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Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Thesis:**

**Navigating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:  
A Journey to Academic Scholarship**

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**Navigating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:  
A Journey to Academic Scholarship**

**by**

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**Thesis**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my mom and dad, who have dedicated their lives to my brothers and me. They taught us how to work hard, work through the beautiful struggle, and share compassion, kindness, and love along the way.

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## Abstract

### **Navigating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Journey to Academic Scholarship**

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**Introduction:** The purpose of this study is to explore and identify contemporary approaches to interacting and engaging students with a diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) lens among academic scholars. The research question that guided this study was: **“What is the journey to develop competence in diversity, equity, and inclusion that fosters equitable teaching and interactions with college students?”**

**Methods:** Narrative analysis was conducted with The Hero’s Journey theoretical framework to showcase five participant stories and their journey towards equitable teaching.

**Results:** The Hero’s Journey was applied and adapted to five individual stories. Each theme presented is defined and operationalized and showcases the individual under that theme. The results are presented in five-themed journeys in narrative form.

**Conclusion:** Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with five faculty members at tier 1, research-intensive higher education institutions in the southern United States, this study has implications for higher education best practice and future research. These

learnings include the importance of a growth mindset, the cyclical nature of multiple journeys and multiple returns, and the importance and significance of mentorship.



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

I enrolled in graduate school at The University of Texas at Austin seeking a Master of Science (M.S.) in the Health Behavior Health Education (HBHE) program because I was interested in investigating the effects of physical activity and mindful behaviors on children's mental and cognitive health. However, when the world suddenly stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic and I volunteered to serve as a graduate student in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Planning Committee, my curiosity shifted to the journeys of faculty who engage in equity and inclusion research. As a passionate individual, I adapted to what was happening around me and the outcomes were the conversations presented in this paper. The study outlined in this document emerged from a class project into a qualitative case study exploring my positionality as an emerging scholar and the journeys of faculty members who study diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

I chose to write this study in the first person because my perspective and participant's perspectives are not objective. I found that I can articulate myself and showcase the participant's voice in-depth with the rich detail of my understanding of how they told their stories using the first person. An individual's lived experience frames the lens from which they view the world and interactions with other human beings. It is important to note that this study was conducted from my lived experience as a Latina graduate student, identifying as an underrepresented racial group within my program of study.

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify contemporary approaches to interacting and engaging students with a DEI lens among academic scholars. The research

question that guided this study was: **“What is the journey to develop competence in DEI that fosters equitable teaching and interactions with college students?”**

Based on the literature review, there is a gap in the qualitative research of DEI in higher education. I conducted this research to further our understanding of this topic. The benefit of this research is to help make classrooms and the lens through which professors teach more equitable and inclusive.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

This chapter aims to review the existing scholarly literature on DEI in higher education and theory-informed approaches to qualitative research.

### **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

On a global scale, research suggests that a DEI conscious campus improves student success, strengthens the academic environment, and has a positive impact on course curriculum (Clayton-Pedersen, O’Neill, & McTighe Musil, 2008; Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Leon, 2014; Milem, 2003; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). “Equity is the why, diversity is the, who, and inclusion is the how” (Chavez-Haroldson, 2018, p. 9). Chavez-Haroldson further explains:

“Why” is about equity in higher education and the reasons it matters—inequities in higher education—are tantamount to social injustice. The “who” are the diverse students, staff, and, faculty on campuses across the nation. “How” is the manner in which diverse populations are included, engaged, and culturally respond in higher education[.] (Chavez-Haroldson, p. 34)

*Diversity* is about including people from various social and ethnic backgrounds (Miller et al., 2018). Education efforts at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) date

back decades, as early as the 1990s, as researchers investigated the educational benefits of ethnic and racial diversity at PWIs. In advancing the work of diversity, Allport (1954) and colleagues supported arguments made by the Supreme Court in *Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke* (1978). Justice Lewis Powell stated in that case:

[The] atmosphere of “speculation, experiment and creation”—so essential to the quality of higher education—is widely believed to be promoted by a diverse student body. It is not too much to say that the nation’s future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to the ideas and mores of students as diverse as this Nation of many peoples. (Powell, p. 2760)

Higher education institutions must shift the conversation of DEI from a place of contemplation to actualization, recognizing that the phase of putting the work into action is where most institutions lose traction and become complacent (Williams, 2006).

*Equity* is about providing distribution to each individual according to their adequate, adapted, and suited need (Freire, 1972/2009; Rendón, 2009; Young, 1990, 2011). Given the shortcomings of efforts in higher education focused on equal distribution of resources and supports, equity emerged as a more appropriate response to meeting people where they are and addressing the specific needs of an individual (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007).

*Inclusion* goes beyond acceptance and is about valuing and appreciating individuals’ differences. Inclusion requires environments in higher education that provide places of belonging (Ferdman, 2014).

## **THEORY-INFORMED APPROACHES TO RESEARCH**

The primary focus of this review is on (a) social constructivism, (b) narrative analysis, and (c) A Hero’s Journey because these theory-informed approaches attempt to

help us understand the evolution of how change occurs. Further, the approaches provided a rationale for my investigation into the lives of faculty and administrators.

### **Social Constructivism**

*Social Constructivism* is an alternative epistemology centered around the idea that humans construct their understanding of the world through their own active experience, rather than passively accepting other's experiences as knowledge (Levine & Munsch, 2017; Andrews, 2012). In this social constructivist environment, I was curious to investigate what the individual, in their role as the instructor, makes of their experience as they adjust and adapt how they teach in service of their students as they unfold in their process as the learner of their own experiences (Sullivan, 2011). Social constructivism views each learner as a unique individual who arrives at the learning situation with their own set of experiences, needs, and perspectives. Each learner is both multidimensional and complex. In this case, the learner is each participant (scholar, faculty member, or administrative staff) in the current cycle of their journey. We see the complexity and multidimensionality as each cycle through multiple points in time in their journey repeats various cycles in a non-linear fashion. Although the higher education students with which the participants interacted can also be considered learners in the participant's courses, for this study, we will not be specifically focusing on the students as learners. Social constructivism encourages the learner to arrive at their version of the truth with the influence of their unique experiences, culture, background, and worldview. The present study will analyze how each individual makes meaning and purpose of multiple journeys they have encountered within their life-long journey. Social constructivism epistemology acknowledges each learner's uniqueness and complexity and highlights, encourages, utilizes, and rewards it as an indispensable part of the learning process (Yucel &



Habiyakare, 2011). The characters in this learning process are the participants, the researcher, and the students enrolled in the participants' courses.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative analysis is an analytic frame for researchers to interpret stories about daily living. Within this type of analysis, there is no single focus; instead, the analysis focuses on giving holistic meaning. I elected to take this approach in this study for several reasons. In the interviews, the first question I asked was, “*tell me about your milestones that led you to where you are in your professional career?*” and it was clear the participants had a lot to share about their lifelong journeys. Participants told a full and rich story of their journeys and how they navigated various challenges and recruited helpers and mentors along the way that led them to where they are today. I chose a narrative lens to focus on each trajectory and highlight each individual's story. In narrative analysis, the objective is to understand how people think through events in context over time (Bold, 2012). The narrative analysis looks into the story, identifies events and consequences, and evaluates and demonstrates evidence of transformation. The depths and understanding of these features cannot be identified as easily in other forms of thematic coding of analysis (Bold, 2012). Narrative analysis posits that we experience life through language and examines the meanings people make of the world to order their experiences. This type of analysis is rooted in the assumption of narrative structures that people experience. The narrative analysis helped me answer the question, “*what meaning does this individual make of their personal experience that brought them to think about how DEI played a role in their journey?*”.

