct but collective voices from Division 15's Race and Diversity Committee's *Building an Anticolonial Educational Psychology* workgroup. In this installment, we will describe some of our journeys toward an anticolonial educational psychology.

We intentionally chose to focus on our personal stories in order to counteract colonialism's attempt at depersonalizing and dehumanizing marginalized voices within communities. Using the lens of our personal journeys is consistent with anticolonialism's aim of recognizing different ways of knowing by highlighting individual stories and giving weight to their personal experiences (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014). Therefore, we share our narratives, providing an in-depth view of our perceptions, feelings, and thoughts.

We acknowledge that this path toward anticolonial educational psychology can be daunting and recognize that people may be at different points in their journey. We, too, are at different points, some of us just boarding, others having been on this flight for some time. Given our diverse experiences and varying positions in our journeys, we hope that some part of our stories resonates with readers and spurs reflection.

What is in your suitcase?

Author Journey: The Importance of Reflection

I feel like a veritable outsider, an immigrant, something like the wind that blows through different terrains. The words that define me are a metamorphosis of identities as I deconstruct my cultural baggage, reconstruct my new avatar, and come to define myself as a woman of Southeast Asian descent.



In India, I was privileged. However, in the United States, I was marginalized, treated as if I were inferior. It was a rude awakening, being defined as a person of color with a hyphenated identity. Whereas before, I was treated with respect, I now was disrespected, and such disrespect seemed socially acceptable. For example, college students here "corrected" my accented English, snickering as they belittled my intelligence, unaware that English was my first language. This was painful, as it was my first experience teaching in the U.S. I sought refuge by intellectualizing my pain and researching non-native accents and stereotypes. This provided insight into my students' worldview, which was based on their interpretations of how English should be spoken.

I sought to distance myself from this label as a marginalized woman. However, while trying to distance myself, I came face-to-face with my internalized racism, believing I was not enough because I viewed myself through a white supremacist lens. This internalized racism resulted in my feeling inadequate and shameful. Before immigrating, I was tenured faculty, confident in my capabilities. After immigrating, I was unsure. I felt I needed to do more to prove that I was, in fact, capable and "worthy."

Participating in the workgroup answered many of the questions and concerns I struggled with in my pedagogy. I teach Psychology of Prejudice and Psychology of Immigration. Given my marginalized identity, I thought I was teaching through a prism of understanding and compassion. Yet, my privilege also played a role, as I was unwittingly endorsing a colonial stance through my discussions of white-centric theories. I learned that introspection was key to determining how my intersecting identities influence my teaching.

Lesson Learned: Without introspection, we may be taking a colonial stance by unwittingly embracing internalized racism.

Author Journey: Repatriating Spaces

I am a white, queer assistant professor at a majority-minority community college. At the beginning of this process, I believed I was adept at challenging my own thinking and reflecting on my own assumptions, but this process highlighted how colonialism could show up in places I had not thought to look.

Anticolonization requires us to ask what voices have been excluded from our syllabi, tenured ranks, and academic journals. I began to ask who I was teaching, who I wasn't, and why. I also found myself asking how my own gaps in understanding the lives and value systems of my students shaped my policies in ways that may have disadvantaged students who did not have the same values and cultural background as I did.

As I asked those questions of myself, I began to find new areas to question. Like many educational psychologists, I was trained to prize quantitative data. Re-examining the ways in which qualitative approaches give voice to traditionally marginalized experiences in education has been a humbling experience (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014).

Throughout this journey, I have continued to uncover more spaces that I assumed were part of the natural way of things. Those assumptions kept me ignorant of the colonialist structures in my own teaching, publishing, and even my own mind.

Lesson Learned: There are many different spaces that need to be repatriated within academia.





Author Journey: Discomfort on the Journey to Change

Unqualified. Deficient. Embarrassed. Inadequate. Awkward. Words of insecurity describe me as a white woman discussing diversity. How can I cultivate a critical, questioning, actionable curiosity for my students when I am an inextricable part of the problem? How can I identify and dismantle enmeshed power dynamics that are a part of who I am and how I teach? How can I communicate when my very words might be hurtful?

As a board member for a non-profit affordable housing initiative, I was tasked with writing an organizational diversity statement. Although I examined issues surrounding diversity as an educational psychologist teaching pre-service teachers, creating an official statement compelled me to examine my own positionality, prejudices, and biases as a white woman, mother, and educator. Before I could draft an outward-facing statement, I needed to look within.

Personal reflection forced me to explore how my own principles and biases interact to reinforce existing paradigms of power and privilege and consider how this new knowledge might promote discourse and change within myself, my classroom, and beyond. Yet numerous iterations of my positionality statement reflected colonialist ideals even as I struggled to explain my growth. So deeply rooted were these paradigms that my journey often required doubling back, getting lost, and starting over.

