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Introduction

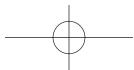
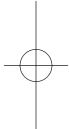
Feminist Takes on Networking Justice

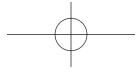
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When this book was coming together in the summer of 2019, we could not have imagined the state of the world that awaited us in 2021 as we finished it or the role that digital media would continue to take within our everyday work and leisure experiences. Hashtag movements like #BlackLivesMatter incited global protests as we mourned the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor among countless others, while the Dakota Access Pipeline was temporarily shut down in July 2020 (and is currently pending an environmental review) after four years of Indigenous and allied resistance, legal action, and digital protest through #NODAPL. The #MeToo movement continued to make waves, initiating its virtual Survivor Healing Series focused on disrupting rape culture and teaching practices for coping with and healing from the trauma of sexual violence. And #StopAAPIHate rallied attention around the rapidly increasing instances of anti-Asian hate crimes and abuse, particularly as a result of racist ideologies surrounding the spread of COVID-19.

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Our collection's title, *Networked Feminisms*, took on new meanings during the pandemic, when much activism was relegated online, when digital connections replaced in-person networks, and when social inequities were laid bare. The pandemic exacerbated existing race- and class-based inequities in accessing food, shelter and quarantine areas, stable incomes, and medical care. Moreover, the pandemic made clear the ingrained ableism in our social structures as many institutions quickly and without question transitioned to remote work—an option many disabled and/or chronically ill people have been requesting for a long time. In Canada, where we, the editors of this collection, live and work, a series of constantly shifting stay-at-home orders





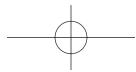
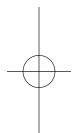
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highlighted the depth of work-based gendered inequities facing those who must balance a series of full-time jobs: remote working, home schooling for children, care-taking, and home-making. This necessitated the continued recognition that the emotional and physical brunt of pandemic life and care has often come to fall on womxn's shoulders. Evidently, the pandemic underscored an acute need to continue amplifying the decades-long work of racialized, gendered, and otherwise marginalized people, specifically with regard to the foundational work of Black feminists on intersectionality.

To seek greater solidarity and organization against unjust systems of power, like those magnified by the pandemic, as an editorial collective we approach intersectionality, the term famously coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), through the words of Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2015, 2017), who describes it as a broad-based knowledge project and not as the end point of analysis. As a field of study situated within the power relations that it studies, as an analytic strategy that provides new angles of vision on social phenomena, and as a critical praxis that informs social justice projects, intersectionality's "essence lies in its attentiveness to power relations and social inequalities," recognizing how "race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age are reciprocally constructing phenomena" (Collins 2015, 3). These mutually constructing categories underlie and shape intersecting system of power that catalyze the "social formations of complex social inequalities that are organized via unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for people who live within them" (16). bell hooks (2000) reminds us that intersectional feminist work must not forget that a commitment to feminism is a connection to political action, that there is a direct relationship between theory and practice (6). Learning about feminism takes place both inside and outside academic settings, and it is incumbent on scholars to recognize that feminism, "a movement to end sexist oppression," cannot stay in the academy—it should be given back to the communities from which it came in order to renew commitment to political solidarity (6). The now widespread adoption of intersectionality across disciplines, fields, and industries has helped it to flourish in important directions; however with this there is the chance that the grounded, practice based work of intersectionality itself risks being ignored as it circulates with the academy. Inside and outside of the academy, intersectionality has been tokenized by those with the most power. Feminism's calls to action have long been co-opted by white colonial neoliberal forces that benefit from the current unjust status quo. This book resists the siloing of intersectionality within the academic institution that Collins warns against, and instead embraces intersectionality's multifaceted "broad-based knowledge project" (Collins 2015). In different ways, each of our contributors outline intersectional feminist activist practices and theorizations that cut across disciplines, practices, and experi-

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ences. It only makes sense, then, to situate ourselves as editors and to pay respects to the land that we work and live on.

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Kwe, I am Shana MacDonald, an associate professor and artist-scholar-activist who works and lives on Haldimand Tract, land granted to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations, and the territory of the Neutral, and Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. I am a straight-passing queer woman and a white, settler of Scottish, French, and Mi'kmaq descent tied the Qalipu First Nation of Western Newfoundland. As a first-generation scholar I have always felt I was a misfit in the elite spaces of academic institutions. This has been a point of shame, but it also defines what matters for me and illuminates where we need to resist, and what kinds of access are needed to ensure community building continues within and beyond the academy despite the constraints placed on those most marginalized by our institutions.

