

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

It is a key responsibility for any academic to root out discriminatory practices and cultivate an environment where a diverse array of persons of all identities and creeds can share their voice. Yet, I wish to stress that I don't treat this as an extra or bonus goal. Rather, a commitment to diversity and inclusion is essential in and central to achieving the goals I've set for myself as a teacher and researcher. The voices of others helped propel me to greater heights, and I believe I can do the same with my own voice.

Firstly, my unique experience with mental health informs my approach to teaching in a way that naturally aligns with the goals of diversity and inclusion. Recognizing and accommodating neurodiversity is very much baked into the way I teach because I am someone with ADD and anxiety. I emphasize one-on-one meetings and discussions with students because I often felt as a student that my voice wasn't being heard, and as a teacher I want to make sure that the voices of my students are. I am able to provide resources to students because I am familiar with them and the stressors that can emerge when you need to reach out for help. So often, neurodivergent students just need to be reassured that there is nothing wrong with them, and there are few better reassurances than seeing someone living with the same sort of struggles they do on the other side of the table and succeeding in spite of it all.

My experience in my home town of Hamden has also made me appreciate the value of diversity. I've been blessed with the opportunity to meet so many people across my life, and I'm honored by the trust some have given me in opening up about how their lives have differed from my own. In my youth, one of the institutions that helped me through many of my struggles with mental health was a martial arts dojo in my local community and as I grew I volunteered as an instructor to pay that kindness forward. Being able to bond with other students over our shared love of Tae Kwon Do and Aikido and still celebrating the differences that informed our lives allowed me to reflect on the world in a way that I wouldn't have been able to on my own.

However, I do recognize that my life experience and perspective is not universal, and this is something that I should remain vigilant to as I pursue work as an academic. I've focused on police and racial bias a lot in previous works. Yet, it's not lost on me that I am a White person in a field where White people are very well represented speaking about a topic that a Black or Hispanic person may have a very different experience with. I'd never want my voice to drown out those of others, especially if the insights of the unheard might shine a light on things I may be blind to. That's why it's often important to have the humility to take a step back and listen when others may have an insight on qualitative matters that I may not be able to speak to.

That being said, I don't believe one voice has to be at the expense of another. Quite the contrary. Actively engaging with colleagues is how research is pushed forward, and sometimes that means the best way to prop up another voice is to take the first step and pose a question. Much of my research is tailored to looking for the blindspots in my perspective and letting the voices of my peers call out the ones that I haven't found yet is all the more conducive to my goals as a researcher. It's important to have the humility to not assume that I can always speak for everyone, but I hope with every passing day I get to understand others a little more than I did the day before. Even more than that, I'd love to just extend a hand to a fellow academic. Speaking out about issues that affect you can be much less daunting when you have someone in your corner, and my goal is to be that someone.

The importance of diversity to my research extends beyond my conversations with colleagues as well. Historically, many have not had equal access to education and that's part of the reason many groups are underrepresented. A commitment to diversity means being vigilant when conducting research to the ways in which this could affect or bias certain findings. Convenience sampling on campuses may be particularly problematic when not everyone in the population we're surveying can afford to be a student. The cost of generating a sample for surveys and experiments can differ due to factors like race, and this can lead to researchers defaulting to majority White respondent pools to get a high powered study in a cost effective manner. These are just some factors that can complicate the readings of studies both past and present. Incorporating other perspectives and being keen to their insights is key to growing as a researcher and doing better work.

Perhaps most importantly, through my teaching I can achieve diversity goals by lifting up the voices of others. The academic world can be difficult and sometimes when you encounter roadblocks or fail something even after giving it your all, you can feel like you don't belong. I'd imagine this is even more daunting for those who look around and don't see faces like theirs or peers they can relate to. Serving as a mentor, I can help students fight the imposter syndrome they may feel and let them prove to themselves that they can make it in the academic world. Effective change comes from the bottom up, and that means the role I take as an educator is crucial.

Overall, I am dedicated to the goals of diversity and equity and I hope that through my work I will be able to further them. I've gotten to work with colleagues of all stripes in my time as an academic, and it has allowed me to even reach out to places like Uganda and help undergrad students get a taste of international research with my help. I'd be honored to get the chance to continue to do so.