Feminist Pedagogy in Digital Spaces: Brief Systematic Literature Review

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This paper presents a systematic structured review of recent research that explicitly underscores teaching and learning aspects of online feminism. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention of higher education professoriate, policy makers and practitioners to social media platforms as potential supplementary teaching tools in higher education contexts.

In this digitally driven world, many people around the world access social media and other online platforms, proving that the power of the internet becomes indisputable in modern age (Fotopoulou, 2016). Digital media is praised for its potential in fostering global communities of feminists who participate in social networks to debate, discuss, share information and call for action (Munro, 2013). Women's voices are amplified in neoliberal digital spaces because social media affords interactivity (Pruchniewska, 2018). Digital spaces facilitate the paradigm shift in that serving as a new means of organizing campaigns against issues of inequality and social injustice (Eudey, 2012). To analyze how feminist pedagogy is practiced in the digital spaces, this systematic literature review looks at ten seminal articles that explicitly talk about teaching and learning aspects of online feminism. This paper is structured in the following way: first, I discuss the rationale of choosing feminist pedagogy as a theoretical framework. Second, I provide various scholars' definitions of feminist pedagogy to enhance our understanding of feminist pedagogy. Third, I explain this study's mode of inquiry and research questions that helped me examine the content of the articles. Fourth, I relay findings in relation to the research question. Then, I will conclude the paper by making recommendations for key stakeholders in higher education.

Perspective(s) or theoretical framework

Feminist pedagogy is adopted as a theoretical framework in analyzing the content of the articles. Based primarily on feminist theory, this pedagogy includes a set of teaching strategies that considers knowledge as socially constructed (Weiler, 1995). The core of feminist pedagogy, however, is a teaching method that is geared to empowering the mode of learning that places women at the forefront (Luke,1994). Empowering women in learning is essential in contemporary higher education because male styles of learning is rooted in institutional culture, making women students feel incapable of succeeding as students (Sengupta & Upton, 2011). According to Luke (1994), feminist pedagogy helps women's identity be more visible in the mainstream academic discourse. Second, focusing on feminine scholarship and politicizing women's issues, it offers approaches to educational and consciousness raising practices. Third, it acknowledges the diversity of women's experiences and fosters inclusive content delivery in teaching and learning. Before proceeding to the systematic analysis of the articles, I have reviewed some articles that define feminist pedagogy to provide a detailed analysis of the framework of this study.

Definitions of Feminist Pedagogy

As a term, feminist pedagogy was coined during the 1980's to describe teaching methods that were used by feminist scholars in women's studies programs (Shackelford, 2020). Since that time, scholars developed various definitions of feminist pedagogy. Shackelford (2020) describes feminist pedagogy as student-centered and the one that emphasizes cooperation in the learning and teaching process. Since feminist pedagogy focuses on developing critical thinking, Shackelford recommends economists to practice feminist pedagogy for as they can utilize dialogic approaches to teaching and to collaborative learning. Grande (2003) defines feminist pedagogy as a teaching practice that fosters teaching practices that encourage student-centered learning. When applying the values of feminist pedagogy in higher, such as its student-centered and cooperative styles, the author recommends analyzing gender through its intersections with race, class, and sexuality. Discussing the underrepresentation of women (and men of color) in science, Mayberry (1998) describes feminist pedagogy as a teaching practice that helps resist the dominant discourse and transform current learning practices by advocating for collaborative learning in science. Feminist pedagogy helps educators teach students how to question scientific systems and the relationship of those systems to power, oppression, and domination (Mayberry,1998). Maher (1987) defines feminist pedagogy as a teaching practice that is made of two sources: liberation pedagogy and feminist theories. As the author argues, these two approaches complement each other, and when practiced together, they produce a robust pedagogy, which is feminist pedagogy, that can challenge traditional teaching practices in higher education. Using such pedagogy in higher education helps promote the role of women in education, helping improve teaching both women and minority students (Maher, 1987).

Modes of Inquiry

A systematic literature review was chosen as a mode of inquiry for this study with the aim of conducting critical content analyses of the studies that are included in this literature review. Structured literature review (SLR) is a systematic approach of identifying, collating and analyzing a set of studies by defining its boundaries in terms of what will be included and excluded (Bisogno, Dumay, Rossi, & Polcini, 2018). Adopting a structured literature review methodology and applying the topical category of SLR was deemed as appropriate to directly analyze the articles in their relation to research questions.