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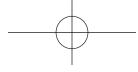
Ni hão. Guten tag. Olá. I am Brianna Wiens, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Waterloo, which is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land that was granted to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River, and is within the territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples. I live and have remotely worked in Stratford, which is the territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Ojibway/Chippewa peoples. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties. I often describe myself as inhabiting the spaces inbetween: mixed-race, the daughter of immigrant-settlers from Malaysia on my mother's side and Brazil on my father's side, bisexual, able-bodied but living with chronic pain from scoliosis and a spinal fusion. Stories, like the ones shared in this collection, have helped to shape and solidify the instability of feeling category-less, to queer the boundaries of the categories themselves, and to articulate the importance of taking up the space of the in-between.

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Hello bonjour! I am Michelle MacArthur, a white settler with French and Scottish ancestry. I am assistant professor at the School of Dramatic Art at the University of Windsor. Windsor sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. This anthology's focus on the digital realm and our reliance on digital modes of communication as we collaborated on it from across Turtle Island have prompted me to reflect on the ongoing disparities in access to digital technology. I am reflecting on how the digital divide is affecting Indigenous communities during the pandemic, how digital technologies have been used to oppress these communities, and conversely, how they might be used to redress inequities.

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Milena Radzikowska is a white settler, refugee Canadian. I work at Mount Royal University, which is situated in an ancient and storied place within the hereditary lands of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Îyârhe Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, and Métis Nations. It is a land steeped in ceremony and history



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that, until recently, was used and occupied exclusively by peoples indigenous to this place.

As a collective, our own research overlaps at the intersections of media, technology, performance, and design, specifically from an intersectional feminist perspective that is critical of the structures that uphold the academy. This commitment to intersectionality and justice necessarily means a commitment to decentering whiteness and other forms of oppressive operational, institutional, and structural powers, especially within our own editorial team. Within our collective, we take up different academic positions: Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, and Postdoctoral Fellow, each position bringing with it different access points to power, security, and precarity. We're also friends, partners, and, of course, feminists. Some of us are parents, sisters, and daughters. It is because of our individual and collective situatedness and the relationships we have built working together that we have come to think in more complex ways about the concept of networked feminisms and the possibilities that emerge from these digital connections.

Even as we are seeing startling increases in mediated misogyny, racism, and other forms of violence and discrimination online, many of us who are attuned to digital culture are privy to the feminist resurgence that has been building across various spheres of media production. As Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles (2020) note, “since the 2011 Arab Spring and the upwelling of Occupy movements across the globe, social networks have influenced how both those on the margins and those at the center engage in sociopolitical debate and meaning-making” (xvii). These conversations were made possible through networked activisms, or, as we define it, the various activist forms that take place through online networks and that have material and affective impacts in both mediated and unmediated arenas, from hashtag activism to social media campaigns to hacktivism. Networked feminist activisms have been crucial for inspiring counterpublic formation and maintenance, storytelling, coalition building, and intersectional education and advocacy. Our aim in thinking through networked feminist activisms in this book is to underscore how intersectionality cannot be just another buzzword, but a framework, a practice, and a way of living. As Flavia Dzodan (2011) so eloquently insists, our “feminism must be intersectional or it will be bullshit” (para. 1). To suggest otherwise contradicts the need to fight gendered injustices where they intersect with racism, colonialism, ableism, and queer and transphobias. In embracing an intersectional feminist approach, we must actively rethink feminist research and activism, starting with the canonical texts and histories that are so entrenched in academic and media spaces.

As Tara Conley points out in the opening chapter of this collection, “Black feminists have a long tradition of rejecting white feminism as a liberatory strategy for a select few and for its one-size-fits-all vision for the

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colonized subject. Black feminists continue this tradition across digital spaces to bring attention to white feminism's ineffectiveness as an organizing strategy as an ethos." Marisa Duarte, a member of the Pasqua Yaqui tribe, outlines in her chapter how Indigenous feminisms' resistance of white colonial practices shares a project with "anti-racist/anti-sexist movements including groups that apply digital tactics toward social change." And we agree—we recognize that the most significant activist movements have come from Black and Indigenous women. Within the last two decades alone, we have seen how the "me too" movement was created by Tarana Burke in 2006 from her organization Just Be Inc. (2003) to help Black women and girls heal from sexual violence before going viral as #MeToo in 2017; Idle No More was created by Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Sheelagh McLean, and Nina Wilson in 2012 to call attention to Indigenous rights and the protection of the land, air, and water; and Black Lives Matter was created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in 2013 in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin and wrongful acquittal of his killer, and has since become a global movement to end white supremacy and seek justice for Black communities. Each of these movements demonstrate the ways in which Black and Indigenous ways of being and knowing are socially and politically transformative, shifting the terms of digital engagement in the process. And these are not the only movements. Recent history has witnessed a range of feminists, including racialized, disabled, queer, and trans feminists, building campaigns, movements, toolkits, and conversations that are setting the agenda for how we work towards greater equities in all aspects of our lives, both online and off.

