"*Honestly, I Think TikTok has a Vendetta Against Black Creators*": Understanding Black Content Creator Experiences on TikTok

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As video-sharing social-media platforms have increased in popularity, a 'creator economy' has emerged in which platform users make online content to share with wide audiences, often for profit. As the creator economy has risen in popularity, so have concerns of racism and discrimination on social media. Black content creators across multiple platforms have identified challenges with racism and discrimination, perpetuated by platform users, companies that collaborate with creators for sponsored content, and the algorithms governing these platforms. In this work, we provide a qualitative study of the experiences of Black content creators on one video-sharing platform, TikTok. We conduct 12 semi-structured interviews with Black TikTok content creators to understand their experiences, identify the challenges they face, and understand their perceptions of the platform. We find that some common challenges include: content moderation, monetization, harassment and bullying from viewers, lack of transparency of recommendation and filtering algorithms, and the perception that content from Black creators is treated unfairly by those algorithms. We then suggest design interventions to mitigate the challenges, bolster positive aspects, and overall cultivate an inclusive algorithmic experience for Black creators on TikTok.

CCS Concepts: • **Social and professional topics** → **Race and ethnicity**; **Cultural characteristics**; **Censoring filters**; • **Information systems** → *Content ranking*; **Social recommendation**; • **Human-centered computing** → **Social media**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Black online culture, racism, anti-Blackness, social media, TikTok, algorithmic inclusivity, algorithmic exclusion

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1 INTRODUCTION

As video-sharing social-media platforms have increased in popularity, a new 'creator economy' has emerged in which creatives make online content for profit, sometimes as a primary source of

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income. This concept has attracted a diverse range of 'content creators' or 'influencers.' Content creators vary in geographic and demographic background, develop various types of content, and range from pursuing it as a hobby, to pursuing it as a source of income. As content creation has increased in popularity as a hobby and career path, many creators rely on the often ambiguous rules and regulations of video-sharing social media platforms, the black-box algorithms that power these sites, and the engagement of their audience, to maintain and grow their following. Marginalized communities including but not limited to LGBTQ+ individuals [49, 50, 54], Black, Indigenous, and people of color [17, 44], people with disabilities [57], and individuals at the intersections of these groups have experienced inequities in the creator economy. These issues can be perpetuated by platform users [48], by company partners [2, 24], and by the algorithms powering these platforms [26, 49, 54]. These challenges include a heightened risk of experiencing harassment and hate speech [40, 47], unequal pay [2, 24], and lack of opportunities to grow their platforms and reach wider audiences [14, 45]. These issues are part of a larger phenomenon of unequal treatment of minoritized groups by technological systems; from algorithm biases making unfair and inaccurate predictions and classification for marginalized groups [5, 27, 28], to racism and bigotry on social media causing these groups to experience heightened harassment, abuse, and mistreatment [40, 47], Black content creators must work around these challenges to succeed in the creator economy.

With this work, we focus specifically on Black content creators on TikTok as a microcosm of larger issues at the intersections of race and technology. TikTok is a video-sharing social media platform owned by the Chinese company ByteDance and was launched in 2016. By 2022, the platform reached over 1 billion monthly users globally. But as the popularity of the platform has grown, so has the criticism, particularly from Black content creators. Black content creators on TikTok have noted several issues with their experiences on the platform, including content suppression, pay disparities, racist hate speech, and content theft. Some studies have supported these claims, finding pay gaps between white and Black creators on TikTok to be 35% [2], and finding Black content creators on TikTok more likely to report being low-balled by brands for sponsored content [19]. Mounting criticisms from Black users in the midst of racial uprisings in the U.S. in the summer of 2020 prompted TikTok to release a statement titled "A message to our Black community" [56] in June of 2020, stating the following:

> We want you to know that we hear you and we care about your experiences on TikTok. We acknowledge and apologize to our Black creators and community who have felt unsafe, unsupported, or suppressed. We don't ever want anyone to feel that way. We welcome the voices of the Black community wholeheartedly.

The statement continues to identify steps the company claimed to take towards creating a more inclusive environment, including better handling content moderation and appeals, creating a creator diversity council, furthering diversity initiatives internally in the company, and developing a creator portal to expand opportunities for creators. Two years after the release of this statement in 2022, we conducted this semi-structured interview study to better understand to what extent Black content creators still face challenges on TikTok, and their understanding of the platform's inclusivity. We center this work around three primary research questions:

(1) What challenges do Black content creators face in building and maintaining a platform on TikTok?
(2) How do Black content creators perceive the TikTok algorithm?
(3) What platform changes or additional resources do Black content creators need to better support their work?

