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Introduction

REDEFINING HASHTAG ACTIVISM

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In early 2020, it seemed as though the COVID-19 pandemic was the biggest emergency facing the United States. By late March, most states had their residents on stay-at-home orders and millions of people were navigating their new circumstances, such as working from home, working in unsafe conditions, or not working at all. But as the summer months approached, many Americans were drawing attention to another ongoing threat. News outlets and social media reported (yet again) on a number of unthinkable killings of African Americans, many at the hands of law enforcement. In February 2020, Ahmaud Arbery was shot down by white men in Georgia while running. In March 2020, Breonna Taylor was shot in Louisville by police officers when they entered her home on a warrant in the middle of the night. In May 2020, George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis when a police officer kneeled on his neck for over eight minutes. By early June, the Black Lives Matter movement—both its Twitter movement #BlackLivesMatter and in-person marches and gatherings—resurged into the largest social justice movement in US history (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020). Tens of millions of people protested the killing of George Floyd, including half a million in 550 places on June 6 alone (2020). In the months since, both violence against African Americans and demonstrations in response to it have continued across the US, with protests in cities like Kenosha, Wisconsin, and Portland, Oregon, erupting in even more violence. This social justice activism has made inroads in a variety of ways, but its long-term outcomes remain to be determined. What is clear, however, is that the accomplishments and visibility of Black Lives Matter are largely possible through #BlackLivesMatter hashtag activism. Since 2013, #BlackLivesMatter has been tweeted more than 30 million times, with a primary focus on police killings of Black Americans (Anderson et al. 2018). By leveraging the affordances of the networked hashtags, activists quickly raised awareness about problematic deaths of African

Americans across the US and drew attention to systematic racism in law enforcement. This hashtag movement has been pivotal in raising awareness about the dangerous racism people of color face every day and in organizing activists to demand change.

In this collection on hashtag activism, contributors investigate the affordances of hashtag activism across different social justice movements and using various methods. Our overall purpose is to demonstrate how hashtag activism has influenced and will continue to shape contemporary social change. Authors in this collection emerge from a variety of disciplines to explore questions of identity, affect, visual rhetoric, language, and more and situate these inquiries within academic areas such as digital rhetoric, feminist theory, internet research ethics, and more. In addition to covering a range of hashtag movements and theoretical frameworks, this collection utilizes a variety of research methods. Many chapters present in-depth cases studies of qualitative hashtag data, while others research hashtags through more theoretical lenses. Ultimately, this collection contributes more than a dozen original investigations into the potentials and pitfalls of hashtag activism as it intersects with people's material lives. An overall outcome of these chapters is an expanded conceptualization of hashtag activism that goes beyond the functional definition of a searchable tag that collects social media posts naming the same social justice movement. This collection defines hashtag activism as inclusive of established social justice movements such as racial and gender equality movements, but it also includes social networked movements that bring attention to other non-normative identities, spaces, and topics where users advocate for social change. Furthermore, this collection establishes anti-activism as an important part of research into hashtag activism. Anti-activism includes a variety of trolling, appropriation, discrediting, and other techniques that disrupt and derail social justice activism. Numerous chapters in this collection demonstrate how anti-activist movements use digital technologies and rhetorical techniques to intervene in social justice goals. By covering these different aspects of hashtag activism, this collection demonstrates the range and power of digital movements in the recent past and reveals implications for the near future.

(SCHOLARLY) LIKES, RETWEETS, AND MENTIONS: ENTERING THE DIALOGUE ON DIGITAL ACTIVISM

While much scholarship has interrogated the affordances and nuances of activism mediated by technology, this collection is focused on hashtag

activism as a particular technique, tool, and rhetorical strategy of social justice work. Hashtag activism emerges from the more general digital activism, which is "an organized public effort, making collective claim(s) on a target authority(s), in which civic initiators or supporters use digital media" (Edwards, Howard, and Joyce 2013). Hashtag activism specifically leverages hashtags to engage in social justice work. The hashtag—literally a metadata tag that labels and sorts digital content (Losh 2020, 2)—has been both digitally and rhetorically monumental in shaping contemporary activist landscapes. Hashtag activism usually occurs through Twitter and refers to the use of repeating and circulating hashtags for the purposes of protest, community organizing, and creating social change.