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As editors, we are guided by intersectional and Black feminisms,¹ Native and Indigenous feminisms,² as well as crip,³ queer,⁴ and trans⁵ feminisms. Grounding ourselves within these feminisms necessitates a commitment to continuously and critically interrogating the insidiousness of white, cis, hetero, ableist neoliberal feminism that seeks to re-center itself time and time again in our academic settings and everyday online digital spaces. Black and Indigenous feminist orientations in particular have served as a blueprint for how we approach scholarship on digital feminist activism and how to intervene into and counter white supremacy. What we outline in this introduction, and what is echoed across the chapters included in this collection, are insights into a series of related activist movements and orientations that are not only about women and gender, but about power more broadly—who holds and wields power and who does not and cannot within the current matrix of domination (D'Ignazio and Klein 2020, drawing on Collins 1990). As such this collection is indebted to the incredible earlier works of the many diverse womxn and gender non-conforming people who have fought, taught, and found joy before us, turning to intersectional feminist scholarly practices of naming and creating historical narratives where none exist in dominant



frames because they were purposefully ignored or erased, as well as supporting practices of imagining better futures, whatever those futures might look like.

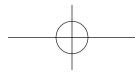
As a collection, the essays gathered here demonstrate the generative and powerful connections that thrive when we center intersectionality and listen to disabled experiences, uplift queer and trans voices, and celebrate the work of Indigenous, Black, and racialized women. Justice is an intersectional endeavour. As editors, we thus bring an overarching commitment to drawing together a range of experiences and standpoints that reflect the long-standing notion of “the personal is political” from intersectional perspectives within the digital moment.

In returning to the cornerstone of “the personal is political” time and time again, we seek to reaffirm that our everyday lived experiences of constraint are tied to larger social inequities that are built into the fabric of our institutions and nation-states. Taking our cue from our contributors, as editors we have oriented this collection and this introduction around the question of what it means to “take up space” as a networked feminist counterpublic (Jackson, Bailey, Foucault Welles 2020; Fraser 1990; Warner 2002) within the white supremacy and misogyny of the digital commons. The chapters in this book demonstrate a variety of ways that feminists have created support, solidarity, and community online and highlight the invaluable practices that have emerged from the nexus of activism, digital media, and technologies. It is only through these forms of introspection and dialogue that we can begin to develop scholar-activist spaces of genuine solidarity that are committed to benefitting, uplifting, and taking up space for and by those most marginalized and targeted by the reach of the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks 2000). And, even as we struggle through these spaces, it is the joy, hope, imagination, and creativity embodied in the essays in this book that offer a framework that will change not just the next generation of feminists’ futures, but their presents.

FEMINIST NETWORKS, COMMUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

[B03.13]

As digital media gained popularity in the early 2000s, feminists took notice. Taking advantage of emerging platforms, feminist activists connected and amplified their messages through social media sites like YouTube (2005), Facebook (2006), Twitter (2006), Tumblr (2007), Instagram (2010), and, more recently, TikTok (2016). The turn to digital media from analog forms of protest media like zines, film, and guerilla art makes a good deal of sense for our contemporary moment. The rapid circulation of social media content has ensured that feminist activist discourses have entered mainstream con-

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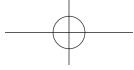
versations and have seen active debate in public spaces where they were not previously as admissible, in some cases going so far as to enable their virality in hashtag, meme, or video form. This kind of exposure to ideas, practices, and languages of social justice has created important spaces of discussion and political engagement in both mediated and unmediated spheres among the general public and policy makers, and has encouraged greater participation in activist spaces (Anderson, Toor, Rainie, and Smith 2018).

