

# A Feminist Scholars Collective Supporting the Growth and Dissemination of a Digital Guide: A Collaborative Autoethnography

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**Abstract:** This article explores our experiences as scholars in higher education who collaborate as part of an informal collective supporting the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*.<sup>1</sup> We, the authors, have diverse professional and educational backgrounds; our areas of research interest also vary significantly. However, we have a passion for humanizing online learning experiences and practically applying feminist pedagogical tenets to these interactions. The purpose of this article is to explore, through a process of self-reflection, our experiences as scholars in higher education as part of an informal collective supporting the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*. To share our experiences as editors of this digital guide, we included our individual stories using a collaborative autoethnography approach. In our stories, we specifically discuss our interest in joining this collective of feminist scholars, the evolving nature of our efforts in support of the digital guide, the success experienced, the challenges that we encountered, and the internal and external support we received throughout this journey. Ideally, through this critical reflection, we can aid other collectives who already engage, or are considering engaging, in similar scholarly communication endeavors.

**Keywords:** Feminist Pedagogy, Collective, Autoethnography, Online Learning

Feminists have grappled with the complex pitfalls and potentialities of distance learning since its earliest days (Hopkins 1996; Rose 1995). Scholars and educators have critiqued the alienating effects of certain course formats, educational technologies, and

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1. This digital scholarship project works toward communicating liberatory pedagogical principles for educators in digital modalities.

the absence of active learning that can result. In her 1996 essay “Women’s Studies on Television? It’s Time for Distance Learning,” Annis H. Hopkins discusses strategies she utilized in her “live-cablecast introductory women’s studies survey course” to counter feminist pedagogical concerns about a lack of direct instructor-student interactions (1996, 91–92). She emphasizes the importance of utilizing distance learning technologies to reach students who cannot otherwise make it to campus, including new mothers at home with their infants. Indeed, feminist educators across the decades have emphasized the power of online learning to enable the inclusion of groups formerly excluded based on gender, class, ability status, geography, etc. (Aneja 2017; Bailey 2017; Briggs and McBride 2005; Chick and Hassel 2009; Chung 2016; Hopkins 1996; Koseoglu 2020; Rose 1995).

Although distance learning technologies can bridge these gaps, when employed without intentionality, they raise several areas of concern. For instance, feminist educators have considered the gendered issues of political economy raised by engaging technologies imbricated in the patriarchal pursuits of militarism, sexualization, commodification, and surveillance. In 2005, Laura Briggs and Kari Boyd McBride responded to feminists’ claims that the internet represents a fundamentally male domain that is not conducive to feminist pedagogy. They argued that despite valid concerns about instructional technologies’ ability to reinstate traditional educational methods and hierarchies, online education provides a pathway to “harness the Net’s potential for decentralizing power and producing new social formations, for reaching a new student population and bringing them the best of feminist pedagogies and feminist research” (Briggs and McBride 2005, 318). Noting issues of digital access that must be surmounted, feminist educators in the earlier days of distance education sought out equitable approaches to unlocking the inclusive possibilities that online learning holds for marginalized and underserved groups.

As distance education has risen in prominence as a tool for bolstering the economic viability of nonprofit and for-profit educational institutions, some feminists have critiqued the ways it can enable new forms of labor exploitation and heighten the student-as-consumer model of higher education (Chick and Hassel 2009). Other feminists have presented methods for countering these effects and studied the benefits of distance learning for women students (Chick and Hassel 2009; Gajjala et al. 2017; Herman and Kirkup 2017). Nancy Chick and Holly Hassel (2009), for instance, note that these concerns had not been validated in the research on distance learning. Instead, given the pressure on educators to adapt to these technologies, they suggest that rather than asking *whether* they are conducive to feminist approaches, the question should be *how* they enable feminist approaches (196). They go on to specify how educators can use distance learning technologies to create feminist educational environments, operationalize a definition of knowledge as constructed and collectively

negotiated, and help students develop feminist *habits of mind*. As online distance learning has expanded on a global scale, feminist educators have also identified its use for feminist engagement transnationally and in developing countries (Aneja 2017; Chung 2016). Throughout this decades-long conversation, scholars and practitioners have sought to identify the main tenets of feminist pedagogy in on-ground, hybrid, and fully online contexts.

## A Guide Centered on Multidisciplinary Collaboration and Crowdsourcing

The COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020 generated new concerns for feminist educators related to distance education on a global scale. While discussion about technologies enabling the integration of feminist pedagogy into online learning had long existed, the wide-scale rapid transition of on-ground classes into distance education formats prompted a new wave of concerns and discussion. For instance, Fem-TechNet (2020) offered recommendations on their open-access website to counter the “complicated, highly corporate, and narrow advice about how to teach online” being provided to faculty by many higher education institutions. Similarly, sociologist Simona Sharoni (2020) published an open-access piece outlining five tenets of feminist pedagogy and how to implement them in the virtual learning setting. The need for easily accessible resources on feminist pedagogy for online teaching during the pandemic prompted the creation of our *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*.

