

## A guide to tweeting at TASA

by Brady Robards (@bradyjay) and Deborah Lupton (@DALupton)

*What is Twitter?* [For new users] Twitter is a 'microblogging' platform that allows users to send and receive 140 character 'tweets'. Users can respond to tweets from others, follow public discussion threads, tag their tweets with 'hashtags' so they appear in a specific channel (more on this below), 'favourite' tweets (sometimes used in the same way the 'like' function is used on Facebook, or as a way to flag something interesting to be recalled later), and even 'retweet' tweets, where you share a tweet from someone else to your own followers. You can create a Twitter account at [twitter.com](http://twitter.com). Twitter can be accessed through the web interface or through smartphone/tablet apps. Here is a quick dissection of a tweet:



When you first set up a Twitter account it is a good idea to quickly start following other tweeters who interest you and to follow hashtags on topics of interest. Once other tweeters see that you have followed them, they may well reciprocate. Responding to other people's tweets with comments or retweets will also get you noticed and let people know that you are on Twitter. When deciding who to follow, try looking through the lists of other people's followers and those they follow to see if any interesting individuals, groups or organisations come up. Try using the hashtag #sociology or more specific hashtags like #digitalsociology to see who is actively tweeting on these topics. There are a growing number of sociologists internationally, sociology journals, departments and associations like the BSA and the ASA on Twitter to follow. You can search for people, organisations, and hashtags on [twitter.com](http://twitter.com).

*Why should you tweet at TASA?* Many of the things we discuss at TASA are of interest to a wider public, and one of our challenges is contributing to public discourse in an accessible way. There are also many people who would like to come to TASA, but for various reasons cannot. The #TASA2013 'backchannel', a channel of tweets that runs behind the papers and discussions that take place in-person, allows people not at TASA to get a sense of what we are talking about and even contribute as 'co-present' participants. Just place the #TASA2013 hashtag in your tweets and it will become part of the conference backchannel. Participating in the conference backchannel can also lead people to your other work. At some conferences, the Twitter backchannel can become very active, and 'session tweeters' are assigned alongside session chairs to contribute to that backchannel and to bring the backchannel into the in-person discussions. We aren't there yet, but we would like to build a culture of tweeting at TASA.

*Isn't tweeting during a paper rude? How can I tweet while I'm focussing on the paper?* This takes time to get comfortable with. Some people tweet the kind of things they'd be writing down anyway – key quotes, paraphrasing important ideas, or a critical question that comes to mind. Sometimes the backchannel continues on between sessions, and even after the conference ends, as discussions carry on and lead into further dialogue. Good luck, and tweet us (@bradyjay and @DALupton) if you need some help by tagging us in a tweet.