Trans Time: Safety, Privacy, and Content Warnings on a Transgender-Specific Social Media Site

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Trans people often use social media to connect with others, find and share resources, and post transition-related content. However, because most social media platforms are not built with trans people in mind and because online networks include people who may not accept one's trans identity, sharing trans content can be difficult. We studied Trans Time, a social media site developed particularly for trans people to document transition and build community. We interviewed early Trans Time users ($n = 6$) and conducted focus groups with potential users ($n = 21$) to understand how a trans-specific site uniquely supports its users. We found that Trans Time has the potential to be a safe space, encourages privacy, and effectively enables its users to selectively view content using content warnings. Together, safety, privacy, and content warnings create an online space where trans people can simultaneously build community, find support, and express both the mundanity and excitement of trans life. Yet in each of these areas, we also learned ways that the site can improve. We provide implications for how social media sites may better support trans users, as well as insular communities of people from other marginalized groups.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **Social media**; **Empirical studies in collaborative and social computing**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: social media, safety, privacy, content warnings, content moderation, transgender, non-binary, online communities, Trans Time

1 INTRODUCTION

The Internet has been revolutionary for transgender individuals (those whose gender is different than their sex assigned at birth, including non-binary people; shortened to "trans" hereafter), often providing a safe space and a "source of personal and social liberation" [76, 95]. The Internet broadly, and social media specifically, has enabled trans people to gain visibility [31, 46], find resources

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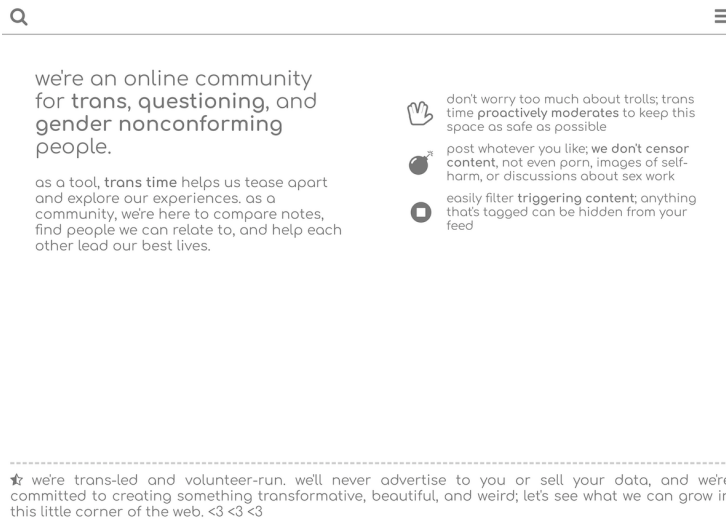
Fig. 1. Trans Time's homepage.

[13, 15, 82], and participate in activism [80, 95]. Social media sites afford connection with people with shared identities, leading to the formation of many trans online communities [19, 69, 82]. Social media can be a "testing ground for identity" [15], where users can try out different identities, names, and gender presentations [34, 69, 70].

Yet while the Internet has had substantial positive benefits for trans people, online spaces are not designed for trans people or with trans people in mind [1], and can sometimes be harmful for trans people [76]. Trans social media users often use existing popular social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to post content related to their transitions, but these sites sometimes lack in their affordances and support for trans users [35, 51, 76]. Whether harm is in the form of Facebook's real name policy requiring a trans person to use a name they no longer use [39] or Tinder removing trans women from the site [44], online social technologies often signal unwelcomeness and outright hostility to trans people.

Trans Time (www.transtime.is), currently in beta, is a social media site specifically for trans, non-binary, gender nonconforming, and questioning people. The site aims to be a space where trans people can document their transitions and build community in ways that they cannot on other sites. Trans Time is the first social media site of its kind created specifically for trans people, and is very different from major social media platforms with wider scopes. Because trans users' needs are often not fully supported by mainstream social media sites [35, 51, 76], there are many potential benefits to a trans-specific site. To examine these potential benefits, we ask: *How can a trans-specific social media site uniquely support trans users?*

To address our research question, we conducted 1) interviews with current Trans Time users (*n* = 6) to understand if and how the site supported their needs, and 2) focus groups with potential Trans Time users (*n* = 21) to understand how the site could support the broader trans population. We learned about trans people's needs around online safe spaces, privacy, and content warnings, and how participants would like these needs to be addressed. We contribute an in-depth understanding of how social media can be designed to provide safe online communities for a substantially vulnerable population. This paper provides a case study of Trans Time, yet participants also used many other

Fig. 2. A segment of Trans Time's code of conduct.

social media sites that they discussed in the context of considering Trans Time and its features. Thus, our results are both specific to Trans Time and relevant for other social media sites. While this paper focuses on trans people, findings may also apply to other marginalized populations that require insulated online communities.

2 RESEARCH SITE

Trans Time is a social media site meant for trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and questioning individuals to document aspects of transition and to build community. Trans Time opened to beta users in September 2018, after a year of software development by founder Briar Sweetbriar. This trans-led site is free to use and aims to provide a space that "[formalizes] the concept of the 'trans timeline' " [87] and allows trans people to connect and discuss transition. The site includes a Code of Conduct (see Figure 2) that states the site's goal as to "maintain a safe, helpful and friendly community for everyone," explaining that safety includes conflict, but conflict that is handled respectfully [87]. In support of these goals and values, the Code of Conduct lists guidelines for users, steps for what to do if someone is violating the code, steps to take if someone accuses them of violating the code, and information about enforcement. At the time of this writing, the site is moderated by the platform's developer/founder.

Trans Time users can post text, photos, or a combination of the two. The site enables a unique way to document transition, and to observe others' transitions, through time and space. Posts are intended to include tags relating to different aspects of gender transition (e.g., #face, #identity, #feelings, #breasts, #surgery, #hormones). Clicking on these tags allows users to navigate through time while focused on a particular body part, emotional aspect of transition, process, or medical procedure. The site encourages users to upload photos from several different angles (see Figure 3) to enable a multidimensional view of physical features. Users can click on a tag and then navigate through time by scrolling vertically through posts in reverse chronological order, and through space by scrolling horizontally through photo angles. Users can add identity characteristics to their
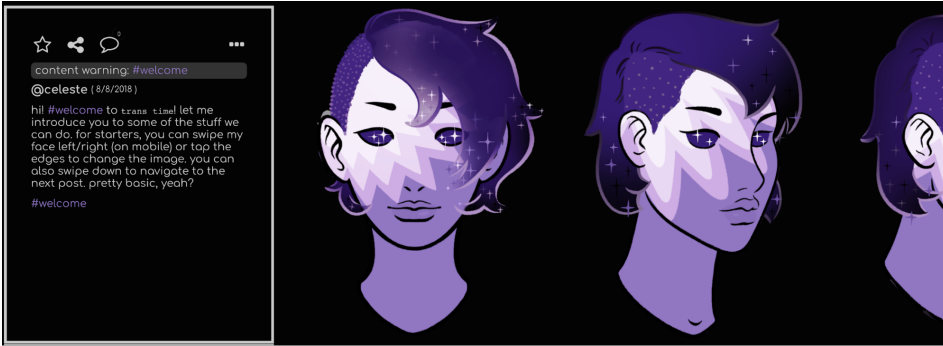
Fig. 3. An example Trans Time post with a content warning tag.

profiles (e.g., gender, race, religion, sexuality), with a date range for each identity facet to signify identity changes across time, to connect users with similar identities. Combined, these features enable users to document their own transition and view others' transitions through time and space.