After a grueling spring semester of pandemic teaching, many educators used the summer of 2020 to improve their online curriculum (Fernandes 2020). Meanwhile, faculty development centers and seasoned online educators provided numerous resources to help educators, such as “Teach Anywhere” guides that provided resources on delivering mostly top-down approaches online (Girves 2021). When asked to support their colleagues in enhancing their online curriculum, Clare Daniel and Jacquelyne Thoni Howard recognized that many of the resources being made available during this period fell flat in helping educators who subscribe to feminist pedagogy extend their practices, such as student-centered learning, care, and meaningful collaboration, to online classrooms. Since their colleagues also identified as feminists, they decided to compile already available resources by feminist educators into a niche subject digital guide. Using this strategy, Daniel and Howard could amplify the voices of feminist educators. In response, Daniel and Howard created the first edition of the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*, using feminist principles of multidisciplinary collaboration and crowdsourcing. The first edition of the guide

included a bibliography of articles written by educators about feminist pedagogy and teaching online.

As this internal document was a collaborative exercise, a colleague with a considerable social media presence shared the guide on Twitter (now known as X). Within a few days, the guide had received over 6,500 views. Due to this interest, Daniel and Howard began discussions around expanding the guide. To take on this kind of project, however, they knew they would need more collective expertise. Through sharing the guide online, Daniel and Howard met Niya Bond, whose writing on feminist pedagogy was originally featured in the guide. Together, Daniel, Howard, and Bond surveyed literature on feminist pedagogy and identified these 13 general tenets: (1) connecting to the personal and to communities outside of academia; (2) promoting reflexivity; (3) promoting concern with materiality (bodies, labor); (4) treating students as agentic co-educators; (5) building equity, trust, mutual respect, and support; (6) promoting cooperative learning; (7) presenting knowledge as constructed; (8) examining how gender intersects with other social categories, structures our lives, learning, and knowledge production, and provides access to resources and information; (9) uncovering the causes of inequality and leveraging resources toward undoing power structures; (10) honoring diversity and lived experiences through intersectional approaches; (11) considering alternative histories and narratives; (12) examining the *why* in addition to the *what*; and (13) cultivating self-care and boundaries (Howard et al. 2023). They also identified four areas of particular emphasis for feminist pedagogy in the online environment: humanizing online teaching and learning, creating cultures of care in online classrooms, examining (dis)embodiment in virtual teaching and learning, and using technology intentionally to build communities and enhance learning (Howard et al., n.d.). In the months that followed, the guide received national recognition by being spotlighted in *Women in Higher Education* (Santovec 2021).

Later, Daniel and Howard met Enilda Romero-Hall, a scholar and expert in instructional design. They also contacted Liv Newman, who was working through Tulane University's Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching to promote a reading group on liberatory pedagogies that featured bell hooks. Within a few weeks, Bond, Newman, and Romero-Hall joined Howard and Daniel as editors. As a result of this multidisciplinary collaboration, the guide has expanded in both form and content. To make the guide more accessible and to improve UX/UI design efforts, they moved the guide from an Adobe Spark web page to a WordPress website. Moreover, the editors added to the front page a concise list that outlines a range of feminist pedagogical tenets with a specific focus on the online modality. Following that list, the editors included information about their collaboration efforts and the growing list of people who have contributed to the guide through information sharing, content creation, and digital expertise. They

also shared their scholarship about feminist pedagogy as a way to help situate readers to the guide's purpose.

From the beginning of the guide, the editors designed this project around the collaborative and democratizing process of crowdsourcing. They encouraged readers to become contributors by sharing the resources that they had written or found helpful about feminist pedagogy for inclusion in the guide. With the help of collaborators and in response to ever-changing political climates, they have expanded the guide beyond the original bibliography to include more sources on intersectional topics. These new pedagogical topics that align with feminism include Accessibility; (Un) Grading; Using Zines and Archives; and Liberatory Pedagogies, such as Anti-Racist Pedagogy, Disability Pedagogy, Queer Pedagogy, Reproductive Justice and Rights, and Critical Data Justice.

The editors also offered readers more opportunities to learn directly from feminist educators. First, they developed a unique bank of assignments that aligned with feminist tenets. Instead of just offering the assignment instructions, however, the contributors annotate the parts of their lessons that they view as contributing to feminist pedagogy, noting which tenets of feminist pedagogy are enacted in specific aspects of the assignment. In early 2022, the editors added a peer-reviewed blog to the guide, where educators and designers could discuss their own experiences working as feminist educators. Since then, feminist educators have written about topics that include addressing patriarchy in discussion forums (Gilpin 2023), using AI intentionally (Lang 2023), and teaching students after the dismantling of *Roe v. Wade* (Daniel and Haugeberg 2022), among other topics.

In future phases, the editors plan to support feminist educators by expanding the literature written by feminist scholars and soliciting educators to write about their teaching and to share assignments. They are also working on moving their static bibliographies into a searchable database so that readers can easily query sources by topic and by the feminist pedagogical tenet. The editors will continue to center multidisciplinary collaboration and crowdsourcing as the core of this feminist work.

## The Purpose Statement

The purpose of this article is to explore, through a process of self-reflection, our experiences as scholars in higher education as part of an informal collective supporting the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*. We specifically aim to discuss our interest in joining this collective of feminist scholars, the evolving nature of our efforts in support of the digital guide, the successes experienced, the challenges we encountered, and the internal and external support we received

throughout this journey. Ideally, the sharing of our experiences can aid other collectives who already engage, or are considering engaging, in similar scholarly communication endeavors.