One major area of focus in contemporary scholarship has been on hashtag feminism. Kitsy Dixon (2014) was one of the first scholars to popularize hashtag feminism when she identified the term and discussed the benefits and risks of digital activists identifying themselves as feminists online. Rosemary Clark (2016) applied the term to a movement when she analyzed the ways hashtag feminism becomes a collective movement through the case study of #WhyIStayed (789). Clark found that hashtag feminism, "in its form, content, and production process, empowers its users to take control of the sociocultural narratives associated with their identities and subjective experiences" (798). The way Twitter users can become empowered and take control of problematic narratives has continued to be a common theme in hashtag activism scholarship. In a later study, Clark-Parsons (2019) continued her work on hashtag feminism by investigating user perspectives on #MeToo. She examined how digital activists perform on social media to create social change while simultaneously trying to maintain enough privacy to keep themselves safe.

Research on racial and ethnic identity in social media is also widespread. Before the term *hashtag activism* was coined, scholars were studying Black Twitter, which refers to the community of African Americans using Twitter to connect on issues ranging from politics to TV shows. André Brock (2012) described how Twitter functioned as a cultural outlet for Black Twitter users given Twitter's digital affordances, discursive support for performativity, and connectivity supported by hashtags. These conversations have migrated into targeted investigations of particular hashtags and social movements. Nora Gross (2017), for example, analyzed the way Black youth utilized the #IfTheyGunnedMeDown hashtag to problematize the photos media outlets use of young Black victims of police violence. Sarah J. Jackson (2016) studied the Black

Lives Matter movement within the context of the historical Black Civil Rights movement and argued that #BlackLivesMatter is taking advantage of its networked tools to make intersectional social justice goals more visible, such as insisting on space at white-dominated political rallies and protesting police presence at Pride events.

Yet other studies have considered additional aspects of marginalized identities. Tanja Dreher and colleagues (2016), for example, considered two Indigenous campaigns in Australia, #IdleNoMore and #sosblakaustralia, and determined that while the social media environment enabled more Indigenous voices to be heard, that did not necessarily translate into political bodies listening to the voices and taking them into consideration when making policy. Benjamin W. Mann (2018) examined representations of disabilities in his study of #CripTheVote. Mann argued that social justice movement terminology relies on historical understandings of embodiment and needs to be reassessed for inclusivity for people with different abilities. #CripTheVote was a hashtag movement that aimed to bring more awareness to disability-related issues in American politics, and Mann outlined the ways users leveraged the hashtag to center disability issues within campaigns and to make people with disabilities feel represented and included.

In an example of hashtag activists protesting hegemonic rule in valuing their identities, Sara Liao (2019) studied #IAmGay on Weibo in China as the hashtag responded to a governmental shutdown on homosexual content and found that the hashtag lent itself to storytelling posts through personal narratives. The censorship was soon removed, but the hashtag increased solidarity among LGBTQ groups and with heterosexual users as well and showed how collective action was created. Roughly a quarter of the posts were deleted (2326), probably by the users themselves, demonstrating again that hashtag activism is not without risks, particularly in such a regulated environment. While numerous contributors in this collection have taken up identity issues in hashtag activism, identity formation and performance are not the primary focus, which reflects both the diverse use of hashtag activism in this contemporary moment and our focus on expanding the definition of hashtag activism.

