

Rachel Bernhard | Statement of Diversity and Inclusion

There are two kinds of diversity: the visible and the invisible. The easily visible kind is the subject of much of my research: race, age, and sex mark us to observers, who often judge us on what they see. The other kind is expansive—sexual orientation, political ideology, religion, learning ability, socioeconomic status, and on—and rarely visible without intentional signaling. As a bisexual woman working in methodology and American politics, I have represented both kinds of diversity. Without great mentors supporting me along the way, I would not be where I am today. I am committed to paying back my debts by mentoring a more diverse generation of younger scholars.

Most of my earlier mentors were white men who were profoundly committed to diversifying their fields. I participated in the Women in Science Program at Dartmouth, which enabled me to spend two years working on an over-snow robot, and generate my first publication in the process. Another mentor hired me as a research and teaching assistant for nearly two years, which not only gave me experience I needed for graduate school, but allowed me to stop working the other jobs I needed to pay my bills. As my research on women's candidate training organizations suggests, women don't "just need to be asked"—they need mentors and allies who are willing to put resources into helping them move ahead.

At Berkeley, I have worked hard to give my students the same sorts of opportunities I had. Over several years I have worked with eight phenomenal students—all women and/or people of color—through the Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program at Berkeley, the Political Science Department, and most recently, the SMART Mentoring Program. One former research assistant is now an APSA Minority Fellow and graduate student at Duke, and others have continued into law school and political consulting. Giving students resources and experience to put on their resume helps level the playing field for those who are historically underrepresented in political science.

While my sexual orientation has never mattered to my department, it does inform my teaching and sensitivity to students who may have learning differences, religious requirements, or other differences that are invisible like mine. I know how painful it can be to announce a private part of one's life to correct a well-meaning teacher's ignorance, and I strive to make my classroom and workspace inclusive for many kinds of students as a result. One way I do this is by starting my classes off with an icebreaker where I ask my students to share something "weird" about themselves. Students' responses are sometimes comedic—a vegetarian who hates vegetables—but just as often are raw and real: eating disorders, homelessness, and cultural dislocation have come up more than once.

As silly as icebreakers can be, this activity sets the stage for a classroom experience that is more personal than most classes at Berkeley are prone to be. In classes in political psychology and American politics, where sensitive discussions of race, gender, and class inevitably occur, creating this environment is a prerequisite for the sort of conversations where everyone can feel comfortable participating. In a class on racism, an exchange student from a Central Asian country raised his hand and said, "I don't get it. Everyone in [country] is racist. What's the big deal?" This question allowed me to jumpstart a conversation about structural racism, equality of opportunity, and equality of outcome. With disengaged or fearful students, these questions occur less often, and as a result,

students learn more from social media and less from teachers who will develop their capacity for critical thought.

Despite my best efforts, I sometimes fail. For instance, one student in my undergraduate methodology class shared that an exercise meant to develop understanding of random sampling—estimating the population percentage of green M&M's by counting green M&M's in repeated samples from a big bag—was disappointing for him because he was colorblind and could not fully participate. As a result of this student's willingness to share his experience, I was able to revamp the exercise in a way that allowed more students to participate going forward (broken M&M's work well).

During graduate school, I have also worked to improve the culture for women, people of color, and queer students. I served as the co-organizer of the Women in Political Science organization, and, with the support of the department, expanded its offerings from a once-a-semester dinner to multiple orientation and admissions events, and the first-ever co-sponsored event for LGBTQ students. In conjunction with the Diversity Action Coalition, I helped design and conduct the department's first survey of graduate student experiences. Our chair was able to use the results in an external review to lobby for increased university commitments to hiring faculty of color. Finally, I explicitly aim the graduate-level computational methods course I teach at students from underrepresented backgrounds. Two women and one man of color were able to win prestigious grants (\$60,000 and \$5,000, respectively) using their final projects from the class as research proposals.

As a professor, I will continue to pay my debt to my mentors by encouraging a diverse body of undergraduate and graduate students to pursue their questions about politics. Such students often need only the opportunity and resources to develop into tremendous successes.