To answer these three questions, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 Black content creators on TikTok, across a diverse representation of content types, follower counts, and personal

demographics. Our findings indicate that Black creators face challenges primarily with content suppression and moderation, harassment and hate speech, and monetizing their platforms. Further, Black creators believe the TikTok recommendation algorithm, the For You Page (FYP), lacks transparency and filters content from marginalized identities. We conclude this work by developing several design suggestions to TikTok that can improve the experience for Black creators.

2 RELATED WORK

2.1 Black Experiences Online

This work builds on research that is anchored in intersections of race and technology and the experiences of Black people on social media. Much of the work in human computer interaction (HCI) lacks a racial analysis and thus we often look outside of HCI and CSCW literature to engage in this research. We build on prior work examining anti-Black algorithm biases, Black experiences on social media in general, and exploring Black experiences on TikTok.

2.1.1 Anti-Black Algorithm Biases. Our ability to examine biases towards Black users and creators within the TikTok algorithm itself is limited, and thus we focus this work on the perceptions of Black creators. However, plenty of existing work has identified and labored to mitigate biases in algorithms like those powering social media platforms. For example, Haimson et al. conducted qualitative and quantitative analyses to identify populations that are more likely to experience content moderation across a variety of social media platforms, including TikTok. They found that Black users, transgender users, and users who promote conservative politics experience disproportionate removal of their social media content compared to other populations in their sample [26]. For Black users, one contributing factor to these disproportionate removals could be the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), among Black content creators and social media users. Prior research Black social media users are more likely to have their speech be classified as hate speech or otherwise offensive speech by content moderation systems [27, 28, 46], more likely to be classified as negative sentiment in sentiment analysis systems [31], have higher word error rates in speech-to-text captioning [33, 52], and broadly to have poor performance on natural language processing systems in general [6, 60]. This issue is particularly concerning for with respect to content moderation and speech-to-text transcription, which both play a role in online video content creation and sharing. While the proprietary nature of TikTok prevents much of these types of analysis of their platform, it is well established that these anti-Black biases can exist in machine learning systems like those powering TikTok. To gain more insights into potential anti-Black biases on TikTok, our work explores the experiences and perceptions of Black TikTok creators.

2.1.2 Black Experiences on Social Media. Despite the limited work on Black creator experiences on TikTok specifically, there is a larger body of work exploring the experiences of Black users on social media. Multiple prior works examine the experience of Black social media users.

Many of the works on Black online experiences have focused on the unique experiences of community building for Black social media users [8, 21, 32]. Prior works from both Andre Brock and Sarah Florini analyze the affordances of Twitter that have been leveraged by Black users to cultivate the large, active, community known as Black Twitter [8, 21]. Twitter's unique features such as hashtags and trending topics enable the online practice of the Black cultural tradition of signifyn' [1] which easily enables Black identity construction and community building [8, 21].

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[1] signifyn' is the linguistic expression of conveying multiple meanings through figurative language, wordplay, and indirectness, and is a common practice in African American culture [21]

More specific to video-sharing platforms, Emma Maguire examines how expressions of Black girlhood become viral, profitable, and appropriated "commodities" through a case study of the platform Vine [38]. Maguire uses the example of Black teenager Kayla Newman, username Peaches Monroe, who created the viral phrase "eyebrows on fleek" in a Vine video that received over 116 million views. The phrase went on to be used for advertising and sold on merchandise by a myriad of companies and celebrities. While others built social and monetary capital from Newman's phrase, Newman attempted unsuccessfully to gain intellectual property rights to it. Maguire argues that Newman's struggle to gain creative ownership of the phrase is part of a greater history of the exploitation of Black cultural production for the profit of non-Black individuals [38]. Within HCI research, there is a small but growing body of work that analyzes Black experiences on social media. Klassen and Kingsley's work analyzes Black Twitter, finding that it functions as a Black community information-sharing space that can be vulnerable to appropriation and infiltration by outsiders [32]. Based on their findings, Klassen and Kingsley describe Twitter as a "modern day Green Book" [2] for it's ability to respond to the shifting landscape of racism and supporting the creation of community-based networks which facilitate resistance, economic empowerment, and Black joy [32]. Musgraves et al. engaged in focus groups with Black women and gender diverse individuals to understand their experiences with online harassment, coping with these experiences, and finding joy [40]. They find that existing content moderation practices often fail to capture racism and misogynoir [3], and that Black women and femmes experience a multi-layered online harassment from outside communities and from within the multiple communities they occupy [40]. Further, their work explores participants online experiences of Black joy, the joy found through experiences of racism and hardship [40, 42], through a restorative justice framework. They find that Black women and femmes cultivate joy online by curating their platforms to center Black women succeeding, Black community memes, and other positive content [40].

