

# Diversity Statement

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**Philosophy.** I firmly believe that part of my academic job is to improve my community and society at large. I believe that an academic community is stronger when a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives are represented. I hold that all people should have the opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and enhance the computer science community independent of their socioeconomic status, their race, their gender, the country of their birth, or anything else. To this end, I am active in many efforts to diversify the perspectives present within the computer science community.

Diverse working environments are more efficient and innovative, as diversity provokes thought. Moreover, equal opportunities represent a fundamental goal of modern societies. As the field of Computer Science increasingly dominates our lives, all genders, races and ethnicities should be equally involved. Computer Science suffers from a low ratio of women to men with the women representing approximately 29% of those earning a bachelor degree in Computer Science in Australia.

**Inequities in computer science** Currently, the low percentage of women in Computing affects both men and women. In my research group, being the only woman never affected interaction with my lab-mates and collaborators. Yet often, in the broader community, when I initially introduce myself as a Ph.D. in Computer Science, the fact that I am different from the norm, makes people skeptical, which in turn, forces me to prove my research abilities, posing a challenge that men do not have to go through. Similar challenges often discourage women from pursuing degrees in computer science. The discouragement stems from a society that has not yet fully accepted women in hard sciences. The gender gap then perpetuates itself, as women ourselves may tend to relate more easily with and feel more comfortable around other women. This tendency comes from confirmation bias, i.e., the tendency to search for and favor information in a way that confirms one's own beliefs or hypotheses and explains human's preference to interact with the same gender. Following the same confirmation bias, in a male dominated environment, bonds between men will naturally be tighter, leaving the minority females in the background. Even though tight bonds lead to easier interaction among men, diversity has been shown to be highly correlated with better performance. When people interact in heterogeneous groups, they anticipate differences of opinion and perspective and work harder to make their points stand out. In short, increasing the ration of women in Computing, will both encourage more women to join the field and improve the performance of men.

**My efforts** As an event coordinator in the department of Software Systems and Cybersecurity in Monash University, I have organized seminars and lunch gatherings to both provide a friendly and supportive environment for women in Computer Science and expose men to the challenges that women face. Women in Computing organizations play a key role in promoting research among undergraduate females and allowing women to share experiences of discrimination and build confidence. I believe that gender, as well as race or ethnicity, should not be obstacles in one's career and that diverse environments pose challenges that provoke though and stimulate innovation. As a faculty member, I would take an active role in the Women in Computing organization, attending seminars and sharing my own experiences. Finally, I will personally mentor and encourage young female researchers and hope to inspire more women and unrepresentative researchers to join my research area.