[B03.15] And yet, the uptake in social media use for advocacy and activism has not been without its failures and tensions, from the violent misogyny, white supremacy, colonialism, ableism, queerphobia, and transphobia that run rampant online, to the continual centering of neoliberal white postfeminist brands as the face of #feminism. In the face of these realities, this edited collection and its contributors work to amplify the labor of digital feminists while also holding the worst parts of the internet to account. Three key, interrelated areas inform the conversations this book offers: critiques of postfeminism, the ongoing threat of mediated digital misogyny, and the promises and constraints of networked feminist activism(s) as a field of research and a site of practice. Here, we offer a brief explanation of these areas and their overlapping interests.

[B03.16] **Post-Feminism**

[B03.17] Feminist media scholarship across the last three decades has grappled with the erasures caused by white feminism, and its most strident iterations: postfeminism and celebrity feminism. As Rosalind Gill (2007; 2017) and Angela McRobbie (2004) have aptly stated, postfeminism is an ideology that displaces the work of feminism as a radical and collective political movement focused on equity and structural change by emphasizing instead neoliberal ideals of individualism, choice, and (self) empowerment. Postfeminism circulates as particular tropes or “sensibilities” (Gill 2007) in popular culture, taking feminism into account only to repudiate it—for example, in the framing of consumerist habits like buying clothing and make-up as driven by individual choice, or in the wellness industry’s rebranding of self-surveillance and self-discipline as empowering and fulfilling for women. Particularly pernicious is postfeminism’s focus on individualism as it actively resists an intersectional understanding of the experiences of those who have been marginalized, holding instead white, Western, heterosexual, cis-gendered women as its ideal subjects. In a neoliberal climate such as ours, where individuals are required to be increasingly self-reliant and self-governing in the face of privatization and deregulation, where productivity and a “boss babe” ethos invite cheers and pats on the back, postfeminism thrives.

[B03.18] Of concern are the ways longer-standing postfeminist sensibilities proliferate online, particularly on social media platforms where women participate



directly in their circulation through their own (often competitive) postfeminist performances. This can be seen anywhere from workout and thigh gap selfies to self-care strategies that include restrictive diet detoxes, to the use of #WifeMaterial when documenting a domestic task like cooking or decorating while spurning other forms and ways of partnership. None of these advance the structural inequalities experienced by women, and all confirm a white-centered set of beauty and feminine ideals. In their own ways, each of the essays in this collection reject the whiteness and elitism of post-feminism through re-centering the racialized and gendered digital labor that diverse networked feminist counterpublics engage in for their own liberatory means.

Mediated Misogyny

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These postfeminist discourses have been paralleled by an equally pervasive rise in mediated misogyny and racism (Banet-Weiser 2018; Berridge and Portwood-Stacer 2015; Kendall 2020; Portwood-Stacer and Berridge 2014). Speaking directly to the onslaught of gendered violence online, Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate Miltner (2016) make clear that “[w]e are in a new era of the gender wars . . .” that are “marked by alarming amounts of vitriol and violence directed at women in online spaces” (171). This “networked misogyny” responds to a perceived threat that feminists are encroaching on men’s “rightful place in the social hierarchy” and more specifically “the incursion of women and people of color into what were previously almost exclusively white, male spaces” (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016, 172). For instance, groups of 4chan participants, defining themselves as the disenfranchised victims of feminism, employed the platform to “organize a campaign of revenge against women, ‘social justice warriors’ and the ‘alpha males’ who had deprived them of sexual success” (Ging 2017, 3). These current forms of popular misogyny continue to ensure that “rape culture is normative, violent threats against women are validated, and rights of the body for women are either under threat or being formally retracted” (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016, 172). The reach of misogyny’s gendered violence online and the retraction of bodily rights extends to non-binary and trans people, made abundantly clear in the recent rollbacks of transgender health care protections in the United States and related attacks on trans people online.

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As just one now well-known example, Gamergate exploded in the summer of 2014 as coordinated public harassments of prominent feminist critics of sexism in gaming culture. Emerging as a backlash to perceived bias within video game journalism, Gamergate quickly became synonymous with a violent form of trolling against women who are vocal about abuse, feminist critics of the games industry, and their allies and supporters. Doxing, rape threats, and death threats used by self-identified members of the gaming community to explicitly silence feminist critiques signal that this outpouring

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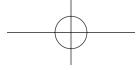
of mediated misogyny has no fear of ramifications, precisely because of the pervasive patriarchal culture we live in and the anonymity offered to abusers online. Every recent feminist happening (e.g., #MeToo, memes and hashtags countering #NotAllMen, #TimesUp, various iterations of the Women’s March, #BlackLivesMatter protests, #IdleNoMore, and #MMIWG and the red dress campaign for Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, etc.) has garnered a misogynistic and racist response as a violent reaction to women speaking in public. Despite actions ranging from policy and law to social movements to simple utterances of “no,” understanding violence against women, gender non-conforming, racialized, disabled, and otherwise marginalized people as non-normative has been overshadowed by a deep complicity with structures of white supremacy, ableism, necrocapitalism, and misogyny that are so clearly supported within digital culture.