Several prior works find consistent issues faced by Black online communities including racist harassment, infiltration of Black spaces, and theft of Black cultural production. Further, several prior works emphasize how Black online spaces are able to facilitate community building and Black Joy. These common themes in the Black online experience are thus used to shape our interview questions and analysis. We build on these ideas by further exploring them in the context of TikTok.

2.1.3 Black Experiences on TikTok. Prior to our work, some scholars investigated Black experiences on TikTok, often with an emphasis on Black women and girls. Cienna Davis examines Black creator Keara Wilson's viral "Savage" dance challenge, to the song 'Savage' by Megan Thee Stallion. In this analysis, Davis puts the phenomenon of content theft of popular dance challenges created by Black creators on TikTok into a greater historical context of digital blackface [17]. Digital blackface is a phenomenon in which Black cultural production is extracted and exploited for profit or notoriety by non-Black individuals online [17]. Digital blackface is part of a greater historical legacy of minstrelsy, in which non-Black (predominately white) people create entertainment through mockery, caricatures, and imitation of Black people. Catherine Knight Steele also discusses this phenomenon, examining Wilson as well as Black creator Jaleah Harmon, who created the viral 'Renegade' dance challenge to the song 'Lottery' by K Camp, as examples of Black women and girls who create trends on TikTok [51]. Steele discusses the disproportionately high benefits that white TikTok creators received for imitation, relative to the Black women and girls who originated these

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[2]The Green Book was a travel guide for Black Americans first published in 1936 providing information on safe travel accommodations. This resource allowed Black travelers to avoid widespread white supremacist terror and racial hostility [53]

[3]misogynoir is the unique combined experience of misogyny and anti-Black racism experienced by Black women and femmes, the term was coined in 2010 by Moya Bailey [4]

trends, and the 2021 Black TikTok creator strike in response to this uneven distribution of credit and capital. Steele argues that, unlike their non-Black counterparts that replicate their work for social and economic gain, Black women and girls challenge dominant narratives around race and beauty by creating these challenges.

Using Andre Brock's method of critical technoculture analysis, first developed to study Black Twitter [9], Chelsea Peterson-Salahuddin examines Black experiences on TikTok. Peterson-Salahuddin examines two 'challenges' on TikTok that directly engage race, through visual and critical technoculture discourse analysis [43]. To put these trends in context, Peterson-Salahuddin documents surveillance challenges faced by Black and other marginalized creators on TikTok. One example is a TikTok video from Black creator Ziggi Tyler (@ZiggyTyler) documenting that TikTok's content moderation system, labeled phrases 'Black Support,' and 'Black Lives Matter,' in his bio as 'inappropriate,' but not the term 'white supremacy.' With greater context of racialized surveillance on TikTok, Peterson-Salahuddin analyzes two TikTok challenges- the 'JoJo Pose' challenge, in which Black creators recreate photos posing like individuals in their towns or schools who had openly promoted racist rhetoric to the song "Pose" by Apollo Fresh, and the #VogueChallenge, in which Black and brown TikTok creators edited themselves onto the cover of Vogue Magazine to highlight the historical lack of diversity in the publication. She proposes that these challenges counter hegemonic narratives of Black identity and are a form of "digital dark sousveillance," or digital strategies to inverse power structures under a system of racialized surveillance [43].

Some of the key findings of these works mirror findings of prior works on Black experiences online, including concerns of appropriation and outsider mockery of Black individuals, and stricter content moderation of Black people. However some of the findings are also unique to video-sharing platforms, or specifically TikTok. The scale of capital built from non-Black individuals, appropriation and copying of Black individuals on the platform, and the inversion of anti-Black power structures by Black creators both are more unique to TikTok. These unique elements suggest a greater analysis of Black individuals' experiences on TikTok is needed. Furthermore, these works complete their analysis by viewing TikTok content rather than engaging these creators. Our work adds to the limited research on Black content creator experiences on TikTok by leveraging semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of Black creator experiences directly from the creators.

