

## [Episode 3.21 Citing Your Sources](#)

March 15, 2019

- Hannah (Host): [00:08](#) [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda* and I'm really sorry that I missed last week. I was traveling and I actually recorded a minisode in my hotel room, in Washington, D.C. at nine 30 at night, while Lucia, former guest of the podcast, quietly sat on her hotel bed and didn't say anything for 15 minutes while I talked into a microphone. And then the cord for my recorder wouldn't work, and I couldn't get the audio onto my laptop, and I was super tired, and I gave up. So there you have it. Anyway, I'm here now to bring you my originally planned minisode. But before I get into this week's topic a quick plug; this Saturday, so if you're listening to this on the day that it comes out tomorrow, I'm doing a panel at The Growing Room Feminist Literary Festival on feminist podcasting. The panel is called "Behind Every Microphone: Podcasting and Feminism." And in addition to me, it features Dina del Bucci of the *Can't Lit* podcast and Samantha Nock of the *Heavy Content* podcast. I think it's going to be a great discussion. It's going to be about podcasting as a medium and about feminism and where the two intersect. It's Saturday, March 16th, 4:30 PM at the Red Gate Revue Stage and, like all Growing Room events, it's a pay what you can or free. So I really hope that some of you will come out. I think it's going to be a good time. All right, well let me tell you what my secret feminist agenda is this week. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans].
- Hannah (Host): [01:55](#) I want to talk about citing your sources. Now, if anybody out there has ever had me as a professor, you may be having a uncomfortable flashbacks to times that I was really mean to you about MLA formatting. As an academic, as a professor, as a teacher, I take citation really, really seriously, and there's a reason why I think it's really important, but that's actually not my entry point into this conversation. I'll, I'll probably come back to it, but it's, it's not where I started thinking about the importance of citation. In fact, it was while I was editing Zena's episode. I noticed that Zena has this way—this is Zena Sharman, if you haven't listened to episode 20 yet. She's the guest on episode 20—Anyway, so Zena has this, this very deliberate way of pausing as she speaks to acknowledge the, sort of, intellectual and community origins of ideas that she's using. And so, you know, for example, while talking about, you know, cultures of care, she might pause and say, "and I want to acknowledge the degree to which I'm drawing here on disability

justice activists such as..." and then will name the people whose work she's drawing on. It stood out to me as I was editing because it's actually not a way that I hear a lot of people speak, and that includes academics. I interview a lot of academics and I rarely hear that kind of deliberate, intentional citation; a sort of pause in the midst of an idea to say, "I want to tell you where this idea came from. I don't want to make it sound like I think I invented this or that I am claiming this idea as my own." And it struck me as I was editing, in large part, because that kind of citation on practice requires a deliberateness, requires an intentionality. It requires that moment of pause and of insistence; "I'm going to tell you what ideas I'm drawing on here." And it got me thinking about the politics of citation and about what practices of citation become normal, become normalized, become habituated in different kinds of fields and what it looks like to cite more intentionally, more deliberately, more resistantly.

Hannah (Host):

[04:27](#)

So I decided I would do a little bit of, sort of, delving into the world of citation on politics, which is a really interesting, ongoing conversation that, from what I can tell, emerges primarily over the world of scholarship because we take citation so seriously as scholars. But that I think has a lot to tell us about what it means to speak with authority and to locate your ideas within different kinds of networks of thinkers. So let me start just by talking about citation briefly. For those of you who aren't academics, or students, or who haven't been in the university for a while, just a sort of, you know, straight forward definition: citation or citing your sources is a practice that we use in the university, in the world of academia that is about making it really clear where you got an idea. There are all of these sort of discipline-specific citation methods, these, these style guides that tell you exactly how you go about doing that, you know. So in one style guide it might be like a footnote and then you go and look in the footnote and it tells you where the fingers from. Or in another one it might be like the last name of the author and the page number, and then you go look at the work cited list and you find the last name of the author and it gives you all of the information. And the point of these really, sort of, formalized, rule-driven citation methods is to create a really transparent, and straightforward, and reproducible trace of where you got your ideas. And it's how we establish the rigor and seriousness of our scholarship, is that we prove that we have read and are engaging with other important works in our fields.