Privacy is important on Trans Time. The homepage states that users can create either a public or private account and that if that account is deleted, the data will be deleted from the site as well. As users sign up, they are asked to select whether or not to allow non-Trans Time users to view their profiles. Additionally, users can mark posts as private on a post-by-post basis and choose which of their followers they allow to access private posts.

Tags, in addition to demarcating different aspects of transition, are also used as content warnings on posts. When creating an account or logging into the site, users are asked to opt into or out of using content warnings (which can be toggled later at any point). If users choose "show content warnings" they are shown a list of tags in each post, and must click to allow these tags before viewing the post (see Figure 3). In July 2019, Trans Time changed how it displayed content warnings. After this update, a list of content warnings precedes each post, and if a user clicks a content warning, the site will obfuscate all posts containing that tag. Users can then selectively reveal these obfuscated posts on a case-by-case basis. What content users might want to hide will depend on the individual, but some potential topics include #violence, #dysphoria, #nsfw, or #weight. All tags used in posts are listed as content warnings so that a user can make the decision to show or hide content, regardless of topic, based on their personal preference.

Trans Time's combination of features and policies is meant to create a space uniquely suited for trans users to document transition and build community. Through research, we can identify which features work well and how others can be improved. Our ongoing research collaboration with the site's developer spanned approximately a year before the study's launch. This relationship enables us to communicate design recommendations directly to the site, which can then be quickly implemented.

At the time of this study, Trans Time hosted a small community of 96 users. The site is volunteer run, its small operating budget covered by founder Briar Sweetbriar. While the rest of the research team is not directly involved with the site's administration, its findings have informed ongoing design and policy decisions.

3 RELATED WORK

To ground our research in previous work, we review literature focused on online spaces for specific communities, the three aspects that enable Trans Time to support its users (safety, privacy, and content warnings), and trans identity in online spaces.

3.1 Online Spaces for Specific Communities

Because Trans Time is a space for people with shared identity, we review prior literature about online spaces for specific communities. Some online communities enact barriers, whether technical or social, so that they are accessed and used only by members who share a specific identity facet (e.g., gender, health condition). In these online spaces, people construct and enact community norms [60] in part to protect the privacy and safety of the members and community. Findings about online communities as described in previous research relate to trans online communities, and Trans Time specifically, due to the community's specificity, focus on gender, and users' ability to take part anonymously/pseudonymously.

Online communities often arise specifically for people of a certain gender or genders. Herring et al. [42] described a feminist forum on the early Internet that was targeted by trolls, signalling the need to "balance inclusive ideals against the need for protection and safety." We examine this balance in the trans context. Sometimes women construct online communities because they find limitations (e.g., related to safety) in mixed-gender spaces, and wish to connect with and mentor/be mentored by other women [83, 98]. Women's spaces online are sometimes open to trans and/or non-binary people, but this inclusion is rarely made explicit [83]. The ability to talk and interact with people whom individuals know share their identities and experiences makes people feel more connected and empowered, and reduces fears of judgement for content posted [98]. Parenting communities online are also often segmented by gender: after being excluded from mom-only Facebook groups, stay at home dads created their own communities on Facebook and Reddit where they could avoid judgement experienced in other spaces [2]. Archive of our Own (AO3) was designed by its community of fan fiction writers to meet the community's values and needs [27]. Though not restricted to women, the site is primarily women, and parts are characterized as "queer female space" [27]. AO3 is similar to Trans Time in some ways: users have substantial control over their identities, and content is not censored [27].

Though Trans Time is not explicitly health-related, a large body of prior research about online health communities can inform our understanding of Trans Time. People often use online health communities for specific medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, cancer) or health goals (e.g., addiction recovery) to find emotional support and advice (often information not available locally or even from one's doctor) [60, 74, 75], motivation, accountability [65], and as an outlet to vent [60]. Participating in online health communities like these can improve community members' wellbeing over time, and increase people's abilities to cope with their condition and manage their stress [74]. For enigmatic or rare medical conditions, people often face challenges in communicating with friends, family, and providers about their condition [59], and spend substantial time in online health communities specific to their condition to gather information and engage in sensemaking [99]. To facilitate support and disclosure, Andalibi et al. [6] designed a prototype app specifically for people who had experienced pregnancy loss. More general social media sites like Facebook are not ideal for specific health communities because there is no supportive community norm, no anonymity, a default of broad sharing, and many weak ties with whom one would not want to share personal information [65], though many online health communities thrive in Facebook groups [59, 99] despite the site's limitations. Some communities, such as people recovering from addiction, benefit from online

communities that include video-mediated peer support, clearly articulated norms, and constructive moderation [75].

Anonymous/pseudonymous spaces online related to a particular topic or population often enable people to share sensitive information and receive support, for example sexual abuse disclosures on Reddit [4, 5]. YouBeMom, an anonymous site for mothers, provides a space where they can express negative sentiment, violate societal norms and expectations imposed on mothers, and explore identity [78]. In identity-based specific online communities such as Trans Time, anonymity and pseudonymity can enable the safety and privacy necessary for some to fully participate.

3.2 Safe Spaces

Safe spaces online are complex, particularly for marginalized groups who often face substantial harm online [68, 91]. What is "safe" and not changes over time, as a space and the people there change [10]. Aspects that increase perceived safety on social media sites include privacy settings, a sense of community, and enforcement of community standards such as harassment prevention [71]. We contribute to this line of research examining how marginalized users might feel more safe and comfortable using online spaces to their full extent. Dimond et al. [24] considered how Hollaback!, an online space and social movement aimed at countering harassment, was an "imperfect safe space" where people found support around experiences with harassment, yet still worried about others' responses. Community experiences with Hollaback! may relate also to trans online communities. Virtual worlds can be safe spaces for autistic youth [72] where they can connect with other people through virtual communication and take part in social experiences at their own pace. To some extent social media sites can enable safe spaces for LGBTQ+ users [13, 58], where they can share about their experiences, but may be subject to harassment depending on who views the content shared. For trans people in particular, who face substantial challenges to safety, Scheuerman et al. [76] argued that "the same tools that afford safety for trans individuals... also afford targeting, infiltrating, and abusing them." For example, trans people often find safety in anonymous or pseudonymous spaces [33], however, this safety allows possible harassers to remain unknown to the community unless they express their views out loud. Thus, understanding how safe spaces (even potential or imperfect safe spaces) can be constructed for the trans population is of immediate concern. While previous research broadly described ways safe spaces could be designed for trans people online (i.e., by designing to protect against abusive behavior and amplifying marginalized users' voices) [76], we take these recommendations a step further by studying a trans-specific online space and providing detailed design recommendations.

3.3 Privacy and Audience

Privacy is dependent on contexts and audiences in which information is shared, and constantly changes due to shifting boundaries [67]. Social media sites often violate contextual integrity [66], meaning that they enable data to be viewed outside of its intended context. People's actual and desired privacy settings often differ substantially [56]. People struggle to use privacy settings on social media, yet inappropriate usage of these privacy settings can lead to unintended and undesirable consequences [26, 90]. While some users are able to make use of granular privacy options (e.g., Facebook "lists"), most social media users do not [26], due to confusion, frustration, distrust, or unwillingness to put in the effort [54]. People tend to use social media privacy settings more when they have larger, more diverse audiences, likely due to context collapse [89], and when people do customize their privacy settings, they disclose more information [26, 85]. Because of difficulties managing social media privacy settings, people instead regulate boundaries and privacy by limiting their audiences [92] such as by editing their friends/followers list, using a "lowest common denominator" approach [45], self-censoring content, posting less frequently, or using

multiple profiles [36, 54, 88, 90]. Nonetheless, some content ends up being shared with unintended audiences, often leading to regret [94]. Social media sites need more easily understandable and usable privacy policies and settings [85]. Enabling privacy on social media sites requires considering how to enable people to separate online selves, such as through anonymity and multiple online personae [20]. While previous literature has generally focused on privacy on social media sites broadly, we examine privacy approaches on a site specific to a particular marginalized community.