2.2 Video Sharing Platform User Experiences

Our work seeks to understand the experiences of Black content creators on TikTok, with the goal of creating design solutions that foster a more inclusive algorithmic experience for this population. While racial analysis of content creators is limited, many prior works analyze video sharing platforms with the goal of cultivating an inclusive experience for users and content creators-including exploring the experiences of other marginalized identities. Our work builds on this body of work, extending the analysis to include racial identity.

2.2.1 Inclusivity on Video Sharing Platforms. Beyond TikTok, there is a larger body of work that explores the experiences of content creators of other marginalized groups on video sharing platforms. The experiences of users from other marginalized groups provide useful insights to help us understand issues faced by Black creators. One such example is recent work from Choi et al., which examines the experiences of YouTube creators with disabilities [14]. They find their subjects struggled to reach a wider audience beyond those interested specifically in their disability, and had to strategically decide weather or not to reveal their disability in their videos [14]. Also examining YouTube, Ma and Kou conduct interviews with for-profit content creators to understand their perceptions of the fairness of content moderation practices, finding that many creators assess fairness through comparisons across their peers, consistency across moderation decisions, and their

ability to have their voices considered in algorithmic decision making processes [37]. Relatedly, Rong et al. explores the experiences of blind and low vision (BLV) streamers on Douyin, the China-based TikTok counterpart also owned by ByteDance, finding many BLV streamers believe their content is suppressed on the platform, and that limited accommodations prevent them from filming and interacting in a timely manner [45]. Finally, Uttarapong et al. discusses the experiences of online sex workers on the digital patronage site OnlyFans and how adult content creators navigate challenges on the site through community building within creator networks across multiple social media sites [58]. Within work on other marginalized groups, there are concerns of fairness and content suppression on video sharing platforms. Further, there is a repeated theme of marginalized creators building community and connecting with peers to better understand and navigate the platform. We build on these works by exploring these themes within the context of TikTok, looking specifically at Black creators.

2.2.2   TikTok User and Creator Experiences. Outside of studying marginalized groups, multiple works have studied the experience of TikTok users more generally. For instance, Lee et al. studied user perceptions of the TikTok algorithm [36]. They find that many users perceive the algorithm to accurately reflect their multifaceted interests with little effort, while some users needed to make additional efforts to "shape" their FYP outside of typical engagements with content. Multiple participants found that their feed lacked diversity. Interestingly, one white user in the study noted that they made a deliberate effort to search and like content from Black creators and other creators of color which helped to diversify their feed [36]. Karizat et al. explore algorithm folk theories held by of TikTok's FYP algorithm, identifying a commonly held theory which they call "Identity Strainer Theory," in which users believe content is actively suppressed based on marginalized identities such as race and ethnicity, body size and physical appearance, ability status, or LGBTQ+ identity. They further propose the concept of "algorithmic representational harm," to describe the harm that occurs when users embody these identities [30]. In another general study on TikTok content creators, Thomas and Kelley et al. surveyed content creators to better understand their experience with hate speech and other toxic behavior including stalking, toxic comments and impersonation [55], among their findings, 23% of their participants reported being the target of hate speech, bullying or harassment 'always' or 'often.' One limitation of this study is that due to low sample size of non-white individuals, nuanced racial analysis distinguishing the experiences of Black, Asian, Hispanic and other non-white groups was not possible.

2.2.3   Marginalized Groups on TikTok. Multiple works focus on the experiences of various marginalized groups on TikTok. Similar to concerns of content suppression and algorithmic oppression put forth by Black creators, LGBTQ+ users on TikTok have expressed similar concerns [49, 50]. Simpson and Semaan studied this through semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ users on TikTok. They find that the FYP provides support for LGBTQ+ identity by enabling users to easily discover other LGBTQ+ individuals and offers a space for identity work. However, users found the FYP's ability to discover one's LGBTQ+ identity without them explicitly stating it unsettling, and that it constructs a normative LGBTQ+ identity by seeming to only promote LGBT+ users that fit a particular motif [50]. Another work from Simpson et al. highlights the challenges LGBTQ+ TikTok users face in the domestication process of the FYP. These include the patience needed to "teach" the algorithm what the users would like to see, and the privacy violations needed to reveal personal details to TikTok and receive desired content [49]. Additionally, Anastasia Todd explores the experiences of women and girls with disabilities, particularly service dog handlers, on TikTok [57]. Todd leverages feminist theory and disability studies to explain how women and girl service dog handlers on TikTok construct a unique identity narrative that counters the service dog handler identity presented in traditional media [57].