Narrative analysis is the most powerful when there are participant stories, experiences of events, and life-changing experiences present. Since each individual in my

study had various trajectories with these elements present, narrative analysis was the best way to showcase their journeys (Miles et al., 2014). The analysis I have chosen will provide a descriptive understanding at an individual level. Identifying themes at the individual and within-case levels before cross-case patterns is necessary (Miles et al., 2014). My analysis in this study is the first step in understanding the individual case, and telling individuals' stories of their journeys is not a search for truth but is instead an acknowledgment of their personal experience as recounted by them at that moment in time (Bold, 2012).

### The Hero's Journey

Through the social constructivism lens, this study is also guided and rooted in Joseph Campbell's The Hero's Journey (Campbell, 1973). Campbell (1973) identified and described the patterns that stories about journeys often follow through examining world mythology. Campbell claimed that stories from diverse periods and cultures follow a motif named The Hero's Journey. For this study, The Hero's Journey framework is adapted to highlight the following arches with the following names (see Figure 1): 1) Preparing for The Journey: the person gets a call to go on an adventure, 2) Helper Along The Journey:

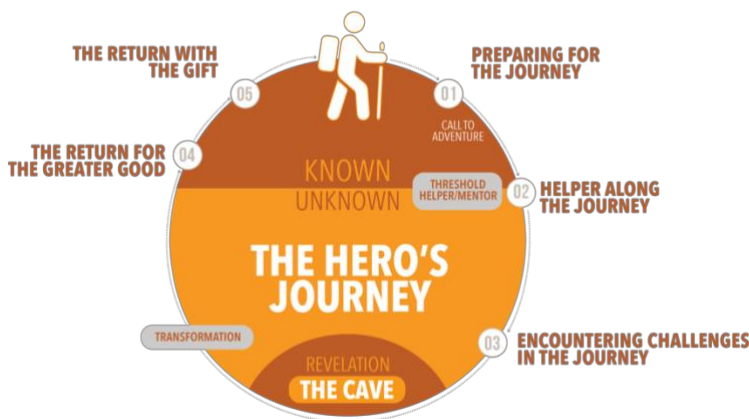


Figure 1: The Hero's Journey Graphic

the person crosses the threshold from the world of the known into the unknown with the assistance of a helper, 3) Encountering Challenges in The Journey: the person braves and overcomes a set of

challenges, and 4) Return for The Greater Good and Return with The Gift: the person

returns home transformed with gifts and lessons learned for their community. To execute into practice the use of people's "journeys" as a metaphor, I identified these specific codes because the themes of The Hero's Journey naturally evolved in each participant's journeys. I have always been fascinated and curious about The Hero's Journeys as I have grown up with a deep love for literature and fiction. As I have grown with Pixar (Pixar Animation Studios, 1995) movies, and Marvel (Marvel Entertainment, 2000) movies, Harry Potter (Rowling, 1997) novels, I have analyzed and been curious about the role The Hero's Journey plays in the foundational structure of each story. The data analysis section will detail participants' data analyzed to purposefully understand the placement of their journey on The Hero's Journey.

#### **MY REASON FOR EMBARKING ON THIS PROJECT**

When I started graduate school, I was initially interested in writing a thesis about the effects of physical activity and mindfulness yoga activities on children's mental and cognitive health. That was a topic that I was passionate about and was excited to explore as I dedicated my entire first year in my classes to researching that area. In light of the COVID-19 quarantine and consequential school closings, researching mindfulness among school-aged children was not likely to occur. During the summer of 2020, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement gained traction, and that moment in time brought about more conversations about anti-racism and racism within higher education institutions.

When classes began in the fall of 2020, I was enthusiastic and excited about my new set of courses for the semester. One of my courses discussed challenging topics for me, and as a racially underrepresented student of color in that class, I was unsure how to best navigate the situation. With the extra challenge of courses all conducted online, I felt as if I was sitting alone on my computer trying to talk about these challenging topics for

me. Although I had multiple experiences throughout both my professional and collegiate career where I felt isolated as a Latina, this was the moment that sparked a greater desire for change and questioning of what it means to feel included. My experience in this class spurred internal questions about the importance of teaching from a DEI-centered approach, especially during a period when anti-racism movements and conversations were so prevalent. The importance of teaching from a DEI-centered approach and its embodiment rose to the forefront of my thinking. I started this project to speak with individuals who specialize in DEI. I asked them questions to better understand what happened or what went wrong in my experience in my class. I was curious and created questions for individuals about how they approach their students, how they approach their work, and what experiences shaped their thinking. I embarked upon this project based on my personal experiences in higher education as a Latina and as a racially underrepresented student in my classes.

Time and place matter in the context of this study. These interviews were conducted six months into the COVID-19 pandemic and shortly following the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd in the summer of 2020. Matters discussed in these interviews referenced these events and were difficult to address due to social isolation during the pandemic. Communication and engagement with students over Zoom were made more difficult during the time of the pandemic. As professors and students reverted to creative ways to communicate and engage in the class content, we may have lost affirmation and confirmation of the validity of thoughts through conversations over Zoom rather than in-person. I conducted this study entirely online when the world was working primarily online. It would have been a very different study if I conducted it in person at a different time.

## Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify contemporary approaches to interacting and engaging students through a DEI lens among academic scholars at one university. The research question that guided this study was: **“What is the journey to develop competence in diversity, equity, and inclusion that fosters equitable teaching and interactions with college students?”**. The approach used in this research study was a qualitative exploratory case study of five individuals who were faculty members or administrative staff at a tier 1, research-intensive higher education institution in the southern United States. I anticipated scholars would offer several equity-centered approaches and perspectives to facilitate discussions in social justice-related conversations with students in the classroom. I indeed received a diverse set of equity-centered perspectives from scholars and learned about their lived experiences that aided in their journey to fostering equity.

### RESEARCHER’S CHARACTERISTICS

As a female researcher and full-time student, I conducted all the methodologies outlined in this study as a student pursuing an M.S. in HBHE. Before beginning this study, I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) training, research training in my community research lab, and developed qualitative research skills in a formal statistics class. My professional development related to qualitative research occurred concurrently with the enacted study through research team debriefing and enrollment in a data analysis course. The characteristics I reported about myself as the interviewer and facilitator were my personal experience and hardship in my classes. The interviews were conducted from a

student perspective with adverse experiences in multiple classes and asking other faculty about their thoughts and advice.