Chapters in this collection utilize and build upon several approaches to and methodologies for studying hashtag activism, beginning with rhetorical studies. An example of foundational work in this area includes Gross's (2017) investigation of #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, which utilizes visual rhetoric to examine Black youth responses. The hashtag emerged after the shooting of Michael Brown and refers to the idea that the media often show unflattering images of Black victims rather than

wholesome images. Gross employed a double-consciousness framework to showcase the rhetorical prowess of hashtag activists and noted the limitations placed on users because of the Twitter template. Aqdas Malik and colleagues (2018) also examined the role of visual rhetoric in hashtag activism when they studied a large sample of #iLookLikeAnEngineer tweets to understand the different ways users engage audiences (through text, images, and URLs). They also looked at who participates in the hashtag campaign (whom they call actors) and found that these various facets support the campaign in its success. Rhetoric is a strong theme in our collection, given both the disciplinary backgrounds of many of our contributors as well as the affordances of viewing hashtag activism for the rhetorical strategies utilized by Twitter users and the rhetorical effects on Twitter audiences.

Affect theory is another productive lens through which to consider hashtag activism. For example, Corrina Laughlin (2020) applied affect theory to hashtag activism when she studied Christian female bloggers and the #AmplifyWomen hashtag through an affective public framework. Social media facilitates evangelical women today in rearticulating what it means to be Christian and to rearticulate traditional notions of white patriarchy. Multiple chapters in this collection consider how hashtag activist movements are shaped by affect, including the ways affect circulates through digital publics and the way affective communities are built through online networks (Gong 2014; Dean 2015; Paasonen 2015). These studies add to existing scholarship, such as Sanjay Sharma's (2013) study of Blacktags (racialized hashtags), which connected identity to affect by arguing that racialized identities are discursively constructed by using the hashtags. Affect is one of the main themes addressed in this collection, particularly as theorized through Sara Ahmed's (2014) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and Zizi Papacharissi's (2015) *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics.* These texts, along with the studies described above, set a foundation for the hashtag activism cases in this collection that show how affect functions in depth in particular contemporary hashtag movements.

While the research described so far focuses on issues of identity, representation, and activism, other scholars have examined the material effects of hashtag activism. Sky Croeser and Tim Highfield (2014), for example, analyzed how Twitter was used during the Occupy Oakland movement to understand how much of the movement was place-based and what connections existed between other locations of the Occupy movement. Like many of our contributors in this collection, Croeser and Highfield (2014) found an intricate relationship between online

communication and physical places, where users leveraged both spaces for their social justice goals. Carrie A. Rentschler (2017) also demonstrated the ways hashtag activism can have a positive, material effect on people's lives through her study of bystander intervention. Rentschler examined #YouOkSis and #BystanderIntervention for the ways activists raised awareness about street harassment and performed affective witnessing. While online activism is not without risk, it is safer than confronting harassers in person and also reframes the narrative away from punishment and toward a politics of care (578). Rentschler's work thus connects hashtag responses to offline experiences and showcases themes that flow through this collection, including feminist interventions in problematic narratives and the role of affect in creating online collective communities.

Digital activism scholarship has also focused on the question of whether Twitter truly builds community, imagined or otherwise (Chen 2011; Gruzd, Wellman, and Takhteyev 2011). Many of the chapters presented here delve into this debate, some doing so to push the boundaries in terms of what communities and actions are included and excluded in conceptualizations and definitions of activism. For example, those studying fan activism follow in the steps of previous studies such as Apryl Williams and Vanessa Gonlin's (2017) inquiry into Black Twitter's engagement of *How to Get Away with Murder*. Williams and Gonlin conducted a discursive analysis of television viewers' comments on race and gender and argued that these second screening practices enabled a productive technocultural discourse on a shared cultural history of Black womanhood. In a different study, Erin B. Waggoner (2018) analyzed fan hashtag activism responding to a trend of lesbian character deaths on television, which activists called the Bury Your Gays trope. Studying fan responses on Twitter and Tumblr through a communitarian ethics lens, Waggoner showcased how viewers used online platforms to critique LGBTQ media representation. Multiple chapters in this collection take up fan activism specifically and explore the affordances of hashtags as they interact with other media.