Prior work on general users and other marginalized groups share some themes to works on Black creators, such as community building, evading surveillance, and subverting dominant narratives. However, there are unique nuances in how different platforms work towards these objectives. Further, content theft, digital blackface, and disproportionate pay remain more prominent issues for Black creators. These gaps motivate our work on a deep understanding of Black creators' experiences on TikTok.

3 METHODS

This work seeks to understand the experience of Black creators on TikTok. This includes understanding the challenges Black creators face in building a monetized platform, Black creators' perception of the algorithm, and how creators balance content visibility and viewer response as their audience grows. To do so we employed a semi-structured interview approach with Black creators on TikTok.

3.1 Interview Participants

We recruited participants for this study from July 2022 to September 2022. Participation was restricted to Black people who were 18 years old or above with at least 4,000 followers on TikTok. We stopped recruiting participants when we reached saturation, or when we heard similar themes repeated in the interviews [15].

This project was approved by the authors' institution's Institutional Review Board. To preserve the privacy of our interview participants, we redact all identifiable information from transcripts, all interview data is stored on a secure computer, and provide limited identifiable information in this work to ensure our participants' privacy. Given the nature of this work focusing on content creators, we understood that some participants would likely be proud of their TikTok platform and their contributions to this study, and thus may want to have their name or TikTok username shared in this work. Prior work from Bruckman et al. [10] and ethics guidelines such as the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans [4] have identified that in many contexts, use of real names of participants in qualitative research is not only ethical, but may be the most ethical option as it maximizes the respect for, and benefits gained by the participant. Further, as discussed in the Related Work, within the specific context of Black content creators, there are many instances of Black creators being copied or their creative work replicated, without credit, for the profit of others, which creates negative outcomes for the Black creators [17, 38, 51]. As such, for the consent form of this study, we provided an option for participants to forgo anonymity and provide a name and/or username to be identified in this work. Prior to final publication, we share the paper with each participant and give them the option to restore anonymity. Further, details they provide about other TikTok content creators not part of the study are obscured to protect the privacy of those individuals.

To recruit participants for this study, we used TikTok's hashtags and 'sound' features. Hashtags, similar to other platforms, are tags that users can utilize to categorize their posts. We used identity and content related hashtags that were popular among Black creators to identify participants. In addition to hashtags, we used TikTok's unique "sound" feature to find potential participants. This is because, as noted by multiple interview participants, "hashtags are less relevant" on TikTok. Rather, TikTok trends, popular topics, and content creation, are largely driven by a unique feature of the app, 'sounds'. Sounds are audio clips, that contain music, memes, film or television audio, or the original audio of a TikTok video. While creators do make videos with their own native audio, creators also use popular sounds on TikTok as background audio or the primary audio of their

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Content Theme	Name	Followers	Participant ID
BookTok	Kendra Keeter-Gray @Kendrea.reads	128k	P02
BookTok	-	5.3k	P08
BookTok	Kimmy	120k	P10
Comedy	Zuhayb	288k	P03
Comedy	Kenan Clark	239k	P04
Comedy	Darius Scott	513k 498k	P07
Religious Deconstruction & Social Commentary	@DonnellWrites	184k	P01
Disability Adcovacy & Social Commentary	Imani Barbarin	464k	P11
Houseless Advocacy & Day in the Life/ Vlogs	Folasade (Sade) Kammen	106k	P05
Veganism & What I Eat in a Day	@zipporahthevegan	80k	P06
Makeup/Skincare & LGBTQ+ Identity	Smith Woods	79k	P09
Accessibility & Restaurant Reviews	-	30.5k	P12

Table 1. Participant information including content theme, name (if provided), following count, and participant number. Note that P07 has 2 accounts, both with comedy content.

