Online Advocacy Work

"Palatable" Platforms and Privilege in GUI features on Twitter and Instagram

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ABSTRACT

In 2019 to early 2020, 33 white supremacist crimes occurred at Syracuse University. Several groups organized to call for accountability, including the Black student led NotAgainSU. Echoing previous scholarship, the protesters used hashtag activism to build networks of support through #NotAgainSU. Through these networks, they built coalitional advocacy networks, which are integral to social justice efforts. However, hashtags are embedded in interfaces which structure "micro-interactions" and mediate the circulation of political content; thus, designers also have a role to play in advocacy work. In this paper, I draw from survey and interview data to learn about people's experiences with the circulation of the hashtag, and what interface features of Twitter and Instagram were most useful to organizers in building coalitions. Combined with their responses, I conducted an interface analysis focused on "micro-interactions" of Twitter's "What's Happening" interface, and Instagram's Live Stream interface. I argue that though both may have helped to build coalitions, both interfaces falsely equate the stakes of different users, and perpetuate privilege and power. Finally, I suggest a series of heuristic questions and considerations for researchers and social media interface designers.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing**; • **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; • **Interaction paradigms**; • **Graphical user interfaces**; • **Collaborative and social computing**; • **Collaborative and social computing theory, concepts and paradigms**; • **Social media**; • **Social and professional topics**; • **User characteristics**; • **Race and ethnicity**;

KEYWORDS

Graphical User Interfaces, Social Media, Social Justice, Technical and Professional Communication

1 INTRODUCTION

Against a backdrop of a history of similar crimes across the nation and globe, from Fall 2019 into the Spring of 2020, more than 33 white supremacist crimes occurred at Syracuse University. The administration was widely criticized for their slow reactions, lack of transparency, and responses to protesters. In response, a self-described, Black-led student group, NotAgainSU, formed to call for institutional reform. As with many activist campaigns, some of their social justice work was conducted online through #NotAgainSU, specifically through Twitter and Instagram. As a part of my dissertation research, I collected data on #NotAgainSU, and I conducted surveys and interviews with organizers and social media participants to learn more about how the interfaces of Twitter and Instagram mediated the relationship and coalitional possibilities through #NotAgainSU. This paper broadly enters into conversations at the intersection of social justice work and technology and interfaces design.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Human-Centered Design and Social Justice

Scholars in technical and professional communications (TPC) have recently incorporated social justice [1, 2, 14, 15, 25] and human-centered design [24] goals into their work. Human-centered design principles ultimately center people and their intrinsic worth, rights, and dignity, rather than just empirical data [24]. Relatedly, social justice is concerned with "ensur[ing] that groups and individuals receive equal opportunities and are not marginalized and disenfranchised" [14] (p. 472). It is both a descriptive term, but also a pragmatic endeavor, and it attends to inequalities and those who are under-resourced [14]. Importantly for this paper, it is both collective and active and involves coalition building [25]. People must form alliances and coalitional groups to enact political change, but people in those coalitions must center the voices of those multiply marginalized in their coalitional social justice work.

Scholars who engage in social justice recognize the three interrelated P's of positionality, privilege, and power. Positionality refers to how people relate with each other in different contexts and in different scenarios; positionality is inherently anti-essentialist and in constant flux, based on different situations, individual people's particular and personal histories, and intersectional identities [25] (p. 63-65). Privilege refers to unearned advantages that some people maintain by virtue of having certain identity markers that allow them to become the unquestioned background [25]. It is both "socially constructed and socially maintained" (p. 88) and it allows some people to become the norm [25]. Those with less privilege must expend more energy to live in the world and, often, this means being asked to explain their experiences to others with more privilege [25] (p. 101). Scholars have extensively theorized power, but

Jones, Moore, and Walton understood it through Foucault's notion of power, which they defined as struggling against domination, exploitation, and against subjectivity [15]. It is inherently structural (p. 221). While Foucault's definition is useful, Walton, Moore and Jones[25], pushed scholars to take Foucault's concepts and think about intersectional empowerment (p. 109-110); by empowerment, they mean thinking about how "organizational and structural frameworks [that] focus[] on justice as the central project" (p. 107). Intersectionality refers to Crenshaw's [5] understanding of how different parts of a person's identity intersect to create different experiences.

