Citation Practices: Shifting Paradigms[1]

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**TEACHING WRITING NOW:
DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM**

A virtual symposium hosted by the Texas A&M Department of English throughout the spring of 2021 that featured a series of talks and workshops on the topic of how practitioners can better teach writing now by addressing diversity, inclusion, and social justice in the writing classroom. The event was aimed at bringing together scholars doing research in social justice pedagogies, cultural rhetorics, and composition/professional writing in our rapidly changing media landscapes. Events were free and open to the public.

Social Justice Matters in Technical and Professional Writing
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Introduction

Thank you to the organizers for inviting me to talk. I'm really excited to be here today. I'm going to talk about changing how we think about citation practices in the academy. So, this reaches beyond the field of technical communication, but because I am in technical communication, I do draw on some technical communication scholarship.

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[1] *Note: The original version of this talk was given on Monday, February 15, 2021 as part of The Texas A&M University Department of English's Teaching Writing Now Symposium. It has been edited for publication and includes references to and citations from the author's previous and forthcoming published work.*

It's interesting because I've been thinking quite a bit about citation practices. Specifically, as I've mulled over this presentation (and given a couple of other presentations), I've been grappling with the ways that knowledge is taken up and legitimized in our field (technical communication), but more broadly in our discipline. In an attempt to tie some ideas together and also, in rethinking some of my own ideas, I circled back to citation practices and what this means in regard to knowledge legitimization and meaning-making. So, in this talk, I draw on Black Feminist scholars to reframe how we think about citation practices and how we engage in those practices.

First, when I say citation practices, I am referring to not only who we cite but how we cite and the impact that these practices can have on the field. There is important work being done that addresses citation analysis. For instance, I am aware of forthcoming work from Johnson, Moore, and Sanchez (unpublished) that will examine how the concept of intersectionality gets taken up in engineering education domains through citation practices. There is also work being done on citation and network analysis by scholars in and beyond technical communication. I'm not talking specifically about citation analysis here, but I am interrogating the justice-oriented ways that we approach citations.

When I considered how citation practices are taken up, I began to notice some patterns. Briefly, and I won't cover them all, we can observe four approaches to citing:

1) Absence
2) Cursory Mentions
3) Listing
4) Coalitional Engagement

Let me say that these broad categories are not mutually exclusive, and one can sometimes find a combination of these approaches to citational practices in a single text or article. But, for now, I just want to discuss what these practices look like and the implications that they have.

Absence

The absence of scholarship by marginalized and multiply marginalized scholars is characterized by citation practices that privilege traditional, Western, white-male, cishet scholars at the expense of Black scholars, scholars of color, or multiply marginalized scholars—who are excluded, even as they have expertise on a given topic. These "traditionally" cited scholars, as Shelton (2019) notes, "reflect the accumulation

of resources at the center of society's social, economic, and political institutions" (p. 10). When I think about this type of citational practice, I acknowledge that this points to what I understand to be an issue of silencing practices, as defined by Dotson (2011), and knowledge legitimization.

So, in fits and starts, I've been writing about and thinking about how silence and silencing work as a gatekeeping mechanism that often devalues certain ways of knowing, learning, and meaning-making. In an article I wrote in 2016 about narrative inquiry methods in human-centered design, I discussed how narrative and the privileging of lived experience can help eliminate silencing and silencing practices ("Narrative Inquiry…"). As I think about some of the claims I made in that article, reflectively I understand that I was discussing what Dotson (2011) called "testimonial quieting." In a 2021 publication, I discuss Dotson's (2011) frame for silencing practices, in which she provides a definitional situatedness for understanding subtle ways that Black women's knowledges, in particular, are devalued.

In her definition of testimonial quieting— "an audience fail[ing] to identify a speaker as a knower"—Dotson (2011) makes clear that the knowledge(s) exist, is useful, and is applicable, but is delegitimized in a way that "disappears" ways of learning, knowing, and meaning making, rather than amplifying epistemologies (p. 242). As Dotson further argues, delegitimized knowledge(s) is often supplanted by dominant and "traditional" ways of knowing and engaging. Dotson notes that "local or provincial knowledge is dismissed due to privileging alternative, often Western, epistemic practices" (p. 236). Moreover, I argued then that by "drawing on the theoretical frame of Black Feminist Thought (Patricia Hill Collins, 2000), Dotson notes how the presumption of incompetence constrains Black women's ways of learning and knowing and restricts the spaces and places in which Black women can engage in epistemic and knowledge-making processes and practices" (Jones, 2021, p. 62).