## Methods

### *Autoethnography*

The methodology guiding this investigation is autoethnography. It is one of the approaches that acknowledges subjectivity, researcher influence, and an emotional narrative (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). Black feminist scholars spearheaded the use of autoethnography as an innovative strategy of knowledge production in the late 1970s to tell their stories and testify against structures of inequality in the lives of oppressed people (Brown-Vincent 2019). It was further employed by social scientists in the 1980s during the Crisis of Confidence, which sought to recognize the “impossibility of and lack of desire for master, universal narratives” (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011, 274). During the Crisis of Confidence, social science inquiry introduced new ways of conducting research that help researchers understand others and their own role in the research process. Despite the active use of autoethnography in other fields of study, it is still a relatively new methodological approach in education research (Mao, Romero-Hall, and Reeves 2024). Yet, in the last few years, there has been an uptick in autoethnographies in the learning design field as a response to calls for critical reflection on educational technology practices and research (Walser 2017; Seo 2019; Herron and Wolfe 2021; Jung et al. 2021; Makwembere, Matarirano, and Jere 2021; Bowers et al. 2022; Fiock et al. 2022; Herman and Clark-Stallkamp 2022; McDonald, Stefaniak, and Rich 2022; Ren 2022; Romero-Hall 2022).

According to Jin Mao, Enilda Romero-Hall, and Thomas Reeves (2024), there are many different types of autoethnography categorized based on research (i.e., evocative, analytic), narrative writing style (i.e., biographical, anthropological, autoethnography sensibility), theories of philosophical views (i.e., exo-ethnography, feminist autoethnography), and the number of researchers (i.e., solo, duoethnography, collaborative). To share our experiences as editors of the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*, we share our individual stories using a collaborative autoethnography approach. The collaborative aspect of autoethnography significantly enhances the self-reflection process inherent in this methodology. Through a collaborative approach, we concurrently reinforce and interrogate interpretations, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and nuanced account of the phenomena under study (McDonald, Stefaniak,



and Rich 2022). We guided the stories we share in this collaborative autoethnography by using the following questions:

- What are the experiences that got you interested in feminist pedagogy and in particular for teaching online?
- Why do you think feminist pedagogy in online learning is an important and relevant issue in higher education and beyond?
- What are some of the experiences you have encountered in your personal and professional lives that have had an impact on your participation and role as an editor for this digital guide?
- What impact did this experience(s) have on you as a person? What impact did this experience(s) have on you as a professional?
- How did the collective embody feminist principles in its work as an editorial board? How did you experience that?
- Did you have support from other academics or colleagues at your institution to serve as an editor of this digital guide?
- Did you have any experience that was negative as a result of your editorial role and required you to contact the university administration?
- What are specific ways that you have advocated for change related to feminist pedagogy in online learning before your role as editor of this guide and since you became an editor of the digital guide?

In this article, as autoethnographers we wrote, read, and edited our own stories. These stories were written separately and then combined here. We were able to see one another's stories once they were shared and merged into this document.

### *Participants*

We, the authors and autoethnographers of this investigation, are the participants sharing our experiences and stories. We are the editors and contributors of the Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online collective. We are women scholars in higher education with diverse professional and educational backgrounds (see Table 1). Our areas of research interest also vary significantly. However, we have a passion for humanizing the online learning experience through the lens of feminist pedagogical tenets. This includes sharing our practice with other instructors in higher education who also envision online education for all and learning from others who are open to sharing their equitable and inclusive practices.

Table 1. The Autoethnographers

Autoethnographer	Role	Biography
Clare Daniel	Managing Editor	Senior Professor of Practice and Director of Research at a gender equity institute within a large research university. Her research interests include reproductive rights, health, and justice; gender and sexuality studies; childhood studies; media studies; the welfare state, structural racism, and social inequality; and feminist epistemologies and pedagogies. She teaches on-ground and online courses in reproductive politics, media studies, gender and sexuality studies, feminist epistemologies and research design, and the study of social inequality and disaster.
Jacquelyne Thoni Howard	Managing Editor	Professor of Practice of Data and formerly an Administrative Assistant Professor at a large private university. Her research interests include critical data studies, data literacy education, surveillance studies, the history of empires and data information, and applying equitable data practices in classrooms and digital humanities labs. She also has extensive professional experience in digital pedagogy and digital research as an instructional designer and instructional technologist.
Liv Newman	Managing Editor	Administrative Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching at a large private university. Newman has worked in higher education for nearly 25 years, spanning both teaching and administrative roles. She has extensive experience improving undergraduate and graduate, on-ground and online teaching through her faculty development positions and numerous leadership roles. Her scholarly interests focus on the intersection of race and class, inequities in education, and enhancing the online educational experience for faculty and students.
Niya Bond	Advising Editor	Online educator, faculty development facilitator, and PhD student at a public land-grant research university studying online teaching and learning. Her publications focus on empowering online learners and educators; creating and sustaining virtual communities of practice (both formal and informal); and facilitating equitable, belonging, and inclusive educational experiences. Niya has presented nationally on using clarity, caring, and community-building in online education and increasing online learner engagement.
Enilda Romero-Hall	Advising Editor	Associate Professor in the Learning, Design, and Technology program at a public land-grant research university. In her research, she is interested in the design and development of interactive multimedia, faculty and learners' digital literacy, and networked learning in online social communities. Her other research areas include innovative research methodologies; culture, technology, and education; and feminist pedagogies.

