

# Creating Platforms of Resilience Towards a Caring Democracy

## Authors

Huatong Sun  
University of Washington Tacoma, huatongs@gmail.com  
Xiaoli Li  
University of Dayton, xli002@udayton.edu  
Irisa Teng  
Newport High School, irisa.teng@gmail.com

## Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks for the Diversity Research Grant from the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC)!

## SIGDOC 2024

## Recruiting Participants



## 01 Introduction

COVID-19 manifests various types of divides in our lives. However, the traumas and wounds resulting from the global power inequality and systemic biases and the associated failures of those victims from the problem of the macro structure are often blamed on the weakness of the individual. It is a common example when “democratic deficit”—“the incapacities of governmental institutions to reflect the real values and ideas of citizens” [15]—is reduced into “caring deficit,” as feminist political scientist Tronto eloquently illustrates. She advocates to envision caring in “its broadest and most public form” and put the caring responsibilities at the center of the democratic political agendas in order to build “more caring and more just societies” [15].

Coping with racial biases and inequality is part of everyday life of BIPOC graduate students and faculty [9]. Fighting against institutional racism and systemic oppression is a long-term process; in this process, resilience—the ability to cope with tough situations and be able to bounce back [4]—plays an important role.

## 02 Design Scenario

To articulate strategies of resilience collectively towards “a caring democracy” [15], we applied for a seed grant from the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC) to build a platform-based community aiming for mentoring junior scholars on resilience-building, developing allyship network towards more inclusive workplaces [1, 2], and cultivating fan bases and champions [6] for the intellectual work of BIPOC scholars. The project consists of the following two dimensions:

- **Knowledge Building:** Using qualitative interviews as sessions of rhetorical listening [8], recruited BIPOC junior scholars, defined as *allyship network participants*, connect with and interview their selected role models to acquire skills of resilience-building and develop mentoring relationship. Interview questions are provided to the participants along with interview guidelines. Interview findings are analyzed to articulate the strategies of resilience and then published on web platforms.
- **Community-engaged Activism:** Utilizing web platform and social media marketing strategies for community-based design intervention, the project studies and disseminates best practices and strategies of resilience for DEI teaching and research. Engaging in a community of practice on researching resilience strategies together, BIPOC participants will be forming an allyship career network for self-empowerment in a form of public care.

## 03 Design Framework Towards Creating Community-Engaged Platforms

A community-engaged platform here refers to a community-engaged system and network that utilizes web platforms and social media marketing strategies to coordinate and facilitate interactions between multiple groups. Informed by the political-rhetorical power of network for community-building [11, 12, 13, 14] and communities of practice [17], the platform concept is also influenced by the intellectual traditions from critical media studies (e.g., [5, 7, 16]) and economics (e.g., [3]) to achieve discursive affordances [13].

### Platforms as Relations

*In business & management literature*

- “A system that coordinates the exchange or interaction between or more groups of people” (Humphreys, 2016, p. 18)
- “Technologies, products or services that create value primarily by enabling direct interactions between two or more customer or participant groups” as multisided platforms (MSPs) (Hagiu, 2014, p. 71)

*In media studies literature*

- “A set of relations that constantly needs to be performed, actors of all kinds contribute *meanings* to platforms” (van Dijck, 2013, p. 26, emphasis original).
- Techno-cultural constructs: both material & semiotic; both human & non-human actors
- Socioeconomic structures: ownership, governance, business models

### Sensitizing Relations

- A relational view of community platforms to invite participation and changes
- A relational view of comparative rhetoric for “togetherness-in-difference” (Mao, 2003, 2006)
- A relational view of agency
- A relational view of discursive affordances coming from local uptakes of technological genres
- A relational view of design centering on everyday practice and aiming to transform its inequalities of power

## 04 Discursive Affordances Towards a Caring Democracy: Two Design Cases