## **STUDY DESIGN**

The present study is a collection and analysis of five case studies. The objective of this study was to achieve detail and depth in specifically selected cases rather than probabilistic generalizability or representativeness. Qualitative research for this study is essential to truly learn and understand individuals' personal stories. The narrative analysis in qualitative research is a method to prioritize the participant voice to understand how individuals make meaning of their stories (Guest et al., 2020). The epistemology that guides this research study is both subjective and constructed, known as social constructivism (Yucel & Habiyakare, 2011). This study was not pilot-tested; instead, this study was the pilot test for future studies.

### **Case Study**

To date, scientific studies continue to prioritize large sample sizes and “big data” quantitative methods. This research study intends to supplement large-scale quantitative approaches to emphasize the importance of participant voice and case study. A case study is a research frame with historical and structural boundaries, an integral theory component, and a method that requires an involved rather than distanced researcher (Stoecker, 1991). According to Miller and colleagues (2018), they say that “*writing and analysis of scholarly personal narratives offers a promising route to explore the experiences of students, faculty, and staff members in depth.*” This current study adds to the body of literature of personal narratives of the experiences of faculty and staff members (Miller et al., 2018).

## **Individual Trajectories**

This work provided an engaging and interpretive examination of the personal trajectories of five individuals in their journey towards equitable teaching. To further understand and make sense of my participants' stories, I chose to take on the lens of narrative elements to look at their trajectories in this case. The characteristics of narrative elements included characters, setting, problem, actions, events, episodes, and resolutions. Another big part of narrative elements includes sensing and understanding purpose in looking at individual trajectories. In this study, I have chosen to look at individual trajectories with an individual's "journey" as a metaphor.

## **STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

The participants' sample was diverse and varied in gender identity, racial identity, and years of experience working in higher education. Out of the five participants, four were faculty members, and one was an administrator. Participants were de-identified in this study and given pseudonyms. Gender-neutral pronouns of they, theirs, and them have been used to further de-identify participants' identities.

## **Recruitment and Consent**

Because this research study began as a class project, the recruitment of participants' consent to be involved in this research was achieved retrospectively via email. The primary participants were identified via the Internet and faculty webpages as experts in social justice, DEI, or health equity. Everyone invited to participate in the study was either a scholar, faculty member, or staff from a research-intensive higher education institution in the southern United States. Participants were identified based on the following criteria: 1)

current faculty member or staff, 2) active in DEI-related work in either research or practice, and 3) were available and interested to invest one-to-two hours of their time.

Based on the timeline to execute and complete this study, eight participants were selected. Out of the eight contacted participants, two did not respond, and the other six responded that they were interested in being involved in the study. Due to power outages from an unexpected winter storm, one participant was unable to be interviewed; therefore, five participants are included in this study. I shared consent and media release forms with participants via email, and consent from every participant was received retrospectively. As this project began as an independent research study, I conducted the interviews before approval of the IRB proposal and retrospectively received approval.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURE**

I conducted this qualitative study exclusively online and no in-person data were collected. I knew two of the participants before interviewing them; the rest were recommended or referred. Then, I started new conversations and relationships with the individuals who participated in this study. I established relationships during data collection in an informal conversation ranging from five to 15 minutes at the beginning of our conversation before the formal interview began. In recruiting for the study, I contacted participants via email with detailed information about the study and the intentions of my class research project. At the beginning of the interview, I disclosed my personal story and experience that brought about this project. The participants were made aware of my position as a master's student working on a class project investigating topics around social justice, my personal goals to understand this topic further, and initial reasons and ideas for doing this research.



## **Interview Protocol Development**

I sent the question prompts and guides to the participants via email ranging between two hours and three days before the interview (Appendix A).

## **Conducting the Interviews**

Individual semi-structured interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes, and the average interview length was 60 minutes. I recorded the audio and video of each interview using Zoom. The audio was recorded and transcribed using the Google Recorder Application and Zoom Audio Recording. Participants were asked for one-to-two hours of availability to participate in the conversation and be available for any follow-up questions. Only the participants and the researcher were present in these interviews. After the interview, the research assistant and I double-checked the automatic recording of the transcription and edited it manually for accuracy.

I communicated with the participants via email after the interview to solicit their signature for the consent forms and pending questions on the study's intention. Repeat and second interviews were not conducted because the initial interview provided rich data to conduct the analysis (Hennink et al., 2017).

## **Other Artifacts**

In addition to the recorded interviews and transcriptions, there were also other artifacts of the researcher's notes during the interview, the researcher's journal, and a research assistant's observational notes and reflections. I captured field notes after the interview.

I took steps to limit and manage potential researcher bias through memos recorded in an audit trail and presenting and sharing my findings with multiple groups. Weekly, I presented findings to my data analysis class, held in-depth conversations with my professor

of the course and my advisor, shared findings in my research lab, and had one-on-one meetings with writing center consultants. These instances provided opportunities to check my thoughts and findings with others where I posed questions including “*are you reading this right?*” or “*is this how it sounds?*” to help limit the potential bias that I could be misinterpreting my findings.

## DATA ANALYSIS

To interpret each individual’s journey, I used Joseph Campbell’s The Hero’s Journey (Figure 2) to best tell and highlight the stories of these individual participants. I adapted The Hero’s Journey to show the non-linear relationship between each stage. In this adaptation, people can go from one step to another and then revisit two previous steps to

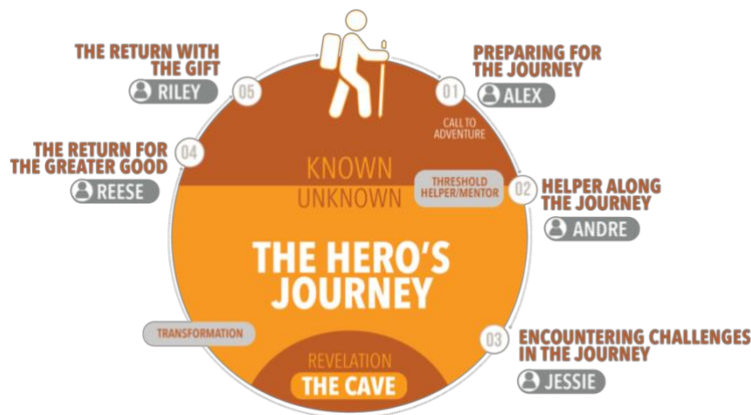


Figure 2: The Hero's Journey Graphic with Participants

progress and evolve in their journey. Decisions and paths are fluid across each participants’ trajectories. Figure 2 of The Hero’s Journey depicts the cyclical nature of an individual’s journey as they leave the world of the known to

adventure into the unknown and encounter helpers, mentors, challenges, and temptations to the moment of death and rebirth. If the adventurer survives the journey, they return with a transformation and a gift back to their community. The stories showcased here are a combination of events that people experienced on their path towards DEI-focused roles. I

showcase and highlight a part of each participant’s story under one part of The Hero’s Journey.