While much scholarship about digital activism is focused on activism for equality and justice, there is less scholarship on organized negative online activity related to or opposed to social justice. In this collection, we refer to the negative activity that seeks to interrupt positivity and intervene in social justice as anti-activism. This kind of anti-activism can take on different forms in digital spaces. One common practice for anti-activists is co-opting existing hashtags in an attempt to disrupt dialogue and progress toward social justice. For example, following the debut

of Gillette's "The Best a Man Can Be" 2019 Super Bowl commercial, those opposed to the corporation's commentary on toxic masculinity employed Gillette's own hashtag to draw attention to problematic gender norms. Anti-activists also produce their own movements and hashtags. For example, during the COVID-19 health crisis, numerous protests unfolded across the United States to criticize the government's role in legislating public health. While those supporting national and global social distancing practices were circulating tweets with #StayAtHome, groups critical of such mandates tweeted out their own hashtags. One example was #OperationGridlock, a hashtag tied to one of the first COVID-19-related protests to occur in the United States—one that resulted in thousands of citizens on the stairs and streets surrounding Michigan's state capitol building. The most common way anti-hashtag activism occurs is through the rise of counter-hashtags, which serve as foils to specific movements—for example, #AllLivesMatter as a response to #BlackLivesMatter, #NotAllMen as a response to #YesAllWomen, and so forth.

Although there remains a need for additional research in the area of anti-activism, an example of this in existing scholarship is Karen Lumsden and Heather Morgan's (2017) study of victim blaming and silencing strategies employed online. They argued that the advice commonly given to victims of online abuse (i.e., the "do not feed the trolls") perpetuates the sexism and sexual abuse at play in these exchanges. In a different study, Erika M. Sparby (2017) analyzed the ways in- and out-groups within 4chan's /b/ board (notoriously known for aggressive trolling behavior) drew upon their understanding of the site's ethos and collective identity to navigate offensive comments. Her study detailed how two transwomen engaged in the 4chan community with differing levels of success, given the ways they each identified with the community. The final section of this collection draws attention to anti-activist hashtag movements and strategies such as these. By researching problematic digital networking practices that directly engage with and derail digital activism, these chapters expand traditional definitions of hashtag activism beyond its typical association only with progressive causes.

The trends in hashtag activism scholarship outlined in this introduction—while not exhaustive—set the stage for the chapters included in this collection. Different contributors take up various research questions, such as how affect contributes to the efficacy of hashtag activism and how anti-activists leverage networks to spread problematic messages. Authors emerge from a range of disciplines and utilize a variety of methodologies to interrogate the life span and trajectories of specific

hashtag campaigns, study rhetorical strategies engaged by online communities, analyze how hashtags are employed for particular purposes, and consider how digital interactions carry over into external spaces and are embodied by participants and spectators alike. Delving into hashtag activism in a variety of forms (tweets, memes, personal narratives) and spaces (Twitter, Facebook, in-person protests), these studies reveal the strategies used by participants to question and construct online and offline identities (and imagined and actualized communities) in order to resist and reclaim societal narratives. They also showcase the complicated ways hashtag activism intersects with consumer culture, popular culture, and celebrity culture. This collection, then, makes a unique contribution to scholarship in digital rhetoric and networked technologies given its breadth and depth of original case studies on hashtag activism. By placing these diverse case studies into conversation with one another, this collection argues for broader inclusion in what is considered hashtag activism. These chapters demonstrate how digital fan tweets, co-opted hashtags, anti-activist political discourse, and media outlet practices all work in tandem with practices such as hashtag feminism and Black Twitter to shape today's social justice movements online. Furthermore, investigations into these practices are happening in an era of constantly evolving ethical concerns. These chapters are produced in an ethical framework that attempts to balance researcher goals and social media users' rights, and the editors were informed by practices recommended through the Ethical Guidelines published by the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al. 2020). To highlight the numerous factors influencing decisions scholars make when conducting hashtag activism research, this text contributes a novel conversation dedicated to ethics in a hashtag activist framework to round out and conclude this collection.