Trans people, and other marginalized groups, often view privacy and use privacy features differently than the general population. In a study about trans crowdfunding, Fritz and Gonzales [28] found that privacy calculus ("negotiation of personal information in exchange for social and financial support") is often exaggerated for people with marginalized identities. Privacy calculus happens on Trans Time when people disclose personal information (e.g., personal details of gender transition) in exchange for social support and community. DeVito et al. [23] and Hanckel et al. [41] found that LGBTQ+ people manage boundaries meticulously on social media sites to mitigate risk related to their LGBTQ+ identities, as a way to deal with marginalization and stigma. Haimson et al. [36] detailed how trans people manage privacy and disclosure on social media via digital footprints related to past identities, such as by editing content, partitioning networks, and maintaining multiple accounts. Cho [18] contrasted sites like Facebook — which are designed with a "default publicness" that, because it assumes that public self-expression is low risk, is often dangerous for LGBTQ+ and other marginalized users — with online spaces that enable less unwanted exposure and thus feel more safe for marginalized populations. In this work we examine how Trans Time is an example of the latter because it was designed to enable privacy in consideration of trans users' particular privacy concerns related to gender and marginalization.

3.4 Content Warnings

Content warnings are labels placed on digital content to warn potential viewers that the content is sensitive or may bring up difficult emotions, thus allowing the user to choose whether or not to view. Research on social media users' thoughts and preferences around content warnings is limited, but could have great impact in changing site designs to address user needs. Some social media sites and internet providers have ways of filtering offensive content using blocklists/denylists, but these lists are often behind the scenes and not visible to users [8, 17]. While AO3 requires content warnings for violence, etc., AO3 users frequently requested a tag blocklist, a feature that the site has not yet implemented [27]. Social computing research on content warnings thus far has considered the term "trigger warning" as a feature in computational models to detect health conditions [12, 22, 62], or as a tag in content warnings on social media posts about self-harm [79]. Researchers created a system that helps users control content access from a "blacklist" of people in their network [63]; similar methods could be employed to filter *types* of content rather than users. This previous work has touched on beginning steps in content monitoring and provide early understandings of what users may want and need when it comes to filtering sensitive content. Yet not all users universally understand the term "trigger warning" to refer to one specific kind of topic, and language as well as people's individual online content preferences are continually expanding and changing. We uncover Trans Time users' and potential users' content warning preferences.

3.5 Trans Identities in Online Spaces

Many trans people actively manage their online identities, such as by controlling how public or private their online profiles are [15], and what information they disclose on which sites [33]. Trans users must work to express their identities within the frames of the social media sites they use [15, 33] by using site features and working within sites' conduct rules to construct "authentic" profiles [39, 51]. Although some self-disclosures (such as coming out) have the risk of negative

effects (e.g., harassment, rejection), many users still choose to disclose their trans identities publicly online [32], or at least to some portions of their networks [33, 35]. Social media sites sometimes provide private or safe spaces (i.e., spaces with maintained boundaries) for trans people to present identity without necessarily having to be "out" in other contexts [13]. For example, Facebook enables private groups where people with common identities can share content among group members without people outside the group having access to that content.

While the Internet has been revolutionary for trans communities, it does not come without harm. As Scheuerman et al. [76] found, "safe spaces can become stages for interactions that do harm to transgender... technology users." Scheuerman et al. [76] described how harm can come from those outside of or within the community, may or may not be purposeful, and can be targeted to an individual or the community as a whole. Thus, while a site that includes only trans people may increase safety, it does not completely mitigate harassment risks. This potential for harm is a salient reason trans individuals must actively manage their identities on social media and be wary of whom they interact with.

Trans online experiences must be discussed with consideration of the negative impacts caused by trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs), who often harass and exclude trans people, particularly trans women, both online and in physical spaces [43, 97]. TERFs frequently exclude trans women from online spaces meant for women due to beliefs that trans women are not "really" women and/or female, mirroring similar trans exclusions from "feminist" spaces in the 1970s-1990s [43, 96]. Trans people have been and will continue to create online spaces where TERFs are not allowed.

Trans people construct communities even on somewhat public spaces like Twitter and Tumblr, where technical walls do not exist between the community and the broader userbase. For instance, the hashtag #GirlsLikeUs enabled trans women of color to create a space to discuss trans politics and activism and to support and advocate for their community [47]. Trans people also built community away from their existing networks by using Tumblr [33, 37], often through the use of tags [21].

The need for trans-specific technology has been prominent for many years. Online spaces and communities have historically excluded or marginalized trans people [43]. Previous HCI research has examined trans experiences in online spaces [33, 76], and has uncovered the ways technological systems often further marginalize trans people [1, 40, 50, 77], and how technology can be designed to address challenges trans people face [38]. In this paper we address a research gap by studying trans experiences in a trans-specific online community, and what it means when a technology is built specifically for trans individuals and communities.

4 METHODS

To answer our research question, we conducted interviews (n = 6) with Trans Time users and three in-person focus groups (n = 21 participants total) with the broader trans population (potential users of Trans Time). All participants were compensated with a $40 gift card, and focus group participants also received food during the sessions. We chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with current users, instead of using another method, to get an in-depth understanding of how Trans Time did or did not support users' current needs. While the later focus groups may not offer the depth of individual interviews, they built on our interview results by giving us a compelling look at how the site could support the broader trans population. All participant names are pseudonyms, and primarily were selected from Nonbinary Wiki's "List of neutral names" [1]. Data containing identifying information was de-identified and stored securely. All aspects of this study were approved by our university's Institutional Review Board.

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[1]nonbinary.miraheze.org/wiki/Names

4.1 Recruitment

We recruited participants by distributing the study information and link to the screening surveys with trans-focused and LGBTQ+ organizations, within online trans-focused groups and spaces, and via our own social media networks. We also recruited in person at a large trans-focused conference. Interviewees were either current Trans Time users or were recruited to the site through this study. Those who started using the site for this study used it for at least two weeks before interviews took place. Current Trans Time users were recruited via email and a post on the site. The screening survey consisted of general demographic information, including age, geographic location, and gender. Participants' genders were captured using an open-ended question (instead of using a list of genders) to make this question more inclusive. From the screening survey respondents we invited a diverse set of individuals (on dimensions such as race/ethnicity and gender) to participate.

4.2 Participants

Interview participants were 50% trans women and 50% non-binary trans people. Three participants were white, one was Latina, one Black/Latina, and one Korean-American. Five were from the United States (though one was currently living in the U.K.), and one lived in Mexico. Focus group participants were 19% trans women, 14% trans men, and 72% non-binary; 62% white, 24% Black, 14% Latine, and 10% Asian. Percentages add up to greater than 100% because some participants had multiple genders and race/ethnicities. 48% of participants were 18-24 and 52% were 25-34.

