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Feminist Co-Authorship Manifesto

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Abstract: As a group of PhD students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, we navigated a toxic and harmful departmental environment upon entry into the program. This statement details our experiences as Queer, Trans*, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (QTBIPoC) students going through abuse of power and white supremacy within our department. As a group, we found solace and strength in collaboration and mutual aid, forming a collective feminist methodology and collaboration that centers marginalized voices. This approach created space for healing and resistance and emphasized on accountability, transparency, and respect. This statement provides a list of commitments that guides the collaborative process through a feminist lens, implications for adopting these commitments in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines, and encourages transdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration.

Keywords: collaborative writing, co-authorship, feminist methodology, transdisciplinary collaboration, intersectionality, academic misconduct

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Authorship Statement

As a collective, we are committed to Equal Co-Authorship. The order of the authors listed is not reflective of the amount of contribution. This is a truly collective endeavor.

White academia's obsession with holding onto outdated scholarship needs to be closely examined. It is time for academia to reckon with the way in which poor scholarship is part of the social crisis at hand. Academia is responsible for proliferating anti-Blackness, xenophobia, homophobia, and so much more due to its refusal to de-canonize texts that have been proven harmful (Jones, 2019).

Embarking on a Ph.D. is a moment marked by a sense of possibility, the culmination of years of work and preparation. However, our experience as PhD students at a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department in a large land grant university in the Pacific-northwest[1] was drastically different from our expectations. Upon entry into our department as first-year Ph.D. students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, we were met with chaos and confusion. We were isolated from each other, and in place of support from the department[2], we were met with suspicion. We bore witness to a student body and faculty on the brink of emotional exhaustion and a department that was and is at risk of being discontinued. This environment was created by very toxic white faculty in positions of power who were struggling to maintain dominance and control over mostly Queer, Trans*, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (QTBIPoC) and disabled students and junior faculty.

As first-year Ph.D. students, we were left to traverse the complexities of our program on our own, alienated from one another, and left without administrative support. Moreover, we only found out about our program being in shambles during our orientation, the Friday before the first day of classes. We were explicitly instructed by the department leadership not to speak to each other about our experiences. The departmental culture was extremely isolating and marked by suspicion. Yet, we chose to speak to one another and ultimately found solace in the recognition of our different yet overlapping experiences within this white supremacist, heteropatriarchal system that demanded allegiance to the status quo.

In this essay, we will highlight how we traversed an incredibly difficult situation within our department and academia at large through nontraditional or unconventional methods. Our methodological approach is autotheoretical and moves beyond positionality statements by incorporating feminist theoretical approaches and

putting theory into practice. Drawing on these experiences, we provide a framework of commitments for a more equitable and accountable scholarly practice utilizing a methodology rooted in collaboration and open communication rather than competitiveness, as well as striving toward transdisciplinarity to recreate new and innovative pathways toward solving systemic problems. From our experiences as PhD students in our department, we identified strategies for collective survival in toxic academic environments. We actively strive towards preventing harm through collaboration and open communication, recognizing that confronting the insidious nature of academic hierarchies must be interrogated and ultimately completely transformed.

Positionality: Who “We” Are

In this narrative, we use a collective voice, as this is a story of how collectivity, solidarity, and collaboration help us to survive. Our individual identities, histories, and knowledges are also part of the story of who we are.

***Author 1*.** As an Asian, queer, first-generation, and international student, I have a deep appreciation for education, and this has allowed me to understand the challenges faced by students entering unfamiliar academic environments. Coming from the sport management discipline dominated by cisgender, straight, white men, I was excited to join WGSS where radical thought and action are celebrated and diversity is embraced. However, my journey within WGSS was deeply impacted by our department leadership's abuse of power. What I witnessed in the department exposed the hypocrisy that exists within institutions that are seemingly dedicated to social justice, and the lack of accountability, especially when the most affected are vulnerable (e.g., graduate students, QTBIPoC, etc.). All the coauthors linked arms with other impacted students in speaking to university authorities and decision makers. We continuously put ourselves in positions where we had to repeatedly relive the trauma from this experience. Yet, the institution failed to address our concerns, dismissing them as "interpersonal conflicts" rather than acknowledge the

harm and systemic and structural injustice we experienced. This experience proved that the power structures of the institution work to silence and exploit vulnerable communities and shattered my image of WGSS as a safe haven for those who are marginalized by society. Through the collaborative writing of our collective commitments, we sought not only accountability but also a fundamental and disruptive shift in how issues of power and equity are addressed.

