# Researcher Positionality AHC workshop

# Questions for breakout groups.

## 1st breakout session

**What are your reflections on the practise of positionality, as raised by the definition and by Mitchell’s preface?**

Understand that it is an important practice

Helps introduce accountability to authors, creates a greater understanding of arguments around a topic which is more accessible

More relevant to some subjects/topics, e.g. civil rights research vs scientific data

We often overlook historical positionality: it is very easy to fail to recognise our own positionality as an author writing in the 21st century.

**Have you seen any positionality statements in the academic writing that you have read?**

Very rarely- mainly see discussions around political position/ideology and sometimes references to gender

None

Yes -- definitely seen statements in introductions, editor’s notes, or in the text itself -- however it is not often called positionality statements, and I am more used to looking up authors in order to find out about them that reading about such a thing in a ‘positionality statement’

Queer theory usually draws on intersectional feminism, and positionality is key to engaging with that frame of criticality. I’ve also noted queer theorists, when talking about queer historical figures/texts, tend to remind the reader not to impose Western 19th - 21st century understandings of sexual variance on cultures and historical periods that don’t warrant it (indicated by the use of the phrase ‘the invention of homosexuality’). It’s a form of colonialism.

Yes - I have encountered positionality statements more often in Black feminism, critical race theory, etc. So mainly in areas of academia that are considered ‘alternative’ knowledge and not mainstream fields of research. Also, love this quote:
“No scholar can avoid cultural ideas and his or her placement in intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation.” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 271)

(That’s exactly right! Even an objective ‘scientist’ - I would argue - can’t divorce from their own position as researcher within intellectual traditions, power structures, socio-economic forces. You can never be a brain in a jar!)

(to add to the above) - positionality within certain ‘identity’ research clusters e.g. queer, subaltern, black scholars often have positionality statements embedded in research. The positionality is foregrounded by the ‘against the grain’ approaches to orthodoxies employed by these schools of thought/scholarly groupings.

Agree with the above- I have only encountered positionality statements when studying critical race theory, themes around racial identity etc.