We also can understand this as a way of devaluing knowledge in favor of gatekeeping that relies on arguments about what counts as experience, arguments that interrogate what is "professional" and rigorous, and arguments that set up false standards about methodological purity. We see some of these gatekeeping and silencing practices when we hear scholars question methods like autoethnography, narrative, counterstory, and work that engages in genre bends and blends.

As I note, first in an article on narrative and silence in human-centered design (Jones, 2016) and then later in a book chapter on silencing practices in scientific communication (Jones, 2021):

> Silencing occurs in a variety of ways and for several different reasons. Silencing is defined broadly as "not being heard or understood, not being included or represented, being ignored or delegitimized, not being valued, or . . . marginalized" (Jones, 2016, p. 478). Feminist conceptualizations of silence interrogate how power is constructed, maintained, and manifested, with the understanding that "power can silence or support the voices of others" (p. 478). Further, when considering silence specifically from a Black Feminist perspective, "silencing is often systemic and systematic" and "can occur without malicious intent, ill will, or even active engagement," with complicity finding a path through "heteronormative, patriarchal, eurocentric" ideologies that go unacknowledged and unchallenged in any explicit way. Resisting silence is about being explicit and removing opacity (p. 478).

In essence, silencing works, as Dotson (2011) notes, to separate a group from the linguistic reciprocity that enables and recognizes knowledge-making. Dotson argues that epistemic violence is a "type of violence that attempts to eliminate knowledge possessed by marginal subjects" (pg. 236). Further, Toni Morrison (1993) argues, and we quote in our book, that the goal in this type of violence—violence around language—and as I argue, the silencing of and the taking away of language is "estrangement."

In regard to citation practices, the exclusion of scholarship from marginalized and multiply marginalized folks works to "estrange" these scholars from their academic disciplines. It invalidates their work. It obscures their work. It disappears the knowledge that they create. To be clear, I don't make claims that this disappearing of scholarship by marginalized and multiply marginalized folks is malicious or intentional, though it can be. However, it does have implications and consequences that reverberate within and across our academic fields.

A generous take on this phenomenon is that folks want to do better, and I'd even argue that we've seen in our field and our discipline that folks are trying to do better.

As Kristen Moore, Rebecca Walton, and I describe in our book *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action* (2019), the first step to redressing injustice is a recognition of injustice and oppression. And I do think folks are recognizing the problem with this approach to citation practices. In fact, the next approach to citation practices is, I'd argue, what is born out of a response to this recognition.

Cursory Mentions

I describe cursory mentions as akin to name-dropping. In this sense, a scholar might mention the name of a prominent marginalized or multiply marginalized scholar as a way to signal some brief acknowledgment of the work that this scholar may have done. This is not, in itself, inappropriate, and there are valid reasons for cursory mentions in our scholarship. So, I'm not addressing those valid reasons, but I am addressing cursory mentions that do performative work without truly being purposeful in citing work from marginalized or multiply marginalized scholars.

One of the things we've seen with the social justice turn in technical communication is the desire to incorporate a multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and ideas into our work. This is a good thing. Folks who haven't before thought about the justice- and inclusion-oriented impacts of their work are doing more to be reflective and engage in practices that seek to acknowledge the field of technical communication's complicity in oppression and oppressive behaviors. This means, in turn, more folks are working to cite more Black folks, POC, and queer folks in their research and scholarship. They are revisiting and revising their syllabi to include perspectives and scholarship from those of us at the margins. Again, this is a good thing. But this new incorporation of work from multiply marginalized folks must be done in a way that does not do harm to, exploit, or extract from the very communities that we try to engage with.

Listing

Listing happens when scholars include citational lists that name scholars in list form. I see listing happening in more than one way though.

Listing to quantify (focus on numeric representation)

Listing as a way to bolster the number of marginalized or multiply marginalized scholars included in a work focuses on quantity instead of true engagement. Listing without an understanding of amplification is akin to racial quotas and representational diversity measures that ask us to count the number of others in the room (whether those "others" are truly included or not). Further, Jennifer Nash (2019) argues citational practices that are not genuine engagements with scholarship are "predatory" and that "a scholar may cite a Black woman to give the appearance of being more liberal, instead of having authentic respect for the Black woman's work and genius."