Author 2. I am a first-generation, queer, neurodivergent, chronically ill, trans* masc nonbinary individual, and one of the only trans* people in the educational programs that I have been a part of until joining my current Ph.D. program, which is comprised almost exclusively of queer and trans* scholars. I have been in the field of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) since my undergraduate career, specializing in queer and trans* studies. Within the scholarship, I find myself drawn to mad, queer, crip trans* studies. I have experienced different forms of academic hardship within WGSS; however, academic abuse was not one of them. My experiences in this program have contradicted much of what I have known to be true about the field of WGSS that aims to challenge all oppressions and center vulnerable marginalized communities. We, the first-year cohort, joined together with other students, past and present, who have faced abuses in this program. Our cohort had to repeatedly relive, repeat, and struggle through abuses during our first term in the program, although we had support from other students and some faculty. However, with our institution failing us, we banded together to try to repair some of the damages done. In that process, we created the guidelines presented in this paper to document what had been missing, the need for a power shift, and how to have a visible form of accountability to each other.

Author 3. Working collectively, my fellow authors and I navigated a profoundly challenging experience within our PhD program. As a first-generation Xicano, queer, trans, disabled, and neurodivergent man, my journey into academia was rooted in the hope of finding a space where my lived experience was not only understood but also championed. The opportunity to work with a celebrated professor, whose work I deeply admired, was a dream I had held for nearly a decade. This dream was

shattered by the revelation of this professor's history of alleged abuse and false claims to Indigeneity. This moment exposed a profound hypocrisy, revealing that the very systems meant to challenge oppression can also perpetuate it. The pain of witnessing my colleagues being gaslit and trivialized was immense. However, this shared trauma became the crucible for our collective strength. That said, I would be remiss were I not to address the fracturing that this moment in the history of our program has caused. The triangulation, manipulation, playing of favorites, and exclusionary practices that were nurtured by this professor have had lasting reverberations, which we are still parsing through. However, through mutual aid and committed organizing, we found a path not only to survive but to actively resist the abuses of power and the "cult of celebrity" that shields them. Our collaborative work, including this article, is a direct response to this betrayal and the fractures it created. It is a testament to our commitment to building an equitable, accountable, and QTBIPoC-centered feminist praxis. Though we are still deeply suspicious of one another, wary of those in positions of power, and struggling to maintain our physical and emotional well-being, we are nevertheless focused on future world-making, determined to create a space where no student experiences such betrayal again. This work is also a testament to my personal resolve to make my own way forward, forging a path that honors our collective efforts and builds a more just and supportive academic community.

Context: A Department in Crisis

At the core of the issues that we faced was a white person in a position of power in our department[3] who we later found was making false claims to Indigeneity and Blackness (Tribal Alliance Against Fraud, n.d.; Boyle, 2023; Estevan, 2024;Graduate Leaders for Equitable Education, n.d.; Hey Colonizer, 2024; Jaquiss, 2023; Khan, 2023; Palmer 2023 Tribal Alliance Against Fraud, n.d.). More alarmingly, they had a documented decade-long history of abusing trans*, disabled, queer, and BIPoC students, terrorizing them with the threat of bad grades, limiting funding, or in some cases, even deportation. This individual, a prolific and widely cited writer in the

fields of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as well as Indigenous Studies with almost a celebrity status, notoriously weaponized their self-identified mad,[4] crip, and queer identities to evade accountability for deeply troubling and oppressive actions against students. Within broader systemic problems in the academy, the cult of celebrity is one that works effectively to silence students who attempt to speak out against abuse. Often, students are gaslit into silence or accused of ableism, transphobia, or even of anti-Indigeneity. Such silencing is not new to many people entering into historically and predominantly white institutions of higher education.