4.3 Interviews

We conducted semi-structured interviews ($n = 6$) via video chat or in person, depending on the participant's location and preference. Interviews lasted on average 48.19 minutes ($SD = 3.67$). We asked questions about participants' Trans Time use, how it compared to other social media sites, and about specific site features. We also included questions about participants' overall social media use and their experiences with trans identity management and disclosure broadly. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4.4 Focus Groups

We conducted three in-person focus groups with trans and/or non-binary people (total $n = 21$) to ask participants their thoughts about several aspects of the Trans Time site, and to understand necessary features for trans-specific social media in general. Our first two sessions were held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the third was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Focus groups were combined with participatory design sessions (the results of which are not part of this paper), and the focus group portion of the sessions occurred in the last part of each session. We began by describing the Trans Time platform and purpose to participants. Next, we discussed three areas of focus: 1) *safe space / community*, in which we asked "How can we build a community that is nurturing and safe on the site? What does an online safe space look like for our community?" 2) *privacy*, in which we asked "How should privacy work on a social media site for trans and non-binary people?" and 3) *content warnings*, in which we asked "How should content warnings work on a social media site for trans and non-binary people?" In each case, we displayed screenshots of the site features being discussed as prompts, and described Trans Time's current approaches. We then asked for participants' feedback, and asked how the site, and trans online spaces more broadly, could be improved. Sessions were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4.5 Analysis

We analyzed interview data by first using line-by-line inductive open coding [57]. The second author coded several interviews, then met with the first author to discuss the data and coding scheme in detail. These two authors then collaboratively conducted axial coding [84] to group the codes into larger themes. The second author then coded the remaining interviews, and the two researchers met to conduct a second round of axial coding and incorporate the new codes into the coding scheme. Throughout the interviewing and data analysis process, the second author wrote memos to record reflective notes and better understand the data [57], and the two researchers met weekly to discuss the data and emerging themes.

To analyze focus group data, three authors independently analyzed data from the first focus group using inductive open coding [16]. They next met as a group to refine the codes, and then met with the first author to collaboratively organize codes into themes using axial coding [16]. These four authors met weekly to discuss emerging themes, and also held a debrief session after each focus group to begin forming an understanding of the data.

Finally, we examined the interview themes and codes along with the focus group themes and codes, and determined how they related to each other. This paper reports on three themes that were prominent in both phases of data collection. Many other themes also arose in interviews (e.g., identity presentation online, documenting transition), but for this paper's scope, we focused on themes overlapping between interviews and focus groups. We treat the data collected from interviews and focus groups as a whole to address our research question.

4.6 Limitations

This study includes several limitations. Trans Time is still a new site with a small user base, and thus the ways it can enable community and support, and how its features are used in practice, are still emerging. Next, the participants in this study, and Trans Time users, are not representative of the broader trans population. Additionally, though this work provides important insights that will likely be useful to many online communities for marginalized populations, results may not generalize beyond the trans context.

5 RESULTS

We identified three themes that cut across both data analyses (interviews and focus groups), which we will discuss here: 1) Trans Time as a safe space; 2) Privacy and audience on Trans Time; and 3) Content warnings on Trans Time. Together, these elements enable a social media site that uniquely supports trans people, and can inform future social media site design that supports trans individuals and communities. We include results describing the site's positive aspects along with results about site limitations to present a more full picture of Trans Time and of trans experiences online. Because participants used and considered Trans Time while also using many other social media sites, they necessarily compared its features to those of other sites. Thus, we present results both specific to Trans Time and related to other social media sites.

5.1 Trans Time as a Safe Space

In this section we describe factors that contributed to Trans Time's potential to be a safe space, some of which could be implemented elsewhere online to create safer spaces for trans people across the Internet. All interview participants described ways the site was a safe space or had the potential to be one, and focus group participants discussed ways social media sites could facilitate safety for trans communities. An online safe space for trans people depended on the following factors: small

size, all-trans user base, maintenance of boundaries, community-based contextual moderation, community guidelines, and lack of censorship.

Trans Time's safety was in part due to its **small size**. Luka noted that *"the fact that it is fairly small makes it feel very safe, because...it feels like nobody's going to use it for malicious reasons, and nobody's trying to get in there to get in everybody's business who shouldn't be there."* While the site's small size had drawbacks in terms of number of interactions, its size was brought up by multiple users as an important contributor to safety.

The **all-trans user base** on Trans Time greatly affected the site's ability to be a safe space. Cande reflected on this potential, stating:

> *I feel like it has a great possibility to be a safe space. I feel like it's necessary to have that kind of safe space because in other pages you always end up feeling or seeing this... transphobia which people don't realize they're being... totally offensive.*

Trans Time is unique in that it was developed and designed specifically for trans people; thus, all Trans Time users are trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and/or questioning. Users described how the site's specific audience and focus was important to them. In Camille's words, *"I like that there's a space that can be used for the specific purpose, that can be contained within itself."* Unlike other sites where participants had to limit or avoid transition content due to their networks or the site's affordances, the specific network of people on Trans Time allowed them to be open about transition. In the Trans Time network, users described feeling that everyone was coming from some sense of a shared experience and understanding. This shared identity allowed posts and conversations to be more personal than what users would share with a mixed network. Paton said,

> *It's a kind of a community where we... have the shared experience of all of us being trans and experiencing dysphoria[2] and stuff like that, so it kind of just allows me to just open up and talk about anything without having the worry of judgment or stuff like that. Yeah, it's just kind of nice just to be able to... have that freedom to post*

The all-trans network facilitated users sharing knowledge with each other related to shared identity and trans experiences, which for many meant less worry and greater freedom in posting.

Additionally, by having a limited network that consisted only of other trans people, Trans Time users thus far did not describe facing negative interactions on the site and did not report fearing harassment or experiencing trolling. While interviewees agreed that Trans Time had the potential to be a safe space, Nova noted the important distinction that Trans Time is a *"safer"* space, as they felt that a truly safe space cannot exist. The notion of trans online spaces being "safe(r)" than other settings echoes prior work [25, 81]. As Scheuerman et al. [76] found, in addition to harm from outsiders, harm to trans people can also come from within the trans community.

Despite the benefits of a trans-only online safe space, focus group participants described apprehension around the difficulties of **creating and maintaining boundaries** around such a space. Meridian said,

> *Okay, what if a person who is not transgender or non-conforming, what if there's someone who actually hates trans-people, signs up for [Trans Time]? How am I to trust that you identify with me or align yourself with me? Or how am I to trust that you're not looking to kill a Black trans woman? I can't... And I feel like that goes for all social media, I feel like it's definitely a risk, period.*

The site must also include mechanisms to report and remove harmful actors quickly and easily; as Fallon stated, *"having a functionality to report TERFs is a big thing."* TERFs are one of many groups that target trans people online, and greatly detract from trans people's online safety. For site users

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[2]Not all trans people experience gender dysphoria, but we present this participant quote as is.

to consider an online space safe, they must be sure that the space does not include dangerous people looking to harm them.

A site like Trans Time faces difficulties when determining how to maintain a safe community for trans people, while resisting gatekeeping trans identities. Joanna suggested potential ways of "vetting" or "handpicking" community members, as she experienced in some non-trans-related Reddit communities: *"It's mostly private invitations. If you're active in another space for awhile someone notices you and invites you in."* Calvin described similar community-building practices on Discord:

> *You might be in a... server that is pretty public and that anyone could be there, but you can have channels in that server that you can't view unless they gave you that certain role. Or specifically invite you. Like for some I'm in we have like a general friend group. But then we have a channel specifically for trans and non-binary people.*

As Calvin described, a smaller invite-only group of trans and/or non-binary gamers was formed within a larger Discord gaming community. Enabling site access by invitation only is a way to decrease harmful people's access, but it also reduces access for trans people who may need the site most: those who are isolated and do not already know people in the online community. Another approach would vet potential community members using questions, similar to mechanisms used in many Facebook groups, as Mani described: *"before you join, the mod will ask questions and you have to respond. And so if you're a TERF, you can usually get weeded out that way."* A combination of vetting, invitations, and active moderation can help maintain an online safe space for trans people.

