

The Asian perspective on social, cultural, and language barriers to inclusivity at OHBM

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Overview

OHBM initially launched a Diversity and Gender Task Force in 2017 to address the growing need to recognize and address multiple forms of inequity with respect to gender balance and geographical representation on the Council (<https://www.ohbmbrianmappingblog.com/blog/you-spoke-we-listened-steering-a-new-course-with-respect-to-gender-equity>). Since 2017, this initiative has worked towards tackling a range of issues surrounding underrepresentation at OHBM. The task force has grown and evolved into a Diversity and Inclusion Committee that meets regularly to ensure that the needs of the diverse OHBM community are adequately represented at all levels of the organization and in all of its activities. As neuroscientists, the OHBM community increasingly recognizes that some groups are historically marginalized in ways that ultimately hinder both social and scientific progress. One way to combat these issues is to expose them and openly discuss ways to address them. This fourth Diversity Symposium follows up on the success of our inaugural symposium in 2019 focusing on gender biases in academia

(https://www.pathlms.com/ohbm/courses/12238/sections/15843/video_presentations/137799), the second virtual symposium in 2020 focusing on neuroscience and the LGBTQ community (<https://www.ohbmbrianmappingblog.com/blog/ohbm-2020-diversity-round-table-intersection-between-neuroscience-and-the-lgbtq-community>), and the third virtual symposium in 2021- Racial Bias in Neuroscience- that was focused on issues faced by Black scientists and other underrepresented groups in OHBM and the field of neuroscience more broadly

(<https://www.ohbmbrianmappingblog.com/blog/what-to-expect-from-the-diversity-and-inclusivity-committee-at-the-2021-ohbm-annual-meeting>). The 2021 symposium was one of many actions we

planned to pursue as outlined in our statement following the murder of George Floyd

(<https://www.ohbmbrianmappingblog.com/blog/ohbm-statement-george-floyd-and-black-lives-matter>).

The goal of this year's symposium is to facilitate productive open discussion on social, cultural and language barriers that impact inclusivity at OHBM, with a focus on the experiences of scientists of Asian backgrounds. This is a particularly timely topic, as the pandemic has unfortunately revealed new sources of anti-Asian discrimination globally. The panelists are neuroscientists who were born in Asia and wish to

share their perspectives as international scientists navigating a predominantly Western academic community. This panel discussion will illuminate the unique challenges and experiences of scientists from Asian backgrounds, with the ultimate goal of fostering inclusivity and cultural competence among all OHBM members.

Lecture 1: *Hiromasa Takemura's perspective*

Hiromasa Takemura Presenter

I was born in Tokyo, Japan. Both of my parents are Japanese. After a PhD (at the University of Tokyo), I worked at Stanford for three years and then I went back to Japan in 2015. I started my own lab at my current institution in Sep 2021. In my generation, elementary schools did not have an English class in Japan (although nowadays the system has changed). Taking English classes is mandatory from junior high school (age 12-15). The beginning of English education may be a bit late compared with English education in other countries. I have never visited or lived in other countries when I was a kid. The first foreign country I visited was the United States, when I already joined graduate school.

Lecture 2: *Kangjoo Lee's perspective*

Kangjoo Lee Presenter

I am originally from Busan, South Korea, where I spent my first 18 years with my parents and sister. After obtaining a B.S. in Radiological Science and a M.S. in Bio and Brain Engineering, I moved to Montreal, Canada, to pursue a Ph.D. in Neuroscience at McGill University. After obtaining my Ph.D. in Feb. 2019, I have been working as a postdoc researcher at Yale University, USA. I moved to the USA with my husband and gave birth to my son who is now 3 years old. My research interest lies in the development of neuroimaging analysis methods and studying neuro-behavioral variations in individual patients with neurological and psychiatric disorders. My first international trip was to attend a conference in Boston during my M.S., which inspired me to study abroad. When I first met my Ph.D. supervisor, it was more surprising to me that I was actually talking with a foreigner than that I was talking with my graduate mentor.

Lecture 3: *Bharat Biswal's perspective*

Bharat Biswal Presenter

I was born in Orissa, India. I obtained my Bachelor degree in Electrical Engineering. Like many engineers at the time, I came to the US to obtain my Masters degree in Electrical Engineering. For my PhD, I obtained it under the guidance of Dr James Hyde at the Medical College of Wisconsin, one of the few places where one could perform functional MRI. I was very fortunate to have an amazing mentor who allowed me to pursue my ideas. For my Thesis, I worked on the noise sources present in fMRI. I am currently a Professor of Biomedical Engineering at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Lecture 4: *Natasha Rajah's perspective*

Maria Natasha Rajah Presenter

I was born in Sri Lanka but was never taught my mother tongue, Tamil, because my parents thought learning English at home would be helpful to me in the long-term and that I would learn Tamil and Sinhalese at school. But due to rising political tensions, my family and I left Sri Lanka when I was 4yrs old and moved to Zambia. We then emigrated to Canada when I was 6yrs of age after the death of my

father. I grew up in Toronto, Canada and picked up a little bit of Tamil over the years due to social interactions with my mother's family. I completed my PhD at the University of Toronto in 2003 and moved to UC Berkeley, USA for my postdoctoral training. I returned to Canada in 2005 for a research position at McGill University and Douglas Research Centre, where I am currently a Full Professor and have a lab studying the cognitive neuroscience of memory, aging and dementia risk.