We often hear about white people in positions of power getting away with all manner of abuses. However, departments such as Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, which emerged from movements for rights led by women and people of color, often tout themselves as being ahead of the rest, more progressive, and less inclined to reproduce systems of power or abuses (ableism, classism, racism, transphobia) than traditional departments. We soon discovered, however, that by dismissing the concerns of graduate students, our department was in fact replicating the very systems of oppression we claim, as a field, to be working diligently to dismantle. With the students' concerns not being heard and the white faculty in a position of power weaponizing their identities to avoid accountability for their actions, it became an "us" versus "them" dichotomy. This individual had accumulated white allies within the department who wielded their identities and power against marginalized students and faculty. When the truth about this person came out, the faculty were also negatively impacted, and as a department, we are still feeling the reverberations. We believe in transformative justice and made multiple attempts to make space for safe dialogue between students and faculty who were impacted. We were forced to escalate the issue when they refused to accept accountability and threatened legal action against vulnerable students and Women of Color faculty. The channels for discussion between faculty and students seemed foreclosed. Further, without examining the differences and centering the experiences and voices of those who have been most marginalized, we cannot claim to be having a serious feminist discussion (Amindoni, 2023).

In the absence of departmental support, we joined forces with the Graduate Leaders for Equitable Education to organize, be in community, and simply speak openly to one another about our experiences. The Graduate Leaders for Equitable Education is a group of scholar activists who were driven to reveal the abuse and injustice in our department. This organizing helped us deal with the alienation we were feeling. We started working towards creating solidarity grounded in both our common positionality in a department as well as our differences. In the academy, where white normativity is often predominant, where culture and practices make whiteness appear natural, normal, or right, and where ways of thinking, knowing, and doing continue to naturalize and uphold whiteness in social and institutional life, the inevitable result is white supremacist and hierarchical top-down knowledge accumulation and hoarding. The centrality of competitiveness and individualism in US academia works as a specific mechanism to stop people, especially those from marginalized groups, from forming alliances. Graduate education is rooted in individual achievement, whereas working towards collective goals is riskier. By simply speaking to each other, we were defying the norm.

Our departmental culture was deeply influenced by the abusive professor who was hoarding power. We entered into a department defined by a culture of hoarding power, exerting dominance and control over students, and manipulating faculty colleagues with falsehoods and misrepresentations. As first years and first-time doctoral students, we did not know what exactly our program should look like, but we instantaneously knew what we *didn't* want: to reproduce the current culture. We didn't want to perpetuate the racism, classism, transphobia, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, and abuses of power that run rampant within academia. Instead, we knew we desired alliances, collaboration, and ethical research by putting liberatory theory into practice through harm reduction, mutual aid, and mutual support. We drew strength from the fact that our origins as feminist activists took place in demonstrations on the streets. We decided that from the rubble, we could create anew. And so, we began talking to one another, first a whisper, then a roar. We

realized that we could create concrete positive change through the negation of negativity.

In our department, the romanticized ideal of the lone scholar toiling away in solitude obscures the powerful reality of academic gatekeeping. While scholarship is often presented as a free exchange of ideas, we encountered a different reality. There was an unspoken, and at times implicit, demand for students to engage with and cite the works of certain powerful professors and scholars in our field. This pressure removed our own agency in deciding whose intellectual lineages we wished to engage with and build upon. This unspoken demand to reproduce a select few's work turned us into gatekeepers, forcing us to reproduce harm by prioritizing certain ideas, theorists, and researchers' work over others.

This practice, we have come to understand, is part of a broader systemic issue. Academia is a hierarchical structure where tenured faculty and senior leadership wield immense power over departmental decisions and the career trajectories of graduate students and junior faculty. Under the guise of providing mentorship and guidance, those in power often expect junior scholars to cite and highlight their work to obtain continued support. This expectation hinders the visibility of other scholarship and is particularly damaging for marginalized scholars, whose narratives are often historically overlooked and overshadowed by frequently cited, and more privileged, academics and researchers. Ultimately, this system keeps intact and reproduces the marginalization of those who are underrepresented in departments, including faculty and students who are early in their careers (Scherpenberg et al., 2021).