EXPANDING HASHTAG ACTIVISM: THE CASE STUDIES AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS COLLECTION

The organization of this collection is designed to support this argument about what defines hashtag activism. The collection is divided into four sections to emphasize different contributions of hashtag activism and build a coherent conversation. The first section, "Intersections between Online and Embodied Activism," considers how hashtag campaigns interact with offline movements, such as how in-person and online protestors created an imagined community in #MarchForOurLives. Together, these chapters analyze the various rhetorical strategies

hashtag activists use to accomplish their social justice goals and engage their particular communities. The case studies presented here showcase some of the affective elements that can be employed in social commentary, such as visual play and personal narratives.

In chapter 1, "Networked Intervention and the Emergence of #BostonHelp," Megan McIntyre presents a qualitative analysis of one of the hashtags that emerged in the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Because of the location of the blasts and the large numbers of tourists and runners visiting downtown Boston for the marathon, thousands of people were cut off from their belongings, accommodations, and transportation. #BostonHelp was born from conversations online about how to help runners and spectators stranded downtown. McIntyre's analysis reveals two emphases in these tweets: specific, material offers to help stranded people and instances of boundary work, the promotional and definitional behaviors that seek to maintain the hashtag's focus on specific material offers. She argues that these two sets of interventions—both a form of digital activism—are dependent on one another for their relevance and success.

Next, chapter 2 studies a particular aspect of successful digital activism campaigns: the generation and circulation of affect. In "Sticky Hashtags: The Role of Emotions and Affect in Hashtag Activism," Salma Kalim studies the formation of an affective digital public that rose in response to the brutal rape and murder of a seven-year-old girl, Zainab, in the city of Kasur, Pakistan. Kalim theorizes digital texts (hashtags, images, tweets) as sites of emotionality where subjects, objects, and their past histories come into play, leading to the chain of signification. Building on the work of Sara Ahmed (2014), this chapter uses notions of stickiness, blockage, and binding to complicate our understanding of the role of emotions and affect in hashtag activism and argues for tracking hashtags as they circulate and interact with other signs, objects, and events instead of treating them as a fixed repository of feelings and emotions.

Continuing to grapple with the role emotion plays in both online and offline protests, chapter 3 investigates hashtag movements facilitating and supporting the 2017 Women's Marches (which followed the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump) and the 2018 March for Our Lives rallies (which followed the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida), examining the role affect played in their larger activism goals. Through qualitative analysis of thousands of tweets, Melissa Ames and Kristi McDuffie present a comparative study that identifies the most effective rhetorical strategies

within the two datasets, attending to recurring affective devices (e.g., personal narrative, imagined communities) and considering their implications for digital rhetoric.

The second section, "(Re)Examining Societal Narratives through Hashtag Activism," takes on traditionally recognized aspects of digital activism where authors interrogate hashtag movements that challenge dominant norms concerning gender, race, and social status. Analyzing a variety of hashtagged dialogue and the ways they intersect with various digital spaces, these chapters reveal how digital activists respond to a variety of cultural issues, such as societal stereotypes and systemic oppression. For example, in chapter 4, "#iLookLikeAnEngineer: Women Reclaiming STEM through Hashtag Activism," Holly M. Wells studies the visual rhetoric of engineers through an analysis of the #iLookLikeAnEngineer social media campaign, which was launched in 2015 as a response to sexism directed at female engineers, and a dataset of photographs collected through the algorithm of Google's Image Search feature. This chapter explores the visual strategies employed by the hashtag activists and considers how both sets of images work to reinforce and reject problematic gender stereotypes that impact women's access to, and success within, STEM fields.