Although I haven't experienced the struggles of so many impacted by colonialism and racism, as a woman and a survivor of domestic violence, I have experienced how both the judicial system and other systems of power silence voices. Silence is no longer an option when confronting systems of oppression. I learned that action is essential as we work together toward an anticolonial educational psychology.

Lesson Learned: Discomfort leads to questions...and questions lead to non-linear change.

Author Journey: Getting Comfortable with Fear

I am a Black, single mother. These are my social identities, of which I am proud. Yet, this cluster of identities often evokes the typical tropes (e.g., poor, uneducated, drain on the system). Although the tropes do not define me, they do, in part, influence my role as an associate teaching professor at a predominantly white institution. I teach pre-service teachers, some of whom have stereotypical perceptions of the children and families they will teach. Although my identities have driven my passion for helping pre-service teachers become culturally inquisitive, sensitive, and validating, I have also been driven by fear – fear of saying the wrong thing, fear of offending, fear of speaking out in a climate that seeks to silence. The irony is not lost on me, as fear is one of the most effective tools of oppression.

Indeed, this is a scary time to be an educator. I have a personal and professional responsibility to prepare my pre-service teachers to work with diverse students. In fact, our accrediting body for our educator preparation programs mandates that we prepare our pre-service teachers to understand student differences and create inclusive environments. But how can I prepare them to do so when policies seek to punish me?

This fear has made me question what I teach and the consequences (e.g., student reports to administration, denied promotions) of teaching it. "Is it okay to talk about racial/ethnic identity development? Maybe I should omit that content. What if it's too taboo?" I admit I have been tempted to lean into this fear and sanitize my course content.

Yet, here I am, reflecting on this journey. Although it was (and sometimes still is) tempting to give in to this fear, I understood that doing so would allow oppressive systems to persist. Anticolonialism requires decentering whiteness, returning the “land” of our academic field to those who have been marginalized. Thus, I learned that, yes, it is okay to discuss topics like racial/ethnic identity development, as this is one way to return that land. I still am afraid, though now, the fear motivates me to question, teach, and learn.

Lesson Learned: Yes, this is scary work, but while fear can be limiting, it can also evoke change.



Author Journey: Performative Actions Aren't Enough

My journey was filled with identity exploration. As a white male graduate student, I was still exploring my educational psychologist identity. This experience was invaluable in helping me develop who I am in this community of practice. What are my values? Beliefs? Goals?

My major lesson learned was recognizing, highlighting, and eschewing performative acts that distract, detract, and undermine our goals. Creating a “checklist” of performative actions “to do” hinders the deep introspection and reflection that undergirds such behaviors. I view this work as persistent and not simply as checking a box. Instead, we must spend time—individually and in community—to re-examine our actions, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions, which may support a collective cultural change.

Lesson Learned: This work takes work.

Conclusion

Our voices are varied, disparate, and not without conflict. Despite differences in where and when we began this journey, we found commonalities through our research, conversations, and lessons learned. Our journeys led to more questions, efforts to seek answers, and attempts to enact change. In the next installment, we will describe the actions we have taken to dismantle colonialistic systems and center marginalized voices.

References

DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., & Schutz, P. A. (2014). Researching race within educational psychology contexts. *Educational Psychologist*, 49(4), 244–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2014.957828>



Beyond the Labels

The Challenges of Defining & Navigating My Current Role Identities

Student Corner

By MG Hodge, College of Education and Human Development, Temple University
(Mary.grace.hodge@temple.edu)

My life as a full-time doctoral student over the last year and a half has been a whirlwind. After a seven-year career in the beer industry and (due the pandemic) a failed attempt at starting my own hospitality business, I arrived at the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at Temple in early 2022 as an adjunct professor. My Master's thesis in Tourism and Hospitality Management explored attendees' motivations to attend beer events. My return to the classroom motivated me to continue my study of motivation (but now in higher education), and I decided to pursue a PhD in Educational Psychology. With this doctoral trajectory, I've been introduced to new ideas, ways of thinking, and role identities. While the labels of these new role identities are simple, straightforward, and taken-for-granted (e.g., graduate student, research assistant, student leader), my personal experience of forming and balancing these role identities has involved tension, confusion, and negotiation.

