

Diversity Statement - Xiangyu Meng

I was brought up in a traditional Chinese family where both of my parents are first-generation college students. They later earn Ph.D. degrees and become professors in the same university, one in chemistry, the other in Chinese literature. When I was young, my family was barely financially solvent; a family of three and a grandma had to fit in a one-bedroom apartment with one single small window. All the struggles and sacrifices they made eventually became my motivations, especially when facing difficulties and injustice. They taught me that economic status does not limit accomplishments and that social position means less than hard work and integrity. I learn to respect and value people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Being the only kid of my parents, I was expected to become the best in class. In elementary school, I was found to have a reading difficulty. My reading speed was below the average. This natural disadvantage gave me enormous academic pressure and made me even more shy of talking in front of my peers. Despite my struggle in reading, I successfully passed major exams in China and got into one of the best schools for my undergraduate and graduate programs. I aced the English standardized tests where critical reading was required, received the highest award for my master thesis, and finally got into a Ph.D. program in Economics in the U.S. My disadvantage never really goes away, but my ability to read has increased immensely, and my anxiety with reciting has abated since. Through my experience, I became more mindful of different abilities and learning habits. At GSU, where the student body is highly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family background, my teaching requires diversification and flexible adaptation while ensuring a mutually respectful environment. I developed different teaching materials in my Money and Credit class while employing varied teaching styles. I believe that the joy of learning will reach more students with various learning capabilities.

At Georgia State, I am exposed to a truly diverse environment. Since my colleagues come from different parts of the world, I am lucky to learn about diverse cultural traditions and practices. I have broadened my knowledge through deep exchanges with my peers, from neo-colonialism in Haiti, worshipping practices in Nepal, to tribal rivalry activities in Ghana. Our long discussions and debates end up in multiple research collaborations where we use econometrics tools to analyze social and economic problems in developing countries. My time at GSU reinforces my idea that our conversation would be an echo chamber where justice and equity could easily be ignored and ultimately overlooked without diversity.

Aligning with a strong value of diversity, I strive to promote justice and equity through my research. My current study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the Chinese government's environmental policy in reducing pollution. I plan to explore the heterogeneity effect of climate change, especially for the low-income and most vulnerable groups. By doing so, I could investigate different coping mechanisms to consequences caused by climate change. Growing up with unequal access to clean water and air, I want my research to be the voice for families who suffer from similar environmental and health hazards.