Maintaining the boundaries of the site and the site's safety depends on how it is **moderated**. Ryder asked, *"Who is moderating it? Because in the idea of an online safe space there's some form of moderation... Is this... a space where there is moderators... or is it self-moderation because you are filtering your own content?"* Focus group participants discussed potential moderation strategies. Several advocated for community moderation, which, in Blaze's words, meant *"we can report this post and actually take it in expeditiously."* Having a team of community moderators would help ensure that contextual elements were thoroughly considered, as Coe described:

> *I think there should be a team of people to actively do it... Things are contextual, like a person of color say "white people make me sick." So that's contextual. But a white person might say no this is not safe for me.*

Rather than blanket guidelines determining what hate speech means and what should be removed, a team-based community moderation approach would account for the contextual nature of language people post and how it relates to their identities and experiences. Participants emphasized the need for transparency around knowing who moderators were, such as knowing that moderators were community members and potentially whether they had *"backgrounds in some kind of mediation"* (Coe). Further, Amy stated that *"there should be consistent communication between moderators and users, just to make sure that everyone's on the same page."* Notably, no participants mentioned wanting the site itself to impose content moderation on its users (i.e., an industrial or artisanal [14] top-down [11] moderation approach). Instead, they wanted a community-reliant [14], bottom-up [11] approach. The moderation strategies participants described would likely work well in a relatively small online community like Trans Time; however, team-based community moderation, highly contextual decision-making, and frequent communication between moderators and users may not scale well to large sites, or Trans Time if the site gets larger.

Many participants mentioned the importance of **community guidelines**, which must follow the community's values and inform moderation practices. As Fallon described,

> *I think having community guidelines that are in line with the actual community's values would be good. No one reads the terms of service, but having an accessible, 'here are some*

> *guidelines that we would like you to follow and that are actually informed by actual trans people on the site.*

Community Guidelines could be especially effective if shown to users directly before posting content, as Coe noted: *"I'm thinking about, before someone is even able to post something, maybe there's a warning for them like 'hey, these are community guidelines.'"* Participants suggested including information specifically for people with multiple marginalized identities, *"especially for people of color, because you can encounter a lot of racism on trans sites. So making sure [it states] in the terms or guidelines that this is unacceptable and here's where you can get resources"* (Mani). As one mechanism of enforcing the Community Guidelines, Coe suggested *"blocking IP addresses of people who violate [the guidelines]."* Trans Time does include guidelines as part of its Code of Conduct that match the site's values and inform moderation, but these guidelines could be made more prominent on the site.

Next, participants described that an online safe space for trans people must allow people to post sensitive content **without worry of censorship**. Trans Time enabled a safe space that did not censor what users could discuss or post, but instead *"creates a space that's safe for you to talk about whatever you're dealing with"* (Paton). Camille found this lack of censorship especially helpful because she found *"very few places"* to discuss sensitive issues *"without feeling like there's going to be someone who's going to take issue with it."* The site's emphasis on tags and content warnings allows users to engage with content on their own terms, enabling sensitive discussions to take place while also letting "triggering" content go unseen by those who do not wish to see it. While many social media sites purposefully or inadvertently remove trans content such as post-operative surgery photos [37], such content is allowed and encouraged on Trans Time. Getting content moderation right without inordinately censoring content is a difficult balance, yet may be possible in a small online community particularly for trans people.

Finally, a safe space online also involves physical world concerns. For example, Lex recommended, *"If people meet on the site and want to meet in person"* the site should provide *"some guidelines of like, 'Meet in a public space,' or something,"* to *"help prevent people who target trans folks to assault them."* Such safety considerations could be included in the site's Community Guidelines, and the site could provide reminders if users' communications signalled a physical world meeting.

Taken together, these aspects - small size, all-trans network, maintenance of boundaries, community-based contextual moderation, community guidelines, and allowance of sensitive content - can create an online safe space for trans people. On Trans Time, these aspects meant that people could just exist, rather than remaining vigilant to potential harm. While transness often felt like a spectacle on other sites, Trans Time was *"a much kinder reminder of the mundaneness of trans life"* (Juliana), where photos of activities like knitting and cooking existed alongside transition-specific content. Juliana found the mundane content *"really gratifying too. That constant reminder of... cooking is cool, but cooking is even cooler now that I'm out as a trans woman."* An all-trans online space enabled trans people to post and observe ordinary content without trans identity being the central feature, but it also made everyday activities more meaningful in the context of transition [15]. At the same time, if people did want to discuss trans-related content, they were in a community that would understand and relate, as Paton noted:

> *It's kind of nice to have a community where I can just share things that are trans-related without worrying about other people's reactions because you're mostly going to get support or like, yeah, I've done that too, I know that feeling, and stuff like that. Yeah, it's just nice having a bunch of other trans and queer people to kind of bond with.*

A feeling of safety on Trans Time enabled space for simultaneous support, community-building, and expressions of both mundane and exciting trans experiences.

5.2 Privacy and Audience on Trans Time

Trans Time users found the site's enclosed nature and options for privacy and anonymity important. Cande stated, *"The fact that this is a more enclosed private space, I think that's the best part."* When comparing Trans Time to other social media platforms, Paton found the site to be *"not as anonymous as Reddit or Tumblr, but not as out there as Facebook or Instagram. Kind of like an in between for me at least."* Trans Time's privacy levels meant that Paton felt comfortable being less anonymous, such as by sharing their name: *"I feel comfortable just putting my name and stuff on here... knowing that people are going to respect that and it's not like I know anyone in real-life here."* In many cases, privacy is enabled by separation from parts of one's network that they do not want to know certain information, as also found in previous work [33, 86]. For example, Juliana chose to use a username that would not be recognizable to others unless they knew her well, which allowed her some connection to her identity on the site, but also kept her account anonymous to outsiders. On the other hand, Luka used their name on their profile and included the link to their public Twitter account.

Focus group participants described how several additional levels of privacy would increase their feelings of safety on a site like Trans Time. First, privacy settings could default to private rather than public. Joanna said,

> *I think I would prefer it to be private by default instead of public by default... I'm just thinking of a situation where like I have foolishly made a Facebook post or something. Not necessarily trans related but I was in a fragile emotional state.*

A site being private by default means that, *"If I make a mistake, I can say 'oh I meant to make that public.' So you can just go back and do that. But you can't unpublish something"* (Joanna). Similarly, Coe described wanting extra features in place to warn a user when they were posting publicly: *"maybe there is a way like a pop-up, confirming [whether] you want it to be private, [stating] 'you haven't made this private.' Because it's easy to forget it."* Coe and other participants described how such protections are important especially when people have multiple accounts on a site with differing levels of privacy, and may not remember which account they are currently logged into, which can lead to private information inadvertently being shared publicly.