Hannah (Host):

[06:21](#)

When I was first learning what it meant to be a scholar and what it meant to write scholarly work, I was told that

scholarship is really a conversation. That what you're doing as a writer is inserting yourself into an ongoing conversation happening across or within a discipline, and if you want to participate meaningfully in that conversation, you need to know where the conversation is at. You need to know what other people have been writing and have been saying, and you need to show how your drawing on using, and then either disputing or furthering, their ideas through this really, sort of, scrupulously performed practice of citation. So you, you establish the credibility of your work through who you cite. You prove that you know what's going on in a field and that your work is relevant and up to date and meaningful again, through who you cite. Now citation in general as a thing is great. Citation is very important. I think that, you know, the, the function of it is that it essentially forces us, as academics, to show our work. I have to tell you where my ideas came from. I have to tell you where I got particular points and I have to tell you in a transparent way so that you could retrace my thinking, so that you can go and find all the things that I read and also read them and use that as a grounds to, to perhaps challenge me, or to perhaps sort of reproduce the same practices or methods that I have used and see if you arrive at, at a different or a similar idea. It's another version of, of reproducibility, right? That, that for something to be scholarly and rigorous, it needs to be reproducible by other practitioners. So citation, period, is a super duper important part of how we work as scholars of how we establish the validity of the things that we were saying. But because citation as a practice is about establishing legitimacy and establishing authority, there's obviously politics and power built into it, and particularly politics and power around who we consider to be authoritative within certain disciplines and on certain topics and who the thinkers are, who we insist must be cited if you're trying to make a particular kind of point. Now going hand in hand, that idea that, that some thinkers are more important than others, is also the fact that the degree to which you yourself are cited is often used as a metric to gauge how important you are as a scholar. And so you establish other people's importance by citing them and your importance is established through how much people cite you. So citation is a way of establishing and upholding authority. And unsurprisingly, within an institution like academia, that authority tends to attach itself to some scholars more than others. And it attaches itself predominantly to white male scholars. Now, the first person who I came across who talked about the politics of citation and the politics of who we cite and who we don't, is the feminist philosopher Sarah Ahmed, who in a blog post called "Making Feminist Points," which gets speaking of citation cited a huge amount on this topic, she writes, "I would describe

citation as a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies." So what Ahmed is saying here is that when we cite the same set of people over and over again, we are reproducing what is legitimate knowledge and what is not, and we're reproducing the way that legitimacy and importance gets attached to some people rather than others. She goes on to say later in the same post, and these are her words again, "even when feminists cite each other, there is still a tendency to frame our own work in relation to a male intellectual tradition." I remember reading this for the first time and being like, "yeah, that's not wrong." Like when I want to make, you know, a sound theoretical point, who do I connect my thinking too. I talk about Foucault, I talk about Derrida, I talk about Barthes. Those are the thinkers who informed a lot of my early thinking and they're still the people who I feel like I need to return to if I want to really make a particular kind of point. In a lot of ways, the way that I was trained to think about citation practices in my work, and then by extension to think about things like how to build a good syllabus around a particular topic, is that you always have to start with those originary foundational thinkers. And those originary foundational thinkers of like, literally every discipline are white men. And then, so you can see this in the way that syllabi are designed, that there will be this sort of what "we'll talk about, white men for the first 75% of the course. And then we'll talk about white women and men of color and maybe women of color towards the end." And it will always be in relationship to these foundational thinkers. So how do they challenge food or how do they push the thinking of Althusser? And I remember having a really sort of paradigm shifting moment when I took a course a couple of summers ago at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute, which is a, an annual event that happens at the University of Victoria. I've been going for years now. You basically go and take a one or two week course in various digital humanities topics. And a couple of years ago I took the Feminist DH course and it was being taught that year by Liz Losh and Jessica Marie Johnson. And Jessica Marie Johnson is a Black feminist digital humanities scholar who, working with Liz, who is a white feminist digital humanities scholar. Jessica worked with lists to really redesign and rebuild the Feminist DH course. It had been offered previously, but, but not taught by or not co-taught by Jessica before. And she really redesigned the whole syllabus of the course, and all of the readings, and all of the foundational thinking so that it was built around the work of Black feminists. And digital humanities, as a field, is so oriented around white male thinkers, and it was a really revelatory experience for me to see what it looked like to build a syllabus that intervened as such a foundational level and insisted on