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And yet, a growing number of feminist voices online have offered powerful responses to mediated and unmediated harassment by various antifeminist and white supremacist groups. Despite the emotional and physical labor of responding to antifeminist hate online, a hatred that has long existed on the internet, the emergence of networked feminist activisms within the last decade is new and, frankly, exciting. The nature of the conversations unfolding across (un)mediated spheres places greater emphasis on how harassment and violence are manifest in both online and everyday offline spaces in equal measure. Media studies scholars have argued for the last decade that there is no “real” separation between on/offline spheres (Hine 2000). And, as harassment against marginalized groups intensifies in coordinated ways, we cannot dispute this. As such, new forms of critical language are needed to equip ourselves with intersectional feminist tactics in order to face everyday misogyny and white supremacy in a moment when online and offline are inexorably intertwined.

[B03.23]**Networked Feminist Activisms****[B03.24]**

As Rosemary Clark (2016) argues, the shift to the digital includes both a discursive and increasingly inclusive focus within contemporary feminist social movements and activism. For Clark (2016), importantly it is “a hashtag’s narrative logic—its ability to produce and connect individual stories” that “fuels its political growth” (2). Drawing on Stacey Young (1987), Frances Shaw (2012) demonstrates how such “discursive activism” understands discourse as always already political, thus enabling new ways of speaking and new social responses and paradigms to emerge. From within the sexist and racist digital spaces outlined above, networked feminist activisms have emerged as movements which are actively “capable of triggering sociopolitical change . . .” (Shaw 2012 quoted in Clark 2016, 792). Shaw thus suggests that the emergence of paradigms and new modes of speech can



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lead to collective action and movement through the ways in which discursive activism highlights how the sentiment itself is political by virtue of being uttered.

Important research on digital responses to gendered and racialized violence has highlighted these kinds of complexities in the relationship between hashtags and feminist activisms (Berridge and Portwood-Stacer 2015). For example, social media hashtags have become effective ways of talking about Black women's issues when mainstream media outlets will not. In her 2017 essay on processes of decoding as becoming in Black Feminist hashtags, Tara L. Conley describes how hashtags like #WhyIStayed, #YouOkSis, #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, and #BlackPowerIsForBlackMen reimagine the human, thinking through how Black women's "encounters, desires, articulations, and bodies" are "entangled among sociopolitical processes of domination and authority," both online and offline, through their "renewal and strategy, mediation and embodiment, and as sites of struggle over representation, as becoming" (23). The work of decoding, Conley argues, contributes to intervening into assemblages of dominant ideologies that uphold "white privilege, racial paternalism, misogyny, and sexual and gender violence" (24). Hashtags as sites of becoming thus offer the potential to address and redress forms of racial, gendered, and sexual violence.

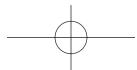
Significantly, Sherri Williams (2015) writes, "Black feminists' use of hashtag activism is a unique fusion of social justice, technology, and citizen journalism. . . . Twitter is often a site of resistance where black feminists challenge violence committed against women of color and they leverage the power of Black Twitter to bring attention and justice to women who rarely receive either" (343). Hashtags in this way enable affective and technological solidarity to express a range of reactions to rape culture and occlusions from mainstream media, including feminist rage, irony, and humor. Feminists are thus able not only to expose rape culture and systems of oppression but share their own experiences with an invitation for response (Rentschler 2014). Moreover, scholarship has recognized emerging opportunities for social justice, commenting on the transnational reach of feminist hashtagging for women's rights activism. "For those who have access to them," observes Eleanor Tiplady Higgs (2015), "social and digital media provide unparalleled opportunities for crossing borders of all kinds, allowing advocates for women's rights to organise around, through, and despite national and cultural divides" (344).

