

Critical Suicide Studies Network: Statement of Ethics

Critical suicide studies, initially known as *critical suicidology*, is a diverse field seeking to offer coherent, practical and creative alternatives to traditional suicidology. Our premise is that we need to develop renewed and novel frameworks, strategies and concepts that move beyond the focus on individual pathology and deficit, harnessed by overused positivist research methodologies. In the face of its incongruity and the pain it generates, suicide is part of the human condition. If we do not question, if we do not embrace alternative perspectives, we risk limiting our understanding of the possibilities of what it means to be human.

A set of evolving ethics guides critical suicide studies. These ethics are not simply about what is right or wrong, and are far from settled. Instead, they are about the principles, and the ways in which these principles shape us as a movement of researchers, practitioners and activists.¹ We expect these ethics to shift and change as we think more deeply about them and more people engage with them over time.

The Statement of Ethics is as follows. Critical suicide studies:

- Encourages a diversity of views, and recognises differences as a site of creativity.
- Recognises that suicide research and suicide prevention often take place on lands stolen from others around the globe as a result of colonialism, built on past (and present) labour of colonised peoples.
- Recognises the centrality of lived experience, and the way it informs both theoretical and practical knowing of, and responding to suicide.
- Recognises the importance of context to how we understand and prevent suicide. This includes gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class, age, ability, place, all which are influenced by time, language, history and politics.
- Understands suicide within a broader socio-political context that attends to the effects of structural racism, white supremacy, casteism, patriarchy, ableism, colonial violence, heteronormativity, transphobia, economic and climate crises in producing vulnerability to suicide.
- Recognises the importance of local and Indigenous knowledges, and global perspectives, and the tensions between the two as means of understanding suicide more.
- Acknowledges the dominance of White, Euro-western perspectives within suicidology, and actively works to engage with the scholarship of racialized, minoritized, and Indigenous peoples - and those from the Global South- to understand suicide within historically and culturally specific frames.
- Challenges reductionistic, oversimplified understandings of suicide, and our responses to it, in everyday life.
- Recognises that suicide is multiple and complex, and will always be at least partially unknowable and difficult to explain.

- Approaches the study of suicide from inter- and trans-disciplinary perspectives, welcoming views and voices from the margins, creating spaces of inclusion rather than exclusion.
- Emphasises the importance of co-production and collaboration in the knowledge generated in critical suicide studies.
- Recognises the importance of the relationship between theory and practice in understanding suicide.
- Seeks to understand and create the conditions which make lives more liveable.
- Respects the agency of people who choose suicide, and will not live.
- Recognises that responding to the reality of suicide requires compassion and respect.
- Recognises the emotional landscape of suicide, and the way emotions influence how people engage with the topic of suicide.
- Remains open to the revisions of our perspectives to ensure we are never at ease with the knowledge we generate.
- Attends to the potentially harmful effects of knowledge generated in critical suicide studies, including the sometimes, coercive nature of suicide prevention.
- Works towards productively managing differences between those within as much as those outside of critical suicide studies.
- Advocates for social justice to change oppressive social conditions, cultural practices, and institutions in which suicide is experienced.
- Acknowledges the complexity of suicide prevention and does not take it for granted as an unqualified good.
- Acknowledges that prevention is often a key focus of research about suicide, but recognizes that all knowledge that seeks to broaden our understanding of suicide is important.
- Advocates an open approach to suicide prevention, where different communities may take up a prevention framework for the purpose of reworking it in their own contexts.

¹ Our position is captured by what the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, once said: “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy, but to a hyper-and pessimistic activism” (In *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., 1983, p. 232).