## Our Stories

### *Clare Daniel*

As a feminist American studies scholar with a modest amount of online teaching experience before the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked in a hybrid faculty/staff role in a university institute devoted to gender equity. Though I had received training in online course development and had developed and taught an online course in graduate school, all of my teaching at my new institution was in person with limited use of a learning



management system. In the spring of 2020, when my institution transitioned all courses online because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the director of the gender equity institute where I worked tasked a colleague, Jacquelyne Thoni Howard, and me with creating an internal resource to support our small community of faculty through that transition.

As we brainstormed about how to do this, Jacque and I realized that we both had a deep interest in feminist pedagogy. My interest arose during my undergraduate career as I paid attention to the engaging and inclusive practices deployed by my gender studies professors. Later, in graduate school, I felt wholly unprepared to teach when I was first thrust into a classroom as the instructor of record. I found myself drawing on the feminist and antiracist principles that formed an important part of my undergraduate and graduate studies to inform how I conducted myself in the classroom and how I treated students. I worked on developing a feminist teaching method that treated the teacher and the students as co-educators. I wanted to problematize the idea that I was the expert and the students had no knowledge to bring to the table. I learned that I was troubled by the “banking” model of education described and critiqued by pedagogical theorists Paulo Freire and bell hooks.

During my time as an instructor in graduate school, I had two formative experiences that led me further down the feminist pedagogical path. First, I had a pregnant student who gave birth during the final week of class and had to take an incomplete in all of her courses. Observing the obstacles she faced and the lack of structural support for her, I recognized that her situation exemplified how educational contexts are not built for birthing people. I endeavored to support her as best I could within the context of my course. One semester later, I experienced my surprise pregnancy, and my life as an instructor was then forever changed by motherhood. The utility of online teaching while caring for a baby, the importance of flexibility for caregivers, and the need for me to bring my (now 12-year-old) son into on-ground and online classrooms with me for years to come changed my orientation toward teaching. Throughout my 15 years of teaching, I have endeavored to educate myself on liberatory pedagogies and experiment with the methods that make teaching both doable and fulfilling for me.

In this pandemic-induced transition to teaching online, though the assignment my colleague and I were given was likely intended to be more utilitarian (i.e., a manual on how to use the institution’s online teaching tools such as Canvas and Zoom), we knew such resources already existed in our university’s Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching. As such, and being that we were developing this resource for fellow feminists, we decided it would make sense to, from the outset, frame our resource as a guide for using feminist pedagogy in online teaching. We began by compiling peer-reviewed articles, blog posts, videos, and any other publicly available resources we could find and organizing them on a website we titled *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*.

As we rolled out our website in its infancy, we were taken aback by the amount of interest it generated. When another colleague shared it on social media, it received so much attention that we were forced to acknowledge how deeply needed these resources were. So many instructors were struggling to humanize their new online teaching environments and utilize distance education technology in ways that fostered safe, equitable, and inclusive environments that were conducive to learning. Given the newly discovered importance of this endeavor, we expanded our editorial team to include three other scholars who could bring unique insights to the curation of materials. We augmented the website to include crowdsourced original materials, such as annotated assignment examples and blog posts.

With our new team of five editors, we strove to create a feminist work dynamic in which we made decisions by consensus and shared responsibilities equally, while also being attentive to individual interests, circumstances, and needs. In my experience, we were fairly successful at working collaboratively in an egalitarian way. However, the varying levels of support our team members received from their home institutions for this work came through in terms of how much time each of us could devote to the guide. Although my colleague and I were tasked with this work by our director, we did not receive a reprieve from any of our other duties to accommodate this new project. Nonetheless, the work was recognized as important, and we had institutional resources, including paid student labor, to help us carry it out. Some of our co-editors, however, were doing this work without recognition or resources from their employers, which put them in a position of having to evaluate and re-evaluate, on an ongoing basis, whether they could continue to participate, given their other professional and personal commitments. The experience of creating and working collaboratively on this guide has served as a clear example of how women, and feminist scholars in particular, are often tasked with or take on additional, necessary work without proper compensation or recognition. Although our guide was useful to a wide audience, our labor in producing and maintaining it has gone largely unrecognized and has had to be deprioritized at various moments by each of us.

*Jacquelyne Thoni Howard*

Clare Daniel and I founded the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide* in 2020 when our department asked us to provide online teaching guidance for our colleagues. As a feminist organization, we found that many of the available resources spoke to emergency remote teaching practices that did not align with the feminist pedagogy frameworks that we used in our classrooms. As a former instructional designer, I had created a one-stop resource for faculty in the past. This instructional design knowledge and experience helped us create a guide that listed sources written by feminist scholars about

how they created dynamic and caring online experiences that centered the student experience using feminist pedagogy tenets. We designed this tool as an internal document, but when its larger value was recognized by a colleague who shared it on Twitter (now known as X), we realized by the attention it received that we were filling a gap. We decided to expand the guide's editorial staff and move it to a more permanent digital site.