Sarah Riddick continues this focus on the visual rhetoric at play in hashtag activism campaigns in "The Ideograph and the #Pussyhat: Multimodal Rhetorics of Brevity in the Women's March." Chapter 5 focuses specifically on brevity as a multimodal rhetorical strategy and presents a case study analyzing the ways it functions in the Pussyhat Project, a grassroots movement that contributed substantially to the 2017 Women's March on Washington. Riddick argues that the project's rhetorical use of brevity—including and beyond the hashtag "#Pussyhat"—played an essential role in the march's rapid international success and continues to play a role in its ongoing influence. Chapter 6 studies memes (and other digital text) associated with three hashtags—#Hokkolorob, #HandsOffJU, and #SaveJNU—that feature dissenting student politics in contemporary Indian university spaces. Avishek Ray and Neha Gupta study the eliticization of certain universities and the processes through which certain "imagined communities" are framed as radical in these digital dialogues. This study questions how these hashtags enable imaginations of university spaces and attends to how certain kinds of political participation are encouraged/discouraged and which voices are amplified/effaced.

The third section, "Fan Culture and Digital Activism," moves into newer territory by exploring how hashtag activism is affecting other

forms of media. The chapters in this section showcase digital activism sparked by popular culture, such as reactions to celebrities and media representation. These case studies highlight how fans use digital tools to protest or support cultural conversation surrounding, or depictions of, race, masculinity, and sexuality. In chapter 7, "Wake Up Mr. West: Kanye West, the Sunken Place, and the Rhetoric of Black Twitter," Kyesha Jennings studies reactions to rap artist Kanye West's public comment that "slavery was a choice." In particular, this chapter studies humorous memes that circulated on Twitter under the satirical hashtag #IfSlaveryWasAChoice. Jennings presents a rhetorical analysis of these tweets that reveals how Black Twitter users employ African American vernacular, creativity, shared in-jokes, and catchphrases through memetic media to offer a viral clap-back that falls within the cultural traditions of signifyin' and that participate in a contemporary form of social activism.

Chapters 8 and 9 turn to activist campaigns tied to television fandom. In "Lexa Deserved Better: How One Character's Death Sparked a Revolution and Changed Media Representation for the LGBTQ+ Community," Erin B. Waggoner studies the #LGBTFansDeserveBetter campaign wherein fans of *The 100* criticized the murder of a queer character, Lexa, who was killed in a common trope called Bury Your Gays. Through a queer theoretical and technological determinist lens, this case study examines how fans used social media to fight for better media representation. Robert Barry Jr. turns to digital conversations concerning media representations of Black masculinity in his chapter, "Constructing Digital Diasporic Spaces and Reframing Black Masculinity through *Insecure*'s #LawrenceHive." Through a case study of fan tweets produced by viewers of HBO's *Insecure* (2016–2018), specifically the hashtag #LawrenceHive, this chapter demonstrates the ways fan engagement can be viewed as a form of activism. In this instance, Barry argues that viewer interactions on social media allowed for therapeutic conversations about Blackness in general and Black masculinity in particular.

The fourth section, "Interruptions and Interpretations of Digital Activism," continues arguing for broader considerations of what counts as activism by including anti-activism efforts that use hashtags to shape—and sometimes derail—social justice movements. These include infiltrating activist dialogues (e.g., to shift conversations and interfere with social justice goals) and framing social justice movements (e.g., strategically curating Twitter narratives to cater to or influence specific communities). In chapter 10, "Meme Warfare and Fake Hashtag Activism: 4chan's Alt-right Trolling Culture," Jeffrey J. Hall presents a case study of 4chan /pol/ threads in 2017 and 2018, analyzing the trolling culture

found on this popular anonymous bulletin board associated with the so-called alt-right. Through a combination of online ethnography and qualitative interviews with 4chan, this chapter explores the cultural context in which users engage in meme warfare and the variety of motivations that drive users to fabricate or co-opt hashtag activist campaigns.