Nevertheless, it is these very acts of "border crossing," both physical and digital, that continue to reveal the kinds of power and privilege inherent to online spaces, even when fighting from intersectional perspectives for justice against sexual violence (Baer 2016; Higgs 2015). Campaigns like #Justice-forLiz and #BringBackOurGirls, though important for bringing awareness and possible change, underscore the prevalence of a white savior complex

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that plays into dominant stereotypes of Black and Brown bodies perpetuated by white feminist, neoliberal, and colonial frameworks and threatens possibilities for genuine solidarity (Higgs 2015; Khoja-Moolji 2015). Within this context, Williams (2015) underscores how “[w]hen white feminists miss opportunities to stand with their black sisters and mainstream media overlooks the plight of nonwhite women,” as has been the case with dominant coverage of the #MeToo campaign, “women of color use social media as a tool to unite and inform” (342). Black feminists on Twitter re-centered the conversation about #MeToo to founder Tarana Burke’s work and intentions, countering the ways in which #MeToo became tied to celebrity feminist visibility. As social media and digital technologies enable the circulation of activist work and community-building potentials, they simultaneously constrain such possibilities through perpetuating misogyny, white supremacy, and classism in updated, digital form (Benjamin 2019; Noble 2018; Wiens and MacDonald 2020) and place the burden on those who are most marginalized to provide the necessary correctives

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While the “algorithmic oppression” (Noble 2018) and “new Jim Code” (Benjamin 2018) embedded in search engines and social media platforms must be addressed, there still lies potential for world-building. Despite their shortcomings, including the ways they can distort or misinterpret complex issues, feminist hashtags have been incredibly effective at providing “easy-to-digest shorthands” (Bailey, Jackson, and Welles 2019, para. 37) that speak back to dominant ideologies surrounding violence against women, queer, and trans people and narratives of victimhood. Here, hashtags encourage a specific naming of the challenges that marginalized groups are up against, bringing into broader circulation issues that have long been silenced. Hashtags collectively “name what hurts” (hooks 2012), articulating aloud the harm done in order to draw attention to the matter. What should be underscored here is the significant and necessary role that previous hashtag movements and their creators have played in carving out digital space and sociopolitical awareness and presence for the future of current movements and where they can go, and what impact they can have. As Jackson, Bailey, and Welles (2019, 2020) point out, the important reckoning force of #MeToo could not have been made possible without the work done by its predecessors like #YesAllWomen, #SurvivorPrivilege, #WhyIStayed, and #TheEmptyChair, since each of these hashtag networks was already publicizing the interpersonal and structural violence experienced by women. The compounding efforts of what Deen Freelon, Meredith D. Clark, Sarah J. Jackson, and Lori Lopez (2018) call “Feminist Twitter,” a community influenced by Black women, Indigenous women, and women of color, has brought to the forefront subaltern communities and conversations that were originally silenced.



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SITUATING NETWORKED FEMINISMS: ACTIVIST ASSEMBLIES AND DIGITAL PRACTICES

[B03.29]

Networked Feminisms: Activist Assemblies and Digital Practices illuminates the myriad interventions feminist assemblies are making online through a necessarily interdisciplinary approach. This book gathers provocations, analyses, creative explorations, and cases studies of digital feminist practices from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives including, but not limited to, media studies, communication studies, critical and cultural studies, gender and sexuality studies, performance studies, digital humanities, feminist Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), and feminist Science and Technology Studies (STS). Given our aims, in pulling the book together we actively sought new ways to articulate scholarly structures in the hopes that, through the iterative processes of challenging disciplinary boundaries, we find new modes of meaning-making and more capacious, accessible knowledges. The result is a series of essays that consider how digital feminist activisms use conventions of networked assemblies to counter the individualizing forces of postfeminism, neoliberalism, misogyny, racism, ableism, and colonialism while foregrounding the types of systemic change so greatly needed, but often overlooked, in this climate.

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Tara L. Conley makes this clear in the opening chapter of this book when she situates hashtag feminism, a sign of the times, as a conceptual framework: a tool for organizing ideas and stories, collecting information, and documenting and organizing movements, especially for Black feminists. Bringing readers through a body of digital feminist research; her website, Hashtag Feminism, founded in 2013 and its blog posts and infographics; the feminist storytelling and organizing of #MeToo; and the tensions of competing beliefs and values as seen through Micki Kendall's #SolidarityIsFor-WhiteWomen, Conley carefully articulates the relationship between feminist praxis and ~~technical~~ processes used for engaging such praxis, both technical and material. In these ways, hashtag feminism is more than a mere tool; hashtag feminism sparks movement in the world as discourse, as embodied practice, and as ideology, particularly in the context of documenting historical shifts, and is thus not neutral.