During this time, I worked in an academic staff position within technology support, where I maintained 18 workstations and four classrooms, while also maintaining an active teaching, research, and student programs agenda relating to digital humanities and my field of history. I was already overstretched when tasked with creating the online teaching resource, but I came to see the guide's expansion as an opportunity to build a feminist community around education in digital spaces in a way that aligned with my digital humanities work. My institution encouraged our work on the guide, especially if I could incorporate paid undergraduate interns from the Technology and Digital Humanities Lab that I supervised to help with maintaining the site and helping with social media. Introducing students to feminist pedagogy has been an incredible experience that allowed them to work on a feminist project while being paid. Delegating and reviewing students' work, however, often brought additional project management responsibilities my way. My institution also funded conference travel, which allowed me to help promote the guide. I received no course or service release to work on the guide, even as we produced more traditional forms of scholarly output, such as a co-edited book project on the same topic (Howard et al., forthcoming). Now, as a non-tenure track faculty, I still feel like I have to justify my time spent on the guide, but instead of pointing to student engagement, I now point to the ways that the guide as a side project has led to more traditional forms of publications. Due to the stigmas around online education and simplified definitions of *online* as that which we experienced during emergency remote teaching, the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide* editors have now expanded our definition of *online* as any time a learning management system (LMS) is used in a face-to-face, hybrid, or online classroom. I have also received critiques that feminism, even when using intersectional approaches, seems too limited of a framework, so I make it a point to actively connect how feminist pedagogy, mainly involving conversations around how power operates in the classroom, aligns with other important liberatory pedagogies.

Though I have always used components of feminist pedagogy in my classes, I came to recognize these practices as feminist later in my career as I gained employment in higher education working for a center that focuses on gender equity. In the early days of my career, I did not have the nomenclature, the resources, and probably not even the desire as a young educator to label myself as a feminist educator. As an undergraduate student, I received a Pell Grant and was a first-generation college student who did not have family buy-in to attend university. I successfully struggled while I majored in

history and completed the requirements to become a certified teacher. I fully bought into the tenets promoted by my teaching program that focused on active learning, student-centered engagement, and the intentional use of technology. My first applied teaching experience in the classroom occurred in Spring 2006, when I student-taught for a semester in New Orleans, four months after Hurricane Katrina, and later as a middle school teacher for a low-income school district. During the 2008 recession, I needed to transition from secondary education to work as an instructional designer. As I worked full-time in instructional design, I earned my master's and doctorate. During this period, I juggled my goals of attaining graduate education and holding meaningful work with my spouse's military commitments. In 2012, I began teaching online, where I virtually met students such as service members, people serving time in prison, single mothers, people with mobility challenges, and other disability-related challenges that made the online modality essential for educational equity. While I learned practical lessons from these experiences, such as recognizing unspoken needs, centering the student experience, building on prior knowledge to make connections, and encouraging students to become makers, I also began to recognize that social justice work belongs in the classroom where intersecting social constructs of race, gender, disability, class, and sexuality, along with environmental concerns, all operate.

I am often called upon to justify my participation in digital research, digital humanities, and online education. Ironically, while these areas are seen as important to bring students vital skills and expand student engagement, the collaborative nature of the work, the non-traditional digital outputs, and the pedagogical perspective are not always viewed within the academy as real enough to be counted as research, even when I pursue traditional publications. Yet I view feminist pedagogy shared through a digital guide as a grassroots method for encouraging social change in online spaces. Despite these challenges, I have found enrichment from working with the editors, who come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. They have played a vital role in making the guide what it is today. To sustain the guide, I feel a responsibility to keep the digital components updated, maintained, and moving forward. It is an ongoing project that I am always thinking about on the side and does not have traditional external success measures. I continue this work, however, because of the relationships that I have built and because I believe that continually thinking about feminist pedagogy in digital spaces via the guide makes me a better educator and researcher.

### *Liv Newman*

I am an accidental feminist pedagogy practitioner. I formally became aware of feminist pedagogy as a model for teaching and learning when coordinating a book club as part

of my responsibilities as associate director at Tulane's Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT). At that time, Tulane did little to foster knowledge of liberatory pedagogies (this has since changed significantly), so with the privilege to choose books for the CELT's book club, I selected *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks. Liberatory pedagogy is a broad idea that I knew about. But feminist pedagogy, specifically, was a philosophical practice I finally had the chance to delve into. Clare Daniel was a member of the book club. She invited me to become involved with the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide* (the *Guide*). My dual role as an online instructor with over 10 years of experience and a co-leader of CELT made my involvement feel natural.

Being involved with the *Guide* has been rewarding for my teaching, my work at CELT, and for me. I will share details about this below. However, I must admit my limited time has led to a limited involvement with the *Guide* and subsequent projects, such as the forthcoming book on feminist pedagogy for teaching online. The benefit of having several editors means there are numerous ways for each person to share their expert skills to support the *Guide*. From my vantage point, this has been one of the most important aspects of the *Guide*. There are scholarly, technical, and practical online teaching skills that are all necessary to maintain and enhance the *Guide*. In addition to the editors, the contributors and the many others who offer their support are essential to the *Guide*. I need to recognize my appreciation for all of the people who make the *Guide* the ever-evolving resource it is.

My teaching dreams are big, but time is limited, so having a space where I can learn about what I need now, what I didn't even know I needed, and what I should consider in the future, is extremely valuable. The *Guide* also provides a community of like-minded educators who can join together to further engage with feminist pedagogy and advance the boundaries of how these ideas are applied. The *Guide* exists for so many people, who, like me, want to enhance their learning and teaching but need curated resources and a community to accomplish these goals.

On a deeply personal level, I appreciate having a community of highly engaged people who are inspiring. Being in higher education has been challenging as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. And just working at a complex university presents daily challenges. Learning about and from the experiences of colleagues, and sharing my own, has helped support me through recent years and has allowed me to support other instructors at Tulane and beyond.