content. Similar to a hashtag, TikTok users can look up a sound and find all videos that use it. We used sounds that were popular among Black TikTok creators to find Black creators to interview. We also reached out to the original creators of some of the popular sounds among Black TikTok users used in recruitment. A full summary of hashtags and sounds used in recruitment are displayed in the Appendix in Table 3 and Table 4. Furthermore, after searching these sounds and hashtags repeatedly on TikTok, the For You Page of the account created for this project began to increase the presence of Black creators. We also recruited participants from these FYP recommendations. Some participants were also recruited through snowball sampling from other participants, and one was recruited through a mutual connection to one of the authors. Upon identifying a Black creator as a viable potential participant, we checked the bio of their TikTok page for a business email address. For those that had a business email, we emailed them a recruitment message to solicit their participation. We chose to use email largely because of the limited messaging capabilities on TikTok; direct messages are typically limited to accounts that follow each other. However, we believe those with an email listed in their TikTok bio are typically more open to professional and sponsorship opportunities, and thus more likely to identify as a "content creator."

This recruitment procedure resulted in interviews with 12 subjects. Our participants were 5 women, 5 men, and 2 nonbinary individuals. All participants identified as Black, but represent a diverse range of ethnic identities, with African Americans as the most represented ethnic group. Our participants range in age from 18 to 32 with a median age of 23. Most of our participants were born in and lived in the United States, with two from Canada and one from Norway. Follower counts ranged from 5.3k to 513k followers on TikTok with a median of 119k followers at the time of the interview. Full demographic information for our interview participants can be found in Table 2, information on each participants' TikTok account can be found in Table 1.

3.2 Interview Procedure

All interviews were conducted virtually via video call by the first author. In most cases, interviews were conducted via Zoom. For one participant who was less familiar with Zoom, we used WhatsApp to conduct the interview. Interviews lasted around 30 to 80 minutes and were audio recorded with permission from these participants. Interview questions consisted of nine major themes:

Category	Count
Ethnicity	
African American	4
Somali	1
Jamaican	1
Nigerian	2
West Indian	1
Trinidadian	2
Eastern European	1
ID as Black Only	2
Gender	
Man	5
Woman	5
Nonbinary	2
Age	
18-20	1
21-23	5
24-26	2
27-29	2
30-31	1
Declined to State	1
hline *Education*	
Some College/In College	4
Undergraduate Degree Awarded	6
Graduate Degree Awarded	2

Table 2. Participant demographics including ethnicity, gender, age, and education level. We display demographic information separately from TikTok account information to protect the identity of anonymous participants. Note that 4 participants identified with 2 ethnicities, while the remaining 8 identified with 1.

(1) Introductory questions: We began each interview by asking participants to introduce themselves and the content they create on TikTok. We asked about the general theme of their content, their intended audience, how long they have been creating content, and some of their metrics such as follower count, average likes, etc. We ended this introductory section with discussing their involvement in the TikTok creator fund or other monetization opportunities they have taken or been offered, and if they experienced challenges with monitization. This often led to follow up discussion of being underpaid which is consistent with prior literature [2, 24]

(2) Engagement: Participants were asked to describe their posting schedule (if applicable), their experiences with their videos going viral, and typical audience engagement, and response. We asked about their experience with the comments section of their content and what type of comments they typically receive.

(3) Growth and Performance: Interview participants were then asked about the growth trajectory of their TikTok platform from the time of launch to the time of the interview. They were asked to discuss any strategies they use to ensure their content performs well and for tips they have learned to improve their performance.

(4) Hate speech: Interview participants were asked to discuss their experience with hate speech and hateful comments and direct messages on TikTok. They were asked to discuss the frequency and nature of these comments, how they handle these responses and any changes to the frequency of these comments over time. Many prior works reveal disproportionate levels of hate speech experienced by Black people and marginalized groups more generally, online [1, 40]. This segment of questions seeks to gain insights from our participants about the frequency of these interactions and instances in which hate speech may be more likely to occur. Further, we also sought to understand how our participants were impacted by these experiences.

(5) Content Suppression: Interview participants were asked to discuss their experiences with content policing and suppression. This includes experiences with having content placed 'under review', receiving 'content violations' or having content removed. They were asked what the reasoning for the violations provided or if reasons were given at all by TikTok. They were also asked to discuss their reaction to these violations, if they attempted to appeal or work with TikTok to have the content restored, and the success of these attempts. They were also asked to discuss any differences between the content that received these penalties and content that has not. Furthermore, many content creators mentioned the phrase "shadowbanning" at some point in their interviews. Participants who mentioned this term were asked to explain how they would define "shadowbanning", their perception of how it works, their experiences with it, and how it differs from other violations on TikTok. Prior work [30, 43] and a direct statement from TikTok [56] reveal many TikTok users and creators believe that Black creators are suppressed on the platform. With this set of questions, we sought to understand if our participants share these experiences, and if so, what the experience is like, their thoughts on why it occurs, how it impacts their platform overall, any any possible mitigation strategies to avoid suppression. Where relevant, we also asked if content creators were on TikTok during the racial unrest events of 2020, and if so if they posted about the events and experienced any content removals or suppression.