Moving from the co-option of campaign to the co-option of cultural figures, chapter 11 studies Pepe the Frog's transformation into a political icon during the 2016 presidential campaign, arguing that it is one of the more blatant examples of the way zaniness has permeated contemporary American culture, particularly in online discourse. Using the framework of zaniness, Sean Milligan analyzes the rhetorical uses of Pepe the Frog memes by the alt-right. Turning to the use of the hashtag #FakeHistory following a 2018 Twitter fight between Dinesh D'Souza, a far right-wing provocateur, and Princeton historian Kevin Kruse over the political history of the Civil Rights movement, chapter 12 delves into another example of what could be called anti-hashtag activism. Anonymous analyzes D'Souza's use of this hashtag to frame universities and the media as partisan and unreliable. Their chapter ultimately argues that #FakeHistory contributes to the cohesion of the alt-right as a powerful counter-public in current political activism and threatens to deepen partisan fault lines around questions of education and expertise.

Chapter 13, "Digital Matters: Twitter Reacts and Hashtivist Narratives," looks at how media curations such as listicles can disrupt or distort digital activism. Gabriel I. Green and Morgan K. Johnson examine the Twitter Reacts genre of media content, in this case online articles that purport to represent the dialogue unfolding within the #BlackLivesMatter movement. They trace the ways these Twitter curations synthesize and circulate digital discourses while also producing new narratives. Together, the chapters in this section stress the complicated multi-directional conversations unfolding within and around hashtag activism.

Fittingly for a collection that features a variety of research methods employed by academics from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, this book closes by addressing the challenges and benefits of studying digital activism as it relates to responsible and ethical research practices. Internet scholars continue to grapple with complicated questions concerning how to ethically conduct research on/within online communities, including how to weigh the benefits of studying important sociocultural digital engagement against the need to protect the participants who inhabit those spaces. The conclusion, "Capturing a Moving Target: Ethical Research Practices for Hashtag Activism," presents a conversation about internet research ethics by four scholars who engage

in and study such work. This final piece is forward-looking in that the participants reflect on the practices included in this collection and also recommend best practices for other researchers.

In sum, this collection takes up a number of investigative questions, beginning with, how do we define hashtag activism? Many questions related to social justice in analog and other digital environments have been extended to this rhetorical situation wherein activism has been mediated by hashtags, presenting us with the question, how does this networked mediation affect digital rhetoric? How does it impact, alter, expand, and otherwise limit activism? How does intersectionality work (or not work) through hashtags? How do partisan arguments unfold? How are some voices privileged over others? What is it about the particular platforms, interfaces, and infrastructures that facilitate or intervene in these movements? How do hashtags expand visibility to underprivileged voices and increase access to social justice movements? What are the material affordances (and consequences) of hashtag activism? Not all of these questions will be thoroughly answered, and we aim to inspire our readers to take up this work in new and varying ways. While these chapters have much to offer, there are certainly many areas that remain to be studied. For example, most of our authors take a rhetorical or textual analysis approach to studying their qualitative data. This leaves much room for hashtag activism to be studied from a big data standpoint or a deeper standpoint, such as ethnography and participant interviews. Next, while we have also taken up issues of anti-activism—the use of hashtags for nefarious purposes like trolling—there is much more to be studied about the ways anti-activists co-opt hashtags to take control of a conversation (e.g., #YesAllMen, #BlueLivesMatter) and use online activity to create harm, like doxxing, that has not been largely taken up in this collection.

Finally, we have entered into internet research ethics conversations, in large part through the collective voices in the final chapter; as a collection, we have largely followed the advice offered by Amy Bruckman (2002) about disguising data. Given the difficulty in obtaining consent for online data (Hudson and Bruckman 2004) and given the way our authors are basing their arguments on numerous pieces of textual data, we find that this approach adheres to current best practices in internet research ethics. Yet because these standards are constantly evolving and will continue to evolve, we argue that our collection represents but a moment in time in this decades-long conversation. As editors and authors, we will certainly continue to develop our own thinking and practices in the coming years, and we encourage fellow scholars to take up these questions as well.

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