

## Global Feminisms Collaborative Statement of Ethics in Research

Submitted by Sarah VanHooser and Brooke Ackerly

Please circulate, but please let us know if you use portions of this in developing your own statement of ethics.

Please direct correspondence to  
Brooke Ackerly  
Global Feminisms Collaborative  
[Brooke.Ackerly@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Brooke.Ackerly@vanderbilt.edu)

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The Global Feminisms Collaborative (GFC) is founded with the purpose of promoting and enhancing research and pedagogy, in and out of the classroom, for social justice. This statement focuses on research.

Because what we do in the academy is an exercise of a particular kind of power and privilege, when we use our academic skill to study social justice, especially to do research for social justice, we must do so in a way that reflects on that power and privilege lest we reify it—ironically, or even cynically—in the fields related to social justice. With this self-critical perspective in mind we remain committed to three areas of reflection:

1. Considering the *power of epistemology*, we reflect critically on our own epistemologies and those of our interlocutors.
2. In light of the *power of representation*, as we carry out our teaching and research, we acknowledge that the representations of both ourselves and our interlocutors are potential ethical moments in our research.
3. Because of the *power of research*, we interrogate the ways that doing research has distributive and redistributive implications.

Being attentive to these three areas of caution allows us to pursue practices of research that reflect the standards of rigor and excellence present in the academy, while at the same time continuing to strive for knowledge production processes that are alert to the powers that they embody. We understand power to be both productive and destructive, depending on whether individuals are free to accept or resist the exercise of power in the context of research-based relationships. We seek research methodologies that are ethically, as well as epistemologically, rigorous.

Because our projects are developed in collaboration with a variety of non-academic partners, and because each researcher brings different experiences, skills, and challenges to

her research, each project will be unique in its language and currency as well as in its methodology and outcomes. With this variability in mind, for us, an ethics statement is a statement of principles of ongoing reflection. Therefore we propose the following principles of ethical research practice:

**Minimize harm.** Whether we understand our fallibility as related to our being participants in the injustices of global political, economic, and social structures or whether we understand our fallibility more metaphysically as grounded in the human imperfection, all of our actions and inactions conceivably do some harm. We make all choices and do all actions with dirty hands. With this in mind, we will be attentive to how power has and might be exercised in the context in which we research, and to the harms that might result from our research. Our commitment is to minimize these inevitable harms by being aware of the dangers that inhere or might inhere in our work.

**People first.** Feminists need to be attentive to the full range of relationships that are constructed through, sustained by, and developed as a consequence of our research. Relationships with research participants vary substantially across disciplines, research questions, and methodologies. For example, the relationship between an historian and the historical figures she studies is different from the relationship between a community researcher and the community in which she works, or that between a social movements scholar and movement activists. With this in mind, “people first” means attentiveness to differences in exposure to abuses of power for different disciplines, questions, and methodologies; we benefit greatly from sharing our reflections in an interdisciplinary collaborative.

Additionally, being attentive to relationships means being attentive to the people with whom we coproduce our research: our non-academic partners, our academic collaborators, our funders and our families and other support systems that enable us to do our work. Of course this means attending to these relationships in ways that don’t exhaust us individually.

**Honesty and humility.** With honesty and humility we hold ourselves accountable to each other through reflection, transparency, and accountability.

- Reflection—Aware that even the most skilled and ethical researchers will never acquire “perfection” in either their research practices or their ability to achieve ethical commitments, we believe that building processes of self-critical reflection into our research practices will reveal the implications of our fallibility, enable us to learn from our experiences, and encourage us to stay open to criticisms from others.
- Transparency—Just as we need methodological processes to make our research processes transparent to ourselves, so too do we need processes by which to make our research transparent to others (academic collaborators, non-academic collaborators, audiences).

- **Accountability**—Honesty and humility can be nonpositivist or postpositivist ways of talking about accountability. We are accountable as scholars situated in the university. The people to whom we owe accountability include our non-academic partners, our academic collaborators, our funders, and our audiences, which may include academics who either want to extend or criticize our work and non-academics who may want to use, apply, or challenge our work.

**Adaptability.** We intend to develop our work in the context of ongoing conversation. We are committed to including more, new, and different voices and collaborators to help us reflect and improve our ontological perspectives, epistemological standpoints, representations of self and others, research questions, and methodologies. These will also improve through dialogue with each other, as we shift to new research questions, engage with different audiences, welcome guests, and enlarge our network.

The fields of inquiry that have informed our development of this ethics statement include indigenous, medical, community-based, development, and feminist literatures. Our articulation of ethics in research has developed over time and continues to develop. We welcome your comments.