This review did not apply exclusionary criteria to methodology with the aim of learning different approaches in analyzing hashtag feminist activism that is practiced in online platforms. The inclusion criteria of the studies were as follows: a) studies that utilized feminist media research; b) the articles that were published in 2017-2019; c) studies that explicitly highlighted teaching and learning aspects of the hashtag activism. The articles that did not explicitly talk about teaching and learning/raising consciousness awareness aspects of digital feminism were excluded.

Since the search engine ERIC (EBSCO) did not sufficient number of relevant resources for the review, Google Scholar was used, targeting peer-reviewed journal articles and excluding dissertations and books that are not available open source or through the NIU library database. Over 40 entries were scanned for eligibility before the ten articles were selected. The following research questions were formulated to analyze the content of the articles:

1. Within research that highlighted teaching and learning aspects, what is the context of

their foci?
2. Which theoretical framework(s) di the studies use?
3. What methodologies did the studies employ?

Findings

To analyze the content of the seminal studies, a free and open source software- Docear was used. Docear is a new solution to academic literature management allowing the most comprehensive organization of literature. As this software offers PDF metadata retrieval, it allowed me to transfer the annotations from PDF files selected for the study. This process helped me identify the similarity of words/concepts related to teaching and learning aspects featured in the study.

Summary of Findings for RQ1

In relation to RQ1, teaching and learning as well as consciousness raising as the characteristic of research has been identified as the foci of the selected studies. The content of the articles highlighted educational aspects of the blogs through which feminist movements, using the feminist mantra "personal is political,' empowered women to share their experiences with racism, sexism and other "isms" and to create collective identities in their fight against social injustice in relation to women. Some of the research highlighted the connection between the second and firth wave feminism, stating that "personal is political" slogan of the second wave feminism was used in the discussions online feminist movements. The phrase was coined by Carole Hanisch in 1969 and later was recuperated by Audrey Lorde (Troutman, 2014).

Personal is political. To describe how personal stories shared in digital platforms have gained political meanings, the majority of the articles discussed different contexts of application of the popular feminist slogan "personal is political" in the fourth-wave feminism. In those digital spaces, women shared individual stories related to sexual assault, rape and other issues to raise consciousness among the online community and feminist circles, thus proving the appropriateness of the slogan in digital platforms. For instance, Aitken's (2017) article opened up a conversation about the empowering and consciousness raising power of the fourth-wave feminism through relevant examples. As she noted, the use of the second wave feminists' famous slogan "personal is political" in the fourth-wave digital movements connected this wave to the second wave of feminism because shared personal stories raised salient political issues. Although Aitken (2017) talked about active digital movements in general without focusing on the specific hashtag movement, she underscored the power of digital tools in amplifying the diverse voices in inclusive global platforms. Online platforms have the power of unite and inform women, especially young women, discovering feminism and developing collective identities across digital spaces on issues that resonate with their experience (Aitken, 2017). Drawing a parallel between second wave and the fourth wave feminism, Zimmerman (2017) explained that the important message of the second wave, which states "personal is political," as a tool for collective consciousness raising, was transferred to the fourth wave in that digital technology has become organizing and consciousness raising tool. To highlight the importance of the Twitter community in the analysis of the discourses on racism, feminism, and online representation, Zimmerman (2017) traced the genealogy of the fourth-wave feminism, noting that the this movement combines the important elements of the second and third wave feminism, such as

resistance to oppression of the second wave and the third wave's recognition of digital culture to facilitate feminist discourses. Initially taking a critical stance on the political role of the fourth-wave feminism, Rogan and Budgeon (2018) posed a question about the applicability of the second-wave movements definitive 'personal is political' slogan to digital feminism. Collecting data through the questionnaire posted on Facebook and Twitter from young women under the age of 21 across the UK, posted on social media, the authors drew conclusion that about the importance of social media providing a political space that is consistent with the definitions of the political advocated by the second wave feminist, while helping women define their personal identities through the connection with others who shared similar experiences with them through Facebook events and tweets engage with politics. Discussing experiences of young girls at a secondary school in England with digital feminism, Kim and Ringrose (2018) recommended that the social media could serve as a strategic tool for exploring rape culture and other topics. The girls joined feminist movements for personal reasons, such as raising their consciousness about feminism. Through their engagement with online feminism, they could challenge "notions of youth as politically indifferent and inept" (p. 47).