As a part of empowerment, Walton, Moore, and Jones [25] argued that designers should center the voices of those multiply marginalized. While they connected rhetorical listening to positionality (p. 73), by extension, positionality implicates privilege and power as well. Ratcliffe defined rhetorical listening as a stance of openness that people may choose to assume in relation to other people or texts [19]. Walton also argued that TPC scholars and practitioners should be conscious of how their designs may "fail[] to see (because we did not seek) and [...] failed to hear (because we did not create a space for listening)" and that scholars should "seek to create spaces for listening" [24] (p. 420). People in positions of privilege and power must critically listen and respond to those with less privilege and power.

However, social justice initiatives and coalition-building is often mediated through online platforms. Tufekci demonstrated how social media platforms can enable "networked" advocacy, which enable people to organize more quickly and without clear leaders, but it can also be dispersed and therefore without clear goals [23]. In a similar vein, Jackson et al. focused on hashtag activism specifically, and they argued that hashtags function in the tradition of counterpublics [13] (p. 20). As I explored a hashtag campaign, it is integral to also explore the technologies on which this social justice hashtag campaign occurred.

2.2 Graphical User Interfaces

Broadly, technology cannot be understood as separate from the cultures that build them; technology both reflects and reinforces existing cultural norms and standards. As Haas wrote, "Technology is not just what does the work, it is the work—and that work relies on an ongoing relationship between bodies and things" [9] (p. 291). Though this is true of all technologies, I focus here on graphic user interfaces (GUIs) because they are a site through which designers can implement human-centered design focused on rhetorical listening. GUIs implicate all three P's of social justice; as Sano-Franchini pointed out, positionality is particularly important for interfaces, though interfaces thus implicate privilege and power by extension [20]. Scholars have long attested to how interfaces are sites of political struggle [21]. GUIs also affect identity performances [18] and exercise Foucaultian productive power by making certain things appear normative [22]. Thus, GUIs speak to how privilege enables some people to become the norm.

Of particular import for social justice work, coalitions, and listening, interfaces are relational; Arola [3] argued that interfaces cannot be only understood through their visual components, as the threat becomes that they would thus essentialize people. Instead,

Arola understood interfaces as relational, and thus an important part of how people build social justice coalitions by mediating the ways that people interact and listen. Sano-Franchini argued that Facebook's interface is structured around four "micro-interactions," including browsing, reacting, commenting, and posting [20]. Sano-Franchini joined other scholars, such as Gerlitz and Helmond [8], in pointing out that these micro-interactions are all incentivized and monetized by Facebook and social media companies, which ultimately monetize affective interactions [20]. Broadly then, if part of social justice work is about building coalitions and building relationships between people and those in power must critically listen, then it is important to look to interfaces as places where people can build those relationships. However, if power and privilege maintain power dynamics by requiring more energy from people in less privileged positions, it is also important to think about how interfaces, as sites of relationships can also drain the energy of people with less privilege and ultimately monetize social justice content.

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Considering the importance of coalitions in social justice and advocacy work and how interfaces, as relational sites, affect positionality, privilege, and power, I asked:

- If social justice is about building coalitions, relationships, and listening, and if interfaces mediate those relationships, what role might Twitter's and Instagram's interfaces play in helping or hindering these coalitional relationships?
- How might these interfaces affect people with different relative positions of privilege and power as they build these coalitions?

There are two important and related methodological points to make here. First, my research was not designed as collaborative participatory research, as my dissertation focused on the hashtag and these questions were about the effects of design features. Relatedly, I also recognize that as a person who benefits from white supremacy, I do not have the lived-experience to speak to how the same design features may affect people differently. This is an important point because Walton, Moore, Jones [25] wrote that researchers who pick up social justice because it is new or popular risk exploiting communities already oppressed by not fairly compensating participants and communities for their work. Following Florini [7], I recognize that the intentions of my research matter little and that by using data collected from an oppressed group, I am reproducing historical power dynamics of white supremacy. At the same time, Florini [7] continued that when operating in systems of oppression, people must choose between "bad choices and somewhat less bad choices" [7] (p. 211). Similarly, Walton, Moore, and Jones [25] wrote that "Others with more privilege can and must do more to make the field and the work we do more inclusive" (p. 112) by centering the voices of those most affected and multiply marginalized. Walton, Moore, and Jones [25] and Agboka [1, 2] argued that technical communications researchers should center the voices of those most affected and multiply marginalized. Following these scholars and acknowledging the limits of my own lived-experiences, I reached out to the organizers of the campaign to ask for their input, help circulating a survey with the possibility for follow-up interviews, and to offer a

deliverable as defined by them. I applied for institutional support to compensate interview participants.

