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Diversity Statement

As a woman who works in two male-dominated disciplines, I bring diversity to my field through my background, perspective, and position as an educator. In the social sciences, life experiences often color our research choices; we tend to study those things we have seen, heard or lived through. In my field of political methodology—where advanced quantitative methods are applied to research on politics—the vast majority of researchers are men. Scholars such as myself, whose research substantively evaluates and investigates American political institutions, are also most often male. Hence, questions in these fields that intersect with gender have gone woefully understudied.

In my research, I bring methodologically rigorous approaches to the study of female candidate behavior, specifically, and descriptive representation, more broadly. For example, in a recent paper I employ advanced statistical methods (e.g. semi-supervised LDA topic models and a covariate balancing method for causal inference) to assess the normative impacts that female candidate emergence has on the electoral dialogue. I find that Democratic male candidates are thirty percent more likely to talk about women's issues (i.e. equal pay, sexual harassment, and reproductive rights) in their campaigns when there is a female candidate running in their same-party primary election. Extending this analysis to examine the effect that Black candidate emergence has on white competitors produces similar results; white Democrats are far more likely to discuss Black-associated issues (e.g. police brutality, voter suppression, and mass-incarceration) when they face a Black candidate in their primary election.

Candidates from minority populations often feel that, in order to make their bid for Congress count, they must win their election. My work should be encouraging to minority candidates who want to run—the mere presence of their candidacy can make a difference. These results also suggest that, by redoubling their efforts to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds, political organizations can help draw minority issues to the forefront of today's political discussion. I plan to continue pursuing these kinds of normatively important questions about political dialogue and discussion. I am currently developing a new method for semi-supervised text analysis alongside Santiago Olivella and Kosuke Imai; this approach will allow me to assess whether candidates make good on their campaign promises about women and Black-associated issues once in office. In a book-length project with Sarah Treul, we investigate if current trends towards political amateurism influence the rhetoric that female candidates use to describe themselves to voters, given that most women who run for office have a political background. This exploration will extend my existing work assessing female candidate self-presentation, which is forthcoming in *Political Research Quarterly.*

I also promote diversity in my capacity as a women who teaches classes on statistics and empirical modeling. To recruit more women into STEM fields, visibility matters. As a female instructor, I am uniquely able to encourage and support women in my classes who show an interest in data science and applied statistics. At the University of North Carolina, I have taught courses in the Political Science Department's quantitative methods sequence across three semesters. This fall will be my fourth time holding a seminar on analyzing text-as-data. Beyond the classroom, I manage a team of fifteen student research assistants who collect and clean campaign website text—the majority of whom are female. I take great pride in my past students successes, particularly those women and students of color who have gone on to pursue research assistantships, undergraduate teaching assistantships for statistical courses, and extracurricular programs in data science.

As an instructor, I place the utmost importance on cultivating a teaching environment where students feel comfortable asking for help and expressing their opinions. In their evaluation for my *Data in Politics* class, one student wrote, "She reminds us often to not get discouraged...I think she does a great job at knowing what pace to teach at, [at knowing] when a student is confused and doesn't want to show it, and is really great at being patient with those who need more explanation." In my course evaluations as the primary instructor for *Introduction to American Politics*, multiple students pointed out the "politically neutral" and "sensitive" learning environment that I cultivate. A student commented that, "She did a phenomenal job of teaching [in] a highly polarized political atmosphere from a neutral standpoint with a neutral agenda of topics to cover."

Through my approachable teaching style, I strive to ensure students traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields feel invited, welcomed, and encouraged to pursue data science and applied statistics. I find that students are more likely to find statistical programming approachable and accessible when it is taught through the lens of real-world application. For instance, my students' final project in *Data in Politics* this semester involves fitting and interpreting a linear regression model in R that evaluates Americans' perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Commenting on this teaching approach, one student wrote in their evaluation that "[Rachel did] a great job of making a largely humanities audience think about math and statistics in a way that made us care." Another one of my students noted that "the idea of learning R was daunting to me, but Rachel made it attainable and accessible." This sentiment about my approach to teaching and commitment to diversity is echoed in other students' evaluations, summarized in Tables 1 and 2. I believe increasing students' opportunities to engage with data science and statistical programming is key to increasing minority representation in STEM. Providing minority students with mentorship, co-authorship opportunities, and encouraging their interest in quantitative analysis will be among my top priorities as a scholar and an educator.

Table 1: **Quantitative Courses:** Evaluations Related to Diversity, Inclusion, and Support

	Promoted a climate of mutual respect	Treated students with respect	Encouraged questions	Encouraged participation	Promoted active learning
Average Evaluation	**4.62**	**4.80**	**4.72**	**4.70**	**4.53**

Each question is answered on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Presented evaluations have been averaged across all classes for quantitative courses for which I was the primary instructor (Data in Politics, Spring 2020; Fall 2019). Full evaluations can be found on my academic website: rachelporter.org.

Table 2: **Substantive Courses:** Evaluations Related to Diversity, Inclusion, and Support

	Exposed me to different points of view	Valued diversity of life experiences	Saw cultural / personal differences as assets	Was available when needed
Average Evaluation	**4.44**	**4.50**	**4.39**	**4.72**

Each question is answered on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Presented evaluations have been averaged across all recitation section for which I was the teaching assistant and substantive courses for which I was the primary instructor (Introduction to American Politics, Spring 2019; Spring 2018; Fall 2017 and Introduction to Comparative Politics, Fall 2018). Full evaluations can be found on my academic website: rachelporter.org.