[B03.31]

delete first "technical"

Similarly, Melissa Brown argues for the important role that Black women and LGBTQ+ people embody as “virtual sojourners”—digital technology users who use the same tools that dominant groups may use but for different means: for self-determination, for self-authorship, and for self-definition, where possibilities for both visibility and erasure take place. In employing these tools, Black and queer virtual sojourners establish important social relationships and discuss shared experiencing, while challenging heteronormative narratives of gender and sexuality and creating their own digital counter-publics and enclaves for Black and queer culture and identity.

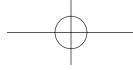
[B03.32]

[B03.33] Offering a playful cyborgian exploration of what they term “keywords for crip feminists” (keywords: chronic, fem(me)bot, doll, ghost, space, fail, sexy/funny), Adan Jerreat-Poole uses their essay to also carve out overlapping counterpublic spaces, specifically speaking to the ways that keyword searches construct users’ relationships to digital information and embodiment. Through grappling with such keywords, Jerreat-Poole intervenes into the algorithmic echo chambers of ableist digital platforms, centering disability and its (in)visibilities, complexities, and affects within feminist activism: “Turning the meaning of these words as we shift registers and positionalities is like turning a door handle,” they write, “opening to a room of our (collective, rather than singular) own.”

[B03.34] And, indeed, it is in turning words, ideas, and spaces over and in (re)considering the logics that we have been asked to grow accustomed to that Brianna I. Wiens argues we cultivate resistance. In offering a conceptual framework for orienting to hashtag movements, Wiens argues that “virtual dwelling” as a way of thinking and being in digital space encourages feminists to become more attuned to the practices, tools, and communities within reach. Wiens brings the reader through her own journey of virtually dwelling with the accusation that the #MeToo movement was a witch hunt, demonstrating how, in slowing down (a fight in and of itself against the neoliberal capitalism of white supremacy and patriarchy) and lingering with these moments of intrigue and outrage, feminists learn, organize, respond, and (re)purpose openings for digital activism and resistance.

[B03.35] Calling on such resistance and persistence in the face of anti-Indigenous racism and sexism, Marisa Elena Duarte details the digital tactics of cyber-defense that Native and Indigenous women engage with to protect their peoples, waters, and lands. Bringing together stories, histories, and scholarship around Indigenous women’s networked practices, Duarte articulates the necessity of framing Indigenous Internet connection, access, and use as issues of human rights and self-determination, rather than merely issues of digital literacy, ISP construction, or ICT use. Drawing on the 2016 #NODAPL movement, network sovereignty, and data-driven tactics for justice, Duarte makes clear that “Indigenous means of production and information distribution are key to Indigenous solidarity.”

[B03.36] Controlling the production and circulation of narratives also comes to bear in Ace J. Eckstein’s essay on the queer worldmaking potentials of trans intelligibility on YouTube, once again making clear the importance of Brown’s virtual sojourner in the quest for self-determination, authorship, and definition. Eckstein closely analyzes the transition channels of five trans men, demonstrating the significance of transmasculine counterpublics on YouTube and how, through these counterpublics, queer worldmaking comes to be. This, he suggests, brings “into focus questions of norms, normativity, and standards of queerness.” Ultimately, Eckstein argues that it is precisely



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the transness of transgender men’s self-published stories of manhood that marks them as intelligible and worthy of taking up space and place in their own right—not for their proximity to cismasculinity.

Radhika Gajjala, Sarah Ford, Vijeta Kumar, and Sujatha Subramanian’s essay also thinks through Internet use as a practice of place-making and counterpublic formation, specifically in the context of Indian digital diaspora and international outreach. Gajjala, Ford, Kumar, and Subramanian highlight how this is particularly important as white feminism often tokenizes upper-caste brown feminist work while claiming intersectionality, especially within academic settings. As such, when examining activist encounters that affect Indian women and women of Indian descent across digital South Asian diasporas, it is crucial to map the relationalities and tensions of race, caste, gender, sexuality, and geography within hashtag publics. In doing so, the authors ask the important question of how and when the relationship between “BIPOC” and “anticaste” might make political sense, specifically in the context of intersectionality and the material and sociohistorical situatedness of hashtag activism.