I reached out to organizers with NotAgainSU who helped circulate the IRB-approved survey with the opportunity for a follow-up interview by posting it to their Instagram page in the Fall of 2020. This snowball sampling method means that my data was not representative, but it was the only feasible way for me to circulate the survey [17]. The survey was hosted on Qualtrics. I used closed and open-ended questions, asking people if they chose to circulate pre-existing content using #NotAgainSU or promoting the organization, or if they chose to create their own content. I also asked why they made those choices, which platforms they chose to circulate content on and why, and how people experienced the circulation of the hashtag. I offered pre-selected choices for questions about why people chose to circulate the hashtag (e.g., "felt a personal obligation") and offered participants an open option. I asked people to describe their experiences of the circulation of the hashtag using three words, and I asked a follow-up question that allowed people to elaborate. Finally, I asked people about platform environments, or the general "feel" of the platform and how that affected their decisions. Survey participants were given the opportunity to provide an email address for a follow-up interview. Due to the small number of responses, I reached out to all participants who provided an email and indicated that they were willing to complete interviews. Three survey participants responded. I interviewed an organizer of NotAgainSU and two white survey participants. To give participants the most control over their interviewing experience, I offered participants the option to be interviewed via Zoom, following Deakin and Wakefield's [6] or via email following Linabary and Hamel's [16] reflexive email interviewing approach. The interviews were semi-structured. I asked participants to describe their experiences in their own words in more detail, and I followed up on their survey responses.

Based on the organizers' interview and based on another organizer's survey responses and the survey responses of a student of Syracuse who identified as Black on the survey, I looked critically at both the interfaces of Instagram and Twitter. Broadly, I used Sano-Franchini's framework of "micro-interactions" [20]. From least to most passive, micro-interactions include browsing, or simply scrolling through a news feed; reacting, or indicating a user's reaction to another post or comment by "liking" it or choosing another reaction; commenting or giving tailored responses to other people's posts; and, posting, which involves sharing to a users' "wall," though often these interactions are already highly structured [20]. I augment Sano-Franchini's framework with explorations of cognitive affordances. By cognitive features, I am drawing from Stanfill's [22] and Harston's [10] definition which refers to how users know what to do with a particular site, and it involves things like labelling.

4   RESULTS

Of all 28 participants that answered the question on my survey at the time of this analysis, everyone saw content on Instagram. The second most commonly cited platform was Twitter, with 20 participants. The prevalence of Instagram may have been due to my snowball sampling method and the platforms that the organizers chose to focus on. The organizer said that they chose these two sites because they anticipated that their college-aged audiences would be there. The organizers also said that they worked to make graphics "visually appealing" to audiences and that they posted content, especially Instagram Live content, "to make sure people understood why we were feeling the way we were feeling." Their point is important because it speaks to how they used the interface to get their audiences to rhetorically listen.

Their tactics to build empathy through interfaces proved successful; when I asked survey participants who were not organizers about what kinds of content that they found memorable, people frequently cited (1) personal stories, (2) informational posts about demands, and (3) visual content. Though not mutually exclusive, these responses suggest that participants did "listen" to the experiences of NotAgainSU.

At the same time, the organizers spoke to how the circulation of the hashtag was "traumatic" and "draining"; one organizer described their experiences as "depressing, powerful and life changing" and they continued to describe their life as a "rollercoaster" since organizing. A second organizer from the survey described their experiences as "Powerful, draining, public" and continued to say that the experience was "extremely *traumatic* [...] but very formative." A Black student survey participant said that the circulation of #NotAgainSU was "Empowering, vulnerable and disturbing." These responses echo Walton, Moore, and Jones's [25] argument about how the circulation of content can be traumatizing and exhausting.