This unjust system has material effects. At the personal level, especially for scholars who experience marginalization due to their identities, this environment can be deeply damaging, resulting in many leaving academia permanently due to the abuse and suffering (Nicole & Coley, 2024; Settles et al., 2022). These kinds of negative repercussions of the abuse and the misconduct have been felt for years and will continue to reverberate years into the future (Graduate Leaders for Equitable Education, n.d.). Beyond the personal toll, such gatekeeping also leads to intellectual

stagnation. In the context of research and writing, it often has the effect of reproducing, ad infinitum, ideas that lack nuance, are passé, and stifle innovation, knowledge, and ways of knowing. The obsession with outdated scholarship requires examination. As scholars, we have the responsibility to confront our citation bias surrounding the refusal to remove harmful texts from the canon while perpetuating anti-Blackness, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia (Jones, 2019).

One small step we can take towards citational justice within our capacity is to remove these harmful texts from our syllabi and/or critically address the harm they cause. For us, citational justice looks like ethical, equitable, and politically conscious citations that are intentionally used to highlight historically marginalized voices. In our view, citations and the creation of knowledge have the power to shape material realities. The rules of citation preclude any further discussion of the matter. In the context of our department, the citation culture demanded a monopoly of the subject matter – and one faculty member's false claim to be Indigenous resulted in many Indigenous scholars who had worked closely with them facing scrutiny over their own ancestry and costing them potential teaching positions.

It is in direct response to these issues that we have turned to collaborative writing. Our work together is not merely a critique; it is an active practice of building a different kind of academic space, one that actively counters hierarchical power structures and commits to citational justice. In our work together, we would be remiss not to acknowledge that we are operating within a white supremacist land grab institution. Yet, we believe that QTBIPoC future world-making and solidarity do not require a purity of thought. Our collaboration privileges diverse ideas and brings us together for a shared goal: revolutionary change.

Responding with an Embodied Feminist Practice of Collaboration

We discovered that collaboration was the cure to isolation and that mutual support was the response to betrayal. A key space we identified for collaboration and resistance was writing. Collaborative writing is a way of speaking truth to power and undoing the harm that competition-driven academic departments can and do

perpetuate. Collaborative writing offered us a new way forward in the production and dissemination of feminist scholarship. Graduate school rewards competitiveness through grants, fellowships, conferences, and research paper awards while dissuading collaborative writing. We are not taught or encouraged to collaborate or form alliances of any kind. In one of our classes, we, the first-year cohort, were exploring the theme of writing and publishing. We talked about our experiences and realized the power of our collective voices. Although our experiences varied, we were all firsthand witnesses to and negatively impacted by the actions of a select few in our department. As we try to find our voices, resist structural abuse, and work towards institutional transformation, we crafted a series of commitments that serves as a collective commitment to one another as well as guides our collaborative work. Doing collaborative writing requires recognizing and locating the hierarchical white supremacist structures embedded within academic scholarship as well as our own embeddedness and participation in them. In our moment of isolation and institutionalized betrayal and violence, collaborative writing offers us a way of coming together, thinking collectively about how we can change these structures, at least in how we relate to each other as people, if not the department, the university, and academia at large.

Furthermore, as a cohort, we are committed to transdisciplinarity[5] and genre-blending across borders in our lives and work. We've found that transdisciplinarity has the effect of locating missing pieces to difficult questions that are in desperate need of alternative and creative solutions. We believe that collaboration as a response to institutional crisis or chaos can be effective across academic disciplines and beyond, although the institutional structures segregate us in disciplinary silos. The perceived disconnect between Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines and the humanities and social sciences has limited our imagination of the kind of collaboration that is possible in academia, especially in response to institutional violence or systemic oppression (Marcoci et al., 2023). While prevalent in all academic fields, power imbalances, knowledge hoarding, and faculty control over graduate students' academic and financial position are particularly

evident in STEM fields (Bettencourt et al., 2024). In all academic departments, access to resources, concerns about career trajectories, funding opportunities, and publication pressures can further exacerbate competitiveness and isolation.

