

Positionality Statement for Hunter Student Research Conference: For Kinesiology Research

Since the Hunter Student Research Conference in 2023, all presenters must now upload a statement of positionality. The purpose of this statement is to clearly explain and allow for reflection on your own identities and how they may have influenced your research. Positionality is the social / political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world.

Our research in kinesiology is more often than not quantitative, and we must remain unbiased – for example, even though I (Jen Xu) have fixed my own foot pain by performing intrinsic foot muscle rehab exercises, I cannot let that influence my research at all. My findings must remain my findings. Although much of kinesiology research asks us as researchers to objectively evaluate data, there is still likely some sort of personal influence that has led each of us to the research we want to do. Whether it's as a sports medicine clinician who is passionate about reducing pain and treating all patients kindly, or as an exercise physiologist who wants to promote general health and fitness to improve someone's quality of life, there is still a personal component, no matter how small. Maybe you yourself have experienced injuries, or have seen family members and friends go through difficult periods with their health, and that has influenced you.

As this is a student run conference, there has been a push to provide social context for our research. Again, although kinesiology research is often quantitative...we must also discuss **why** we do the research we do – sometimes that is as simple as “there is a gap in this piece of research”, but sometimes it may be tied to a social, personal aspect.

I wrote about how there is truly a lack of Asian-American researchers in the field of kinesiology/sports medicine research. Although, for example, the American College of Sports Medicine has many members who are of Asian descent, many of them identify strictly to their country of origin (as they grew up/live there now) and not the USA, and it has been easy to feel left out. However, I am no stranger to these situations, given my time spent in college athletics – and instead of looking down on myself and slinking away, I am choosing to push forward in this field of research to provide mentorship and collaboration where applicable, for others like me. So while this does not apply to my specific research of foot health, it is a guiding force for the way I choose to conduct myself as a student, researcher, and mentor.

I do have other personal ties to my specific research line as well, from being a previous plantar fasciitis sufferer and a clinician who has seen how much injuries can affect one's health and joy. Foot health is especially important to me as someone of Chinese descent, as they used to break and maim young girls' feet to make them “look better”. Having strong feet (relative to a broken foot, anyway) allows you to do so much. Who cares what they look like! So even though these things feel rather adjacent to my specific research, they are still important to me, and they may shape some of my intentions behind the objective research that I do.

And remember, 3-5 sentences is all you need!

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