In contrast, white survey participants did not respond indicating the same sense of trauma and exhaustion. Though the white interview participants acknowledged that they did not experience the hate crimes in the same way and did express some concerns for their audience, they were less concerned with their audience and their relationship between their audiences as they were in less vulnerable positions. They were more concerned with what made the content appealing for them to consume. They talked about what made platforms "palatable." Echoing hooks' [11] argument about "eating" the Other, the concern was how to consume information in a way that does not require challenging the status quo or changing positions.

This points to how positionality and privilege are implicated in interfaces; if privilege means having to expend less energy to go about the world [25] (p. 101), then these results point to how interface designs are not only a part of how people circulate content to build empathy, but also in how privilege manifests and maintains positionality through interfaces. As a site between users that mediates positionality and the potential for coalitional audiences, it is important not only to consider how interfaces can help build empathy, but also to consider how interfaces, as relational elements, privilege some people over others, particularly in terms of whose energies they drain and who can maintain a comfortable position. The question is one of who has to alter their position. My points here are not about the survey participants themselves, but about their experiences and the stakes that were involved for them. The stakes of the relationships that the interfaces mediated for people in multiply marginalized positions are not equivalent to the stakes of those who were not affected by the crimes. Broadly, the stakes for unaffected white survey participants were comfort in consumption.

The stakes for organizers were building coalitions, drained energy, and trauma.

To re-center the experiences of those most affected, I approach the rest of this analysis around the stated experiences and stakes of the student organizers. I focus on the organizers' points about the stakes for them, but I also focus on what organizers said was useful to them about Instagram and Twitter. To explore the features that organizers cited, I use Sano-Franchini's framework of "micro-interactions" [20] to explore which interface features could theoretically also contribute to both coalition-building and exhaustion. An important limitation here is that I cannot speak for the organizers' experiences of these features; rather, I am drawing from their stated experiences and Sano-Franchini's experiences and framework.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Trending Hashtags and "What's Happening"

In this section, I am arguing that Twitter's "What's Happening" sidebar that features "trending" hashtags and content adds a temporal element to Twitter's interface. The sidebar flattens the stakes of users in different positions; while convenient for some users because it lessens the effort needed to find information, it falsely suggests that the ease for viewers is of equivalent value to the stakes for protesters.

The organizer from the survey said that they "liked that the hashtag put my content among other notagainsu related content so that everything was in one place." Thus, I am focusing my analysis on Twitter's interface around hashtags here. On Twitter, one way in which hashtags gain more publicity and potentially build coalitions is by "trending" in the "What's happening" side bar on the right side of the interface. The idea behind the "What's happening" toolbar is that it is supposed to update people with current events, rather than just what is presented in the algorithmic feed. Oftentimes, the "What's Happening" toolbar includes trending hashtags.

I understand this sidebar to be similar to Sano-Franchini's understanding of browsing. Sano-Franchini argued that browsing involves scrolling through a News Feed for posts from people in one's network, and that browsing on Facebook's timeline is "cross-temporal" because people can experience images from across time next to each other [20]. While people can scroll through Twitter's main interface similarly, the "What's Happening" section functions as a highly curated form of browsing; it is similar in that it is supposed to "update" users about what other people are doing, and, though events happen at different times, since the title of the section is "What's Happening," it is all presented as happening at the same time. Though it lacks the infinite scrolling feature of Facebook's news feed, there is a "show more" button that does take users to another screen where they can scroll through trends. Furthermore, the clickable nature of each trend itself can become an infinite, and rhizomatic, scroll.

Importantly, "cross-temporal" browsing has different stakes for different audiences and users. This highly curated form of browsing may be experienced by some users as convenient; they do not have to scroll back through Twitter's timeline to find out about events that occurred a few hours ago, rather than those that are occurring at that specific moment in time. The sidebar makes content easier for some people to consume without having to change their positions. However, the stakes were much higher for organizers and people affected by the crimes on campus. As the organizer alluded in the quote above, they experienced the circulation of the hashtag as "public" and "traumatic." As Twitter's interface made the hashtag prominent, especially through the "What's Happening" sidebar, it brought the protester's hashtag and content to audiences who could coalitionally align with protesters, but it also brought the hashtag to audiences who could look in and drain the energy of protesters without changing their own positions. Thus, the stakes for protesters were of coalitional support, but also trauma. Though cross-temporal interfaces like "What's Happening" may be opportune for some audiences looking to be updated without altering their own positions, I argue that this highly curated form of browsing caters to the convenience of audiences, overlooking the coalitional stakes and potentially traumatizing circulation about which the organizer spoke.

