

## Diversity and Inclusion

Despite being an immigrant to the USA, I was fortunate to be born a white male in an English-speaking Western nation. Beyond this, I was raised in a semi-rural area in a low socio-economic status family and graduated as a first-generation student. Throughout my schooling, I have been almost exclusively advised by mentors who identify as female and worked in diverse laboratory groups that embraced the racial, sex, gender, and cultural differences of their members. And so, my position and commitment to diversity and inclusion has been shaped in only a small way by my lived experience, but mostly by the enormously generous lessons afforded to me by colleagues and friends of varied age, status, culture, gender, ethnicity and so on. In addition, I have been fortunate to be able to actively build a better understanding of the world as experienced by those around me, and how my empathy and efforts may best serve others. As best I can, I carry this perspective into all my work including teaching, research, and my collaborations.

My approach to diversity is one that informs my teaching and mentoring, where I want to foster a culture among my mentees and collaborators that embraces and values our diversity and I intend to do so by seeking diverse persons to mentor and work alongside. Further, my experience as a first-generation student makes me aware that there is often a critical gap between the institutional resources (e.g., the Office of Disability Resources) and specific programs (e.g., the FIRST Together program) that are available to support students and students' awareness and ability to navigate these resources. All too often faculty perceive themselves as outside of the connection between the student and the resource office, rather than a bridge through which students can navigate this complex machinery. In the classroom, I recognise that grades often do not consider the entirety of an individual's context; and so, I have incorporated active prior knowledge assessments alongside active learning pedagogies into my classes to enable students to better engage and learn on their terms. Further, I aim to be available to all my students, and strongly encourage them to connect with me via their chosen modality (online, in-person, etc.) as they need.

Moreover, my chosen field of developmental psychophysiology presents me with the opportunity to actively approach diversity and its impact, and I intend to recognise and address that opportunity now and into the future. Indeed, my current research in the Family Life Project (FLP) does so by specifically investigating the development of children (a large number of whom identify as people of color) raised in low socioeconomic status rural regions of Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Moreover, my discussions with my postdoctoral advisor regarding the importance of diversifying psychophysiology and its participants (noting that representation is not achieved when a diverse range of individuals is averaged together under the implicit assumption that they are interchangeable) has instilled in me a genuine appreciation for the topic, and led to designing and implementing an additional project inside FLP. This project will provide empirical and practical guidance on the application of EEG technology to naturally textured hair and/or participants of African-American descent, in an effort to dispel a very common presumption that EEG is not feasible with this hair type and/or commonly associated styles.

Beyond academia, my commitment to diversity and inclusion extends to my service in the broader community, where I have and continue to participate in outreach programs that primarily engage underprivileged or disadvantaged groups. After arriving at Penn State (PSU), I've participated in several 'Ask/Meet a Scientist' networking sessions; one such session was for a summer program that aimed to engage middle-school students who were visually impaired in STEM disciplines from which they may have previously felt excluded, while another session was for local school students, and another was for first-generation PSU students. In these sessions, I was able to speak to students about my academic path, and their aspirations and options for entering STEM. Previously, I compiled a program of interactive perceptual neuroscience demonstrations for K-12 students that was to be presented at the 2020 USA Science & Engineering Festival. Although the event was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I intend to find future opportunities for these demonstrations, and community outreach events hosted via the Gelfand Outreach program and the Psychology Outreach Program could be fantastic opportunities for these and other demonstrations. Finally, with a brief return to our ivory palace, I was a member of the organizing committee for the 2020 Penn State Postdoc Research Exhibition and am a consulting member for the 2022 exhibition. In our program, we chose to focus multiple events around diversity and inclusion, enabling postdoctoral researchers and fellows from various backgrounds to discuss approaches to promoting diversity and inclusion, and the value and impact of diversity and access to education.

Whilst the aphorism '*a rising tide lifts all boats*' is questionable in its native field of economics, in my mind it is without a doubt true with respect to diversity. Simply put, I recognise that the world is diverse and when we actively embrace this truth in a quest for equity, we all benefit.