Tulane has committed to advancing liberatory pedagogies. Thus, in my role at CELT, I provide faculty with teaching knowledge and support as the university becomes more equitable and inclusive. Since my involvement with the *Guide* began, I have been attuned to providing faculty with knowledge and support to infuse their teaching with feminist pedagogy principles. While Tulane has few online courses, workshops on feminist pedagogy have been offered to faculty (led by Clare Daniel and Jacque Howard).



CELT's five-year strategic plan includes a goal of expanding our reach to communities outside Tulane. Having a broad goal, such as this, as part of my department's strategic plan justifies my commitment to the *Guide* and related projects. My colleagues have been fully supportive, with the only limitation being the time I have to dedicate to the ongoing support of the *Guide*. An example of expanding reach beyond Tulane is presenting at various conferences, particularly the Online Learning Conference, which has been rewarding for me. Soon, I hope to collaborate with the other editors of the *Guide* to develop a multi-day workshop on redesigning a course incorporating feminist pedagogical principles.

I have learned a lot working with Clare, Jacque, Niya, and Enilda. They are an amazing group of patient, compassionate, and supportive people. They are brilliant and dedicated to advancing feminist pedagogy. Collaborating has provided opportunities to explore new ideas and create new experiences, such as developing a feminist pedagogy course redesign template. There is a passion for what the *Guide* provides to the wider community of educators, and these educators are also called to be co-creators of the *Guide*. This collection of qualities, and the community that has been created, is certainly feminist. And this experience is unlike any other professional experience I have had.

The higher education landscape seems well poised to adopt feminist pedagogical principles in online courses (as well as on-ground courses). Many universities have committed to expanding access and opportunity and to supporting success for increasingly diverse students. The *Guide* provides valuable tools to help instructors infuse their courses with feminist pedagogy, but I believe workshops that provide faculty time to develop new courses and revise existing courses are a meaningful way to accelerate positive change in online learning spaces for learners.

### *Niya Bond*

I started adjuncting online in 2008, soon after I graduated from my master's program in English, where I studied the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and nationality in 19th- and 20th-century American border fiction. Philosophically, my education had effectively prepared me to be a feminist educator, to question power dynamics, to embrace the importance of lived experiences, to amplify counter-narratives, and to consider the conundrum that technology can sometimes represent—equal parts opportunity and obstacle. Practically—and, as I discovered later in my faculty development work with other online educators, somewhat pervasively in higher education—my degree did little to prepare me for the realities of these pedagogical negotiations. At that time (and sometimes still), discipline-specific craft was equated to teaching



competency, digital or otherwise. And so, I entered the world of online education with a lot of intuition about what kind of feminist teacher I was or could be and not a lot of insight into why or how.

That tension followed me for the next decade, through a contingent career that operated simultaneously to, and in the shadow of, my full-time job. By day, I was a dedicated, though underpaid and under-supported, academic advising staff member. By night, lunch hour, weekend, or any other spare moment I could sneak, I was a feminist pedagogical side hustler, straddling multiple online teaching and faculty development initiatives. My positionality was part boon, part bane. I gained valuable experience that allowed me to build an impressive portfolio in the world of online education, but those efforts were entirely self-driven—the evolution of always-distracted energy. Even so, I recognize that my positionality was, and still is, one of privilege. Although my adjunct career has largely been driven by the consequences of capitalism—I am the primary earner for my family of five, and higher education does not pay staff like me enough to survive on one salary—I also engage this career adjacent to full-time work that comes with health insurance and retirement benefits. Many adjuncts are unjustly and inequitably separated from such support.

In 2018, 10 years after my first foray into online teaching, I stumbled upon Twitter (now known as X), which was, at that time, a space full of vibrant teaching and learning talks. I didn't always have time to deep-dive into dialogue, but even—or perhaps especially—in clipped form, the conversations I could partake in were nothing short of cup-filling. What once was a siloed, solo effort started to feel like a shared engagement. And, as I plucked knowledge from this new community, I also began to parse out my feminist praxis. It was teaching/learning symbiosis. It was pedagogical magic.

Being part of a community was good for my confidence too. It was in this space that I became inspired to solidify—and send off—some of my online teaching insights. Because public engagement had proved so valuable to me, and because its openness felt feminist to me, it was important to me to share my ideas outside of an academic pay-wall. That desire prompted my foray into public scholarship. One of my first pieces was a blog post for *The Scholarly Teacher* called “Reflections on Forming a Virtually Feminist Pedagogy.” In that post, I described the ways that I was using a virtual form of feminist pedagogy to guide my online teaching—by way of two simple and sustainable tenets: promoting the personal and shifting agency to students. As part of a feminist reflexivity, I highlighted how these tenets were already in action and also how I aspired to expand or revise them. I hoped that this piece would help other educators like myself, who don't have much institutional support for their teaching, feel more confident about putting feminist pedagogy into practice in online spaces and places.

Fast forward to one very early morning when I was sipping my tea in the quiet moments before my family stirred and a friend texted me with a link to something

called the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*—wherein two of my writing pieces were featured. This same friend had recently been encouraging me to think bigger with my ideas and consider publishing a book on online feminist pedagogy. I decided to take a chance and email Clare and Jacque, the creators of the guide, thanking them for including me and asking if they might be up for future collaborations. Those initial conversations led to just that—our group grew from three members to five, and we slowly started building a pathway forward for feminist pedagogy online—into a website with practical resources, into a public scholarship blog with guest contributions, and into an edited collection of feminist-pedagogy-driven online teaching essays.