### **Inductive and Deductive Coded Themes**

I used a combination of inductive and deductive methods to code the data. I used major themes deductively from The Hero’s Journey and adapted them to fit participants’ narratives. The themes that emerged from participants’ narratives emerged inductively from the data. Five major themes were identified (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Major Themes and Major Theme Descriptions.*

	<b>Major themes</b>	<b>Description of each theme</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Preparing for The Journey</b>	Stories and events of participant’s preparation for their career in DEI in higher education.
<b>2</b>	<b>Helper Along The Journey</b>	Stories and events of how participant’s journey to DEI in higher education heavily relies and leans on the support, help, and mentorship of other individuals that encountered their path.  In addition to the traditional ‘Helper’ stage, the ‘Helper’ is also woven throughout the various stages as participants told their stories with helpers, teachers, and mentors as were essential in their journey.
<b>3</b>	<b>Encountering Challenges in The Journey</b>	Stories of challenges and triumphs when participant is navigating challenges along their journey.
<b>4</b>	<b>The Return for The Greater Good</b>	Stories and events of when an individual returned from a journey with valuable lessons to contribute and share back with others for the greater good.
<b>5</b>	<b>The Return with The Gift</b>	My addition to the original Hero’s Journey framework that showcases the story of an individual in their journey as they return to the community with the gift of health.

### **Coding Framework**

I present and describe the coding tree and coding framework through participants’ journeys using The Hero’s Journey framework. Every section of The Hero’s Journey below

begins with the major theme name, followed by a definition of that theme. A participant case demonstrates that theme and includes quotes from the participant.

I developed a matrix to have one central place to host and analyze participant quotes. I organized the matrix into the five major themes. Each participant had their row under each theme with quotes and learnings from that section. By reviewing the data in this matrix, it was apparent in which stage of The Hero's Journey each participant was most prominent. I conducted this analysis to prioritize participant's voices and highlight their story in a particular part of their journey. Although this matrix was not the only part of the analysis that determined what part of the journey to showcase for each participant, it did help facilitate the review and selection of quotes.

### **Data Interpretation**

I engaged two research teams as part of the interpretation process: I debriefed with (a) an undergraduate research assistant and (b) debriefed with two separate larger teams of graduate students while building the matrix. In addition to the matrix aiding in data analysis, I also analyzed by writing and articulating the data. According to Matthew B. Miles (2014), when referring to qualitative data analysis, he said, "*Writing is thinking...writing does not come after analysis; it is analysis.*". Another helpful tool in articulating my thoughts and interpretation of the data was recording myself talking aloud about my participants' stories. I used the Google Recorder Application on my phone to record conversations with myself and individuals from the two research teams involved, and then transcribed the conversation and reviewed my thinking and self-talk.

## **Data Management**

I analyzed the data and formed matrices in Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. Participant data were de-identified. I performed data management in the organization of the folder structure. The structure used included the participant's assigned number followed by the file description, such as 'S007\_Transcript'.

## **Member Checks**

In this study, I utilized informal member checks (Mertens, 2015). I prompted informal member checks during interviews as I paraphrased a participant's telling of their story to make sure that I understood their meaning. I did not return transcripts to participants for comment nor correction. Although some scholars conclude that formal member checking is a requirement of rigorous research, other scholars suggest that returning the transcriptions to the participants may contaminate their thinking and encourage them to provide more socially normed responses (Guest et al., 2020).

## **Saturation**

Although saturation is a form to reach scientific rigor in qualitative research, reaching saturation was not a goal in this case study. Saturation was not the most appropriate concept due to the purpose of the study to prioritize participant's voices and have ample space to do so (Guest et al., 2020). For narrative analysis, existing literature recommends a minimum of 15 cases if the purpose is not theoretical, and in this pilot study, there were only five cases analyzed (Guest et al., 2020).

## **Chapter 4: Results**

To address the research question of “**What is the journey to develop competence in DEI that fosters equitable teaching and interactions with college students?**” Joseph

Campbell's The Hero's Journey was applied and adapted to five individual stories. Each section begins with defining and operationalizing the theme and showcases the individual under that theme. In narrative analysis, it is important to stay focused on the story rather than disaggregating it into themes (Riessman, 2008). The results are presented in this section in five-themed journeys in narrative form.

### **PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY | ALEX**

In this adaptation of The Hero's Journey, 'Preparing For The Journey' includes stories and events of a participant's preparation for their career in DEI in higher education. The following is the story of Alex, who now holds a leadership position in a diversity-focused position at a university, but did not initially set out with this career in mind. As they shifted from a business career to graduate school, someone encountered their path and offered them a job in a DEI-specific department within the university. Their preparation for their journey to equitable teaching began when they arrived in graduate school and landed that job in the DEI department. From there, they continued growing both as a graduate student in school and their position, thinking about and addressing matters of DEI in higher education.

I got started on my master's program, and everything was great. [I] was also working with students, helping supervise our peer mentoring program, working in our diversity shop. That was my first exposure really working on the backside of higher education. I've never even thought about working at higher ed up until that point. Even at that point, when I was getting my master's, it [the plan] was going to be here [in the program] for two years, going to an internship, and then be able to start working in the industry or an athletic department. (Alex)

Then someone came along Alex's path once more and encouraged them to pursue a doctoral degree to continue their work in DEI. They agreed to do so and their journey to equitable teaching continued as they pursued a doctoral degree and continued to gain experience in the DEI department.

And with the success that I was having in the classroom and success I had working as a [graduate research assistant]... my advisor[s] in my master's program, said "You really should consider getting a PhD, I think that would really help open some doors, and you would have opportunities. [They said], you can be great in a classroom in terms of doing research and teaching what you know; I think that will also open a lot of doors and give you some options." That was the first time I'd really thought about getting a PhD and with that encouragement I switched from an internship to a thesis track. And I started to really get on the track towards preparing to be in the PhD program. (Alex)

Alex demonstrated the strength to lean on others for a cyclical journey of growth and depth of experience as they prepare for their journey towards equitable teaching. Through Alex's story, we also learned that as Alex was open to a new experience, they naturally grew into a leadership position in a diversity department as that role became available. They had already built up the experience to do so.

[I] never had the mindset [that] I was gonna be a chief diversity officer one day...or be [a leader] in diversity; that was never the onset, but it's like you [were] already doing the work to an extent. Even when I was in corporate, I was helping out with corporate recruitment of students of color and things of that nature; [I was] active with our employee resource group and the African American forum. Those things [were] diversity in that sense, but it wasn't necessarily called diversity. I had the

experience (even though I didn't know it at the time) and so bringing some [other] perspective was really helpful and continued up to the PhD. (Alex)

#### **HELPER ALONG THE JOURNEY | ANDRE**

In this adaptation of The Hero's Journey, encountering a 'Helper Along The Journey' includes stories and events of how a participant's journey to DEI in higher education heavily relied and leaned on the support, help, and mentorship of other individuals whom they encountered in their path. The following is the story of Andre, who, like Alex, now holds a leadership position in a diversity department. Andre expressed the vital importance of mentors who have helped shape their path and journey across their lifetime.