The "What's Happening" side bar has some added cognitive features that flatten the stakes of different users. For instance, the cognitive label of "What's Happening" is a useful label for users looking to be updated without changing their positions or habits. It tells them exactly what they will see there. However, scholars argue that when news media cover things like hate crimes, they often write about those issues as isolated events; news media rarely contextualize those events in broader patterns of oppression, such as historical and global patterns of white supremacist and patriarchal violence [12]. With the title, "What's Happening" the sidebar suggests that whatever social issue the hashtag is indexing are only happening now, thereby de-contextualizing them out of larger patterns of oppression. Thus, even if the hashtag gains enough popularity to trend and be featured in the "What's Happening" sidebar, the sidebar may not be reflective of "What's [systemically] Happening" because the interface design positions those issues as a singular event, or hashtag. If the stakes for the organizers were to build sustaining coalitions with audiences, then the cognitive label "What's Happening" makes the hashtag into an episodic, and singular event, potentially undermining long-term coalitions against systems of oppression in favor of a convenient label for other users looking to be updated.

Additionally, the label of "trending" flattens the stakes for different users. Though Twitter is notoriously obscure about their proprietary algorithm to determine news feeds and trending features, the idea behind a trend is that it is something that a lot of people are doing; it is popular. The interface often includes other elements about those trends, such as which other hashtags a particular hashtag is trending with, how many Tweets use that particular hashtag, where the hashtag is trending, and if the hashtag or post has been promoted by a particular company. Thus, there is an intensified element of popularity here; while Sano-Franchini argued that Facebook's News Feed also becomes a "popularity contest," the trending feature adds to that element [20]. In this case, the suggestion becomes that a social justice campaign needs to gain enough popularity to be seen by other users, and it emphasizes viewers' stakes that they may miss something that is "popular."

However, the suggestion that a social justice campaign should "trend" and become popular to gain visibility ultimately puts the

onus back on those most affected to get the attention of others and build coalitions; the suggestion is that the hashtag should be tweeted enough to win the popularity contest; it relegates the work of coalition-building back onto those most affected. It also perpetuates privilege because as Walton, Moore, and Jones [25] argued, privilege is maintained through dominant ideologies of meritocracy, whereby dominant culture assumes that people can earn what they need in inherently unjust systems (p. 88). Again, the label falsely flattens the stakes of different users here; while the stakes for unaffected internet users browsing Twitter are to be caught up on what is "trending" and popular, the stakes for people seeking to build coalitions are much more significant. For protesters, the stakes of winning the "popularity contest" are increased visibility that can help build coalitions, but which can also be experienced as traumatizing. The suggestion that the hashtag is just "popular" minimizes these stakes.

Finally, the "What's Happening" toolbar also flattens the economic stakes of advertisers with those of protesters. Much like Sano-Franchini argued that Facebook's News Feed can be "jarring and out-of-context" in its temporal re-arrangement of users' experiences by placing politicized content within other content, [20] I argue that placing promoted content next to social justice issues can also take social justice hashtags out-of-context, but in a depoliticizing way; arranging the two next to each other falsely suggests that promoted content for films or beauty products are of the same importance as trending hashtags addressing social issues. This is important considering scholars' arguments that interfaces structure interactions that can be monetized. Placing a trending social justice hashtag next to promoted content uses the affective attention of the trending hashtag to draw users' eyes to advertisements, and thus, company profits. In this case, the "What's Happening" sidebar flattens the stakes of protesters and advertisers.

