

Supporting the educational goals of others has always been important to me, because neither of my grandparents attended university, my mother was unable to finish college due to the Lebanese Civil War, and my father's access to higher education helped my family to succeed. As an Arab-American woman in a post 9/11 U.S., I strongly believe that everyone, no matter their age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or gender identity, should have the resources they need to obtain fair and equitable education. I have committed myself to reducing the academic attainment and resource gaps across my university service, teaching, research, and mentoring experiences.

University/Community Service:

Although over two-thirds of PhDs in psychology are awarded to women, fewer than half of assistant professors and fewer than one-third of full professors are women (Nelson, Brammer, & Rhoads, 2007). To promote the participation and retention of women in the sciences, Dasgupta and Stout (2014) recommend programs that focus on increasing social belonging through exposure to female experts and peers. When I first arrived at Duke, I helped develop an undergraduate/graduate mentorship program for the [Women in Science and Engineering group](#) so that **women across disciplines could see themselves** in their majors. I then built on these efforts within my Department and founded the Psychology and Neuroscience Women's Support Network with Dr. Beth Marsh. We subsequently earned a [Professional Development Grant](#) from the Graduate School to create programming aimed at 1) facilitating a supportive network that grows feelings of belongings and self-efficacy through exposure to peer and expert role models and direct mentorship and 2) promoting the work of senior women in the field as well as the diverse career paths that they may take. Our network focused on belonging, mentorship, and professional development through events with internals and external speakers as well as community building through the formation of a biweekly writing group.

As part of my university service, I have sought out **professional development opportunities aimed at diversity and inclusion efforts**. For example, I was a discussion leader and member of the Women in Science book club at Rutgers-Newark and [Scientists Promoting Equity and Knowledge](#) group at Duke, discussing career development issues and solutions that we may take towards a more equitable society. I have attended workshops and forums (e.g., [How to Be an Ally](#), [Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom](#), authored by me: [Becoming a Better Teacher: Trans* Inclusive Pedagogy](#)) that encourage the creation of safe spaces. I continue to learn from my colleagues at teaching-oriented conferences (e.g., Dr. Chayla Haynes's

"[Debunking the Myth that the STEM Classroom is a Race-Neutral Space](#)" at [Elon TLC](#) 2018). As part of my national service, I am an ad-hoc journal reviewer, and I recognize that I am a "[reflector](#)" of the scientific process; I thus keep an eye out for [citation biases](#) and encourage colleagues within the field to combat such epistemic injustice.

Finally, I have also participated in **outreach events that encourage students from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue STEM careers**, such as, but not limited to, the [North Carolina Central Regional Science and Engineering Fair](#), [Research Triangle Park STEM-focused Expos and Mentoring sessions](#), and [Technoquest](#), aimed at North Carolina Girl Scouts, from the Graduate Women in Science. I have helped lead the kids table at the [Brain Discovery Day](#) hosted by the Duke Institute of Brain Sciences and served on panels about applying to graduate school. I have been focused on giving back to my community ever since I was a residential adviser at Pomona College, fostering a safe and intellectually stimulating environment for students of all backgrounds and leading community-focused initiatives.

Teaching & Mentorship:

As a teacher and mentor, I hope to return the support that I have received, encouraging students from all backgrounds to pursue STEM careers. As a psychologist, I am in particular aware of **how feedback needs to be individually tailored**. I make sure to give "[wise](#)" feedback ([Cohen, Steele, and Ross, 1999](#)), expressing my high standards with the firm belief that all of my students can reach their potential and meet these standards. [In the cognitive psychology class I taught as instructor of record](#), all eight students strongly agreed that I provided helpful feedback, and when I was a [TA for the Psychology distinction thesis workshop](#), students wrote that I give "*thorough and constructive feedback*", which "*really improved*" their writing. Giving constructive feedback is one facet of creating an inclusive environment that supports the learning of all students.