Trans Time's current levels of privacy are binary: "public" means that anyone on the Internet can see the post (if they have the URL), and "private" means that only one's followers who are specifically given private access can see the post. Each follower is manually vetted by the user, who clicks a "grant private access" button. Participants described desiring several additional levels of granularity: allowing access to anyone on Trans Time but not outside of the site, and allowing access only to oneself but not one's followers. Ronan asked,

> *Is there a way to be just private to the site itself? It might be useful, just because if maybe you want to find people on the site that you want to connect with, but you don't want it blasted across the Internet.*

Additionally, participants described ways that they sometimes used online spaces to post content only for themselves to see. For example, Coe used Tumblr in this way: *"My Tumblr privacy is just me, I'm the only person that can see it. Just so I can have a digital space for it."* Calvin similarly mentioned wanting Trans Time to have a "no one can see this" level of privacy, for storing/writing personal content.

Others described wanting even more granular privacy options, such as sharing with small groups of close friends only — in Fallon's words, *"I want to share it with these three mutuals, and I want to inform them on things repeatedly throughout different updates,"* — strategies currently enabled on sites like Facebook and Instagram but which are difficult to design in a usable way [26]. Having

substantial control and choice over who could see which content was important to participants, such as Jamie, who described granular privacy options that worked well on LiveJournal:

> *Of all the ones I'm using now or in the past, I think I had the most control when I used LiveJournal back in the early 2000's and a lot of people were transitioning. You could add only just a certain amount of people to some things or more to others... There was a lot of choice, ...and a lot of us felt safe using that.*

Designing granular privacy options that are usable and not confusing would be especially helpful for trans-specific online spaces.

Participants also expressed privacy concerns related to social media platforms themselves, particularly their business models and advertising strategies. Jordan described,

> *I don't trust any of my social media sites to do privacy well because of the potential for selling information and stuff like that. The for-profit nature of a lot of social media sites, I just don't... I don't trust 99% of the Internet.*

Avalon described being *"so freaked out by targeted advertising"* and how sites determined what to target to them. *"Doesn't feel very private at that point,"* they said, *"but I guess we all clicked the terms of service."* As such, participants valued sites like Mastodon and Diaspora, which do not run on advertising models, which, in Amy's view, made these sites *"as private you want them to be."* Trans Time, similarly, promises "we'll never advertise to you or sell your data." Participants' sentiments show how designing for trans communities goes beyond a site's features and affordances, and requires a platform's business model to align with the community's values [37].

5.3 Content Warnings on Trans Time

Content warnings are an important aspect of social media sites that enable people to customize their experience by deciding which types of content they do and do not want to see. In our study, participants overwhelmingly recommended that Trans Time and other sites implement customizable content warnings that enable users to see or not see posts based on posts' tags. Ronan described that *"having more nuance in what you're showing and what you're hiding is useful. Because I know there are certain tags that maybe you just want to see, ...and there are certain tags that you know you want to avoid."* Customizable content warnings were especially useful when considering content that users may want to hide at some times but show at other times. As Luka put it,

> *I like that it gives me the control in what I'm seeing... I mean, I'm fine right now, but there may be a point down the line where I am in a bad place and I don't want to see certain topics.*

Nova considered the implementation of personalized content warnings on Trans Time a *"really lovely and good example of care woven into a tech artifact,"* demonstrating how the site's values shine through in its design features. Similarly, Juliana said, *"Reading the message of how closely monitored or moderated the website is made me feel like, this is a website where the moderators are really paying attention."*

Some participants preferred content warnings to take the form of an allowlist and denylist of tags. Joanna described using such affordances on sites like Tumblr and Mastodon: *"So I usually use websites that use tags and blacklists. So people make their own tags and you make your own blacklist and you decide whether or not you want to see those things or not."* While Tumblr does not have an official mechanism to create allowlists and blocklists, many users create such functionality through browser extensions like xKit and Tumblr Savior. Participants emphasized that such lists should be fluid and easily editable, so that users can *"do it on the fly. Like can I just say, 'Oh I don't feel like looking at this tag today'"* (Joanna). Previous social computing research has advocated for

providing more control to users over what content they see or don't see as they use social media, especially in personal, emotional, or sensitive settings [3]. While what have been typically called "blacklists" and "whitelists" functionally serve the purposes participants desired, it is important to note the racialized nature of these words, which posit Blackness as negative and whiteness as positive. Any social media site that implements such lists should call them by a different name to avoid perpetuating racial bias. For instance, some platforms have recently started using more acceptable terms like "allowlist" and "denylist" or "blocklist" [64], which we have adopted in this paper.

Participants emphasized that content warning preferences often depend on the particular physical context in which they are using the site, such as in one's physical workplace: *"sometimes you're at work, you have nothing else to do, you want to document some things but you don't want to potentially click on something and be like, 'Oh, no.'"* (Ronan). Such concerns could potentially be mitigated by context-aware, location-based content warnings, which would enable, as Mani desired, *"a 'work' setting or a 'this space' setting and then a 'I'm at home, no one's watching me' kind of setting."* Cande agreed, wanting a universal NSFW (not safe for work) mode button to easily hide content in certain contexts and *"have the option to quickly move between the NSFW setting and then privately at home."*

As another means of implementing content warnings, participants described wanting certain content to be blurred or covered when it came up on their feeds. For trans people, particularly trans women of color, seeing content related to trans women's murders can be especially difficult - an example of "incidental harm" as noted by Scheuerman et al. [76]. Meridian described encountering such content on a social media site:

> When the Muhlaysia Booker [a trans woman of color whose 2019 murder was captured on camera] thing happened it was covered before I saw it, and then there's a small tab on the bottom of the video that says "uncover video."

Participants stated that sites should obscure difficult content proactively, rather than showing the content and then letting people choose to hide or blur it, because as several participants noted, people cannot "unsee" things. Users appreciated how Trans Time hides posts until the content warning tags on the post are approved. Paton described how on most social media sites,

> Posts, even if they have content warning or just a topic that you don't want to read, you still have to scroll over it. But with Trans Time, it's like just totally blocked off... so you can just kind of go to the next one or whatever.

Participants generally appreciated seeing more information (e.g., image or video descriptions) before revealing visual content, which Hollace noted also makes visual content more accessible.

Trans Time allows users to create their own tags for posts, without a standardized list of tags. Some users appreciated this freedom, such as Cande: *"The identities and the tags and stuff like that, the fact that it takes into account so many different identities and possibilities on stuff like that... I like that. It feels like an actual inclusive platform."* Other users wanted a more standardized tagging system. Camille mentioned that until there was standardization, filtering content would be difficult:

> lots of people are using lots of tags for the same thing. I'm using #myface for selfies, and I'm pretty sure other people are using different tags for that... Until we have a unified tag system, I'm not sure how the filtering system's gonna work.

Along the same lines, Camille felt that tags should be required on posts as long as users do not wrongfully tag content, *"I think forcing tags is a good thing... I just hope that it's not abused, people aren't wrongfully tagging their stuff, like someone's tagging as cats and it's really just full frontal nudity."* Platforms must strike a careful balance between freeform tagging, which promotes inclusivity, and standardized tagging, which enables more accurate content warnings. AO3 solves similar issues by

enabling a group of "tag wranglers" to link all similar user-generated tags together, which means users can freely tag but tags are still searchable [27].

Mechanisms that make content warnings work in practice depend on users, or the site, labeling each post with tags or descriptions. Such practices could become site or community norms, as Amy described occurred on Mastodon and Diaspora: *"They have this neat feature. You can put a little content warning line before every post and everyone does that."* Content warnings add extra work to posting on social media, add friction to site experiences by requiring extra clicks rather than simply scrolling through a content feed, and ultimately mean that users view less content on their feeds. However, despite these extra steps, participants in our study valued the extra information and the extra care that content warnings provided, enough to be willing to deal with friction and the extra work of labeling content.