5.1.1 Implications. Ultimately, the implications here are twofold for both that people who design social media interfaces and TPC researchers. Interface designers at social media companies should critically consider how they display trends to users and the different stakes that users will have in those trends. Similarly, TPC researchers can look to how trends implicate different stakes for stakeholders as a point of analysis. First, they should consider the implications of the labels "What's Happening" and "trend." The former takes social justice issues out of larger patterns, and it implies that social justice issues are singular events. The latter emphasizes popularity and put the onus back onto those most affected. If the term "trend" suggests popularity, what labels can platforms use to avoid the connotation that something is just popular? Does displaying the number of Tweets on a social justice campaign turn it into a popularity contest? Second, both people who design social media interfaces and TPC researchers should also consider what content social justice content and hashtags are situated among. Are social justice hashtags dispersed with promoted content, thereby suggesting that less-pressing issues are on an equal level to social justice issues? Furthermore, does the presentation of trending hashtags and the title of sidebar and interface areas where "trending" content is featured suggest that particular hashtags or events are isolated, rather than a part of ongoing historical white supremacist

and patriarchal patterns? Could the interface re-situate those issues with something like tags without being exhausting?

Some of these issues could be addressed through simple re-design measures, such as re-arranging the interface to not place jarring content next to each other, reconsidering what information is shown and re-labelling the titles of sections and sidebars, and potentially adding tags to indicate the ongoing nature of oppression. However, other areas around content-moderation are harder to address. As organizers and scholars have expressed feeling like the circulation of content related to violence is re-traumatizing [25], is there a way that hashtags can be curated to avoid that re-traumatization? Though platforms have historically moved to using algorithms and human content-moderators, algorithms miss things and there is a very real human toll on content-moderators.

5.2 Instagram Live

In this section, I am arguing that Instagram's Live Streams may have made content more "immediate," and altered power dynamics by enabling posters to gaze back at people who consumed their content. However, these interactions still occur on an interface that flattens the stakes between users. Viewers can react and comment on Instagram Live streams, putting more pressure on posters to "perform."

Both the organizer with whom I spoke and a second organizer from the survey talked about Instagram Live being a useful feature for them. The organizer from the survey said, "I also used Instagram often because of the live stream feature." The second organizer who I interviewed further elaborated, saying that Instagram Live was useful for events that were planned, but also for things that were happening at that particular moment or if something happened suddenly. They said, "we would make sure someone was on Live to make sure other people [were] also witnessing [what happened] and [... to] mak[e] sure other people [were] watching at the same time to make sure we [were...] not making anything up." Survey respondents also frequently noted Instagram Live as some of the most memorable content, pointing to the effectiveness of the Livestream feature as well. Though I cannot speak for the organizers' experiences of Instagram Live beyond these comments here, I am following their lead in thinking about Instagram Live's interface through Sano-Franchini's framework.

In contrast to Sano-Franchini's reflection about "anachronistic time" on Facebook's News Feed, the organizer's quote points to how Instagram Live adds a different kind of temporal element. Sano-Franchini wrote that Facebook gives users an "anachronistic sense of time and order." She argued that "Such engagements are also distinct from media engagement across older sources of news such as radio, the newspaper, or television, which audiences tend to experience relatively synchronously, based on the broadcasting and publication schedules of media corporations" [20]. Sano-Franchini's observations are astute, but Instagram Live also importantly differs from broadcast media and deeply affects how the interface affects the relationship between the poster and the viewer, and again highlights how the interface can flatten the stakes for protesters and for viewers.

First, the suddenness of the Live Stream interface affects relationships and the stakes of different users. While broadcast television

is scheduled well in advance, and though some Instagram Lives can be replayed through IGTV, as the organizer's quote points out, some of the Instagram Live feeds had to be sudden; thus they were dependent on people being online at the time that they went live and on those people's personal decisions about their notification settings, as people may get notifications when someone "goes live," extending things like browsing out into people's everyday lives. This sudden-ness of Live Streams and the "documentary-style" of them make Live Streams feel more urgent; there can be a sense of anxiety about what is happening in Live Streams; the Live Stream feature ultimately adds an element of "immediacy," which refers to the desire for the interface through which one watches to disappears [4] (p. 272-273). Rather than anachronistic time as browsing on Facebook's News Feed, Instagram Lives make viewers feel like they are in the same time *and* space, thus collapsing both.

As the organizer points to, this can be useful in showing experiences and building empathy to build coalitions. However, again, the collapsed space and time of Instagram Live Streams again flatten the stakes between users. First, the sudden-ness can be experienced by potential viewers as inconvenient; if they are doing something else, they may choose to turn off notification and not to join the Live Streams. However, when they do join, the anxiety in Live Streams have different causes and stakes as well. Viewers' anxiety may stem empathy and feelings of fear that something terrible will happen on Live, or it may stem from simple fear-of-missing-out. The stakes for them are about what they can consume or take in from their existing positions.