In this article, we offer an alternate vision of academic work for graduate students and scholars that is centered on collaboration. Specifically, we offer a statement of commitment to one another that can be used to guide an equitable process of collaboration. We draw on feminist methods that center QTBIPoC lived experience, multi/transdisciplinary communication, and collaboration to guide our collaboration and the formulation of these commitments (El Kotni et al., 2020; Martin & Dace, 2023; Nagar, 2014). Tracking the legacy of our feminist forebearers, our work tracks back to Black feminist activism (Combahee River Collective, 1977), epitomized collaboration by bringing together diverse voices of women of color (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981), community-based action (Boggs, 2011), the interconnectedness of global liberation movements and solidarity across struggles (Angela Davis, 2015), collective care and shared responsibility are foundational to resistance efforts (Dean Spade, 2020), and natural and decentralized systems of organizing for social change (adrienne maree brown, 2017). Collaborative writing has been a key mode of feminist resistance and of speaking truth to power. Thinking and writing with our feminist forebearers, as they consistently demonstrate its formative potential, we acknowledge and honor their contributions as we attempt to orient our own collaborative practices. By acknowledging and honoring our feminist forebearers, we recognize their contributions as we attempt to orient our own collaborative practices.

Collaboration is not unlike solidarity in that we do not necessarily need to agree upon everything; we simply need to agree that we are dedicated to concrete positive change in our department, where accountability is prioritized and the issues of power imbalance are addressed. To become co-writers, we only need to agree that we are no longer satisfied with tyranny, exclusion, toxic competitiveness, and the cult of celebrity. Through collaboration, we see ourselves as engaged in the creation of a QTBIPoC WGSS culture that is sustainable, open to accountability and change,

and always becoming. As part of our ongoing struggle for institutional transformation, we compiled a list of commitments to guide us as we move forward with work as a cohort. The following is not a "how-to" per se; it's an expression of mutual respect, understanding, and commitment to each other and to collectively creating a space in which we can grow to thrive as scholars, teachers, and activists. We are attempting to transform the culture of our field and our department through a decolonial practice focused on challenging feminist ideologies/practices that are embedded in white supremacy and centering Women of Color, Black, Indigenous, Xicane, and transnational feminisms that are based on the voices, experiences, and knowledges of those who have been oppressed, marginalized, and othered (Lugones, 2010; Manning, 2021; Takeuchi & Marin, 2022). It's a vision, a future-facing imaginary of the trajectory of our department—a department where we research, write, and co-produce knowledge for true liberation. Everything we have written is open to change. In this article, we laid out ways for those in precarious situations to challenge departmental or institutional culture, to consider ways of rejecting the institutional mandates of competition and individualism, and to embrace collaboration as an alternative way of thriving in academia.

Feminist Collaborative Commitments

Based on the principles of shared authority, accountability, and respect for each other, our approach to collaboration is rooted in the belief that knowledge production is a collective activity that should focus on centering marginalized voices and challenging dominant power structures. Considering the state of the nation with the emergence of a virulent anti-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) movement, it is imperative to reaffirm and recommit to our feminist ideals as a daily practice. These commitments can be adopted across disciplines and institutions and are not fixed; instead, they are flexible and should adapt to changes in the spaces that we occupy. As such, as a cohort and a community, we have developed and adopted a series of commitments or community agreements that guide our collaborative process, including the collaborative writing of this piece. We write, collaborate, and engage

through the following commitments:

- ***Accountability***: We agree to commit to each other and honor each other's time, effort, and energy. Reciprocity and mutual respect, kindness, and understanding are key in this regard (hooks, 1999). Communicating our limitations is crucial to the accountability process. For instance, having a meeting minutes or an agenda ensures members who were not present have access to all the information that was discussed.

