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Examining Instructor Conceptions of Diversity

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Introduction

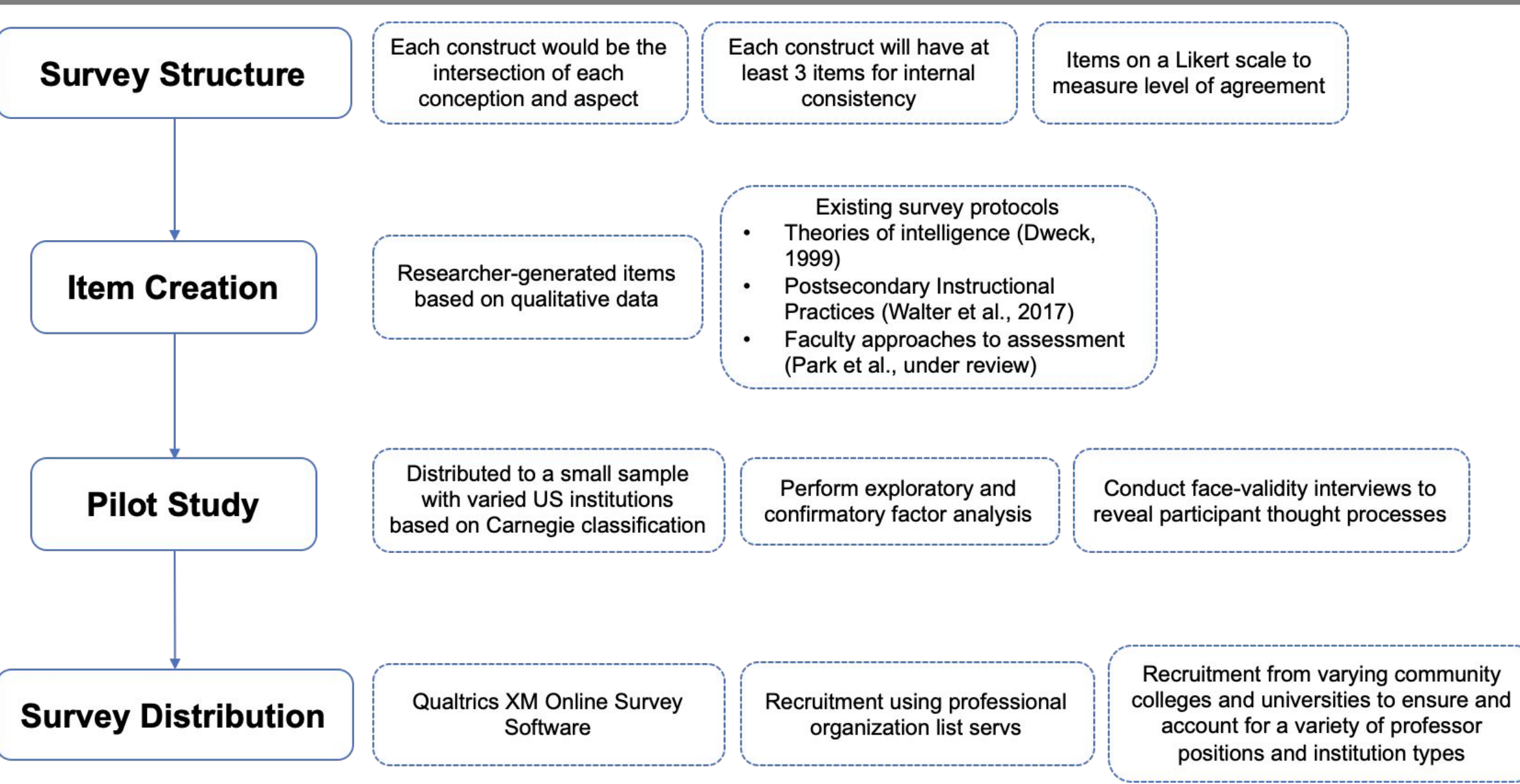
- Despite increasing diversity in student populations, underrepresented students experience lower degree completion rates and participation in STEM compared to their White and Asian counterparts as a result of an existing equity gap.
- There are many factors that affect the equity gap but one that we focus on is instructor-student interactions, which can be influenced by implicit biases.
- The objective of this study is to examine how instructors conceptualize diversity in order to create more equitable and inclusive learning environments.