However, while the other editors had financial support through their institutions for professional development (PD), I had none. What's more, I had to sneak our group meetings, and any additional responsibilities, such as blog submission edits, presentation prep, or writing, into my workdays—as I didn't have explicit permission to engage in extracurricular activities that weren't directly related to academic advising. Add in an unexpected pregnancy during the height of the pandemic, the fact that I was still working multiple jobs, and trying to complete my PhD coursework, and the trend of exerting a devoted, yet distracted energy on my part prevailed.

My colleagues were nothing but supportive about my situation; several even offered to use their own PD money to fund my participation in group-oriented presentations, but I was always too guilt-ridden to accept. My co-editors also kindly agreed to my taking extra time on writing projects (including this essay that I'm composing now!), even when it meant potentially slowing down their progress, and each of them always exuded nothing but empathy and encouragement. However, I still felt insecure about my place in the group, and that insecurity fed into imposter syndrome. I often questioned what value I added to our committee and whether the other members viewed me as more of a hindrance than a help. A perpetual lack of time, combined with a pervasive fear of failing everyone, led me to announce I needed to step away from our efforts and offer to support more from what felt like the sidelines. However, as one of my editors reminded me—thanks Jacque!—I'm not on the sidelines so much as I am being strategic about the spaces that I work in, such as editorial assistance. And that move hasn't diminished my passion for the project, my connection to my co-editors, and my hopes to help higher ed embrace feminist pedagogy—online or otherwise. But I'm still figuring out how to reconcile my own perspective of meaningful contributions while making room for the continued chaos of my life, an ongoing process that I'm sure will test me with its complexities and complications, but one that I now look forward to rather than fear.

In February 2024, all of us came together in New Orleans at Tulane University to host a talk on feminist pedagogy for teaching online. I was looking forward to building

community, chatting about feminist tenets for teaching online, and continuing the work of pedagogical practicality. Not only was this the first time I met my co-editors in person, but it was also my first experience as a fully funded panelist. In that way, it was a multifaceted milestone—a moment that marks an important personal and professional evolution—the work of feminist pedagogy made manifest.

*Enilda Romero-Hall*

I started serving as an editor of the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide* in March 2021. I got an email from Clare Daniel who was reaching out to me to see if I would be interested in getting more involved with the digital guide. The digital guide was already a collaborative endeavor with Clare Daniel, Jacquelyne Thoni Howard, Niya Bond, and Liv Newman as editors. Joining this effort interested me because I have always considered myself a feminist.

I grew up in Panama, which has a fairly patriarchal society. Therefore, growing up I witnessed firsthand how the role of women has always been limited to the vision of a male-dominated world. As I continue to get educated and experience life in other parts of the world, I realize that these limitations were not only imposed on women but on many other individuals based on their various social identities. It was then that I started identifying as an intersectional feminist. Of course, now as a professional and specifically a university professor, I can't separate my intersectional feminist practice related to equity and inclusion from my teaching practice. Therefore, feminist pedagogy has become central to how I teach regardless of modality. Why would I change my views on equity and inclusion in society within one of my most important communities, my classroom?

To me, feminist pedagogy in online learning is particularly important and relevant because of the outdated views that continue to perpetuate many educational institutions, in which online learning is seen as one-way communications of narrated MS PowerPoint slides and online students are seen as observers in the learning experience without any sense of agency. Patriarchal ways of teaching create power dynamics between the instructor and the learners in traditional in-person settings. Often these patriarchal power dynamics are also replicated, by instructors, in online teaching and learning. Being part of this collective allows me to further the message of feminist pedagogy along with my colleagues and to help dismantle archaic perspectives of what online and distance learning has to offer at all levels of education and how it can be implemented in more equitable and inclusive ways.

As an academic, I saw my participation in this collaborative effort as (1) a way to give back to my community of scholars and (2) an opportunity to connect with

others with whom I have a shared vision. Working with my fellow editors collaboratively has been easy, but maneuvering my schedule and the demands of my role at my previous institution and my current institution has been challenging. To have a united voice on how to best support the development of the digital guide and its dissemination, we first started by meeting every two weeks. To accommodate our different family dynamics and changes in our schedule due to the end of the traditional academic year (August to May), we transition to a once-a-month meeting during the summer months. This seemed to work well for me until I found a new job and had to engage in a massive move across different states. The number of tasks that I needed to get done and the stress of the move (i.e., selling our house, packing and unpacking, purchasing a new house, and relocating my family to a different state) became overwhelming. I felt that I had to pause my participation to maintain my mental health. Once the move was complete, taking on a new role meant learning new dynamics at my workplace, learning about work that needed to be completed, and mentoring doctoral students who desperately needed guidance. I decided to continue to be part of this collective, but I was not sure how much more of me I had to give. Finally, after taking a summer to think about it, I decided to take a less involved role at the beginning of Fall 2023. Yet I have committed to fully completing those projects for which I am a lead.

My role with the digital guide as an advising editor has not been recognized in the past within the measures of my annual evaluation at my previous or current institution. However, I have seen some of the outcomes of my involvement be recognized in my evaluations, such as the virtual conference presentations (i.e., Online Learning Consortium Conference, Association for Educational Technology and Communication International Convention) that my colleagues and I have done in the past few years. I think that institutions of higher education should find ways to officially recognize our roles (i.e., managing editor, advising editor) with the digital guide as part of the merit system that is often used to evaluate academic excellence. Our involvement as managing and advising editors in this digital guide serves to disseminate feminist pedagogy practices and application, to create opportunities for scholarly publications, and as an outlet for open scholarship.