- ***Expectations and availability***: We expect to engage in collaborative generative conversations related to our agreed upon areas of research, interest, and engagement. This requires patience and understanding. We expect to engage in dialogue without the threat of dismissal. Solidarity in this sense does not mean we must agree on everything. On the contrary, we can expect to disagree. How we meet conflict, with grace and humility, is incredibly important to the feminist pedagogical approach that guides our teaching and learning. Feminist pedagogy is a framework of teaching and learning that challenges and troubles hierarchical classroom structures. It is rooted in feminist theory and is a guiding philosophy that seeks to incorporate knowledge accumulation and dissemination that is equitable (Fischer, 2000; hooks, 1994; UNC Charlotte, n.d.).
- ***Measurement***: Our collective success will be measured by the completion of collaborative projects defined, produced, and shared by the group.
- ***Transparency as defined below***:
    1. Transparency in terms of idea development and generation: When thoughts are still speculative or exploratory, members of the collective are allowed and encouraged to revise and clarify their positions and ideas in response to new information or insights.
    2. Transparency in commitment: There will be times when we are faced with challenges, both in and outside of this collective; we will hold each other with grace in these times, and make sure we are there for each

other as human beings first, and then scholars.

3. Transparency in availability and accountability: There will be times when the collective may not be able to meet, discuss, edit, or support each other's writing to our full capacity. We will attempt to support each other within our capacities and be clear when we may not be able to fulfill our collective responsibilities.

- ***Coming to consensus*:**
    1. Sitting with discomfort: When attempting to gather and come to a consensus, it is important to know and understand the limitations therein. We may have to move forward despite not having come to an agreement. This might feel uncomfortable, but sitting with discomfort is an important part of working collectively.
- ***Critical introspection*:** Introspection is an important practice to embody when working collectively. In the context of this work, this includes our awareness of "the privileged academic way of *critical* thinking we have as people who have the time and resources to reflect upon themselves" (Rossling et al., n.d.). Once we have agreed upon the foundation of language use and approaches, including ethical practices of understanding our positionality, we must critically interrogate ourselves as an ethical feminist practice to ask: *Who are we? What is our positionality in relation to ourselves, our work, our identities, as a collective, and in relation to the world* (CTLT Indigenous Initiatives, n.d.)?

- ***Decentering ourselves and checking our biases*:** We must decenter ourselves in an effort to come together for a common goal while simultaneously locating and understanding our positionality. By being critical of ourselves and our positionality, we can focus on the common goal without the risk of centering our personal experiences in collective work. The world we are living in now is facing unprecedented challenges. As a collective, we find ourselves in the midst of having to manage our commitment as scholars and socio-political positions with an understanding of when to claim space, when to

stand in solidarity, and when to decenter ourselves and acknowledge our own implicit bias.

- ***From the margins to the center*:** There is a lack of Black, Brown, and Indigenous mentors, collaborators, elders, and leaders in the academy. Due to this direct lack of representation and collaboration, we aim to build off our forebearers who have continually fought white supremacy and purposeful systems of oppression. We acknowledge the labor required to continue to combat the erasure of these voices and are working to carry on this legacy. While the field might still be centered on white cis/het academics who tend to be focused on white saviorism, we would like to imagine and strive for a field that is representative of the long legacy of feminist scholarship based on different experiences (Willuweit, 2020).
- ***Clear communication in collaboration*:**
    1. Intentional collaboration: We will seek out and respond to opportunities to work collaboratively on academic projects instead of being sucked into the traditional competitive individualism. When opportunities arise for the collective to present at academic conferences or other events, we will confer with each other as to availability, accessibility, scope, timelines, and willingness to present and/or publish in order to reframe the narrative about the state of the field and concrete positive structural change.
    2. Understanding institutionality: As scholars working in the larger collegiate system, there are institutional constraints such as the hierarchy described above that we will encounter in the process of writing and collaborating with each other. In challenging times, we commit ourselves to clear and consistent communication as well as forming strategic plans to resist institutional pushbacks or roadblocks.
- ***Commitments to intersectional and queer/trans* feminisms, epistemology, and methodology*:**
    - **Decentering white feminism**: White feminism uplifts and centers the

