

## Introduction: Making Race and Gender Politics on Twitter

In this book we argue for the importance of the digital labor of raced and gendered counterpublics. Ordinary African Americans, women, transgender people, and others aligned with racial justice and feminist causes have long been excluded from elite media spaces yet have repurposed Twitter in particular to make identity-based cultural and political demands, and in doing so have forever changed national consciousness. From #BlackLivesMatter to #MeToo, hashtags have been the lingua franca of this phenomenon.

African American journalism is an often highlighted example of the influence counterpublics can have on the mainstream public sphere, even under conditions of extreme inequality and surveillance. The African American journalist and suffragist Ida B. Wells, for example, famously engaged in a careerlong anti-lynching campaign at the turn of the twentieth century. While the logic of Jim Crow and a deeply racist nation resulted in white-run news sources that legitimized or ignored the lynching of African Americans while embracing racist mythologies of Black barbarism and white civility, Wells reported on lynching from the perspective of African American families and communities who lived in fear of white mob violence and who found

no protection in a complicit legal system. The consequences of Wells's work were severe. In 1892 a white mob burned down her newspaper's offices and, by all accounts, intended to lynch Wells or her co-editor, J. L. Fleming, but found them absent. Ultimately, Wells's persistence and courage in telling alternative lynching stories helped lead a national antilynching movement.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, during and after World War II African American newspapers told the stories of the domestic oppression and terror faced by Black veterans even as mainstream news sources engaged in a white nationalistic fervor that ignored such soldiers altogether. Other groups that have experienced varying degrees of exclusion from political discourse and power have also created notable mainstream interventions through community-centered frames; some examples here are the newspapers of the 1960s feminist movement, which buoyed national activism against employment discrimination based on gender, and the theatrical storytelling of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), which steered movement among both drug companies and the national government on AIDS research in the late 1980s and 1990s.<sup>2</sup>


Such examples of counterpublics at work are usually presented to assess the historical shape of the U.S. public sphere, with less emphasis placed on the role counterpublics continue to play in shaping U.S. politics in the modern era. In fact, some have suggested that counterpublics, and the alternative meaning-making processes they further, have waned as U.S. institutions that formerly excluded marginalized voices have normalized, at least on the surface, their inclusion. Since the 1980s, and well into the supposedly "color-blind" Obama era, neoliberal narratives of inclusion and diversity insisted America has achieved or is

near achieving its democratic ideals. Yet such narratives perpetuate the invisibility of members of counterpublics who, despite increasing token inclusion and celebration as objects of consumption, are still vastly underrepresented and misrepresented in contemporary politics. The virulent sexism and xenophobia that arose and were repeated over and over again in mainstream political discourse during the 2016 election cycle highlight the failure of inclusive ideals in the public sphere. It is to this underrepresentation and misrepresentation, along with efforts toward solidarity and community building, that contemporary counterpublics respond, using media technologies available to them. Our work here demonstrates that counterpublics are alive and well in contemporary civil society, using Twitter as one important technology to push the mainstream public sphere on issues of social progress in ways more powerful and visible than possibly ever before.

In the twenty-first century, the proliferation of social media has enabled the widespread study of and speculation about the impact of digital technologies on politics, activism, and social change. Key among these debates is the role of social media in shaping the contemporary public sphere and, by proxy, our democracy. 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. Building on the success of the activist tool TxtMob, Twitter was launched in 2006 as a microblogging platform that allowed users only 140-character communications at a time (280 characters as of November 2017); by 2015 the site boasted more than 300 million active users.<sup>3</sup> These users' tweets create a continuous live

deluge of information. Following certain users, creating lists of users, and using third-party apps are among the tactics available to help manage the flow of tweets. Hashtags, which are discursive and user-generated, have become the default method to designate collective thoughts, ideas, arguments, and experiences that might otherwise stand alone or be quickly subsumed within the fast-paced pastiche of Twitter. Hashtags make sense of groups of tweets by creating a searchable shortcut that can link people and ideas together. Throughout this text we use *hashtag activism* to refer to the strategic ways counterpublic groups and their allies on Twitter employ this shortcut to make political contentions about identity politics that advocate for social change, identity redefinition, and political inclusion.