One important mentor who crossed Andre's path was a teacher from high school who encouraged them and believed in them to develop their speech skills. Through that helper, they met their life partner and credited it to that teacher for evolving and transforming the rest of their life. Andre found it critically important to stay in touch, be thankful, and pay it forward how people in their past have helped them develop.

It's all about paying it forward so ... [moments] that I experienced and realiz[ed] how important it was to have educators help me along the way I really, I can't tell you how important that was. My [high school] teacher, I mean these people I still stay in touch with. (Andre)

Andre described their mentors as an essential part of their journey to DEI in higher education. Andre credited their mentors for believing in them to be a vital part of what kept them growing and learning in academia. Andre's mentorship and support from professors when they were a student is a part of what drives them to pay it forward to their students and mentees today.



I have my freshman year, I was so lucky to find I would say three or four mentors who are, those who are still alive, are still a part of my life and ... they had such belief, they told me, “you know, [Andre], you’re gonna do great things at [this school]”, and I’m like, “what are you talking about, I just got here, I don’t think so”, I’m barely getting through my classes. In fact, I was on classic probation my second semester here, so I’m like, I don’t think it’s gonna be the case and they believed and that’s what I kind of carried with me in my career as an educator, that same kind of belief. I really am very much replicating [what] was done for me, having teachers who believed in me in K-12, having staff members and professors who believed in me in higher education. I’ve done those things. I was the beneficiary. (Andre)

#### **ENCOUNTERING CHALLENGES IN THE JOURNEY | JESSIE**

In this adaptation of The Hero’s Journey, ‘Encountering Challenges in The Journey included stories of challenges and triumphs when an individual navigated challenges along the way in their journey. The following is the story of Jessie and their challenges as they integrated their background in healthcare with their passion for teaching. What is particularly interesting about how Jessie exemplified this cycle of their journey is that every challenge they encountered, they looked at it as a facilitator to their next opportunity. Jessie told their story that they have a natural inclination toward their ability to use the present challenge as a part of what will help them grow and enable them into their next opportunity. In this case, Jessie was not somebody who came into teaching from the get-go to focus on DEI and teach from that lens. This part of Jessie’s journey was not necessarily a part of their intended path; teaching was not a part of their career plan nor a part of whom they aimed to become. We cannot conceptualize their challenges

as a brick wall that stops them, but their personal and intellectual growth is tied to the challenge itself.

Jessie's journey into DEI happened rapidly as a teaching position unexpectedly landed in their path as they were not considering that in their career journey. This unexpected teaching position provided an opportunity for them to imagine a new path. It was not because Jessie did not want their previous career; they indeed loved it, but rather it was because they took the events and challenges that happened in their lives and the society around them to heart and elected to make a change in their lives. Jessie shifted trajectories as they adapted to rejection from jobs, becoming a parent, and being open to this new opportunity.

I couldn't get a job. I got rejection after rejection like I'm applying for jobs and they're like, no, sorry. I'm thinking, I have a master's in [healthcare] and you won't hire me to work in your NICU... you'll hire a graduate nurse but not me and I you know, I get it, I was probably "overqualified" and wondering how long am I gonna stay so it was humbling that's probably what I needed to knock me off my little Ivy League horse. (Jessie)

The direct journey in their trajectory toward equitable teaching for Jessie began with integrating some of their learning from their doctoral program and developing a class about race and health. They were on a rapid journey working to integrate various learnings and responding to challenges and events that arose along the way. Jessie shared how topics about race were something they thought about before, but there had never been a way to integrate that into the classroom until recently. Jessie was interested in topics about race and health in their graduate studies, but since it was not their dissertation topic, it was not something Jessie actively pursued. Another challenge Jessie faced was putting their dissertation work into practice as there was no immediate need or

ask. As Jessie was tasked with teaching, they found themselves questioning and wondering what their greater purpose in teaching was. Jessie found themselves asking and praying to God in search of a greater purpose.

I'm like, okay God, what am I supposed to do, you know the whole idea "to whom much is given, much is required," I'm like okay, I have this PhD and I'm thinking, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem [Jessie]. The soul searching like, what do I? How do I get involved? What do I do? (Jessie)

There was a particular moment for Jessie where they realized that they wanted to change something in their life, where they decided that they intentionally wanted to do something about it based on what they just heard.

Fast forward to Spring of 2018, NPR KUT is doing a series on maternal mortality and I'll never forget where I was, I was washing dishes and listening to one of the episodes and they were interviewing a mom whose daughter had passed away and the interviewer asked her like, "what do you think contributed to your daughter's death?" And she said racism. And I just was like, oh my goodness. Wow, and so I was sort of floored. In that moment I had this existential crisis, like [Jessie], what are you doing? (Jessie)

Jessie encountered various challenges in growing into a professor that helped position DEI as a central part of their teaching. Those challenges included: 1) the request and a fellowship to create, structure, and teach a class around race and health and 2) the initiative and drive to create and lead a book club within their faculty team and their students within their department. Those were two key challenges that both altered and created Jessie's path toward equitable teaching and interaction with students.

As Jessie received a request to create, structure, and teach a class around race and health, they were unsure if they were prepared enough to accept the request.

One, I had admin stuff and like oh, when would I have time to do that and two, not feeling expert enough because I don't have a background in sociology or history or like any of this black studies ...and so I'm just sort of learning and unlearning and teaching myself as I go and so there was that part too, not being expert enough, not feeling expert enough, the ever present imposter syndrome. (Jessie)

However, as Jessie encountered the opportunity to teach and train other faculty colleagues at a faculty training center, Jessie picked up on a lack of readiness from the faculty to engage in these topics. This challenge brought about conversations and next steps within Jessie's faculty team. The following quote is an example of how Jessie encountered a challenge and allowed that challenge to guide the way toward a solution into the next step of creating a faculty book club and Jessie's decision to accept the request to create a class around race and health.

We're in a faculty meeting and one of our ... faculty is sharing instances of racism that her students had observed in the clinical setting and how they had unpacked that...and so we had a faculty member who was like, you know what I'm not really comfortable having those conversations and so it was like, okay, we need to get comfortable. How do we get comfortable?... we talked about it. Brainstormed. And we came up with the idea of having a faculty and staff book club, a space where we could do readings and just you know, make missteps and share and talk and even get comfortable saying the "r" word." (Jessie)

## **THE RETURN FOR THE GREATER GOOD | REESE**

In this adaptation of The Hero's Journey, 'Lessons for the Greater Good' included stories and events of when an individual returned from a journey with valuable lessons to

contribute and share with others for the greater good. What is particularly interesting across participant's journeys upon their returns is that it was not a singular journey with a singular return. The following story of Reese exemplifies multiple journeys with multiple returns. As Reese made their multiple returns from their multiple journeys, every time they returned inspired to continue learning, growing, and becoming their best self to contribute to the greater good. The "greater good" refers to their students as this participant holds a leadership position at their university. Like Andre, Alex, and Jessie, Reese also leaned on family, supervisors, mentors, colleagues, and students as an essential part of returning with lessons for the greater good.