Of course, this is a problem. Nash calls this using citation as a "credential." If the focus is purely on the number of marginalized folks you cite, then you are using those folks as a tool rather than doing the dialogical work that we've been trained to do as researchers. In this sense, citation practice becomes purely utilitarian and a performative means to an end. There are, of course, reasons to cite works in list form, but those reasons should not include a "diversity headcount."

Now, I don't think listing is always a bad idea. However, I think it's important for us to ask: How/when does listing work, and when is listing disingenuous?

Listing to amplify (call attention to the existence of the work)

Sometimes, listing can help to amplify by specifically calling attention to the existence of work by and about marginalized and multiply marginalized scholars (Cooper 2017). In other words, this type of listing resists arguments that the work doesn't exist, the scholars are not there, or there is a gap that scholars who are marginalized or multiply marginalized have not addressed. In this way, listing can explicitly push back against silencing through a citational version of "talking back" to gatekeepers upholding oppressive ideals about where knowledge can be located and whose knowledge is valid (or even where and whose knowledge exists). For example, in *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*, Drs. Walton and Moore and I (2019) use this practice in our chapter detailing critiques about the social justice turn in technical communication. One of the critiques–that the reason for not citing marginalized and multiply marginalized scholars in our work or including these scholars on our syllabi–is that there just aren't many of us out there. To be clear, there is no pipeline problem. Listing to amplify, as defined by Cooper (2017), becomes one way to address this myth head-on.

Listing can also provide a way to trace the development of concepts and ideas that have not been centered in our research and scholarship. We see this in literature reviews, and this type of listing can afford us a way to acknowledge how marginalized scholars have been at the fore of certain concepts, ideas, and theoretical frameworks that get taken up in popular thought but don't get credited back to the originators of those ideas. Cooper (2015) addresses this phenomenon in an essay on the future of Black Feminism.

In *Love No Limit: Towards a Black Feminist Future (In Theory)*, Cooper argues,

Despite the "citational ubiquity" of concepts like intersectionality in fields and disciplines across the humanities and social sciences and despite the

proliferation of vibrant cultures of Black feminisms on the innerwebs, academic Black feminisms still confront a "culture of justification," in which one is always asked to prove that the study of Black women's lives, histories, literature, cultural production and theory is sufficiently academic, and sufficiently "rigorous" to merit academic resources. (p.7)

Williams and Packer-Williams (2019) remind us that Black women scholars, as noted by Cooper (2017), take up "cope" with Black women's scholarship being ignored (p. 2010). In this way, even listing to amplify must be done carefully and purposefully. In essence, though ideas, concepts, and theories by and about Black folk and POC appear in publications, there is still a push to justify the belonging, the appropriateness, the rigor behind these ideas. Sometimes, lists don't allow for a deeper engagement and then the danger of citing work by Black folk and POC without genuine engagement with those ideas leaves the marginalized and multiply marginalized scholars to do the heavy lifting of that justification work--to go back and reiterate why what they've said is valid, misconstrued, misattributed, misunderstood, or taken up in uncritical ways.

Specifically, in relation to scholarship by and about Black women, Williams and Packer-Williams (2019) point out that, even as Black women contribute to academia in important ways, they are, as the scholars note that Cooper has suggested, "perpetually misunderstood, not seen, and/or deemed inconsequential" (n.p.). The authors go on to say that "one coping response might be for Black women academicians to take up the posture of advocating, naming, and amplifying the accomplishments of other Black women and themselves" (n.p.). This productive response is what Cooper (2017) describes as listing and is the purpose of the Cite Black Women Collective organized by Dr. Christen Smith at the University of Texas at Austin. Both advocate a praxis of honoring and acknowledging the intellectual work of Black women because often their work is rendered invisible.

So, in this sense, we see Black women taking up listing as an amplifying practice. In regard to citation practices, this listing can function in much the same way—to make work visible. As Mckoy (2019) notes in her work on amplification rhetorics, this rhetorical move to center marginalized knowledges and epistemologies underscores a desire to reclaim agency, making the work not only visible, but valid and valuable. But it's still work being taken on by Black women! It's still labor. It is making moves that are necessary, but that are also rhetorically invisible labor that other scholars don't think twice about—that is, how can I amplify the work of scholars who

look like me, who have similar experiences in the academy as me, who are on the margins like me?