### Evolution of the #



In the late 1990s, the “pound sign,” as it was called in internet forums, was used to group items in online conversations and chat streams. In 2007, Twitter user Chris Messina asked his followers what they thought about using the sign to designate groups on the fledgling platform. His tweet would be the catalyst for the ongoing evolution of hashtags as a method to thread conversations, people, and movements together. Since this user-created innovation in 2007, hashtags have been so normalized by Twitter users that their use has spread beyond the platform and been incorporated into other social media spaces such as Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr. More and more people have adopted hashtags as a way to connect multiple sites of shared interest, and mainstream media outlets and politicians, noting their ubiquity, have used them to engage on a range of topics

and debates.<sup>4</sup> Hashtags have even become self-referential and an ironically used convention in everyday speech.

The narratives that emerge around Twitter hashtags evolve more quickly than traditional media, and for this reason Twitter has become one of the major tools for disseminating information to the public in the hope of spurring particular actions or outcomes. For example, when the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation announced in 2012 it would withdraw financial contributions to Planned Parenthood intended for breast cancer screening, Planned Parenthood and its supporters flooded social media spaces with the hashtag #IStandWithPP, along with emotional stories and compelling statistics about the significance of Planned Parenthood to American women's health. Within days, the Komen Foundation responded to the growing public relations disaster by reversing its decision and pushing the official behind the original decision into resignation. This speed in the race to frame important issues is attractive to activist tweeters because it means there is less time for those with power to create spin or for traditional media to moderate issues according to mainstream logic. In an attempt to keep up with this communication revolution, many mainstream news organizations, politicians, and corporations have been motivated to create their own Twitter accounts and have hired "social media managers," tasked with responding to the new communication logics enabled by the platform. These efforts are not always successful, as became evident when New Yorkers and other Americans hijacked the New York Police Department's public relations hashtag #MyNYPD to tweet a seemingly endless stream of stories about police brutality, or when Bill Cosby's social media team asked followers to use #CosbyMeme to create fan images of the

actor but instead were inundated with memes referencing the dozens of sexual assaults of which Cosby was accused.

The practice of hashtagging is shaping how everything from presidential executive actions to snack-food branding takes shape. While hashtags have extended the communicative reach of those who already benefit from widespread access to the public, for those individuals and collectives unattached to elite institutions, Twitter, and the unifying code of the hashtag, have allowed the direct communication of raw and immediate images, emotions, and ideas and their widespread dissemination in a way previously unknown. While the public waits for print journalists to narrativize national crises and controversies, ordinary people on the scene are able to tweet firsthand accounts. While politicians embed particular issues in opaque language and meaningless euphemisms in their public discourse, ordinary people are able to explicitly advocate using unrepentant and concise rhetoric on these same issues. Notably, Twitter has low financial and technological barriers to entry. Using relatively inexpensive equipment, and with limited technical knowledge, ordinary people can engage in public speech and actions without mediation by the mainstream media or other traditional sources of power. Moreover, the use of hashtags and other conversational conventions enables an emergent organization whereby individual tweets coalesce into a larger collective storytelling.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, as the internet sociologist Zeynep Tufekci points out, hashtags facilitate something that looks very different from traditional, institutional-based politics—a kind of democratic participation that is inclined toward a horizontal, identity-based movement building that arises out of grievances and claims.<sup>6</sup>

For example, the 2011 democratic uprisings that came to be known as the Arab Spring demonstrated the power of Twitter

hashtags in movement spaces. Along with more traditional forms of organizing, people used English- and Arabic-language hashtags to alert each other to the movements of state actors and communicate with the world what was happening in the region. Frustrated by corrupt local governments, income disparities, and poor labor conditions, youth and union members organized large-scale protests in multiple countries in North Africa and the Middle East. These uprisings were not coordinated but built on each other, aided by the proliferative capability of social media to share important, time-sensitive information.<sup>7</sup> Hashtags like #Tunisia, #Jan25, and #Egypt that specified the country and day of political action were among the first to bridge political consciousnesses across oceans and cultures.<sup>8</sup> Hashtags morphed as the movements grew, responding to both the number of places and points of overlap.