Reese was recommended to me by one of my professors, and I quickly made the connection that I knew them from my teenage years as my softball coach. Reese gave me the most valuable player (MVP) award because they said they could put me anywhere, and I would play just as well wherever they put me. As we began our interview, I reminded Reese of the MVP award they gave me and thanked them. As we discussed the characteristics that make up the MVP award, including adaptability, flexibility, and determination, Reese continued to use that analogy throughout the narration of their story. Just like me being an MVP, that also has served them well in their career.

As Reese wrapped up their undergraduate career, their goal was to graduate as quickly as possible to take a full-time job in admissions to help other students apply to and attend university. In their journey, they were unsure of exactly how to apply to college as a first-generation student; they did not know the process, they did not know how to apply, and how to go all the way through to acceptance. Reese was fortunate to have an older sibling who was a mentor for them who helped them navigate that process to apply and get into school. Reese decided to help future students apply for higher education, much like their sibling did for them.

Straight out of Reese's undergraduate degree, they took a job in admissions at a university, and they immediately loved working with students. The initial part of their job required them to travel to various towns and cities throughout the region of their university. Reese talked about how they use the MVP strategy to relate and adapt to students from diverse backgrounds to communicate with and serve students in the way that they are best going to receive the message. Reese tuned into their inner MVP strategy to chameleon their way to give back to the community by bringing diverse talent to the university. Reese said,

Really even connecting with students, and particularly students of color. Whether they were Latinos, whether they were African American, I felt kind of like your [MVP] award that I can be in any situation, you can put me in front of a super affluent family from [one region of the state], and I can work with them and be as personable with them as I can with a kid in [another region across the state], and I can relate to them and show them that this is doable and they can achieve their goals and not everybody can do that and so I think that was one of the things that I prided myself on is that I wanted people that had never thought about giving [this university] a chance I wanted them to come to school and I was gonna do what I could to mentor them. (Reese)

Reese was adamant about their intention to give back and mentor other students to have the opportunity to attend university; their whole mission was to help others arrive where they arrived. Reese intentionally used the MVP strategy to be the person who could plug into different places, to be the person the team needs them to be for that time. The MVP strategy became a strategy that Reese used to give back to the community; in this case, the community are their students.

If it's better for my team or what I would be bold enough to say my students...if it's better for them then I'm all for it. And whatever I have to give up to make it happen, let's make it happen. And that's just my mindset. (Reese)

For Reese, it was not just adaptability that kept them going on journeys and returning with lessons for the students. However, it was about keeping the community at the forefront of their mind, and that is how they gave back to the students—never losing sight and wanting to be an MVP leader that always has their foot in the community with the students.

The students are what keep me showing up. And I think my passion for I want to see the university become the university I know it can be, we're not there, but I have such high expectations for it because we are the flagship and with it's kind of the whole comic quote, like “with great power comes great responsibility”, we owe it [to this state] as a university ...[to] every person around the country and around the world to be that welcoming, accepting place for academics. And if it wasn't for the students, and I've kind of joked around with some of my bosses before, it's like if y'all ever make me quit seeing students that's when I'm going to retire because I thrive off y'all's energy. I mean, that's been some of the difficult parts about being here, during COVID, is that I can't high-five a student when they do good on a test, people aren't rushing in telling me about their job offers, or they got into PT school, or med school, or they got their teaching job or things like that. But it's really the students that keep me going. (Reese)

### **THE RETURN WITH THE GIFT | RILEY**

‘The Return with The Gift’ is my addition to the original Hero's Journey framework. The following is the story of Riley as they return to the community with the

gift of health. As an HBHE program student, I approached this project from a health and well-being lens and found myself curious about what working in DEI and working with topics related to DEI do to our well-being and health.

The following is the story of Riley, who dedicates their work to seeking to understand women's struggles with their health to learn how to best support them in their journey. It is evident that through this journey of learning from women through in-depth interviews and focus groups, Riley learned from the women they engage within the community and this, in turn, enabled them to approach, interact with, and teach their students from an equitable lens.

I've always enjoyed just working with the community or you know, having that engagement and I think when you lose sight of that or you start hiring other people to do things for you, you become so out of touch with what's going on and I've seen that I worked on projects like that. And you can't make good decisions and informed decisions if you don't have the pulse of what's going on with the people that you're working with. (Riley)

Not only does Riley learn from the women they interview and apply that learning to their students, but most importantly, they also find joy, well-being, and purpose through being in connection with people and helping people in that way.

[talking with participants is] so much just fun and [I hear] personal stuff about the participants that I've spoken to... It's just really rewarding knowing that you're going through something and ... then analyzing data... I can be like "oh that was this number, this is the context and this is what happened" and everything because I know them and you're putting a face to research...and that's one thing I really will strive to make sure that I don't lose sight of that because it brings [me] joy. Sometimes it's heartbreaking but I think being able to put faces to the data makes



a huge difference and I've really enjoyed that part of doing the research that I do.  
(Riley)

Riley is passionate about including women in research to be able to best help address health inequities.

Inequities is just fueling the health disparities that we see and so that's what I try to strive to do...is how can we make this more equitable? And not a top-down approach where it's like, well I'm the researcher of my PhD so let me tell you what you need to do. It's like, no, we need to include them, whoever they is, whoever you're working with and find out what they want and what would be beneficial. (Riley)

Through Riley's story, we learn how they find purpose, meaning, and connection through the work they do in research through interviewing women. Riley takes what they learn from working with various populations and integrated that into their character, which they draw upon in their teaching and interactions with students. For Riley, it is about engaging fully with the women they interview and learning from that experience for their students and their future participants. Riley's story embodies returning to the community with the gift of health, they say, "*I'm just very honored that women feel comfortable and I can get their stories from them.*"

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

Findings from this study suggest that all of the participants went through multiple cyclical journeys and multiple returns, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity. Rather than separating and classifying individuals based on these labels, this study seeks to unite the commonalities participants share. I used a single portion of one individual's cycle through a journey towards equitable teaching. This interpretation indicates that individuals

can learn equitable teaching through multiple cycles and multiple returns of learning journeys.

### **MY REFLECTION**

Through working on this project, I was reminded of my deep love for working with children. I realized that I feel most like myself and most comfortable around children. In reflection, I realize that this is because I naturally feel included among children; meanwhile, I must work harder to feel included around adults. The need to feel included drew me to have these conversations with scholars specializing in embodying DEI practices. As I learned several mental health strategies from these scholars, including believing you belong, identifying and moving past imposter syndrome, and shifting perspective and expectations, I now feel more equipped and empowered to feel included myself. At the same time, I feel more at ease knowing outstanding scholars are teaching and sharing equitable and inclusive practices so that this also comes from the professor, teacher, staff, or person in power in that dynamic.

