Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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Scholarship in the social sciences is inherently related to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Researchers who make claims about how the mind works must recognize how our work is predicated on systems of marginalization and perpetuates existing inequity. It is my responsibility to promote representation and accessibility in the design and dissemination of my research and in my contact with students.

Equity in research practices

I work to be vigilantly mindful of my privilege and the inequities I risk tacitly endorsing in my research. I employ strategies like increasing the accessibility of presented materials with tools like written access papers and captions and representing a diverse range of racial, ethnic, dis/ability, and gender identities in presentation of my work. For example, I recognized that while the families in the parent-child interaction corpus I work with are representative of the racial diversity of Chicago, an overwhelming majority of the project's "go-to videos" for presentations have historically featured white families. This discrepancy was especially great for examples of language use leading to positive outcomes, implicitly reinforcing the racist and untrue perception that Black children learn "incorrect" English in the home. I work together with several colleagues to maintain a shared collection of video clips reflecting the diversity of our families that researchers may draw from when disseminating our work.

My research has not yet directly asked questions directly addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, but it is my intention to apply my future research to questions that may impact marginalized communities by collaborating with scholars across the social sciences. Some of my planned research projects involve exploring how Blind individuals communicate with gesture and asking how classroom interactions may be structured to empower marginalized students.

I use my work to create avenues for students who are passionate about social justice to pursue their own research questions. For example, a recent mentee used my work as a foundation for her undergraduate honors thesis exploring pragmatic development in children with early brain injury. Another mentee was interested in how parents and adults can best support autistic children with language delays. Though no one at our institution was conducting research exactly in line with her research, she persisted. We worked together to design and execute a thesis project giving her a background in nonverbal communication and early pragmatic development, allowing her to pursue her initial research questions in a Ph.D. program. I intend to use my resources as a faculty member to continue supporting undergraduates' interests in these areas.

Accessibility in the classroom

I acknowledge that I have so far had limited ability to effect social change through my research. Most of my efforts to enacting practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion have taken place in the classroom. I design my classes to create an infrastructure of accessibility. I do not use one concrete set of classroom policies for all classes, and instead allow the learning objectives and course design to inform policies around late assignments, attendance, etc. Though there may be variation from course to course, each class's syllabus presents its policies unambiguously. Additionally, the syllabus should clearly indicate avenues for students to request exceptions and

accommodations; policies must not only be appropriate for the course, but for individual students as agents of their education.

I have been fortunate to teach and mentor students with highly diverse identities, backgrounds, and academic interests, helping me develop the ability to identify students struggling due to factors of marginalization. I have seen that a poorly written essay rarely indicates a student's engagement with the material, overall efforts, or capacity for academic writing. More often it indicates the student is a non-native speaker of Mainstream American English, has graduated from an under-resourced school system, has a learning disability, or has been otherwise limited in opportunities for learning and practicing foundational writing skills.

I am committed to providing student-guided support. I must respect that my privilege will remain a barrier to understanding the lived experiences of my students. Although I continue to educate myself on how to best engage with diverse groups of students through DEI programming, I have seen that true diversity of individual identities means a true diversity of needs. I do not subscribe to a one-size-fits-all approach to accommodation. With respect to the example above, a student with dyslexia and a late-learner of English may have similar difficulties with grammatical errors but benefit from entirely different support structures. I firmly believe my students will always have the best understanding of their unique circumstances and needs.

Agency and accountability in the classroom

I aim to create a welcoming and inclusive space for all students. I have seen that even simple practices like addressing students by name, sharing preferred pronouns, and creating opportunities for students to speak directly with one another can show students they are valued and have a positive impact on classroom climate. I am grateful to the many psychologists, linguists, and others who maintain and contribute to shared databases of work from BIPOC authors, providing an invaluable resource for diversifying instructional materials. I work alongside my students to build an inclusive community, giving students concrete tools they can use to actively participate, like using "step up, step back" discussion guidelines, encouraging both calling out and calling in, and offering specific strategies for actively listening and contributing to discussion and offering firm, respectful disagreement.

My role as preceptor illuminated a significant issue around students' agency I had not previously considered. My students were passionate about social justice and eager to tackle research problems of diversity and equity. Yet there was a paradoxical barrier I had not anticipated. Students from marginalized groups wanted to do work with a direct impact on their own communities but worried their contributions would be dismissed for lacking an objective perspective. Meanwhile, students from highly privileged backgrounds felt they lacked the right to pursue research questions about identities they did not share and communities they did not belong to. From my vantage point, it was clear that these two concerns together put everyone in a position of being too objective or too subjective, leaving no one "allowed" to do this work. I encouraged students to explore where these beliefs came from. Unsurprisingly, the most effective way of helping students understand the value of their individual perspectives was to embrace the diversity of the group, facilitating an open discussion of these topics among the students. We saw some fears dispelled, other concerns validated. In the end, some students felt emboldened to pursue their interests. Other students continued to hold reservations and so adapted their research questions or methods based on the community's feedback. This remained an ongoing and thought-provoking discussion throughout the year, as useful for me as for my

students. I am committed to continuing this conversation in my future work with undergraduates and colleagues alike.

When a classroom is truly inclusive, marginalized voices are essential for achieving the aims of the course. I include the relationships between language and marginalization as an active part of my Conversation in Context syllabus, where units are designed to get students talking about the social and interactive consequences of language. For many students my classes may be the first time they have reflected on the languages they speak as factors defining their identities, reinforcing privilege and marginalization, and subconsciously influencing their own social judgments. Students may arrive fully prepared to relate familiar sources of bias to language, such as discussing how the enforcement of Standard/Mainstream American English in schools disadvantages Black students who speak African American [Vernacular] English in the home. I can use these foundational ideas to push students farther, examining how this terminology contributes to normalization and othering as it pits "Standard American" against "African American." From there, I can draw students' attention to how speech and language can contribute to additional forms systematic othering, like the agism and sexism surrounding upspeak and creaky voice or the ableism of disability interventions that prioritize speech over other kinds of communication. Students' identities are not incidental as the class works through these challenging topics, they are integral.

I recognize that I still have much to learn from my students, colleagues, and communities in the way of actively promoting antiracist and inclusive scholarship. As a white, educated, cisgender woman, I must first and foremost commit to listen. I attempt to be gracious when faced with criticism and actively seek feedback for how to improve representation and accessibility in my work. "Inclusive instructor and researcher" is not a box for me to check off, it is – and will always be – a continuous and conscientious choice I must make.