This resistance precipitated the Occupy movement in the United States as it served as one motivation for the magazine *Adbusters* to issue a call to readers to mobilize in Zuccotti Park on September 17, 2011, using the hashtag #OccupyWallStreet.<sup>9</sup> Fed up with the economic corruption of global capitalism, New Yorkers and other members of the public descended on Wall Street for a multi-monthlong sit-in and occupation protest that sparked other encampments across the country and around the globe.<sup>10</sup> Participants used the hashtag #OWS and region-specific hashtags such as #OccupyOakland and #OccupySeoul to signal the needs of those encamped, report on police actions, and communicate with others about the goals of the movement.<sup>11</sup> Whether it's the clever repetition in the hashtag #StandWithStandingRock or the power of using a name like #CyntoiaBrown, successful digital mobilization and the continued media interest in the way Twitter hashtags are deployed have made "hashtag

activism" a favored strategy for young activists trying to effect change.<sup>12</sup>

Hashtag activism, a term that first appeared in news coverage in 2011, describes the creation and proliferation of online activism stamped with a hashtag. We argue that this online activism leads to material effects in the digital and physical sphere. In this book we focus on the activism of members of historically marginalized groups in the United States, which in recent years has had a measurable impact on political debates, social policy, and the public consciousness. These hashtag activists, occasionally maligned as "slacktivists" or "armchair activists" because digital activism is sometimes considered less valid than direct action and is mistakenly regarded as in competition with it, use hashtags to create social change.<sup>13</sup> As we discuss in the following chapters, such hashtags as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have had far-reaching influence, moving debates about identity politics, inequality, violence, and citizenship from the margins to the center and into places as crucial as presidential agendas.

### **From the Margins to the Middle: Publics and Counterpublics**

The question of how ordinary people use media in democratic societies is not new. Scholars of the public sphere, from Jürgen Habermas and Michael Werner to Nancy Fraser and Catherine Squires, have long contended that contemporary civil society is in part constructed, maintained, and moved toward or away from change by mediated messages that inform the public. Inherent in this idea is that communication is politics, that mediated public discourse, which in the twenty-first century is all public discourse, is political: it informs, misinforms, expands,



limits, bolsters, or undermines the way we understand and in turn respond to and engage with politics.

While hashtag activism is a uniquely twenty-first-century phenomenon, there is something familiar about the goals of those using Twitter to push for social change. Indeed, ordinary people challenging, redefining, and changing the terms of public debate is one of the most enduring and crucial characteristics of democracy. Much of the discourse related to U.S. progress, from the abolition of slavery to the sexual revolution, was rooted in narratives created on the margins of society. Counterpublics, the alternative networks of debate created by marginalized members of the public, thus have always played the important role of highlighting and legitimizing the experiences of those on the margins even as they push for integration and change in mainstream spaces.<sup>14</sup>

In an idealized civil society, democratic access to the production and distribution of public forms of communication would be (and always would have been) granted to all people. Yet this is not, and has never been, the case. Access to public discourse, and thereby access to politics itself, has always been severely limited for those with less power and privilege. Just as civil society throughout history, from the Enlightenment salons in Paris to the famed Lincoln-Douglas debates, only granted individuals with particular privileged identities access, marginalized groups face ongoing barriers to inclusion in the public sphere. U.S. politics, and the issues and debates that shape it, have largely excluded individuals who, at various points in history, were not considered full citizens or otherwise worthy of prominent roles in civil society. Among those who have been excluded are people of color (in various iterations, but we use the term here to designate people who have been marked as “other” by ideologies

of white supremacy), women (in this book, we consider women anyone who identifies as a woman), members of the LGBTQIA+ community, immigrants, people with physical and mental impairments, and the poor and indigent.

The political formations and cultural values that have justified these exclusions have been explored in depth in countless works and are beyond the scope of this book, yet they are important here because exclusion from the public sphere has never rendered these groups fully voiceless or wholly stifled attempts at remaking meaning, and in turn politics, in ways that are reflective of group experiences. Rather, these groups have birthed and nourished counterpublics in which their experiences and political values are given primacy. Though members of counterpublics have sometimes been invisible in conventional political spaces, the effort of counterpublics to integrate and interrogate mainstream spaces has had significant influence on the shape and evolution of U.S. politics. From the Negro spirituals sung by enslaved Blacks to the Riot grrrl festivals of third-wave feminists, members of marginalized publics have always created their own communication forms, and in turn their own politics.<sup>15</sup> Of note, these counterpublic communication forms have served not only to reflect and legitimize counterpublic politics but have had a real influence on definitions of citizenship and inclusivity as mainstream politics has been forced to respond to the ever more visible presence of those on the margins.