In contrast, the experience of being *gazed in* upon is very different than gazing or consuming information. Tellingly, the organizer from the survey described their experiences as both "public" and "draining," pointing to how these experiences are very different. Though Instagram Live may have been useful to build coalitions, as the second organizer's quote points to when they spoke about making sure that other people witnessed their experiences, the problem with needing to make sure that other people witnessed their experiences in the first place is one way in which privilege is maintained through what Walton, Moore, and Jones call questioning and critical interrogation. Critical interrogation refers to how people in marginalized positions have their experiences questioned by people in dominant positions [25] (p. 98-100). Being in a position to be gazed in upon to answer questions about experiences of oppression always functions in a milieu of white supremacist oppression and power.

Thus, again, the stakes of Instagram Live flattened these experiences of publicity. As the organizer from the survey said, they experienced the circulation of #NotAgainSU as "public," and "draining," pointing to the stakes and experiences of being gazed upon through features like Instagram Live. However, people who viewed these Live Streams did not express the same sense of being "public," or feeling drained. For them, the stakes were more about taking in information to potentially coalitionally support protesters. The stakes of Live Streams for different people were not equivalent.

A second important way that Instagram Live differs from both browsing and traditional broadcast media and flattens stakes is through how the interface presents the presence of others. Both the account that has gone Live and other people who join the Live Stream can see who else is viewing the Live Stream. This is

importantly very different from when people browse a Facebook News Feed; rather than invisibly surveilling the News Feed, posters and others can *gaze back*. Looking back has two important and related potential benefits; first, it can be useful for building coalitions because it offers those who post the chance to know who their audience is; in traditional broadcast media, people had to create content with only generalized audience knowledge. However, as the organizer pointed out, when talking about selecting platforms, knowing one's audience is important. Second, looking back can alter the power dynamic of the interface by potentially making the relationship between the poster and the viewer more reciprocal; both have knowledge about the other. Instagram Live's interface feature that enables posters to look back at the people who are watching them could offer posters the chance to "browse" back, thus altering the relationship of uni-directional gazing in Facebook's News Feed.

However, the stakes here are again not the same; being looked back at as a viewer of content, is not the same thing as being the person who creates content and posts. People who view content share some similarities with live audiences; they are seen, but the Live Stream does not center them, and they do not have the pressure to create content and react to others. Just as with live audiences though, viewers may choose to "react" and "comment" on the media as it is happening though [20]. Both of these microinteractions are more active than browsing; they take more effort on the part of the user. While in traditional media, the relationship between people and the live media that they viewed was more uni-directional, on Instagram Live, people can actively react and comment in real-time. The real-time interaction could theoretically be positive for coalition building by adding to the immediacy of Live Streams. Sano-Franchini pointed out that commenting can connect people who did not have previous connections [20]. However, Sano-Franchini also importantly pointed out that people are quick to use comments to sow discord; she wrote that users can use comments on Facebook's timeline as a space to "share immediate reactions without being required to take the time to reflect and think about how to best deliver those responses" [20]. Basically, people comment and post to others that they do not know in an emotionally toxic and exhausting way. The potential for toxic comments is exponentially increased with the immediate and urgent nature of Live Streams because people would have to react even more quickly and would have even less time to think through those reactions and comments. Thus, the Instagram Live interface simultaneously puts posters in a position to have to defend themselves. Other survey respondents indicated that was true for NotAgainSU.

This is an important point because it further alters the relationship between the poster and the viewer; on immediate Live Streams where people are in collapsed time and space, since other users can quickly and toxically react, there is a pressure on those hosting the Live Stream to perform, react, and possibly defend themselves. This broadly speaks to the Black student survey response above where they said that they experienced the circulation of #NotAgainSU as "vulnerable" and the organizer's point that they experienced the hashtag as "public." Much like live performances, it is stressful to perform for a Live audience, especially audiences that feel empowered to use comments and reactions in a toxic way. Again, Instagram Live's interface flattens the stakes for different users. The stakes for viewers were about creating emotionally reactive content

like comments and reactions. However, the stakes for protesters were greater; they were in positions to defend themselves from some of potentially toxic reactions of people who gazed in on them, even as they gazed back at those audiences. The stakes for people who "perform" and must respond to critical questions about their experiences in Live Streams are not the same as people who are in the audiences of those Live Streams, whose concerns may be centered on taking in information comfortably and on creating emotionally reactive content in response to those Live Streams.

