



“Tweet like the wind, friends!”: Building a Theory and Praxis of Conference Live-Tweeting

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My approach to this project is grounded in feminist methodologies that understand ideas as embodied acts (Kirsch & Jones Royster, 2010¹) and view research as a theory-to-practice endeavor (Johnson-Odin, 1991²). My perspective is also significantly informed by a previous career as a journalist and my ongoing work as an activist.

Feminist methodologies emphasize reflective practices and work in communities and contexts, and journalism is (ideally) focused on reporting what is both true and important. Journalism that includes commentary also has an important function, and live-tweeting academic conference sessions makes apparent (Frost, 2016³) a number of issues relate to performance, access, and inclusion.

Further, our multiplicitous identities (Daniel Tatum, 200⁴) impact the way we tweet and the way our tweets are received. My work on this project centers three questions about this shared, undertheorized practice that has yet to yield widely shared behavioral or discursive norms.

How do we decide which conferences and sessions to live-tweet?

I first began live-tweeting conference sessions as part of the 2017 social media team for the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. Using *#TheFeministsAreComing* and *#CFSHRC*, I live-tweeted conference sessions at *#FemRhet2017*, and then I kept up the practice.

In 2018, I live-tweeted panels showcasing feminist scholarship at *#ABCMiami*, *#RSA50*, and *#NeMLA2018* (April 12-14). The following year, I did the same at *#4C19*, *#ATTWcon*, *#ABCDetroit*, and *#FemRhet2019*. Reporting out to my readers who were not at the conferences—or at different sessions in the same time slot—was an important way to share the news of this scholarly work.

Where's the divide between reporting and commentary? How do we make that divide clear?

The clear separation of news from opinion (though, alas, no longer a common practice) was once a professional expectation in journalism. Both aspects of live-tweeting are important, though serve different purposes, and my journalistic approach to the praxis of live-tweeting means I have always worked to make the distinction clear.

I primarily do direct reporting when I live-tweet: what the scholars say or claim or demonstrate. Separating editorial opinion from the reporting is not difficult. Simply labeling the opinion—often by literally beginning the specific tweet with *Commentary:*—has been my general practice. Other options might include switching from straightforward language such as “X found that...” to more descriptive terms or to inserting themselves into the narrative: “I love...” or “Not sure I agree....”

¹ Kirsch, G. E. & Jones Royster, J. (2010). Feminist rhetorical practices: In search of excellence. *College Composition and Communication*, 61(4), 640-672.

² Johnson-Odim, C. (1991). Common themes, different contexts: Third World women and feminism. In C. Talpade Mohanty, A. Russo, & L. Torres (Eds.), *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (pp. 314-327). Indiana University Press.

³ Frost, E. A. (2016). Apparent feminism as a methodology for technical communication and rhetoric. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 30(1), 3-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651915602295>

⁴ Daniel Tatum, B. (2000). The complexity of identity: “Who am I?” In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, H. W. Hackman, X. Zuniga, & M. L. Peters (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, sexism, anti-semitism, heterosexism, clasism and ableism* (pp. 9-17). Routledge.