Since starting this role as editor of the digital guide, I have only experienced one awkward moment online in which a LinkedIn follower asked me “not to politicize education” after I shared a link to the digital guide with my LinkedIn connections. We assume this LinkedIn follower thought the word *feminist* was politicizing education. Of course, from a feminist perspective, education is already political and to not recognize that is to perpetuate the status quo of inequitable education. I simply ignored the comment and continued to post as usual. I never heard back from that individual, nor did I share the incident with my university administrators. I do remember sharing with

my fellow editors. I am thankful that since starting this journey, whenever I have shared with others the digital guide, it has always been welcomed with curiosity and praise.

## Discussion

The purpose of this article is to explore our involvement and experiences as scholars in higher education who are part of an informal collective supporting the *Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online: A Digital Guide*. In this article, we specifically engage in dialogue about our desire to join this community of feminist scholars, the achievements we have witnessed, the hurdles we have faced, and the support—both internal and external—that has bolstered us along this path. When reflecting on our journeys, it is easy to see that our paths are unique. Life and professional experiences presented us with different situations that have guided and nurtured our feminist pedagogical practice and our presence in this collective. Our narratives illustrate our engagement with feminist pedagogy, stemming from encounters with entrenched patriarchal and oppressive structures. These encounters led us to seek a deeper understanding of ways to dissent and support learning experiences that humanized our learners.

For all of us, feminist pedagogy is more than just a set of tenets (Howard et al. 2023) that guide our teaching, it is a life philosophy ingrained into who we are in all facets of our lives. Therefore, it is no surprise that as we have engaged in online learning experiences throughout our careers, our feminist way of life has served to cultivate teaching practices that center and empower learners. In this day in age, in which online learning is growing exponentially across educational sectors and geographical boundaries (Singh and Thurman 2023), it is key to engage in pedagogical efforts that aim to make learning more relatable and accessible to individuals (Mehta and Aguilera 2020). Although there is no one-size-fits-all solution, feminist pedagogy serves as a liberatory theoretical foundation with practical application to foster efficient, effective, engaging, and equitable online intellectual discovery (Koseoglu 2020; Romero-Hall 2022; Veletianos and Koseoglu 2022).

There is an African proverb that states, “It takes a village to raise a child.” This proverb recognizes that parenting is a communal affair (Hill 2017). Similarly, for us, coming together to this collective reflects the collaborative nature in which feminist scholars with a shared vision were able to identify allies willing to contribute to this endeavor. Our *village* is much more than the editors of the digital guide. Our village includes the contributors of annotated assignments, blog post authors, the book chapter authors of our forthcoming edited volume, and the community of practice scholars to whom we are connected via digital and in-person networks. However, despite having a village, being part of an informal collective without *formal* institutional recognition has meant

that at times our work may lack financial support and dedicated time during traditional work hours or may not be acknowledged by the traditional merit systems of institutions of higher education. This does not mean that our work as editors of this digital guide has gone unnoticed by our institutions and peers. We have been acknowledged and recognized by many in our respective fields, places of employment, and colleagues. It does mean that this lack of formal institutional recognition of the collective has influenced how, when, and why we engage in this collaborative effort.

Amid a backdrop in which the significance of education, educators, and advocates for equity, diversity, and inclusion have faced considerable scrutiny, criticism, and attempts at control, we consider ourselves fortunate that our public scholarship and identities as feminist scholars have largely escaped significant backlash. While we have encountered sporadic instances of online harassment, these have been unwelcome but manageable. The absence of comprehensive policies and procedures by administrators to tackle online faculty abuse (O'Meara et al. 2024) makes our experience all the more fortunate, sparing us from additional challenges in navigating such situations.

## Conclusion

Historically, feminists have always organized to protest against injustice, systems of oppression, and lack of equity. Today, if we were to perform a search for the words *feminist collective* in an internet search engine, we would get a list of organizations that self-describe as a feminist collective. Our collective is not unique in its intent. However, our individual stories shared in this article serve to illustrate how members of a feminist collective can and will experience working together, in such an endeavor, differently. Yet, despite our differences, as feminist scholars we come together to work toward trans-institutional goals as part of our network. Last, our experiences reflect on the ongoing need for institutions (regardless of sector) to recognize the value of cooperative enterprises.

## Author Biographies

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**Niya Bond** is an online educator, faculty development facilitator, and PhD student at the University of Maine studying online teaching and learning. Her publications focus on empowering online learners and educators; creating and sustaining virtual communities of practice (both formal and informal); and facilitating equitable, belonging, and inclusive educational experiences. Niya has presented nationally on using clarity, caring, and community-building in online education; increasing online learner engagement and success; and enacting feminist pedagogy in online teaching/learning spaces and places.

**Liv Newman** is an Administrative Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching at Tulane University. She received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Florida and MA in Education Policy from Stanford University. Dr. Newman has worked in higher education for nearly 25 years, spanning both teaching and administrative roles. She has extensive experience improving undergraduate and graduate, on-ground and online teaching through her faculty development positions and numerous leadership roles. Her scholarly interests focus on the intersection of race and class, inequities in education, and enhancing the online educational experience for faculty and students.

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