### **Measuring and Chronicling Hashtag Activism**

Our interdisciplinary mixed-methods approach to understanding hashtag activism by networked counterpublics draws on theories and methods from communication studies, digital

humanities, and network science. We illustrate the particularly complementary roles of network science procedures, communication studies theory, and critical humanities interventions. Through these approaches we offer readers multiple entry points into the data in an inquiry that illuminates how counterpublic networks construct and define issues of race, gender, and sexual politics.

From the outset, we approach hashtag activism as a networked activity, focusing not only on the attributes of individual tweeters or activists but also on the connections between them. This affords a number of possibilities, including, crucially, the ability to identify emergent leaders and their pathways of influence within each of the counterpublic networks we examine. Network science, and its related suite of analytical methods, prioritizes social structure, rejecting the assumption implicit in much quantitative social science work that individual attributes are what matter when accounting for social outcomes. Instead, a network allows us to consider the nonadditive and intersectional nature of attributes, relationships, and entire social systems in producing outcomes of interest.

Transforming online counterpublics into networked data makes it possible to understand their dynamic and interdependent properties while also narrowing an overwhelming volume of data to a manageable size. Each one of the hashtags we consider in this text appeared tens of thousands of times on Twitter, and some, such as #BlackLivesMatter, have appeared tens of millions of times, with no indication of subsiding. This presents an obvious analytical challenge—even at an initial 140 (later 280) characters per tweet, we would have had to read hundreds of thousands of pages of text to analyze the dynamics of a counterpublic Twitter conversation in raw form. Instead,

we transformed these individual tweets into a network of individuals connected by conversational features in the text they produce. Specifically, we connected individuals to one another by using two Twitter conversational conventions: *retweets* and *mentions*. When someone authors a tweet, by default that tweet will be visible to anyone on Twitter. Someone else can choose to *retweet* that tweet, broadcasting it to their own followers, either in its original form or with some commentary attached. The act of retweeting signals at least passing attention to, and often an endorsement of, the original content. Users may also *mention* one another by using a particular conversational syntax (*@user*) within the body of a tweet. The reasons to do so are numerous, including simply addressing one another, engaging in a conversation, tagging or giving credit to one another, or drawing otherwise unengaged users into a conversation. By means of these conventions, a stream of tweets can be reconfigured as a network, with Twitter users connecting with one another via retweets and mentions within the text of their tweets.

Organizing tweets into networks rather than keeping them solely as individual posts allowed us to pick out individuals, messages, and subgroups of particular importance for closer examination. Of note, we relied on the mathematical properties of networked importance, which are agnostic to the content of the tweets or the identities of the individuals who compose them (other than the aforementioned syntax that signals a connection between users), allowing us to select individuals and cases for analysis without any a priori notions about who ought to be included in the analysis. Moreover, the specific mathematical properties we drew on, including *degree centrality* and *betweenness centrality*, are unevenly distributed within networks, such that selecting cases for analysis that exemplify these properties

results in selecting tweets that are disproportionately more likely to be seen by, and to have influence over, the greatest part of the network. Focusing on importance and influence is, of course, a normative choice, though one informed by the everyday users in these networks whose communicative actions (retweeting, mentioning) collectively created the measures of networked importance that guided our selection. Borrowing Zizi Papacharissi and Maria de Fatima Oliveira's idea of *crowdsourced elites* in online activism, we transformed the tweets in our samples into networks, which allowed us to highlight important people and conversations based on the individual and collective properties of their networked communication.<sup>16</sup>

Next, methods from digital humanities allowed us to study this massive corpus of tweets in two ways. We used Stephen Ramsay's construct of algorithmic criticism and humanities critical theories, such as feminist and critical race theories, to fully explore the significance of the data.<sup>17</sup> It is by bridging between digital quantitative data and humanities theorizing that the unique story of the power of these tweets can be told. Digital tools can be used to answer humanities questions that previously would have been too cumbersome to answer without computational assistance. We examined nearly four million tweets in the course of this project. We were able to assess this archive using theories that address power and identity to deepen our analysis of the significance of these tweets both for who composed them and for those spurred to action by their content.