5.2.1 Implications. Instagram Live's implications for people who design social media interfaces and TPC researchers are complex. Both can consider how the immediacy of things like Instagram Live that collapse time and space and how that immediacy can be useful for coalition-building. However, again, both should critically consider how the stakes for protesters and viewers are not equivalent. Designers and TPC researchers can consider the implications of reciprocal gazing. What other features help posters to know their audiences and is that knowledge empowering? Importantly, empowerment is "an organizational and structural framework that focuses on justice as a central project" [25] (p. 107). Thus, empowerment is not something individually achieved, but it is systemic; the entire system must be built around gazing back and exposing power. Both designers and TPC researchers could imagine systems built around empowering gazing.

However, social media interface designers and TPC researchers would want to think about the different stakes for different users. For instance, both should recognize that reciprocal gazing can also be exhausting both for the viewer and the viewed, depending on different positions. Posters may want the option of *not* seeing who else is watching their streams, and viewers who are already in vulnerable positions may prefer the relative invisibility of browsing. Furthermore, designers and researchers should consider how interface design features that enable live reactions and comments can put exhausting pressure on those who post Live Streams. While users currently have the choice to turn off comments on Instagram Live, they could give users more control by allowing them to turn off comments from specific viewers.

Ultimately, designers can consider how they can design interfaces that make the voices of those most affected more "immediate," and how they can empower those posters to "gaze back" at their audiences. Designers and researchers should consider how the stakes for viewers and posters are not equivalent, especially when people are building social justice coalitions. Designers can think about how to relieve the pressure and potentially toxic and hateful reactions and comments that come with live performances on features like Instagram Live. Though Instagram Live may have been helpful, it is important for designers and researchers to recognize that it can still function in a milieu of privilege as it can rely on the idea that people should validate their experiences to others.

6 CONCLUSION

Both Twitter and Instagram's interfaces flatten the stakes between users who are seeking to build coalitions around social justice movements. The stakes for unaffected viewers are comfort in consumption, often not requiring them to alter their positions. In contrast, the stakes for those working for social justice are building coalitional ties and potential trauma. I explored two specific features of Twitter and Instagram's interfaces to explicate how these stakes are flattened through micro-interactions.

Twitter's trending hashtag feature has some similarities to curated browsing and can raise the profile of a hashtag to open up coalitional possibilities. However, it has the potential to turn social justice into a popularity contest, falsely equating social issues with company ads, and to isolate social issues from larger sustaining systems in favor of convenience for viewers, rather than the long-term coalition building and potential trauma those who work for social justice. Designers should think about things like where they put trending hashtags and how they label "trends" and sidebars. Instagram's Live interface feature structures relationships very differently than does browsing and it offers some coalitional possibilities because it makes content more immediate, and it intervenes in the relationship between posters and viewers by letting people on Live Stream gaze back at those who are watching them. However, again, the stakes for viewers are about comfortably taking in information, while people who create social justice content may be drained by critical questioning and the ability for potentially hostile viewers to react and comment. Designers could consider adding other features that help build immediacy and give users the opportunity to "look back" at their viewers, but they should give those users as many options as possible and recognize that the need to validate one's experience in the first place also functions to sustain oppressive regimes.

Finally, future research should consider users' positions in a more nuanced way. On an infrastructural level, it is important to not put all users on the same level. While giving users as many options as possible in how they access and use digital tools is important, it is also important to not put the onus on individuals to protect themselves in networks that put them at risk. Furthermore, infrastructural designers should recognize that the same tools that can be used to build coalitions for positive social change can also be used to build malicious and hateful coalitions; designers and companies cannot put all users on the same level because this reinscribes the myth of meritocracy, about which Walton, Moore, and Jones write, which falsely suggests that everyone starts with the same resources [25].

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