DEI Statement – V.N. Vimal Rao

My views on diversity, equity, and inclusion are naturally informed by my experiences and my identity. I am a child of immigrants from India. I was raised in the Hindu religion. My home is multilingual. My nationality is American. Based on these experiences and my self-identity, there are three unique aspects to diversity, equity, and inclusion that guide my actions as a teacher, a researcher, and a citizen of the world.

Towards diversity, I try to be sensitive to the stories we tell, and our national and cultural narratives, in order to ensure that everyone, especially children, have role models that they consider 'like them' (see work by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie for more about the importance of stories) . In my statistics classes, I try to exclusively use famous statisticians who are women or persons of color as example characters, because their stories are disparately represented in the story of statistics. With each example is a link to a short biography of their contributions to the field. I have also recorded some podcast episodes telling the story of these historical figures and their contribution to statistics (see RaoVNV.github.io/Contexts/ for more).

Towards equity, I believe statistics provides powerful tools that can be a tool for the identification of disparities. Statistics played a role in helping the Supreme Court rule against jury discrimination, quantifying Absolute Disparities, Relative Disparities, and Absolute Impact[1]. While working for the HIV/AIDS Bureau, I advocated for these simple to calculate and simple to interpret statistics as a prima facie check on potential disparities. When teaching, I try to stress the value of statistics as a lens and tool for equity. One activity I use in the classroom is called the "What's not here?" activity. The goal is to promote critical reasoning that helps students identify potential biases and disparities, understand how these realities manifest in data, and how statistical reasoning and thinking can help individuals reason about equity.

Towards inclusion, I believe that having an open door is not enough, as individuals might not be aware of the support you may be willing to provide. In my teaching, I try to do as much outreach as possible to reach students where they are, and let them know that I will try to provide a safe learning environment and whatever support they need. I also send individual messages to all my students, especially those that miss assignments or appear to be struggling with the course materials, in order to meet them where they are, and actively open the individual channels of communication for them, in case they need it.

I believe that any approach to addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion begins with one's attitude toward other individuals. The great saying from the Yajur Veda, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (aham brahmaasmi), coupled with Sri Ramana Maharishi's question "Who am I?", reminds me to equally value each of our experiences and personal truths. I do my best to put myself in others' shoes, and ensure the environments that I can affect, such as a learning environment, support everyone in their growth in a manner that values and respects their experiences as individuals.

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[1] Kaye, D. H. (1984). Statistical analysis in jury discrimination cases. *Jurimetrics Journal, 25* (3), 274-289.