Finally, discursive analysis of the counterpublic networks allowed us to explore the significance of hashtags beyond quantified popularity and digital curation to highlight the social and political labor undertaken by hashtag activists as they work to tell stories and make meaning. This approach is a constructivist

one that recognizes that discourse constructs reality by making ideas and events meaningful in particular ways that uphold or challenge cultural ideologies. A central focus of this book is how members of counterpublics use hashtags to make and remake reality in the face of dominant discourses that represent them as undeserving of full inclusion in civil society. Thus our discourse analysis of these counterpublic networks grants agency and a unique power to members of counterpublics engaging in the very meaning-making processes that help define citizenship and cultural belonging. We examined the discourse from the most popular and influential tweets and members of our networks (as determined in our network analysis) for causal interpretations; attributions of agency, blame, and belonging; and interpersonal connections, narrative connection, storytelling, and contextualizing to understand how members of counterpublics use hashtags to frame particular issues and experiences in an attempt to contribute to their relevance in the public sphere.

Through this unique combination of network analytics and critical readings of tweet texts, in this book we illustrate how and why Twitter hashtags have become an important platform for historically disenfranchised populations to advance counternarratives and advocate for social change. We show that members of these marginalized groups, in the tradition of counterpublics, use Twitter hashtags to build diverse networks of dissent and shape the cultural and political knowledge fundamental to contemporary identity-based social movements. Further, we find evidence of significant permeability between the mainstream public sphere and counterpublics on the Twitter platform, suggesting radical possibilities for contemporary democracy.

Deciding what hashtags to include in our analysis was not easy. We had a plethora of hashtags to choose from that demonstrate

the power of the medium, and more emerge every day. However, the hashtags we chose best exemplify the diversity of networks that have been able to operationalize the tool in the service of counterpublic discourse. The selected hashtags, which focus on race, gender, and their intersections, have helped facilitate real shifts in U.S. political debates, community practices, and media representations between 2012 and 2017. Through a university agreement with Twitter, we had priority access to a 10 percent random sample of data from Twitter's streaming application programming interface (API) for the duration of that time period.

### **Voices from the Margins**

As hashtags are built on networks of connection, it would not have been possible to write this book without getting some insight from network users and creators about their experiences. Because we believe the inclusion of these cultural workers' voices is important, we identified influential users and creators of hashtags and asked them to speak to the reality of the networks they were nodes in, what happened or did not happen that made their hashtagged networks successful, and what other forms of work online and offline they see as important to hashtag activism. Rather than participate in the translational practice of interviews, which can lead to misunderstanding and obfuscation of the goals of subjects, we wanted hashtag users to speak for themselves. Thus each chapter includes an essay written by an influential member of a particular hashtag activism network. We consider these essays to be in conversation with our research.

In addition, throughout the book, we have included examples of tweets created by people using the hashtags we examine. We view hashtag users and creators as researchers themselves,

and we see part of our charge as practicing a more egalitarian model of research whereby our “subjects” are understood to be collaborators, particularly in light of the way some researchers have exploited prominent Twitter and hashtag users.<sup>18</sup> We shift this practice of potential harm by working collaboratively, ensuring that creative voices are front and center.

Of course, centering the voices of people—particularly marginalized people who are otherwise not in the public eye—risks exposing them to unwanted and unanticipated attention (however public their posts may be). Although both the Twitter API rules and best practices in online research ethics require us to confirm that the tweets we publish are (at the time of publication) still publicly available, we took some additional steps to honor, as best we could, the intentions of those we feature in this book. As we selected tweets to illustrate discursive themes, we were careful to consider the context of and intended audience for the content, choosing, for example, messages intended for the general public rather than posted in reply to a particular user (though still technically readable by the general public). We also respected signals of desired privacy; thus we did not include tweets that were subsequently deleted, those from closed accounts, or tweets from users who made direct requests for privacy. The ethics of whether and how to include social media data in research are not straightforward. But we believe that our approach strikes a balance between authentically representing conversations as they unfolded and protecting subjects from unwanted exposure. We hope readers will hear the authors’ voices as scholars alongside the multitude of voices from the subjects of our research.

In chapter 1, we consider the way women use hashtags to center and legitimize their experiences with violence. We



illustrate how hashtags like #YesAllWomen, #Survivor Privilege, #WhyIStayed, #TheEmptyChair, and #MeToo work to challenge dominant understandings of gendered violence that have long relegated women to the sidelines of their own experiences of victimization, survival, and resilience even as they debunk cultural myths and offer systemic critiques of patriarchy. We consider how such hashtags further the work of a feminist counterpublic and how they break new ground in feminist political projects. Along with our analysis, chapter 1 includes a brief meditation on #SurvivorPrivilege by its creator, the feminist activist Wagatwe Wanjuki.