Focusing on the feminist analysis of hashtag movements, several other articles highlighted the links between trending (personal) topics with a larger structural framework (political). For example, analyzing frequently used terms in #YesAllWomen, Barker-Plummer and Barker-Plummer (2017) notes that this hashtag feminism is both personal and political discourse because the majority of the shared stories comprises first-person accounts on oppression, gendered violence and sexual assault. The hashtag #YesAllWomen reinforces a feminist rhetoric links trending topics with a larger structural framework, i.e., creates links between the personal and the political. Through the analysis of discourses of hashtags #MeToo and #BeenRapedNeverReported movements, Mendes, Ringrose and Keller (2017) discuss how these popular online feminist movements create safe spaces that challenge sexism, patriarchy and other forms of oppression via digital platforms. Extending this conversation to #MosqueMeToo movement, Point's (2019) article examines the potential of this hashtag feminism for empowering Muslim as it encompasses the real-life experiences and views of Muslim women across the globe. The unique aspect of this movement is that it analyzes feminist and religious discourses together, raising consciousness about the interrelatedness of these topics in regard to Muslim women's experiences. Turley and Fisher (2018) discuss British feminists' hashtags, namely #everydaysexism and #shoutingback, for their individual protests against unequal treatment of women in the patriarchal culture while advocating for issues that affect women around the world. Highlighting the importance of social networking sites for fostering feminist movements, the authors note that digital spaces are vital for practicing the fourth wave of feminism to creating global communities. Taking a different stance on digital feminism, Jester (2018) analyzes the three curriculum groups (Rhodes Must Fall, Why is My Curriculum White?, and Women Also Know Stuff) to underscore the importance of representation of diverse experiences in the dominant Western academic discourse, which operate to bring changes to higher education. Through Twitter and Facebook, these movements have become successful in bringing to the forefront the curriculum issues to the attention of higher education practitioners, academicians and policy makers. Therefore, Jester (2018) proposes that scholarship on the feminist fourth wave can be enhanced through the examination of these groups as some successful events offer promising opportunities. For example, re-tweets and hashtags allowed showcasing the work of women in history (@womnknowhistory (through Women Also Know Stuff website's 'Women Also Tweet' section) while global Facebook groups of Why is My

Curriculum White? helped organize events garner support and garnering support for making curricula diverse and representative of all groups of people. Ringrose (2017) also discusses the benefits of using Twitter as a teaching tool in higher education contexts, detailing her a lecture where she deconstructed her personal activism through Twitter account. Her participation in major feminist Twitter discourses about the U.S. election in 2016 helped her to initiate a debate on raising awareness among her students about the importance of fostering the feminist slogan the 'the personal is political' through tweet cultures.

Summary of Findings of RQ2

In relation to the findings of RQ2, the findings revealed two major themes: (a) intersectionality as a framework; (b) feminist pedagogy and (c) Freire's Pedagogy as a theoretical basis.

Intersectionality as a framework. Although Aitken (2017) does not frame her study within the intersectionality, she recommends that combination of community education with feminist pedagogies can help raise consciousness about intersectional identities. Criticizing #YesAllWomen from the intersectional feminist lens, Barker-Plummer and Barker-Plummer (2017) point out to the movement's failure to be adequately intersectional due to its dominant white discourse thereby making intersectional feminists set up parallel hashtags. Jester (2018) argues that intersectionality is the foundational principle of curriculum activism is a core component of fourth-wave feminism and within the higher education context, it is. Drawing from the works of Tara L. Conley and Kimberlé Crenshaw, Point (2018) explores the potential of hashtag movements to raise intersectional awareness about Muslim women's struggles for equality, contributing to the debates regarding gender and Islam, and transnational feminist studies. Although Turley and Fisher (2018) do not use the intersectionality framework, they underscored the importance of social media campaigns for fighting against sexism, misogyny and rape culture through discussions. To enhance the discussion, they recommend analyzing online feminism through the lens of transdisciplinary literature, namely national, transnational and global academic literature. Drawing on Black feminist and intersectional feminist scholarship, Ringrose (2017) explores racism and misogyny in the debates on Twitter surrounding the 2016 election in the United States. Mendes et al. (2017) also recommend reviewing public discourse on Twitter with intersectional lens because this framework allows understanding the accessibility to the discourse in terms of ability, race and class privilege, which is the main aspect of digital feminism. Zimmerman (2017) also draws on intersectional scholars' works, noting that intersectionality serves as the political driver and theoretical framework employed by fourth wave feminists. According to Zimmerman, this framework is necessary for analyzing hashtag movements to foster dialogues on intersectional identities and their representation in online platforms.