6 DISCUSSION

We investigated Trans Time to understand how a trans-specific site can uniquely support trans people and communities. We found that the site provides a safe space for its users due to its small size, all-trans user base, maintenance of boundaries, community-based contextual moderation, community guidelines, and allowance of sensitive content. Additionally, Trans Time users and potential users emphasized the importance of foregrounding privacy and enabling content warnings. While this study was conducted in the context of Trans Time, some of these factors could also be implemented in other social media sites and online communities. Yet Trans Time is unique from other social media sites in two primary ways: 1) it is an insular space that its users considered safe because it is comprised only of trans people; and 2) it can actually implement the requested features suggested by its users and the wider population of trans people. The former suggests that marginalized groups broadly may benefit from their own spaces online, in which they can be sure that others in that space have experience with similar kinds of struggles and joys. Insular and specific communities can and do exist within larger sites like Facebook (in the form of Facebook groups), Reddit (in the form of trans-specific subreddits), Discord (in trans-specific servers), and via Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr tags. Yet some of these sites are not safe for trans people [76], and most operate on a massive scale that places users far from the site's decision-making and design. Trans Time, on the other hand, through its partnership with our research team and by way of this study, places its users and potential users close at hand, and adjusts its features and design in response to users' needs and desires. Due to its small scale, the site has flexibility and the ability to make changes and updates quickly based on feedback from users. As the site grows, intentionally prioritizing flexibility [30], and continued partnership with our research team and the trans community, can enable the site to continue to meaningfully respond to users' needs and values.

Because trans people do not only exist in trans-specific spaces, implementing the features participants mentioned (e.g., granular privacy options to control posts' audiences, widespread use of content warnings) on social media sites more broadly would improve trans experiences online. Additionally, many features participants described wanting and appreciating are not useful only for trans people specifically, but also could be helpful for many people who hold marginalized identities or are in times of personal transition. For example, immigrants moving from one country to another, or people facing mental health struggles, may also want ways to manage the audiences who view their posts, as documented in past literature [7, 55].

To understand how trans people's social media needs may be different than recommendations for online communities more broadly, we mapped our findings onto design claims presented in Kraut and Resnick's *Building Successful Online Communities* [53]. Kraut and Resnick [53] presented a series of design claims, which were a way to translate theory into design by providing actionable

insights that could improve online communities if implemented. However, Kraut and Resnick [53] acknowledges that the design claims' applicability depends on context. Though the design claims are grounded in online communities research [53], many have not been tested in particular types of online environments. Thus, we examine how some of Kraut and Resnick's [53] design claims do or do not apply in a trans-specific online community.

Some of our findings are consistent with Kraut and Resnick's [53] claims. Kraut and Resnick [53] argue that cohesive groups lead to norms being followed, consistent with Trans Time's insular community and trans-specific userbase. They offer a number of suggestions for community boundary management and community member vetting, such as asking for "credentials" (similar to asking questions before allowing entry to a community), enabling entry by invite only, and tying referrals to "sponsors" already in the community and their reputations [53]. Kraut and Resnick [53] also describe useful methods for moderation and encouraging compliance with community guidelines, such as community influence on rule-making, displaying norms formally and providing examples, and reminding users of community guidelines when they may be violating norms.

However, some of Kraut and Resnick's [53] design claims differ from our results in the context of trans online communities. First, much of Kraut and Resnick's [53] advice for successful online communities focuses on visibility and rapid increase in membership, such as via active recruitment, advertising, and celebrity endorsements. In contrast, on Trans Time the community values its small size, and while building community is important, a rapid membership increase may make the community feel less safe. Next, in considering how to limit misbehavior and norms violations, Kraut and Resnick [53] recommend verified identities, photos, long-term identifiers, and imposing costs for changing pseudonyms. In a trans context, where many people's identity presentation requires the ability and freedom to *change*, sometimes rapidly and frequently, such practices would be prohibitive. These differences between our findings and Kraut and Resnick's [53] design claims highlight ways that design for trans communities must be different than design for general audiences.

It is important to consider how a site like Trans Time could remain a safe space for its users even as it grows larger. Scaling up is a difficult problem for social media sites, and requires careful attention [53]. Limiting the site to a certain threshold would be problematic, as doing so would proscribe access for many trans people who need support and community. Though one of Trans Time's strengths is its small size, elements of smallness could likely be maintained even with growth. For example, the site could enable users to interact with separate groups and communities, whether randomly configured or based on particular identity facets or interests, so that people could build tight-knit communities within a larger online space. Such groups could be created by users and also by the site itself. As numbers grow, the site's moderation procedures would need to evolve in alignment with its code of conduct. To remain aligned with the community's values, the site could implement community-based moderation, as desired by participants in this study. For instance, each small group of users could establish moderation strategies and norms that work for them. Doing community-based content moderation well is not an easy task [49], particularly at scale, and future work should examine how community-based contextual moderation scales up as a site like Trans Time grows.

Previous research has argued that a trans technology is one that enables meaningful change away from existing networks, along with policies and an economic model that enables transition content [37]. Trans Time fulfills this promise and is a trans technology in ways that other sites (e.g., Tumblr) are not. Given the vast inequality, discrimination, and violence that trans people and communities face in many settings both online and in the physical world [48], it is vital that such safe and insular online communities exist. Yet Trans Time is still in beta, and is not yet financially sustainable. Haimson et al. [37] argued, drawing from Mananzala and Spade [61], that a

trans technology could be cooperatively-driven, and funded by grants, donations, and sliding-scale memberships. This economic model is a potential way forward for Trans Time. In the meantime, trans communities exist on large platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit, YouTube, and Discord, and also on smaller, decentralized sites like Mastodon and Diaspora. These sites should be updated, in policy and design, to better support trans users' needs and to protect trans people from online harassment, potentially by implementing the design recommendations we detail below. Additionally, there is space and need for a sustainable, long-term, trans-specific online space, where people can freely share both the excitement and mundanity of trans lives. Such a site could be made safe by employing the features that we found support safe space on Trans Time.

6.1 Implications for Design

We discuss ways that social media sites — both trans-specific sites, and social media sites more broadly — can be designed to better support trans people. These design recommendations may be useful when designing for marginalized individuals and communities beyond the trans context. Many of our suggestions add friction to social media experiences, in contrast to the "mindless scrolling" and effortless posting commonplace on dominant social media platforms. Yet for participants in our study, extra friction was preferred to the alternatives, such as accidentally posting or viewing unintended content.

6.1.1 Safe Spaces. While all online spaces should be designed to be trans-inclusive and to combat harassment against trans users and other targets, it is also important that trans-specific safe spaces exist online. Having a site created specifically for trans users can address needs that other sites do not. Every interview participant acknowledged that the all-trans network on Trans Time was extremely important to how they viewed the site and what content they were willing to post, and was a primary factor in users viewing the site as a potential safe space online. Because Trans Time users share the experience of being trans, the site can host conversations and resources that go beyond what one might share in a more mixed network. (That said, online insular safe spaces are not desired by all trans people; some may not want or use these separate spaces.) Many marginalized groups would also benefit from safe, insular spaces designed specifically for their needs, and by having input into design and policy decisions. For instance, people who live with rare health conditions often use Facebook groups to discuss their experiences [59, 99], but may find better support and community in an online space designed specifically for them.