reformulating the whole field. And the ideas and the conversations and the sense of what Feminists DH meant was completely transformed by this shifted citational practice by the insistence of building our conversations out of the work predominantly of Black women. And I can't say that I have figured out yet how to do a similar kind of restructuring in my own syllabi. You know, I'm always thinking about like diversifying my syllabus, but this is not diversifying a syllabus. This is a, sort of, foundational reorientation of a field that requires a kind of expertise that I, that I don't have yet. But again, it got me thinking about, about citation and about whose voices and whose expertise we treat as foundational, about who we treat as being the primary thinkers who we'll center in different kinds of conversations.

Hannah (Host):

[14:24](#)

Now, as I was doing some more searching, I found that these, these conversations are happening in lots of different disciplines. For example, I found an article about geography, about, sort of, geography as a, as a scholarly discipline. This is a piece by Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne, an article in which they're thinking about how the practices of citation, in their words, "contributes to the reproduction of the white heteromascularity of geographical thought and scholarship." That's, that's how they refer to it. And so they're thinking about the possibilities of citation being, again, in their words, "a feminist and anti-racist technology of resistance that demonstrates engagement with those authors and voices we want to carry forward," and I love that. I'll link to this article in the show notes. I love that language of citation as "feminist and anti-racist technology of resistance." That it's not just about that, sort of, additive after the fact like, "oh, I want to diversify this," or "I want to make sure that there's a few voices in my work cited or on my syllabus who aren't white men." It's an active decision on active reorientation that is political and resistant because citation, as I've already said, is a, is a deeply political act. And then as I did a little bit more looking into who's talking about the politics of citation, I came across this project called the Cite Black Women Collective who described themselves, "as a campaign to push people to engage in a radical praxis of citation that acknowledges and honors Black women's transnational intellectual production." And they actually, they have an amazing t shirt that says "Cite Black Women" on it, and they also have a podcast that thinks through exactly this, this practice, the practice of citing Black women. I will link to that in the show notes too.

Hannah (Host):

[16:18](#)

I know this, this conversation might feel for those of you who are again, not scholars, like it's kind of a niche one, but I really

