

## **Critical Vulnerability as Praxis: Positionality Statement**

It is impossible to separate my experiential knowledge from the racialized cultural history of my sociopolitical identity, especially as an American born son of Toisanese immigrants who was taught to be conscious of my place in society. I am thereby confronted with a century and a half of Yellow Peril propaganda in the US that positions my racial and gendered presentation as the emasculated perpetual foreigner who keeps his head down to work towards the American Dream. Since this immigration story includes nights when I would be asleep by the time my parents came home from work, sport was my primary means of social interaction and development. Accordingly, my research centers around the intersection of race and gender in sport and physical activity cultures with respects to cultural nationalism. In other words, my research confronts the stereotype I face as the effeminate nerdy foreigner Asian American in contrast to the picture of the powerfully masculine All-American Athlete as the archetypical opposite. With this positionality, my research and pedagogy is centered around negotiating with the relationship between cis-heteropatriarchal nationalism and the fluidity of race and gender.

At one point in my graduate education, I was trying to avoid inserting my racialized and gendered experiences for the sake of a neutral position in research. After all, science is supposed to be objective, and sport is supposed to be apolitical. I also had to factor in the community of both sports and STEM being a predominately White and masculine oriented field. Second, I thought of the irony of being one of the few BIPOC researchers in the field who turned out to be doing intersectional research for BIPOC communities. I was afraid of being isolated as “one of those SJWs” as I had yet to find a community that confronted the reality of today’s “post-racist” post-sexist” society. Finally, perhaps because of pop-culture’s depiction of nerds vs jocks, I also felt that I often had to justify the academic rigor around a post-structural critique of sport.

Nevertheless, the widespread appeal of sport in pop-culture, the dearth of intersectional research in sport, and the coalition building between activist scholars have helped me realize that a community of intersectional researchers can exist as a necessity in Sport Studies.

Besides playing a mean defense in sport, I also had a knack for teaching and tutoring. Both require responding to the other's behavior and recognizing the direction they are trying to go. It was easy to see the frustration of the opponent when they couldn't get pass my defense in sport, and I remember seeing this same face of frustration when a classmate couldn't get pass the concept at hand and asked me for help. Consequently, my teaching and pedagogy revolve around how we address obstacles and frustrations toward the intellectual and material accessibility to knowledge. Considering the standardized format of teaching and Physical Education as a means of ensuring national competencies, teachers have become like coaches holding a class tryout for students trying to make the team/grade. A few students with the educational or athletic wherewithal succeed while everyone else feels like they are put on the bench. Tutoring, on the other hand, feels like after the tryouts when two or more teammates are working on a skill with each other after practice. The difference, I'm alluding to, between teaching and tutoring is that teaching has become an authoritative relationship between students and grades while tutoring is more collaborative towards personal growth. My approach to dialogic pedagogy rests on this collaboration between students and the facilitation of the teacher.

In the same way I have narrativized sport in my teaching philosophy, I slowly engage my students through the traditional rhetoric of athleticism to deconstruct its institutional systems. My dialogic pedagogy revisits students' frustrations toward the institution of sport as a proxy to the institutions in the US. That is, we move back and forth between the macrosystems of our national institutions and scale towards microsystems of race and gender ideology by talking through our

ordinary experiences of sport and physical education in the public school system. I encourage students to be in dialogue about what frustrated them about their sporting experiences, and I ground their dialogue in a discussion about the systems that reproduce their frustrations. The classroom then becomes a community of students who connect over something as seemingly trivial as sport, and we collaborate on deconstructing its cis-heteropatriarchal structure that mirrors society.

My approach to mentorship is similar to my pedagogy. Mentorship is a collaboration between those who will become future colleagues. It becomes important to move away from an authoritative relationship to one of collaboration. My role as a mentor is not to impart knowledge, as in what I know, but to help the mentee build awareness of the systems in place. These are not limited to the systems that can support the mentee and the systems that will hold the mentee back. The awareness a mentee builds is not an encyclopedic knowledge, as if knowledge is transactional, but a trained skill of critical awareness developed from their lived experiences applied to higher education. The goal is to provide space for the mentee to sharpen their ability to pick up patterns of systemic inadequacies. This way, the mentor and mentee can compare notes with each other as they tackle their own biases and the biases of higher education.

#### Brief Bio:

Matthew Gee is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Critical Ethnic Studies with a M.S. in Kinesiology. His research address the intersection of race, gender, and nationalism in Sport Psychology and Sport Sociology, including the relationship between research, scientific communication, and society. He connects these research topics to teaching through narratives revolving around the “home” and “away” team and how the nation allows certain athletes to thrive while other are relegated to the bench.