

Positionality Statement: Critical Vulnerability as Praxis

(Part 1)

As a nano-minority within academic environments, I position myself as a researcher who has consistently been embedded in institutions of higher education dominated by majority groups with whom I have not fully identified. My lived experiences within these spaces reflect a complex negotiation of marginalization and institutional privilege, shaping both my pedagogical orientation and scholarly commitments.

My most salient identity is that of a Sikh minority. Persistent underrepresentation of Sikhs in academia significantly informs my research questions, ethical commitments, and teaching practices. I carry the historical and ongoing experiences of marginalization associated with being part of a racialized and religious minority, while simultaneously benefiting from the protections and legitimacy afforded by academic institutions at the scholarly level. This dual positioning informs my approach to teaching, where empathy, compassion, and dialogic engagement function as pedagogical resources rather than affective byproducts. Drawing on my cultural capital, I intentionally engage dialogic pedagogy to navigate classroom power dynamics and support students encountering unfamiliar or non-affirming learning environments.

My undergraduate experience required learning a new academic language and adapting to cultural norms markedly different from those with which I was raised. This experience sharpened my awareness of how cultural dissonance shapes participation, belonging, and learning. It also informs my capacity to recognize how individuals draw strength from their identities when navigating non-favorable or exclusionary contexts.

In addition to my cultural identity, I closely identify with my professional identity as an engineer with over thirteen years of industry experience. Working within multicultural and multidisciplinary professional environments has shaped my understanding of dialogue as essential to collaboration, ethical decision-making, and knowledge construction. This professional background informs my teaching and research by foregrounding relational communication and reflexivity in diverse ecosystems.

Engaging with Critical Vulnerability as Praxis requires me to acknowledge that my interpretations, pedagogical choices, and research decisions are neither neutral nor exhaustive. While my lived experiences of belonging, professional practice, and minoritized identity provide meaningful insight, they also introduce interpretive constraints shaped by personal investment. Rather than attempting to eliminate bias, I approach reflexivity as an ongoing methodological practice, incorporating iterative feedback, self-interrogation, and relational accountability as analytic tools.

Finally, I remain attentive to how power circulates through teaching, research, representation, and decision-making. These acts—whether technical, ethical, or pedagogical—have the potential to reproduce or resist dominant narratives. I therefore approach this work with sustained reflection and accountability, understanding vulnerability not as exposure for its own sake, but as an ethical practice that resists epistemic mastery, invites relational responsibility, and acknowledges the partiality inherent in all knowledge claims.