do think that how we think about the authority of different voices and the act of citation permeates far beyond the university, or at least it should. That when we think about who we attribute authority to, who we listen to, who we center in our conversations, how we perceive knowledge and expertise attaching in different ways to different people, that these are the fundamental questions we're asking when we think about citational politics. I think we could attach citation on politics to something like the conversation I had with Taylor Crumpton, where she talked about her tweets getting stolen by journalists, and the way that, that comfort people had stealing her ideas and not crediting her as a co-author, as an expert, has to do with the way that Black women are not treated as, as experts, are not credited or not given credit for their ideas. You know, in general the way that we treat platforms like Twitter as a site where we can just steal whatever we see without actually thinking about what communities these ideas came out of, I think is a really troubling reproduction, again, of these citational politics, particularly as we think about who's getting published in scholarly journals in a way that it's really easy to source and who's doing a lot their thinking on these public and more transient platforms. And what would it look like to have a really scrupulous citation on practice that takes into account like shit you learn from reading Twitter. I mean that's a question I want to direct towards myself because I learned a huge amount on social media. There's thinkers on there who are pushing me forward all the time, but because of the very ephemeral and transient way I engage with that platform, because I'm flipping through it and I read a thing and it sticks with me and then it's gone and I wouldn't know how to find it again because I don't remember the exact words and I don't remember who wrote it. I just kind of remember the ideas. You know, those are bad citational politics on my part. That's bad citational practice. And figuring out what it looks like for me to really acknowledge and credit where my thinking is being pushed or transformed across the board, well it's something that I would like to get better at. And it's something I was thinking about a lot when I was editing Zena's episode because I think she models that really beautifully. Final afterthought about citation: this podcast has show notes because I'm a scholar and it's my job to cite my sources, but because I want the show notes to be accessible and easy to navigate for people who might not also be working as academics, I don't format it like a work cited list. I format it like bullet points with embedded links. And that's great, except that sometimes links die, sometimes links break, sometimes websites disappear, and we've actually had that come up. Some of our links have broken. And so it's interesting to also think about what it looks like to ensure, sort of, really rigorous

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citation, including in projects like this one, that aren't necessarily following the same kinds of guidelines that an academic journal would, but that I really want to, sort of, embrace the best part of academic citation practices, which is the insistence in a, sort of, transparent documentation of where you've gotten your ideas. All right, enough talking about work cited lists. Talk to Kaarina [Music: "I Will" by Mitski]

Kaarina: [20:14](#)

Hello and welcome to Kaarina's Cozy Self Care Corner. I'm out of self care tips. This winter is, whew! It's destroying me. It is so icy in Halifax. Every surface is icy. I've fallen so many times. I have bruises on my legs. I spent so much time clearing my sidewalk, only to go on and walk on the hundreds of other sidewalks that have not been cleared. I was kept up all night by snow plows, beep, beep, beeping their way up and down my street. And I'm tired. I'm tired, tired, tired. People around me aren't doing great, trying to take care of them, but I can't. Trying to take care of myself, not doing it, not succeeding. About the only thing I'm excelling at right now is watching *Jeopardy!* I'm super good at it. Turning it back to you, dear listeners. You know that part in the concert when the lead singer and just turns the microphone to the audience and they sing the most important lines of the biggest hit song. That's what I'm doing. I don't feel like singing tonight. You sing for me. Send me or self care tips ,or your memes about Chris Evans, Pratt, Hemsworth, or Pine. Actually any Chris. Chris-based memes, send them to me at twitter.com. Have a good weekend. Bye!!! [Music: "I Will" by Mitski]

Hannah (Host): [21:53](#)

As always, you can find show notes and the rest of the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on [secretfeministagenda.com](http://secretfeministagenda.com). You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor, you can follow Kaarina @kaarinasaurus, and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. You can also rate and review the show on your Apple Podcast store of choice. My friend Vivian told me about a tool called My Podcast Reviews, which scrapes all of your reviews off all of the iTunes stores. And so I signed up for it and it gathered all of the Secret Feminist Agenda reviews that I hadn't been able to see previously, and there are 141 five-star reviews. And they're from like Canada and the U.S. Obviously, but also the U.K., Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, India, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden, which is wild. I will never ever catch up on thanking all of you, so please accept this as [laughs] a blanket statement of gratitude. The most recent two reviews, the ones that came up in the last week are by Petra von Kant and Letti Their Infernal Majesty, which is an amazing name. Also, Petra calls me "excitable," and I don't know what that means, but I will take it.

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You're seriously all so great and I feel tremendously grateful for how generously people keep engaging with the show. The podcast's theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on free music on [freemusicarchive.org](http://freemusicarchive.org) or follow them on Facebook. Kaarina's theme song is "I Will" by Mitski. *Secret Feminist Agenda* is recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh first nations where I'm grateful to live and work. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] And cite your sources.