As chapter 1 illustrates, the networks that make up “Feminist Twitter” are diverse despite the often narrow representation of feminists and feminist issues in traditional media. Young Black women and other women of color have been able to harness the power of the hashtag to amplify conversations that do not normally receive mainstream attention. In chapter 2 we examine #FastTailedGirls, #YouOKSis, and #SayHerName to illustrate how Black women have organized on Twitter to talk about the politics of their everyday experiences with violence. These hashtags trouble the business of mainstream (read “white”) feminism by highlighting the ways Black women and girls are policed, blamed, and harassed, and openly challenge feminist spaces that exclude Black women and girls, as a means to radically rethink gender equality. Jamie Nesbit Golden, feminist journalist and the cocreator of #FastTailedGirls, has offered her thoughts in conjunction with our work in this chapter.

In chapter 3 we center the hashtag #GirlsLikeUs, which marks a particularly compelling network of transgender women who trouble negative societal representations and build community through storytelling and organizing. Though not overtly

intended for a mainstream audience, #GirlsLikeUs allows followers a window into the lives of trans women beyond media stereotypes. This chapter explores the creation of the hashtag and how it has been used, noting the most frequent topics and the ways in which the tweets signal an ingroup conversation that is open to the public. We consider in turn the contemporary moment of trans visibility and politics and connect the tweets created by this community of trans women, including several high-profile members, to it. The creator of the #GirlsLikeUs hashtag and outspoken trans advocate Janet Mock allowed us to include her story and mediation on #GirlsLikeUs in this chapter.

In chapter 4, our first on the digital activism of what some have dubbed “the new civil rights movement,” we examine how racialized counterpublics used Twitter as early as 2009, following the killing of Oscar Grant, and through 2012, following the killing of Trayvon Martin, to make state-sanctioned anti-Black violence visible to those outside traditional African American and civil rights communities. We examine how Twitter’s shifting infrastructures in just a few short years changed the way members of racial justice counterpublics engaged one another, as well as media-makers, celebrities, and politicians. This online activism, storytelling, and strategy building set the stage for what would come to be known as the Black Lives Matter movement in ensuing years.

Chapter 5 examines the spread of racial justice hashtags in the wake of the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014 and through the series of high-profile incidents of police killings that followed. We consider how the hashtagged naming of victims of this violence, the geographic locations of their deaths, and resulting demands for change have evolved

over time. We include several hashtags and topics that were created or occurred prior to Brown's killing, among them #BlackLivesMatter and #EricGarner, and a series of those that followed, including #BaltimoreUprising and #PhilandoCastile, to illustrate how the networks that create these hashtags are evolving over time. This chapter includes an essay by #BlackLivesMatter activist DiDi Delgado on how the hashtag, and other digital organizing, helped shape her work.

In chapter 6 we consider hashtags created not by members of marginalized publics but by those with more social power seeking to ally themselves with the political needs and experiences of marginalized communities. Here we examine the creation and spread of the hashtags #AllMenCan and #CrimingWhileWhite. These hashtags called on men to speak out and act on feminist issues and urged white Americans to acknowledge their privilege in the criminal justice system. They present complex questions about allyship and whether it can in fact be performed successfully online, how such hashtags contribute to the larger goals of networked counterpublics, and what happens when hashtags intended to further social justice focus on those with the most privilege. Emmy Award-winning comedy writer, *Daily Show* alum, and creator of #CrimingWhileWhite Jason Ross offers his thoughts about his own ally work in this chapter.

In the concluding chapter we look across the counterpublic networks explored in the book, noting similarities and differences in the content, strategies, and network topologies. In doing so, we identify the underlying patterns that enable digital counterpublics—the “signature” of their success. Consistent with the rest of the text, our analyses are both quantitative (network structural) and qualitative (discursive strategy), with implications for academic audiences interested in the mechanics

of online social movements and for cultural workers leveraging online media to further their causes. By linking together theorizing networks of dissent, mixed methods and interdisciplinary approaches, and commentary from members of these networks, this book presents a complex picture of contemporary digital counterpublics and demonstrates how to inclusively study the digital behavior of often ignored members of U.S. society.