

Diversity Statement

“All the guys think you’re gay,” the note said. “Here’s a list of things to change about yourself if you want everyone to stop making fun of you.”

- A letter, co-written by several classmates, 2002.

I grew up in a part of Ohio where being gay is heavily stigmatized. Middle school, high school, and early college were filled with moments where the people around me discouraged me from expressing myself authentically. These experiences were painful, to be sure, but they were also impactful; they have provided me with an empathic lens for thinking about others’ stigmatization experiences, and they have motivated me to make learning environments as inclusive, equitable, and as supportive of diversity as possible. Below, I provide examples of how these motives for inclusivity impact my research, teaching, and graduate student mentorship.

Diversity in research. For decades, social psychologists have studied stereotyping in a one-size-fits-all way. Psychologists who study how people evaluate men vs. women, for example, have tended to do so by conducting experiments in which they manipulate the gender of a target person and hold all other demographic features of the target person constant. This approach makes sense from the standpoint of creating controlled experiments, but it comes with a major drawback: namely, that it results in conclusions about bias that generalize only to *certain kinds* of people. For example, typical studies on gender stereotyping often reflect stereotypes that are directed toward men and women who are *White, cis-gendered, heterosexual*, and the like. This means that psychologists often cannot speak to the patterns of stereotyping and discrimination that impact individuals who are marginalized on the basis of more than one identity. My scholarship on intersectional stereotyping is designed to help address this issue. By examining the processes by which perceivers stereotype targets who are multiply marginalized, I seek to make the academic landscape on stereotyping more generalizable—and in turn, more inclusive of those at the intersections of historically overlooked identities (e.g., queer Latina women).

Diversity in teaching. My teaching is directly informed by my research. Currently, I am developing the syllabus for a senior-level seminar on Stereotyping and Prejudice that will be offered to undergraduates this winter. Each week, students will be responsible for reading empirical articles on stereotyping and prejudice, and one of the big questions that will frame our discussion of these articles is, “What’s missing?” With very few exceptions, the answer will be “diversity.” The purpose of teaching classes in this way is to get students to really *think* about the canon of psychology—and specifically, to get them thinking about who has tended to ask scientific questions, and who, historically speaking, has not. In addition, classroom rules during these discussions will require respect for one another’s opinions and mindfulness of whether one is taking up too much air time. Rules such as these ensure that all students feel welcome to participate in the classroom, and that when they do participate, they are met with respect and open-mindedness from their peers.

Diversity in mentorship. Academia often extends opportunities to students who already have them. Rather than admitting students to Ph.D. programs on the basis of their enthusiasm, for example, we tend to admit students on the basis of superficial cues: including how prestigious their undergraduate institutions are; who writes their letters of recommendation; and whether students reach out to us in advance of applying to our program. To the extent possible, I intend to create opportunities for students who historically have not had them—to admit students on the basis of enthusiasm in addition to accomplishment, for example, and to sponsor the research projects of students from underrepresented groups. One of my foremost goals will be to remember that privilege is not to be mistaken for potential.