Feminist pedagogy. All the articles reviewed highlighted explicitly or implicitly the importance of feminist pedagogy to understand the discourse happening in hashtag movements. Therefore, it is important how the scholars describe feminist pedagogy in those articles. For instance, Aitken (2017) summarizes research on feminist pedagogies by drawing attention to relationship between community education and feminist pedagogical practice. Critically analyzing feminist teaching and consciousness raising practices, the author explored their consistency with a community education approach. Focusing on the fourth-wave feminism, Aitken (2017) underscores the power of online platforms to evoke debates on gender inequality

through campaigns and to amplify feminist voices. Trying to explain how feminist pedagogy is practiced through a hashtag movement, Barker-Plummer and Barker-Plummer (2017) draws attention the discursive activism that took on the platform in two forms: (a) a site for collective identity to raise consciousness (sharing of experiences and stories) and (b) recirculation of shared stories and experiences through other platforms, affecting public discourse beyond Twitter. Although not explicitly, Point's (2018) study notes that the fourth-wave feminism focuses affords a contemporary method of community building, namely through the sharing of collective experience. When discussing the importance of feminist pedagogy in raising consciousness about racism and sexism through Twitter, Ringrose (2017) reflects on the dynamics of her own participation in Twitter as a public medium for practicing the feminist pedagogy.

Pedagogy of Oppressed as a theoretical basis of feminist pedagogy. Some articles trace feminist pedagogy back to Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and comment on the importance of the pedagogy in exploring feminist issues discussed in their studies. Indeed, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides an appropriate departure point for feminist pedagogies because the knowledge production is a dynamic dialogue in which the learner is directly involved (Freire, 2005). Citing some scholars works, for instance, Aitken (2017) notes that feminist pedagogies replenished Freire's work, putting an emphasis on gender in traditional educational contexts and creating inclusive framework that aims to restructure education as a space for all genders. Jester (2018) argues saying that Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* allows us to understand the feminist components of curriculum activist groups as it forms the basis of the groups, specifically of Why is My Curriculum White?

Summary of Findings of RQ3

In relation to RQ3, I have based classification on the authors' descriptions of their methodology, rather than applying a priori categories. The content analysis of blogs and groups revealed that the primary purpose of them were to teach, educate and raise consciousness of women about the existing problems. For example, Barker-Plummer and Barker-Plummer's (2017) case study's methodology was the content and discourse analysis of #YesAllWomen hashtag, including two million tweets and of 251 media and blog stories, the interactions of which are traced back to the hashtag. The rationale for choosing #YesAllWomen as a case study explained with the hashtag's potential for underscoring the importance of online discursive politics for public debate ad digital protest. Second, #YesAllWomen is a successful example of how feminists are developing new strategies to engage and utilize emergent communications platforms.

Other studies used different methodologies to explore teaching aspects of the social media discourses or reviewed the literature that discussed the potential of online platforms in uniting women across the globe. The table below provides detailed information about the methodology of the studies and outcomes reported in those studies, highlighting the importance of integrating non-academic tools to higher education to foster the inclusion of intersectional identities in the mainstream academic discourse.

Table 1. Review of the Methodology of Articles in SLR

Articles	Methods	Participants	Results reported regarding knowledge production/raising consciousness
Aitken, M. (2017). Feminism: A fourth to be reckoned with? Reviving community education feminist pedagogies in a digital age. *Concept*, 8(1), 1-18.	A review of research that recommends feminist pedagogical intervention as a possible method to combine the ideas of the fourth wave feminism and community education.	N/A	"The fourth wave deconstructs individualist discourses and, in true feminist spirit, makes the personal political (p.7). Community educators have a duty to resist agendas that seek to silence women's voices and through their practice for social change.
Barker-Plummer, B. & Barker-Plummer, D. (2017). Twitter as a feminist resource: #YesAllWomen, digital platforms, and discursive social change. In J. Earl and D.A. Rohlinger (Eds.), *Social movements and media*. (pp. 91-118). Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited.	Content and discourse analysis methods to analyze the #YesAllWomen hashtag qualitative coding of the news and blog stories	An analysis of a sample of 251 media and blog	Participants in discourse focused on core feminist concerns – rape, harassment, sexual entitlement and inequality All key elements in discursive activism were revealed, such as building collective identity/collective consciousness.
Jester, N. (2018). Representation within higher education curricula: contextualising and advocating for feminist digital activism. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 23(5), 606-618.	Content analysis of *Rhodes Must Fall, Why is My Curriculum White?* and *Women Also Know Stuff*	Actual number of participants contributed to the movements is not reported	Curriculum movements offer promising opportunities for higher education. Followers of the movements reported that higher education institutions are starting to change their curricula