white femme/woman-identified experience as a universal femme/woman-identified experience to the detriment of women/femmes of color. We embrace intersectional feminism that recognizes the ways gender is shaped by race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, dis/ability, madness, age, nationality, and religion (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1986; Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1977; Crenshaw, 1991; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). We reject a centering of white feminism that depicts white experience as normative and upholds a system of white supremacy, where white feminism is tied to white saviorism, and where white supremacy guides an ideology that white people are in a position of superiority and are attempting to "help" save those who are not white (Banerjee et al., 2023; Willuweit, 2020).

- **Interrogating anti-Blackness**[6]: We critically interrogate anti-Blackness and colonialism (including ongoing settler colonialism in North America upon which US academia relies for its continued existence) and recognize that the two are intertwined (See also: Bush, n.d.; Tuck & Yang, 2012). With the knowledge that our institution is a land-grant university, we must recognize our responsibility to the original owners of the land and our institution's involvement in the harm of others.
- **Trans* justice**: We reject Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism (TERF), a system of excluding trans* people, perpetuated by allegedly radical feminists, often to create separation between gender categories and reinforce the gender binary (Saul, 2020). TERF feminism is hostile to and excludes trans* people, especially trans* femmes, from feminist discussions through fear-mongering and demonization.
- **Disability justice**: We understand and recognize that we live in a society that often disregards disability. As such, we are committed to critically interrogating and dismantling ableism in all its forms.
- **Transdisciplinarity**: Engaging with scholarly work through a

> transdisciplinary, intersectional approach is the foundation of our collective work. Within our collective, we center trans* people, especially BIPoC trans* women. We reject any exclusion of trans* people and refuse separations between gender categories that support the gender binary. We are mindful of and purposefully engage as a collective to approach work that is trans*-inclusionary and that avoids centering white femme/woman-identified experiences as a universal 'we'/woman experience to the detriment of femmes of color (Ezaydi, 2023). We refuse to engage with the narratives and exclusionary practices of those who are hostile or exclusionary to trans* folx (Burns, 2019; Saul, 2020; Van Horn, 2023).

This list illustrates that a deep commitment to feminist collaboration provides a framework for a more equitable and accountable scholarly practice within our field. It is also essential to consider how these principles can be applied to broader academic contexts. For instance, what are the implications of these commitments in STEM fields, especially in the current context where efforts to make STEM more equitable for women and people of color are under threat? Feminist commitments and a collaborative approach would be one way for students and faculty in STEM higher education to respond to anti-scientific discourse, funding cuts, and the dictate that questions of equity and justice are not central to scientific inquiry. One way to resist the institution and its oppressive structures would be to explore opportunities for transdisciplinary work and envision the development of a more equitable and just research process across disciplines.

Transdisciplinary Possibilities: Collaborating with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Disciplines

Collaborative writing is not unique to feminist co-authorship and collaboration. It has a much stronger legacy and is accepted as common practice in STEM fields.

Another common practice in collaborative scholarship—Equal Co-Authorship (EC), the practice of crediting two or more authors equally by sharing a byline position—is most common in biomedical disciplines (Hosseini, 2020). This often translates to graduate students having to credit their advisors or senior faculty at the department as co-authors, even if the paper is based on their own research. As publications play a big role in acquiring funding, jobs, promotion, and tenure, this gives senior faculty a lot of control over graduate students and junior faculty, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, under-represented groups, and first-generation college students who are less likely to have support and professional networks they can rely on (Rayle et al., 2006). Marginalized students and faculty often face disadvantages due to systemic inequalities that are woven into the fabric of the academy. Lacking the social capital and inherited knowledge of academia's "unwritten rules," they are less equipped to navigate or challenge unfair authorship demands from powerful advisors (Gardner, 2013).