For example, I love hosting. Whether it is in my own home or at another venue, I love welcoming people into a space and doing what I can to facilitate their enjoyment of the event. As a doctoral student who felt comfortable navigating CEHD, I took on the role of host by ensuring my fellow graduate students felt welcomed and by offering my advice, support and encouragement. Enthusiastically, I joined a small team of other graduate students—the Graduate Community Programming (GCP) Leadership Team—with the intention of planning and hosting events designed to build community, promote professional development, and cultivate relationships between graduate students, staff, and faculty. The GCP leadership team is a grassroots organization with no formal structure, created by volunteer graduate students for graduate students. But through this volunteer work and my increasing knowledge regarding one's sense of belonging, I have become aware of major tensions within this organization's understanding of our role, goals, and actions.

First, I learned that the label “host” itself can be misleading. A host invites others into their space, which contradicts our goal to create a community of equals and cultivate a sense of belonging. If my role is not “host,” then is it “student leader”? Or something else that removes any power differentials? I encountered a similar role-labeling dilemma as an entrepreneur. I left the beer industry in late 2018 to create my aforementioned hospitality business. The premise of the business was using my hospitality and event organizing skills to connect clients with their perfect event venue. I struggled with finding a name for my business. I wanted something catchy but that would also inform potential clients about the goals of the business. I came up with “MG the Venue Specialist” but what exactly is the role of a venue specialist? What do they do? Wait, you're NOT an event planner? I spent a lot of time and effort trying to define this role for myself and for my clients, but thanks to the pandemic, these efforts have transitioned toward my new roles I have taken on here in academia. Creating an appropriate title for a role that isn't already a part of a cultural schema is challenging; and it is even more so, when an existing, misleading title IS a part of a cultural schema (i.e. “host”).

Another confusion emerged in relation to common roles that we toggle as graduate students. I am grateful to be funded as a Research Assistant to a professor with whom I have an excellent working relationship. Earlier this year, I learned that this professor was appointed as the new Associate Dean of Student Success. One of her new responsibilities in this role would be to advise and advocate for the GCP Leadership Team. On the one hand, this professor and I already have weekly meetings and a well-established rapport. But, how do I negotiate the different relationships called for by these two very different roles of Research Assistant and GCP leader with the same person? So far, it has been smooth sailing, beneficial, and very productive! But what do I do if it's not?

Adding yet another layer to my role confusion struggles, I am starting to consider my dissertation topic, which I decided to focus on the experiences and motivations of graduate students to engage with community building events. I am planning surveys, focus groups, and my own observations of graduate student community events to theorize, investigate, understand, and hopefully inform my GCP team and the Associate Dean about increasing graduate students' participation and supporting their sense of belonging. I have already been getting in my own way trying to negotiate the researcher role with my student leader role, considering whether the data instruments are going to turn students away from the events. How do I align these roles instead of having them conflict with each other? (And, unfortunately, I also tend to overthink everything).

I knew that a doctoral program would be challenging, but I didn't think about this realm of obstacles. Fortunately, through workshops, training sessions, and overall life experiences, I have done a lot of work to become agentic in the development of my own identity. Despite these tensions between my various role identities, I lean into my core values to guide my decisions; remaining adaptable while carving out my own path in the direction I think I should go.

Calling All Students for Our “Student Corner” of NEP!

Now Accepting Proposals for Short, Original Pieces



The NEP Student Corner features current students of educational psychology. NEP is for all members of Division 15, and we hope to capture student reflections, experiences, or interviews in this recurring feature written by one or more students in the field. As we work within and outside of Division 15 to expand psychological knowledge and theory connected with education, the experiences of our Division 15 graduate students will continue to change as well. How is the student experience in becoming a member of this community different than it was for your professors or mentors? What experiences have particularly shaped your understanding of educational psychological knowledge and theory? What do you think the field should know?

We invite current student members of Division 15 to submit a 100-word proposal through [this link](#).

Proposals chosen for future NEP publication will be contacted for a 600 to 800 word length feature article in the upcoming year.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Fall 2024 Exec. Committee Meeting | October 2024

Find full minutes [here](#).



- Budget updates, including 2024 compensation for E3P editors and core 2025 annual expenses.
- Discussed rekindling the Division 15-Division C social hour during AERA
- Proposed a DEI grant opportunity
- Discussed in-person executive committee meeting at AERA.

What is Educational Psychology?

A helpful primer video (and conversation starter!) from Division 15!



One persistent challenge of the field of educational psychology is public confusion regarding what educational psychology actually is! For example, people often confuse educational psychology with school psychology, or with educational counseling. There is little familiarity and understanding that the label “Educational Psychology” refers to the science and practices that describe and promote people's learning, motivation, development, and well-being. So, Division 15 has developed a brief (~60 seconds) explainer video that introduces educational psychology and its applications to lay audiences. **We encourage you to use this video liberally—including in your email signature if desired!**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Avi Kaplan (script author) and Jeff Greene (narrator) for their contributions to this video!