Kim, C., & Ringrose, J. (2018). "Stumbling Upon Feminism": Teenage girls' forays into digital and school-based feminisms. *Girlhood Studies*, *11*(2), 46-62.	Research on participants' activism on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, and Twitter) to explore their postings over four-week period	Qualitative study: Interviews with four most active members of the feminist society and artifact analysis of their accounts in social media	The failure of the school to use non-academic pedagogies via social media engagements as it is important—even transformative—sources of learning
Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). # MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *25*(2), 236-246.	Over 800 pieces of digital content, including blog posts, tweets, and selfies.	Feminist media research and qualitative study (the views of 82 girls, women and men who contributed to the blogs/tweets).	Despite fear of attack and experiences of trolling, digital feminism can be experienced as extremely positive in generating community, connection, and support for feminist views, and solidarity in calling out rape culture
Point, C. (2019). # MosqueMeToo: Islamic Feminism in the Twitter sphere.	#MosqueMeToo as an artifact to analyze Twitter dsicourse	No actual number of screenshots from Twitter presented	#MosqueMeToo serves as a statement of justice, requiring a demand for both intervention and visibility of Muslim women.
Ringrose, J. (2018). Digital feminist pedagogy and post-truth misogyny. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *23*(5), 647-656.	The experience of having the feminist content of personal public Twitter account	The author used the digital affordances of hashtags and trends on Twitter to spread a message, as it offers a unique pedagogical dimension for feminists	Anti-feminist threats travel beyond the digital sphere into the personal lives as feminist academics .

		to raise awareness and spreading ideas around gender and sexual violence	
Rogan, F., & Budgeon, S. (2018). The personal is political: Assessing feminist fundamentals in the digital age. *Social Sciences*, 7(8), 1-19.	Mixed methods study focused on a set of important questions regarding the nature of young women's relationship to feminism in the age of digital femininities	50 responses from young women under the age of 21. The nine focus groups in three urban locations in England— one in the South-East, one in the West Midlands and one in the North West	The 'personal is political' falls under four interrelated categories: power, the private/public dichotomy, political action, and subjectivity. Each of these key dimensions remains central to a contemporary feminist analysis of the experiences of young women's engagement with digital practices.
Turley, E., & Fisher, J. (2018). Tweeting back while shouting back: Social media and feminist activism. *Feminism & Psychology, 28*(1), 128-132.	Review of two social media-based feminist campaigns	N/A	Social media is not the only mode of online feminism; importance and value of offline feminist movements should not be ignored.
Zimmerman, T. (2017). # Intersectionality: The fourth wave feminist twitter Community. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice, 38*(1), 54-70.	Review of scholarship on genealogy of the fourth wave feminism and the analysis of the term "intersectionality"	N/A	Intersectionality is the most appropriate theoretical framework for the fourth wave movement for its potential to practice political intervention and visibility without segregation and/or marginalization of people

As it is seen from the table above, some authors of the articles were analyzing the content of the blogs/groups, being engaged in feminist media research. Contemporary feminist researchers are engaged in feminist media research to better understand how power dynamics is represented in media. In this process, the researchers get connected to the text, and "become [s] part of the power structure that informs the text" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 287). Getting connected to the text offers some advantages and disadvantages. The advantages can be explained by discovering multiple meanings of the text and having less interaction with people, and the disadvantages are mainly about how texts are perceived by the audience. This is a laborious process for researchers to analyze as they can only make assumptions. However, feminist media research has a certain role in social transformation as it aims at empowering women through feminist discourse.

Conclusion

The findings of the study underscore the importance of developing pedagogy centered on anonymous social media spaces. The online aggressive behavior should not be tolerated as it tries to suppress the democratic discourses. Educational practitioners, university professors and rhetoric scholars are, therefore, charged with an important task, and that is to participate in anonymous and pseudonymous digital social media to reveal opportunities for democratic participation using the discourse of digital media to foster active feminist movements.

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