How can online spaces be designed to maintain safety for community members? Boundary management is one of the greatest challenges in designing online safe spaces. How can spaces ensure safety by keeping out enemies (e.g., in a trans context, TERFs and people with harmful intentions) while not gatekeeping people's identities? A site for a specific marginalized community could be designed to enable vetting, such as through questions that a potential community member must answer. Yet it is important that such vetting not be so restrictive that it excludes new community members, or people who are not yet sure that they belong (e.g., in a trans context, people who are questioning their gender and people who are not sure if they are "trans enough").

Active moderation can also ensure safety. Participants described how team-based community moderation could account for the complexities and contextual nature of content and those who post it, and could serve as a way to discover and remove users with harmful intentions. While similar moderation approaches are employed in some trans online communities on larger sites (e.g., Facebook groups, subreddits, Discord servers), online communities' moderation approaches are often limited under the purview of a site more broadly. For example, trans content is often removed from private Facebook groups without admins' approval. Our results highlight true community-based moderation approaches' importance for supporting trans online communities.

Finally, Community Guidelines can communicate the community's values (not only the site's values, which are centrally determined and may not represent the community), and explicate what sorts of behaviors and content are and are not allowed, which guides moderation and increases safety. Our results suggest that a site's Community Guidelines are particularly effective if they are prominent and attentive of the ways that intersectional identities impact people's experiences. Additionally, a site can display parts of the Community Guidelines to users as they are posting content, to help reduce content that is not in line with the community's values.

6.1.2 Privacy and Audience. We detail several ways of managing privacy and audience that a trans-specific social media site, and social media sites more broadly, could employ to support trans communities. Trans Time users described that the site met their privacy needs to some extent, such as by having the option for different levels of privacy on a profile level and post level. However, participants also brought up many ways to further improve privacy to maintain boundaries between audiences. Most simply, participants suggested that privacy options should default to more private rather than more public audiences.

Sites could support trans users by allowing users to make their account as connected to or disconnected from their offline identity, and other online identities, as they choose, enabling multiple levels of anonymity and publicness. Unlike sites like Facebook that require identification with a "real identity" or sites like Reddit that are generally anonymous/pseudonymous, participants appreciated that Trans Time allows users to share identity information aligning with their comfort level. Interview participants described varying choices in identity configurations on Trans Time.

Beyond existing features, participants brought up many ways that they wanted privacy options to be more granular than Trans Time's current binary public/private options. While granular privacy options on a site like Facebook tend to cause confusion and are underused [26, 54], there are ways to do granularity well. For example, Snapchat enables users to select whom to share a post with from a list of people, which shifts the default to choosing who *should* see a post vs. who should not (as is common on many platforms). With large audiences, choosing who should see a post can be challenging. In those cases, privacy controls need to be intentionally usable and transparent.

Next, sites could add an extra step of verification clarifying who would see the post that the user clicks before posting sensitive content. Verification could take the form of a pop-up window before content is posted that clearly states which audiences would have access to the post (similar to privacy nudges explored in [93]). Such a feature may help people make informed decisions about what information they choose to disclose to which audiences. As participants described, after posting something, you cannot take it back — the post can be deleted, but if unwanted audiences already saw the content, then the damage is done. Of course, this extra step adds friction to the social media posting experience, but this friction is likely necessary to increase privacy and intentionality in sharing personal information.

Offering users enhanced privacy features does not mean that their privacy concerns will align with their social media actions, according to the privacy paradox [9]. Yet designing to support marginalized communities means listening to and implementing those communities' needs and desires. Though people do not have to use privacy features if the features do exist, they cannot use them if they do not exist.

Finally, the site's values and business model matter. Participants described not trusting privacy options on sites that were profit-driven and used targeted advertising. Marginalized social media users may appreciate a respite from the corporate social media world by building community on smaller sites that do not sell their data or advertise to them.

6.1.3 Content Warnings. A social media site designed specifically for trans people, sites for other marginalized online communities, and social media sites more broadly, should more seriously

consider implementing usable content warnings. We describe three ways to enable users more freedom over the content they see, based on our data and analysis. First, sites could enable users to actively curate lists of types of content that they do and do not want to see. This suggestion is in line with Andalibi and Forte's notion of *human-centered news feeds*, that "enable users to input preferences that allow them to identify sensitive topics that they may want to avoid or engage with in certain time periods" [3]. While some sites already employ similar features or plugins (e.g., XKit for Tumblr, and the ability to mute words/tags/accounts on Twitter), user-generated lists of approved vs. non-approved content could be much more standard in social media site design, and such designations could even be context-aware and location-based. Of course, accurate content warnings require users to label each post, but participants in this study described that they did not mind doing so. Both sides of content warnings — labeling one's own posts, and approving/disapproving tags before viewing others' posts — add friction to site experiences. Yet this friction may be necessary for marginalized online communities to be safe and comfortable.

Next, sites should consider blurring sensitive/difficult visual content rather than showing it to users by default. For example, in the case of the Muhlaysia Booker video, it is important that there is a record of this event that can draw awareness to violence against Black trans women; yet many people would not want to witness such violence. Violent but politically important content is a moderation gray area: the content should not necessarily be moderated out, but also should not be seen by all users [73]. Several sites, including Facebook and Instagram, are already blurring some posts of this type. Standardizing such practices would enable site users to avoid seeing things that they "can't unsee." Of course, deciding which content to blur depends on content moderation policies and practices, requires proactive moderation, and, if moderation work is managed by the platform, gives platforms tremendous power in determining what should and should not be seen [52]. Proactive moderation may not be possible for a small site like Trans Time that has limited resources and employees. Community-based moderation of potentially violent content would also be problematic, as it would require community members to view exactly the type of content they should be protected from. How to moderate harmful content is an active research area with no conclusive answers for how to approach such content without causing harm to moderators [29, 73]. Computational methods are not yet ready to do nuanced moderation work, and may never be, given the contextual nature of much social media content. Setting aside moderation's complexities, in the event that content moderation decisions could be made in a reasonable manner, blurring violent content and providing enough information (e.g., via tags associated with posts) to allow users to choose whether to view a post or to scroll past would likely benefit many users.

We provide these design recommendations through examining how online spaces can be made safer for trans people, and trans people's practices and preferences toward privacy and content warnings. We have illuminated how a trans-specific social media site can be designed to uniquely support trans people, and in doing so also contribute ways for social media sites to support trans people and marginalized users more broadly.

7 CONCLUSION

We talked with current and potential users of Trans Time, a social media site created specifically for trans and/or non-binary people to document their transitions and build community, to understand how social media sites can support trans people's needs. While some aspects of the site are similar to social media sites built for the general population, Trans Time's specific community focus makes it unique in several ways. The insulated community, active moderation, and the values instilled in its guidelines and policies meant that participants considered the site a potentially safe space. Additionally, the site's privacy features enabled the audience segmentation necessary for people during and after gender transition. Finally, we learned from participants how Trans Time's content

warnings can be designed with enough granularity to address the community's needs. Taken together, safety, privacy, and content warnings create a site that uniquely meets the needs of trans people, and enables them to find support, build community, and express both the exciting and mundane aspects of being trans. By examining Trans Time via Kraut and Resnick's [53] design claims for online communities, we determined ways the site is similar to online communities more broadly (e.g., the need to uphold community norms and values and practice community boundary management), yet with important differences (e.g., Trans Time's focus on small size rather than rapid membership increase, and the importance of changeable rather than static user identities for trans users). Our design recommendations, beyond providing guidance for Trans Time, detail ways other social media sites may be able to better support the marginalized individuals and communities who use their sites, and ways that sites can be designed to support specific marginalized online communities.

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