### **DELIMITATIONS**

Both a strength and a limitation in this study was the duality of the interviewer and researcher roles. Serving as both the interviewer and the researcher or as a participant-observer are common and acceptable in qualitative research and can strengthen comprehension and reliability. Further, one of the participants was one of my supervisors. Our plan to address this conflict included having two supervisors and two distinct research debrief teams: (a) one lab group and (b) formalized course of students that included one faculty member and continuous feedback on data interpretation.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There are various limitations to this study. 1) This study was conducted under a limited time constraint. I conducted it in a school year for my master's thesis, and I attempted to instill as much scientific rigor as possible during the allotted time frame. 2) This was the first official study that I created from start to finish and leaned on the support of multiple research teams, my advisor, supervisor, and professor. 3) I do not have a professional background nor career in DEI; I have my personal lived experience, which I drew upon in the design and execution of this study. 4) This study only showcases one part of each individual's stories at one point in time and does not go into the depth of their whole background and lifelong journey.

I did not create this study to generalize its findings to others, but rather with the idiosyncratic examination at the individual participant-voice level. Although this study is not generalizable, the concept of The Hero's Journey and how every individual goes through a cycle of learning, encountering challenges, transforming, and returning with lessons for the greater good is seen throughout literature, including movies and fiction novels (Campbell, 2008).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with five individuals who were either faculty or administrators at a tier 1, research-intensive higher education institution in the southern United States, this study has implications for higher education best practice, DEI training, and future research. These learnings include 1) the importance of a growth mindset, 2) the cyclical nature of multiple journeys and multiple returns, and 3) the importance and significance of mentorship.

Through the stories of the individuals showcased in this study, we learn the importance of rather than seeing challenges as barriers, seeing challenges as an opportunity for new learnings and new journeys. In other words, this study confirms the importance of a growth mindset. The importance of a growth mindset in equitable teaching has also been uncovered in previous research studies (Chavez-Haroldson, 2019).

Individual stories in this study uncover how their journeys follow a non-linear cyclical journey with multiple cycles and multiple returns. Currently, a challenge in DEI training is that the current model presents training as a one-time learning experience, such as a one-day or six-week workshop. Rather than a single event, we need to think of DEI training and workshops to initiate people on their journeys and develop ways to sustain such values and actions as a lifelong learning journey. The nature of multiple cycles of learning confirms the findings of existing research. One study showed how diversity educators are tasked with conducting a two-hour session of a half-day workshop for a one-time learning experience that only adds additional labor to these individuals without the promise of sustainability in training (Miller et al., 2018).

The stories of the individuals showcased in this study highlight how essential people and mentors are to their journeys. In The Hero's Journey framework, the helper plays a vital role in aiding an individual to cross the threshold from the world of the known into the unknown. Such a step helps individuals to overcome challenges and actualize learnings. The importance of a helper along a learning journey suggests that they are important allies encouraging them on their journeys. In cases where DEI training focuses on the self, we also need to be thinking about reaching out to others. The importance of the helper has been uncovered in previous research that suggests diversity education should consist of a team approach comprised of intersectional identities (Miller et al., 2018).

Education has seen the critical need to integrate DEI practices because it provided a space for people to bring their personal journeys into their work or academic career. The need for DEI integration is seen through more DEI positions becoming available and being offered to individuals with that expertise, as is seen in Alex's case in this study. As research suggests, a DEI-centered campus improves student success and strengthens the academic environment with a positive impact on course curriculum (Clayton-Pedersen, O'Neill, & McTighe Musil, 2008; Gurin, 1999; Gurin et al., 2002; Leon, 2014; Milem, 2003; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

During the shift to online classes, I embarked on this study due to the pandemic and the racial tension that swept across the country entering higher education classrooms. I was curious to understand how scholars develop an equitable lens to teach and interact with students. I entered this study with the research question, **“What is the journey to develop competence in diversity, equity, and inclusion that fosters equitable teaching and interactions with college students?”**. I learned from individuals that when you look at a challenge as a facilitator for personal growth rather than as a barrier, anything is possible. I learned of the importance of a growth mindset in spearheading a journey towards equitable teaching. I learned that everyone goes through a series of journeys with multiple adventures and multiple returns, each time with a new lesson learned to share with students. I learned of the utmost importance of leaning on each other for help and assistance in the form of mentorship and community building. Every single participant in this study showed an instance of how someone entered their path and forever evolved and changed their trajectory. The role of the helper is vital to note in DEI; DEI training is not an individual endeavor but rather a collaborative effort. After in-depth interviews with these scholars and in-depth analysis and interpretation of these conversations, I learned how the journey of

others to develop competence in DEI could be used to increase understanding of DEI training and equitable teaching practices.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

From this study, I learned multiple strategies that individuals have encountered along their journey to equitable teaching. The findings in this study can aid in creating DEI training for faculty, staff, and students and help both individuals and groups of people navigate DEI conversations in higher education classrooms. The theme, ‘The Return with The Gift,’ is my addition to the original Hero’s Journey framework. The addition of this theme is an essential theoretical insight because of the impact DEI has on students, faculty, and staff’s well-being (Iheduru-Anderson K et al., 2021).

Future studies should further investigate how equitable teaching influences students, faculty, and staff’s well-being and mental health. Future research could also consider DEI educators’ self-care and stressors strategies across various higher education institutions (Miller et al., 2018). Lastly, as this current study adds to the stories of scholarly personal narratives, future research should continue investigating and telling more stories of individuals focused on the development of equitable strategies (Miller et al., 2018).

## Appendix

### SAMPLE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

#### *Courageous Conversations: Health as Social Justice*

Dr. [First Last Name],

My name is Denise Gutierrez. I'm a second-year master's student in the Health Behavior Health Education program in the College of Education. This semester I am taking a self-directed research project focused on health inequalities from a social justice perspective. This project aims to synthesize contemporary approaches to understanding social justice as a LatinX graduate student and those positionalities of the experts like yourself.

*[SPECIFIC PER PARTICIPANT] When I was brainstorming this project with someone in a consultation at the writing center, she mentioned that you would be a great person to talk with about it. I felt really called and inspired to reach out to you from your statement on your faculty page, "She stays motivated by keeping in mind that systems of oppression gain their power from silence, so she must keep talking." The call to speak up and use my voice is what initiated this project.*

For my project, I will conduct interviews with scholars who have social justice-related areas of expertise, conduct a self-study identifying my place within this content and context, and share what I learn with students, faculty, and staff through a podcast. I hope that in doing this work and sharing it through a podcast, it will bring awareness and both open and respectful conversations to the landscape between professors and students in classrooms in academia.

If you're interested, I would love to interview you on your thoughts on the matter, your work, and what we can be doing about it as students.