In addition to attending to the material and sociohistorical dynamics of hashtag activism, Helena Suárez Val argues for the inclusion of emotional and affective practices in recording and mapping networked feminisms. Suárez Val offers digital cartographies of femicide as “feminist affect amplifiers” to demonstrate how feminist activists in Ecuador, Mexico, Spain, and Uruguay use their own knowledges and emotions to change mainstream affects of apathy around femicide, the gender-based murders of women and girls. Because, as she so eloquently argues, feminist activists understand the political strength of publicly displaying emotion, these cartographies illustrate the power of feminist activism in translating grief and rage into public action through collecting, analyzing, processing, and distributing data about site-specific femicides, publicizing the systematic prevalence of these tragedies and modulating the “affective atmosphere” of gender-based violence.

Suárez Val’s essay reminds us of the many intersections that are necessary for interrogating gendered violence, and Leandra H. Hernández and Sarah De Los Santos Upton’s chapter too argues for the need to approach violence against women from an intersectional perspective, specifically within reproductive contexts. Focusing on what they term “reproductive femicide,” the authors explore social media and digital social justice as tools for combating reproductive and gender-based injustice through analyzing specific hashtags like #ProChoice, #ReproductiveRights, #ReProJustice, and #ReproductiveJustice. By focusing on reproductive justice, the chapter investigates the relationships between reproductive relationships and practices and policies that shape reproductive experiences. The authors highlight and explain intersections of race, class, and gender to transcend the pro-life/pro-choice binary that often prioritizes white women’s experiences. Hernández

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and De Los Santos Upton’s essay emphasizes the need to further engage with discussions of reproductive justice that center matters of intersectionality, inclusivity, and coalition building, themes that are also key to Angela Smith, Ihudiya Finda Williams, and Alexandra To’s chapter.

[B03.40] Reflecting on their 2020 paper, “Critical Race Theory for HCI,” Smith, Williams, and To discuss the writing process and the reception of the paper, offering personal stories to help form the wider context of the relationship between Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), and to shed light on the need for more justice-oriented work that encourages scholars to bring their “full selves to our academic community through a labor of scholarly activism for racial justice.” In bringing together their stories and justifications for writing, the authors effectively provide a set of tools for future scholar-activists, contextualizing what scholar-activism can look like and offering calls to action and recommendations for sustainably engaging with CRT and racial justice in technology research and practice.

[B03.41] In the closing chapter, Elizabeth Nathanson asks readers to embrace the complexity of networked meaning-making within digital culture, focusing on the iconic Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Instead of accentuating historical accuracy, Nathanson argues that we might reflect on Ginsburg’s popular representations within digital culture as a sign of changing times when it comes to feminine representation, where older women are no longer simply viewed as “symbolic of stasis or obsolescence,” but are “agents of change and liberal revolution.” At the same time, Nathanson suggests that we might give popular representations the credit they’re due, considering the ways that the production and circulation of popular digital artifacts, like memes, of Ginsburg offers “unpredictable and distinctly energetic” interactions with political events. In analyzing RBG’s circulation within and across networked publics, Nathanson demonstrates how the Supreme Court justice’s popular representations signify and perform important intergenerational feminist politics.

[B03.42] At the beginning of this introduction, we reflected on how much has changed since we started work on this collection in 2019. The digital landscape at the center of this book is, of course, ever evolving, posing challenges for a collection like this one to keep up and ensure its material remains relevant by the time it makes it to print. But if the pandemic and the issues and questions of inequities it magnified have taught us anything, it is that the work of social justice is not over. The central concerns of the networked feminist activisms outlined here extend from the analog past to the digital present, from offline to online spaces, from the pages of this book to the conversations we hope they initiate.



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NOTES

[B03.43]

1. See, for example, Collins 1990, 2015, 2017; Combahee River Collective 1981; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Davis 1981, 1990; 2015; hooks 1981, 1984; 1990, 2003; 2012; Lorde 1984, 1997, 2017.

2. See, for example, Anderson 2010, 2011, 2016; Cook-Lynn 1997; Green 2017; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, and Barman 2011; Tallbear 2014, 2015, 2017.

3. See, for example, Bailey and Mobley 2018; Fritsch 2019ab; Garland-Thomson 1997, 2002, 2011, 2016; Hamraie and Fristch 2019; Kafer 2013; Nishida 2016, 2018; Wendell 1989, 1996.

4. See, for example, Ahmed 2006, 2017, 2019; Butler 1990, 1993, 2004; Halberstam 2005, 2011, 2012; Sedgwick 1990, 2003.

5. See, for example, Bettcher and Garry 2009; Bettcher 2006, 2012, 2013; Bornstein 1994; Feinberg 1992, 1996, 1998; Namaste 2000; Stryker 1994, 2004, 2008.

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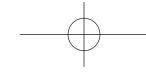
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