The interesting thing about this approach to listing and how Black women use listing is that it keys into the idea of amplification and advocacy in coalition with *one another*. It moves multiply marginalized folks into a knowledge-making space that brings them together to achieve a commonly sought goal. This space is dynamic and shifts—like any other coalition. Sometimes, you bring in voices that serve one purpose or another. Other times, you bring in voices for the express purpose of holding up your, what Cooper (2015) calls, "foremothers," those that came before you and made a space for your work. In other words, this Black feminist, coalitional approach to citation practices allows Black women scholars to be in coalition in a way that both honors and acknowledges each other's intellectual work—work that is too often disappeared in the academy.

This brings me to the final approach, citational practices that focus on coalitional engagement. What has Cite Black Women taught us? What have our "foremothers" taught us? What can we learn about knowledge-making from Black Feminist traditions?

Coalitional Engagement

Recently, a colleague of mine brought this concern to bear in a tweet, asking about the role of engagement in citation practices and how we can be critical in our citation practices, and I agree with him that engagement is key. It's nice to see citations by Black folks and people of color, but what good does that do without engagement.

I refer to Shelton (2019), who says, "Seeking out a framework for knowledge production that explicitly rejects the primacy of Western philosophical and rhetorical traditions can feel like working in a void when mainstream education (both formal and informal) is built exclusively on these premises" (pg. 18). When you tie citation practices to knowledge production, knowledge legitimation—work on that void continues, but we can move to "circumvent" and "subvert," as Shelton argues (pg. 19).

I think here, the fundamental ask is that we shift how we think about citation practices; not as a performative act of solidarity, not as utilitarian, but as a way to amplify *and* be in coalition with each other.

This requires that we move away from thinking about citation as purely a way to map and trace the traditions of the field. What does "tradition" mean to the Black woman scholar?

The reason why this gets sticky is because often the "traditions" and dominant narratives about a scholarly space, place, idea, or discipline leave out important voices. Marginalized folks and the work of marginalized folks have been long overlooked, disappeared, and devalued. This becomes a vicious cycle when we only trace the narratives (and not the antinarratives or counterstories) and fail to take time to purposefully amplify what Mckoy (2019) calls marginalized epistemologies, the ways of learning, knowing, and making meaning (p. 46).

If we only think in utilitarian terms about citation practices, we are also more likely to try to identify gaps and holes. Many of us are trained as researchers to identify the gap and then fill it. Cooper (2015) notes: "Traditional academic strictures themselves require a "displacing and supplanting of previous knowledge" to prove what is new, novel, and useful about one's contributions" (pg. 7). We rarely are trained to look for ways to amplify existing, but devalued work or to address a community need or to expand on what work has been done in a marginalized community. This orientation to research is almost always deficit-based (Something is missing; something is done poorly; I can do something new and something better). This orientation also encourages the type of toxic competitiveness that further marginalizes those who are already seen as not valuable as scholars. Guzman and Amrute (2019) acknowledge this problem when they state that "we want people to know we've got something to say, so we conveniently forget all the others who co-created our ideas: (mostly) Black and Brown women and people who don't have formal credentials (like the people we interview)" (n.p.). They call this the problem of lineage and originality (acting AS IF we stand alone).

So, what is next? How can we shift these citational paradigms? I think we can move toward coalitional engagement in citational practices. Some Black feminist scholars have provided us with ideas about what that might look like already. Instead of claiming these ideas as new, I attempt here to extend on these ideas and place them under the umbrella of coalitional engagement. In order to do that, I ask the following questions that, as my colleague Kristen Moore often reminds me, we can think through as a coalition together—and start a dialogue about what this shift might be.

First, what might it look like to engage in citation practices as a way of honoring those before us (instead of working to prove that we are "in company with")? What might shift about our practices if one of the goals is to honor?

How do we move from citation practices that merely acknowledge to citation practices that amplify?

Nash (2019), in a lecture entitled "Citational Desires," asks us to treat "Black women's work with care and respect [that] shows that the user's engagement with

black feminist work is conscientious. Respect can help distinguish 'stewards' of Black women's work from 'trespassers.'" What might respect in citational practices look like? How can we be good stewards of the work of marginalized and multiply marginalized folks (without coopting or extracting labor for our own)?

How can we build coalitions with marginalized and multiply marginalized scholars that then influence who we coauthor with, how we coauthor, and how we cite?

I'd also like to encourage you all to check out #citeBlackwomancollective.org to view some of their work on how they conceptualize the praxis of citation.

Thank you for your time.

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