

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

From most of my life, I have been a member of a visible minority. I am no stranger to being prejudged and categorized, and having to work to dispel preconceived notions as to what and who I really am. Which of course is *my own person*, shaped by my experiences in life and, yes, influenced in various ways by 'belonging' to various classifications, visible or invisible.

Through my experiences living and teaching in three continents, and traveling extensively in five, I have been lucky to be exposed to diversity in a global sense. I am always expanding my sensitivity and understanding across cultures, religions, genders, economic backgrounds, ethnicity, race, sexual orientations, disabilities, etc, but remain firm in my belief that each person is entitled to be treated with respect *as their own person*.

As a teacher, mentor, and frequent organizer of events in my discipline, I have mulled over many issues which disadvantage specific groups. It is no secret, for example, that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in college due to multitudinous reasons: financial issues, lack of preparation, bias in standardized tests, difficult home situations, etc. Those making it to college—not having had the benefit of the educational training or background at home enjoyed by their more privileged peers—might struggle further, having difficulties academically and socially. As an example in this regard, the POSSE program—which Connecticut College participated in when I was there—can help tremendously. By taking in not a few but a *group* of students from inner-city areas, and having an ongoing faculty and upperclass mentorship program, Connecticut College succeeded in dramatically increasing retention numbers for students from traditionally under-represented minorities, while simultaneously making the campus a more vibrant environment. While not an official mentor, I had many POSSE students in my beginning calculus classes, and enjoyed the opportunity of helping these students reach their latent potential. When a postdoctoral associate at Brown University, I was an ALANA (African, Latino/a, Asian and Native American) mentor, where I met frequently with several undergraduate mentees throughout the year. In Australia, I volunteer for the Aboriginal Summer School for Excellence in Technology and Science (ASSETS) program by hosting high-achieving Aboriginal high school students for a three-day work placement. Through the 'Mathematicians in Schools' program, I collaborate with a teacher in Adelaide, conducting eight joint sessions a year in her under-resourced public elementary school. Wherever I am, I would feel compelled to continue to seek such ventures into the future.

The remarkably low numbers of females in the mathematics professoriate is clearly an issue which requires attention. While the reasons for this are many, I try to ameliorate this by focussing on reasons I might be able to influence, in however small a role. For example, there is some evidence that student-centered teaching is particularly effective for women; I frequently use such methods in my courses (as described in my teaching statement). Clickers, for example, might encourage student who are reluctant to speak up in class. Of course, these efforts are for the benefit of *all* students—not just female—but if they have any role in helping with the gender imbalance in mathematics, they are doubly rewarding. I strive to be approachable and friendly, and have had many female and minority students do their projects/theses with me. As a regular organizer (of workshops/conferences/minisymposia), I take a conscious effort to not let male numbers dominate; increasing the number of *visible* female role models in mathematics is one factor I can try to help.

Diversity is not simple; many different approaches are necessary to be inclusive and supportive of differing needs. For example, at Oberlin College, discussions with a student with a specific and unusual writing disability ended with our deciding to video-record my classes in their entirety, and for his scribe to attend our regular supplementary meetings after class. I was an early supporter (in 2011) of a student request at Connecticut College to make restrooms in academic buildings unisex to diminish difficulties for the transgender community. In these and many other aspects which emerge in my teaching life, I do my best to be inclusive, and not let 'rules' or 'common practice' disadvantage specific students. Perhaps because of my own visible minority status, students have frequently approached me with their difficulties. My duty is to help not just them, but to be mindful of diversity *throughout* my teaching and professional practice. The concept of diversity is evolving, as shall I.