Developing a co-authorship statement and commitment, as demonstrated above, for scholars and researchers in STEM disciplines collaborating with one another and across disciplines and institutions might be a useful strategy to challenge a deeply hierarchical system of co-authorship, which mirrors the systemic issues that we have discussed here. A clear, agreed-upon outline of how the collaborative process can help address the fundamental inequity of EC practices. It is not uncommon for journals or publications to require a statement in the byline or footnote to indicate the contribution of each author. One of the main challenges surrounding EC is the rarity of authors and collaborators making exactly equal contributions, since ideas or arguments are not easily measurable or quantifiable, which in turn would make accurate and equal division of all contributions difficult to achieve (Hosseini, 2020). Disagreements about the contribution of each author can also delay the publishing process (Scott-Lichter, 2012). Those who seek to reform this system recommend a statement that clearly identifies contributions by each author, division of work, and labor (Caño et al., 2024; Martin & Dace, 2023). While this is a good practice, we believe that adopting a collaborative framework similar to

the one laid out in this article allows us to challenge the foundational ideals of competitiveness and individuality upon which academic work is predicated. This is key to creating innovative transdisciplinary scholarship.

With the recent targeted elimination of STEM research funding, transdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration is needed now more than ever (Bush et al., 2025; Reed, 2025; Ris, 2025). There is an urgent need for new alliances and a rethinking of what STEM research and writing looks like. We hope to open up new pathways for meaningful collaboration between STEM students, faculty, and researchers and others beyond the field of STEM. We can only imagine how generative feminist collaborative commitments co-created by scholars from STEM and WGSS could be. By adopting a commitment and agreement with the anticipation of conflict, a transdisciplinary writing/scholarly collective can appropriately address issues and conflicts that might arise throughout the collaboration and writing process.

Having a shared language and conceptual framework for collaboration is key to successful transdisciplinary work (Gardiner, 2020). The feminist collaborative commitments we have outlined, then, can inspire or even act as a model for authors and collaborators looking for ways to bridge the gaps between disciplines on knowledge production, challenging hierarchical structures, strengthening commitment to ethical research, and eliminating potential power imbalances. The long-debated issues of workload contribution, allocating credit, and the emotional labor involved in collaborative work can also be minimized, as authors and collaborators would agree upon practices before working together. In this section, we highlighted the issues of co-authorship and how feminist collaborative commitments can be a way of rethinking the hierarchical structure of co-authorship. At this time of political uncertainty and tightening of funding opportunities, there is an increased need for transdisciplinary collaboration, and the commitments here offer a model for grounding this work.

Conclusion

Some of us reside at the margins of academia, at the intersections of multiple oppressions. In spite of the constant forced authentication and delegitimization we face within the academy, we've found power in numbers. We recognize that resisting or speaking out alone is sometimes not possible. Therefore, we joined forces in alliance formation. A collective voice is more impactful than a singular voice. Through our own collaborative writing of this article and actively utilizing the statement and commitments we described above, we envision academic institutions that embrace and encourage multidisciplinary collaboration. We recognize the profound impact that inter-, trans-, and multidisciplinary scholarship can have, particularly collaborations that bridge the gap between humanities, social sciences, and STEM disciplines. We are of the belief that Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and their adjacent departments can be truly beneficial to an overall mission of ethical research practices*. Co-authorship not only acts as a strategy to promote and encourage collaboration but also gives communities that are historically and currently underrepresented within the STEM fields an opportunity to be properly recognized for their contributions to their disciplines. A co-authorship statement such as one demonstrated above, which outlines an agreement of commitments among co-authors, serves as a testament to the shared commitment and standard to facilitate and produce scholarship that is meaningful and harm reductive, benefiting the community, the co-authors, and the broader academic community. Our shared commitments are not fixed and remain malleable and are subject to change. Remaining open to change is a part of our commitment to ethical research. We hope that through sharing our collaborative writing journey, supported by a clear, transparent, and equitable co-authorship statement, it reflects our own dedication to creating a more equitable environment for co-authored, cross-disciplinary research and collaboration.

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