

Diversity Statement

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The job of a faculty member, especially one dealing with topics of race and ethnicity, does not end with teaching content. Recently, I have had a situation with a student in my Race and Economic Power class who is struggling on multiple dimensions, with financial, mental health, and academic issues. Despite all of this, he is an extremely talented student. At the beginning of the semester, I assigned him the role of discussion leader for a paper on ethnic attrition, an area of economics that focuses on the choice of identifying as “Hispanic” for those in the U.S. with Latin American ancestry. He is one of only two students of color in the class, Afro-Dominican on one side of his family but raised monolingual with his white non-Hispanic mother. After being absent from all of his classes for four weeks, including mine, he rejoined to present on ethnic attrition and has come to class ever since. It is a privilege to work with young people. Moments like this, where we can offer support, where our research and activism informs our pedagogy, are the reason why I want to pursue a career in academia.

A commitment to challenging systems of oppression is woven into all of the work I do. In my research, the experiences of people of color and women inform the topics I choose and the questions I ask. I explicitly use inclusive practices in my pedagogy, using techniques that elicit multiple perspectives and ensure everyone’s voice is heard. Much of my service is dedicated to expanding opportunities for individuals from underrepresented minorities in economics. I understand diversity to be a broad concept, changing as our society changes, and so a commitment to diversity and inclusion is always a process, not an endpoint.

The connecting thread in my research is topics related to race, gender, and inequality, but these interests often take me far afield. At Oxfam America, I was interested in work on female headed households, and wrote a paper titled “Can Data Analysis Bring Back Gender Justice: Critical Approaches to Household Headship” with Emma Fawcett, a gender and development scholar. The category of female headed household struck us both as an odd way to apply a gender label (typically an individual-level concept) to a household (a collection of people). What resulted was a study that applied several empirical methodologies to test alternatives for incorporating gender in household-level research, bringing to the surface gendered relationships that are otherwise unseen.

Research on the racial wealth gap has motivated my broad interest in wealth and assets, which I am exploring in my job market paper, “The Effect of Extended Family Wealth on College Enrollment,” and the third chapter of my dissertation, “Asset Accumulation and the ACA Medicaid Expansion.” These applied microeconomics papers tackle different dimensions of human capital—education and health—but both are inspired by the same basic facts of inequality in the U.S.: racial wealth gaps dwarf racial income gaps, and intergenerational economic mobility is largely determined by the intersecting dynamics of race and wealth. Of course, my other publications in stratification economics, “Toward a Latinx Stratification Economics” and “Bold Policies for Puerto Rico: A Blueprint for

Transformative, Justice-Centered Recovery,” both center the experiences of minorities, with particular focus on Afro-Latinxs, immigrants, and Latinas.

In the classroom, I use active learning, online technology, and discussion to bring out multiple perspectives. My training in classroom management from the Princeton Review taught me to plan interactive lessons where students anticipate solutions and critiques. I follow a regular sequence, demonstrating a new skill, and then leading practice exercises, first with the class as a group and then individually (“I do, we do, you do”). Using Perusall, an online tool where students mark up or annotate pdf documents, has helped my Race and Economic Power class explore how our personal histories inform the way we see the world. The most powerful moment in this course came in a discussion about affirmative action in which several white female students explained, to a group of white male students, how their support for affirmative action is informed by their experience of sexism.

I recently spent a memorable summer as a graduate teaching fellow for Advanced Research Methods taught by Lisa Cook at the American Economics Association Summer Program hosted by Michigan State University. The AEASP accepts 40 advanced undergraduates and post-graduates from underrepresented groups in economics: African Americans, Latinxs, and Native Americans. Each student is exceptional. My role was to coach pairs of students in their summer-long research endeavors, providing individualized help with coding (Stata, R, LaTeX), econometrics, theory, and writing. One of the groups that I worked with, writing about gentrification and mass incarceration, won the award for best research in the advanced cohort, and I scored above average on each dimension of the student evaluations.