

Contributions to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement – Cristina Zepeda

The best environments embrace and respect how people differ while providing access and opportunities for those who are underrepresented in a welcoming manner. As the first Latina in my family to earn a doctorate, I understand the importance of having experiences that encompass these values. To further diversity and inclusion in both psychological science and post-secondary education, I routinely participate in outreach and academic preparation programs, create courses and workshops, and mentor underrepresented scholars. Below, I provide examples of my longstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and my plans for continuing these efforts through my research-, teaching-, and service-related actions.

Research–related actions. At the heart of my research endeavors is my goal to **identify ways to make education more equitable and inclusive**. Specifically, my research examines the metacognitive and motivational techniques that have been particularly beneficial for students that are lower performing, underrepresented, and/or lacking access to sufficient educational resources. These techniques are typically beneficial because they are rarely supported in school contexts, and when they are supported, there is a biased belief that these students are not ready for such supports. Critically, in some of my recent work, I have specifically examined how these phenomena are perceived and used by students from different backgrounds (e.g., first-generation, lower-SES) to better understand how to design effective interventions (e.g., Butler, Alarcón, Een, Zepeda, & Schell, in prep; Wang, Zepeda, Quinn, Del Torro, & Binning, 2021; Zepeda, Giani, & Butler, under review).

I also strive to make more equitable experiences in the lab setting. For example, I have sought opportunities to support students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds through various programs, which I highlight below in the service section of this document. I have also mentored several undergraduate and graduate women, resulting in co-authored conference submissions (e.g., Ferrara, Zepeda, & Nokes-Malach, 2014, July) and four peer-reviewed publications (Boden, Zepeda, & Nokes-Malach, 2020; Martin, Zepeda, & Butler, 2021; Zepeda, Hlutkowsky, Partika & Nokes-Malach, 2019; Zepeda, Martin & Butler, 2020). **All three undergraduate female co-authors are now pursuing their doctorate in psychological science.**

I also advocate for underrepresented voices in my other scholarly activities. For example, I intentionally look for opportunities to cite and discuss work by folx from various backgrounds. I also share and create opportunities that support students in applying to research experiences, graduate school, and postdoc positions. I recently started an [early career research group](#) of ABD graduate students, postdocs, visiting assistant professors, and recent assistant professors to provide a common space for us to collaborate and support each other as we navigate the ECR life. As I advance in my career, **I will continue and advocate for others** as I run my lab, write grants, collaborate with scholars, present my work, and recruit reviewers.

Teaching–related actions. In my teaching-related endeavors, I seek to promote equitable access and diversity in education. My goals are for students to recognize their educational aspirations, learn how to navigate that process, and cultivate a sense of belonging. Much of academia contains hidden curricula about how to navigate college and higher education that one's social capital or networks can dismantle, but these opportunities are not equitable across students. In an effort to make these opportunities more equitable, one approach that I have taken is mentorship. Through a service-learning program at UC San Diego and as the Assistant Director of Hot Metal Bridge Post-Baccalaureate program at the University of Pittsburgh, I have worked with students from underserved and traditionally marginalized backgrounds to broaden participation in postsecondary and higher education. In the latter position, I worked with post-baccalaureate students and **developed a course, workshops, and a manual** that demonstrated how to navigate graduate school with an emphasis on the graduate school application process. Critically, these materials were iteratively improved with feedback and contributions from the post-baccalaureates based on their experiences in the program, academia, and the city. In this role, I also managed and trained graduate students and

faculty mentors on how to best support the post-baccalaureates. **Thirteen are now pursuing their doctorates, two have earned their masters, and two have earned their doctorate.**

Another approach I have taken to advance diversity and equity is through guest lectures. At the University of Pittsburgh, I regularly gave workshop talks at the Academic Resource Center on how to effectively study. At the graduate level, I guest-lectured for the Teaching of Psychology course on promoting diversity and inclusivity in the college classroom. Before guest lecturing for this course, I spoke with several of my BIPOC colleagues that I had worked with at the university and asked them to anonymously provide examples of how they have felt marginalized or discriminated against within a university context. In my guest lecture, I provided these examples along with my own. These examples (e.g., "When I finally had the courage to say something in a grad course, a faculty member told me I was using a word incorrectly, instead of focusing on the meaning of my statement. I rarely speak up in classes now.") led to a carefully crafted and reflective discussion. After this discussion, **I provided a toolkit** with concrete ways to be more inclusive at the collegiate and instructor levels. Later, many students thanked me for opening their perspectives and sharing such experiences. I am immensely grateful for my colleagues' anonymous contributions.

Lastly, in my classes, I seek to **create inclusive activities** by diversifying my materials and connecting with students. For example, I select readings from various scholars based on race, gender, and age (graduate student versus senior scholar), select materials based on student interests, and learn students' names (regardless of class size). When teaching, I emphasize the importance of open communication and hold office hours in a welcoming environment such as a coffee shop or library. I also ask students background questions (e.g., their pronouns, their interests) in a pre-course survey to better understand the makeup of my class and inform my teaching. So far, this survey has allowed me to elevate voices in our discussions and make connections to student interests.

Service-related actions. Similar to my teaching, **my service-related activities focus on creating access and equity to broaden the field of psychological science** to include those from underrepresented backgrounds. In addition to my role as the Assistant Director to Hot Metal Bridge (HMB) Post-Baccalaureate program, I have served on the DEI committees for the Psychology Departments at the University of Pittsburgh and Washington University in St. Louis and for the Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC). In these committees, my goal was and is to create access and opportunities for students while also furthering my education of DEI best practices. For example, at the University of Pittsburgh, I designed the content for many of the new programs that provided research opportunities for students from underrepresented backgrounds, such as LRDC's Summer Undergraduate Research Internship. At Washington University in St. Louis, I am currently creating a platform and corresponding procedures to receive anonymous input, creative solutions, and suggestions on making a more equitable and inclusive department climate. At the national level, I have also participated in meetings for the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans and the SPARK society. In a recent SPARK meeting, two of my former post-baccalaureates presented why they felt that the HMB program was successful and the importance of having structures and communities to support them as they transition from undergrad to grad school. It was full circle for me to see them describing why and how these experiences mattered.

Future Directions

In the future, I will continue my efforts in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in my research, teaching, and service activities. In my research, I will continue to mentor students and collaborate with colleagues from underrepresented backgrounds as I search for new ways to create more equitable educational experiences. In my teaching, I will continue to implement inclusive activities and educate others on supporting inclusivity. In my service activities, I will continue to create opportunities to increase representation. I look forward to continuing these efforts and working with others who also value creating environments that provide supportive access and opportunity.