Creating an inclusive environment is one of my highest priorities as an instructor, directly incorporated into my course design. First, I start with my syllabus, where I include a [diversity statement](#). Prior to the first class, I also send a welcome email and introductory survey, where I explicitly ask about preferred gender pronouns and names as well as course concerns, hoping to both [keep lines of communication open and establish an inclusive name policy](#). Every single course that I have taught has included anonymous exit papers so that students can express their daily concerns without fear of judgement, and these concerns are directly addressed in the next class. Within my cognitive psychology course, one major goal was also for students

to develop skills as critical consumers and communicators of academic research. As part of this goal, students read and summarized academic articles from Duke cognitive psychologists for the Duke Research Blog, with Duke as a focal point to create a sense of community. I ensured that these articles included an approximately equal number of male- and female-identifying scientist colleagues, who were then featured on the course website for students to see. Finally, applying their communication skills, students wrote Wikipedia profiles of underrepresented or women cognitive psychologists. Course evaluations suggest that these policies have been successful, with [students in all of the courses I have taught more often strongly agreeing](#) that my courses have “*a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment*”. Indeed, one common theme among student feedback has been that I am “*very open to questions*” and “*approachable*,” and all students within my cognitive psychology course strongly agreed that their class “*feels like a community*.”

Although I have designed my courses so that community-building is an important learning objective, I also consider these efforts as part of a broader [open pedagogy movement](#). My [course website](#) was open for all educators and to my students as well, bringing them into the learning process. I am committed to using resources that are freely available, promoting open access and facilitating a deeper engagement with the material for all students.

Finally, teachers and mentors should **set clear expectations and a flexible structure that is responsive to student needs**. As a mentor, I have scaffolded individualized research plans for students based on their short- and long-term goals, which was praised in my nomination for the [Dean’s Award for Excellence in Mentoring](#). For example, my RA, Ziwei, was interested in graduate school, so her plans included opportunities for her to develop study design, coding, and presentation skills as well as network with future potential advisors. I try to embody this sentiment across all my professional relationships. For example, I encouraged my adviser to lead discussions of articles focused on inclusion efforts (e.g., [citation diversity biases](#)) during his turn in lab meetings as well as [post a diversity statement](#) on his lab website and state how students can get involved in lab research. These efforts were meant as a broader effort to continually educate ourselves about the biases and barriers within our field and to make the norms of academia more explicit for students without this foreknowledge.

Research:

Cognitive psychology research is particularly prone to [issues of diversity and](#)

[inclusion](#), such as assuming generalizability of WEIRD samples and not expecting demographic information to be reported within manuscripts. I have reported demographics in all of my published manuscripts and recently consulted with an expert on better phrasing for demographic questions, particularly surrounding gender, sex, and gender-sex. Generally, I have tried to **include underrepresented groups** in my work and perform **research that is directly applicable to reducing resource gaps**. As an undergraduate at Pomona College, I worked in the Levin lab, which focused on characterizing the transgender population. My research projects, using survey and behavioral data collected from LGBTQ conferences, were driven by the goal of giving an underrepresented community a voice within science.

Now, at Duke and previously at Rutgers-Newark, my work on intelligence mindset with Drs. Tricomi and Hard also has direct applicability to leveling educational resources. Understanding how a malleable vs. fixed intelligence mindset improves academic agency can help later combat the effects of stereotype threat for underrepresented communities in educational domains (e.g., [see Dweck and Yeager, 2012](#) and [recent Nature article](#)). Moreover, as part of my current scholarship of teaching and learning research, my colleague and I have asked students to describe whether and why they consider themselves to be intelligent. One emergent theme was that students devalued their own effort in school and that comparison to their peers led some students to believe that they were not smart. Thus, [my colleague and I curated an art show](#) of these responses in the library, showing Duke students that they are not alone in their feelings and that imposter syndrome is real and pervasive, but ultimately, an inaccurate representation of their abilities and potential.

Looking Forward:

In the future, I would like to continue taking an active leadership role in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Ultimately, I hope to exemplify my mentors in the words of the Lebanese poet, Khalil Gibran: “It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.”