Research Question: How do instructors in higher education conceptualize diversity?

Our Conceptions of Diversity

Conceptions→ ↓ Aspects	Essentialist	Functionalist	Existentialist
Student Identities	Static	Malleable	Experiential
Ability Belief	Fixed	Deficit	Asset
Student Engagement	Irrelevant	Supporting Weaknesses	Reciprocity
Pedagogical Motivation	Equal Treatment	Accommodations	Intentional Implementation
Legitimized Membership	Students as Outsiders	Students as Guests	Students are Rightfully Present

Survey Creation and Distribution Plan



Draft Survey Items

Based on our conception framework, we have formulated the following draft survey items that are categorized by conception for the aspect of legitimized membership.

Essentialist:

- A certain identity is fixtly connected to a certain property of the student. (Student Identities, Static)
- I believe that students have a certain level of ability that cannot be changed. (Ability Belief, Fixed)
- I believe students are responsible for their engagement with the course material. (Student Engagement, Irrelevant)
- I believe that my teaching should remain the same for each cohort of students I have. (Pedagogical Motivation, Equal Treatment)
- Students are expected to behave a certain way in order to succeed. (Legitimized Membership, Outsiders)

Functionalist:

- I believe that students can change in order to position themselves better for academic success. (Student Identities, Malleable)
- I believe underprepared students still have the ability to catch up to their peers. (Ability Belief, Deficit)
- I believe it is important for me to change my teaching strategies based on the students in my course. (Student Engagement, Accommodation)
- I believe it is important to integrate student diversity into the curriculum. (Pedagogical Motivation, Intentional Implementation)
- Students' backgrounds and knowledge are noticed/acknowledged. (Legitimized Membership, Guests)

Existentialist:

- I put the identities of my students at the center of my classroom. (Student Identities, Experiential)
- I believe it is my duty to create opportunities for every student to contribute something to the learning environment. (Ability Belief, Asset).
- I believe each student comes into my classroom having meaningful experiences to share. (Student Engagement, Reciprocity)
- I believe it is important to integrate student diversity into the curriculum. (Pedagogical Motivation, Intentional Implementation)
- Course content is connected to issues that students face today. (Legitimized Membership, Rightful Presence)

Face Validity Questions

- Can you read through this survey item and put it into your own words?
- Can you walk me through your thought process as you answered this survey item?
- Did you encounter any difficulty understanding this survey item?

Expected Data Collection

The goal of this study is to develop a quantitative survey informed by education field research to examine the conceptions of diversity in a larger population of faculty across the nation.

Pilot Study:

- We will pilot test our survey items with instructors from varied US institutions based on Carnegie classification.
- At the end of the pilot survey, participants will be invited to participate in an optional interview, which would be used to validate and improve the survey items.
- These face validity interviews will consist of questions meant to reveal the thought processes that participants undergo as they complete the survey. This will ensure that the survey items are understood as intended.
- In addition to the face validity interviews, an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis will be conducted to confirm the correlation between the survey items and the defined constructs to be measured.
- The survey will be checked for reliability and internal consistency by computing the correlation between items intended to measure the same construct.

Expected Outcomes and Plans

- The broad outcome of our pilot survey will help to strengthen our framework and ensure that our broader survey will be effective in [gauging professor's conceptions of student diversity](#).
- Following validation and revision of survey items, the survey will be distributed to higher education instructors across the nation.
- The results of this survey could serve as a [reflection tool](#) for instructors that would allow them to better understand their own conceptions of diversity.
- In doing this, we hope to [increase instructors' awareness](#) of their biases and perceptions of diversity in order to [encourage conceptual change](#) as well as positively [promote equity and inclusive classrooms](#).

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