**Do you have 45 -60 minutes to spend with me over Zoom sometime in the next month?** When works best for you?

I plan to familiarize myself with your work and come ready with questions to engage us in conversation. Are there specific publications or books you would like us to focus on? This is a fantastic opportunity to highlight what you're most passionate about these days! If so, name them and I'll find them!

I look forward to our future discussion. I hope we can make this happen!

In gratitude,  
Denise

# A QUALITATIVE STUDY: HEALTH EQUITY AS SOCIAL JUSTICE PODCAST AND INTERVIEW GUIDE

By: Denise Gutierrez, M.S. Graduate Student

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The following protocol is the format and sequence for conducting the semi-structured interview to collect information about topics of health equity and social justice from a participant.

## **PODCAST SET-UP** *[offline, will be recorded separately from the interview]*

Denise Gutierrez introduces herself and why she is having this conversation with this scholar. Introduce [scholar] and their line of work. Now, let's get into the conversation with [scholar].

## **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL BEGINS**

### **Introduction from interviewer**

- Thank you so much for the investment of your time and energy to talk with me today.
- I would like to record our conversation today, to transcribe our conversation and not misrepresent your words. Let me know at any point you'd like me to stop recording. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time without consequence. Excerpts of the interview will be published and made public via a podcast. The only people who will have access to the complete tape and transcript will be the research team.
- Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

### **Introduction to participant**

- What are some personal milestones that shaped your professional career? What happened along the way that brought you to where you are today?

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), and Social Justice**

- What do DEI mean to you? How is that different from or similar to anti-racist work? How does this tie into social justice?
- How has your work and/or focus evolved or changed in the past 7 months (March – October 2020) in the pandemic and throughout the *Black Lives Matter (BLM)* movement?
- What is this moment in time for you? Thinking about this moment in time, with COVID-19, inequalities omnipresent, protests, riots, active #BLM movement, police brutality, and political tension, etc....



- What is this doing to our health?
  - How do you see it affecting you in your teaching?
  - In what ways does this expand to your relationships with your students?
  - Do you see it affecting students in their learning? And in their conversations and engagements?
  - In what ways is the online classroom environment helping or not helping?
  - What is the heartbeat of your class like?
- Can you tell me about how the progress we've made in DEI?
  - Who am I to be doing this work? What is the value of someone like me (woman of color, cisgender, heterosexual) having this conversation, when I am not black?

### **Self-care**

- What keeps you showing up?
- How do you manage your emotions? How do you cope?

### **What comes next?**

- What is most important to focus on right now regarding DEI (as faculty and students)? What do we need to be thinking about? What do we do?
- Who is doing great work around this? Who to talk to next?
- What is the most important thing to keep doing that brings you joy in your work?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **Closing from interviewer**

- Thank you for your time in talking with me today.
- After I transcribe this interview, I will send it to you so you can confirm the accuracy of your answers. If there is anything you would like to edit, revise, add, or remove, let me know. I will also share the podcast with you, once it's ready.

## Consent to Participate in Research

### Basic Study Information

Title of the Project: Courageous Conversations: Health as Social Justice  
Principal Investigator: Denise Gutierrez, M.S. Graduate Student, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, The University of Texas at Austin  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Darla Castelli, PhD, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, The University of Texas at Austin

### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to be part of a research study. This consent form will help you in choosing whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent document.

### What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify contemporary approaches to eliminating health inequities and promoting social justice from a LatinX perspective among academic scholars. First, elicitation interviews will be conducted and shared as podcasts. Second, the elicitation interviews will be inductively coded to identify common themes and patterns. Finally, the interviews will be used to develop a survey to solicit information from other faculty members across the country. We anticipate that the academic experts will provide insight into contemporary strategies and approaches related to health equity. Further, we believe that sharing this information through podcasts and surveys will enhance our understanding of social justice related to health equities. Having a positionality of LatinX will hopefully inform local policy and practice.

### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Correspond over email with Denise Gutierrez.
- Have a 45-60-minute conversation with Denise Gutierrez over Zoom.
- Review the transcript and podcast of your interview and answer any follow-up questions.

### How long will this study take and how many people will be in the study?

Participation in this study will take 1-2 hours of your time. We anticipate that there will be 20 interview participants and up to 1,000 survey participants over an academic year.

### What risks and discomforts might you experience from being in this study?

There are some risks you might experience from being in this study. They include psychological or informational risks.

Informational risks could include those involving breach of confidentiality. Any topics or specific answers given during the interview can be retracted. Participant can request researcher to not use that data.

Psychological risks could be those associated with a particularly sensitive topic during the interview. You can request to not discuss that topic and move on to the next question. Researcher can provide you with contact information for counseling resources.

### **How could you benefit from this study?**

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, this is an opportunity to share and highlight your expertise, thoughts, and work with The University of Texas community including students, faculty, and staff.

### **What data will we collect from you?**

As part of this study we will collect qualitative interviews, including audio recordings.

The results of this study may be published or presented at a scientific meeting. The researchers will ask for separate written permission to include your name and recordings or other information that could identify you.

We will receive consent from every participant, you are receiving this consent form either retrospectively or prospectively.

- 1) Retrospective – as this project began as an independent research study, several of the interviews were already conducted prior to this IRB proposal. In this case, you are asked for your consent retrospectively.
- 2) Prospective – any participant interviewed after the approval of this IRB proposal, will be asked for consent prior to participating in the initial interview.

### **How will we protect your information?**

We will share your data with other researchers for future research studies that may be similar to this study or may be very different. The data shared with other researchers may include information that can directly identify you. Researchers will not contact you for additional permission to use this information.

We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, we will/will not include any information that could directly identify you.

Information about you may be given to the following organizations:

- Representatives of UT Austin and the UT Austin Institutional Review Board

**What will happen to the information we collect about you after the study is over?**

We will keep your research data to use for future research. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be kept secure and stored separately from the research data collected as part of the project.

**How will we compensate you for being part of the study?**

You will not receive any type of payment for your participation.

**Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary**

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin. You will not lose any benefits or rights you already had if you decide not to participate. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, your data will be secured and not published, nor shared publicly.

**Media Release Podcast Consent**

For valuable consideration, I do hereby authorize The University of Texas at Austin, and those acting pursuant to its authority to *(check all that you agree to)*:

- Record my participation and appearance on video, audio, and transcription recording.
- Use my name, likeness, voice, and biographical material in connection with these recordings.
- Exhibit or distribute such recording in whole or in part without restrictions or limitation for any educational or promotional purpose which The University of Texas at Austin, and those acting pursuant to its authority, deem appropriate.
- My voice recordings will appear on a podcast to be shared openly on the internet. I am okay with my name being associated with those audio clips and those clips being shared broadly on the internet.

**Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:  
Denise Gutierrez  
Phone:

Email:

Or

Dr. Darla Castelli  
Email:

**Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

The University of Texas at Austin  
Institutional Review Board  
Phone:  
Email:

Please reference the protocol number found at the top of this document.

**Your Consent**

*I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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