(6) Challenges: Content creators were asked to discuss their biggest challenges with creating content on TikTok and how they get around these challenges. They were asked to explain if there was anything about the platform that they understood better and if they had any concerns about the TikTok algorithm. This segment of questions was asked to capture any challenges of our participants that are not already reflected in prior literature such as hate speech, content suppression, and growth. Consistent with prior work [17, 51], these questions often led to discussions about content theft, but also encompassed other unique challenges faced by our participants.

(7) Positive Experiences and Black Joy: Participants were asked to describe why they create for TikTok, what the positive aspects of the app are, and how they use TikTok to create Black Joy for themselves or others. Following Musgraves et al., much of the work on Black people's experiences online focuses on the many ways in which Black folks suffer, and as such, it is crucial to include discussions of Black Joy [40].

(8) Design Ideas: We ended the main content portion of each interview by asking questions to inform design ideas to improve creators' experiences on TikTok. They were also asked to discuss tools they use outside of TikTok to create their content, or what other features or changes to TikTok would help them be more successful.

(9) Demographic Questions: Participants were asked their age, ethnicity, race, gender, pronouns, education level, place of birth, and place of residence with the option to decline to answer for any of these questions. Ethnicity and pronouns are both non-standard demographic questions within qualitative computing research. We ask participants of their pronouns to avoid making

assumptions based on gender and to properly refer to them in work. We also ask about ethnicity separately from race. Black racial identity is broadly defined by African ancestry; it encompasses many ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and histories. Prior work shows both shared and separate online communities and experiences between different groups within the Black diaspora and on the African continent [3, 7, 11]. To avoid flattening these various dimensions of identity, we ask participants to share their ethnicity to understand any potential nuances between the experiences of different Black ethnic groups in our analysis. We believe when studying the experiences of people within a specific racial group, surveying for ethnicity can provide added depth to the analysis.

3.3 Analysis

We used Otter.AI[5] to transcribe all audio recordings of interviews, then used a thematic coding approach [25] to analyze the transcripts. With our three research questions in mind, two of the authors worked together to identify important quotes and common themes across the interviews. The first two interviews analyzed were chosen for initial analysis due to the difference between the two content creators in content type, follower count, and demographic factors, to get an idea of the more generalizable, overlapping themes earlier on in the process. After that, the two researchers analyzed the remaining interviews independently in a shared document discussing the themes asynchronously. Once all transcripts were reviewed, the two researchers discussed the findings of each interview, the overall commonalities, and generated a finalized list of themes that span across multiple interviews and answer the research questions. Lastly, the finalized themes were categorized into greater overarching themes and quotes from interviews that support each theme were selected.

4 RESULTS

Below we discuss the findings of our analysis, and how they help answer our research questions. We first discuss RQ1 on the specific challenges that Black content creators face in building and maintaining a platform on TikTok from three perspectives: content moderation and suppression challenges, monetization challenges, and viewer response challenges.

4.1 Content Moderation and Suppression

4.1.1 Content Moderation. One of the most common challenges experienced by most of our participants was content moderation. In particular, the hypersensitive nature of the content moderation system on TikTok was a challenge, as it appears to suppress, review more closely, or frequently remove content from the Black creators in our study. Several creators discussed the hypersensitive nature of the TikTok content moderation system that seemed to remove videos for erroneous violations . Many participants had received false violations at least once, most commonly for 'hate speech' , 'harassment and bullying', or 'nudity.' 'Nudity' violations were most common among women and femme presenting men and nonbinary individuals in our sample. For example, Sadé (P5) who makes "day in the life" content described their experience with content violations which they have had consistently throughout their time on TikTok. The nature of the violations varied based on her daily activities in the video.

> *I used to get a lot more sexual violations when I was ... teaching surf lessons, I was on the beach a lot more, I got a lot of, 'adult' [or] 'minor' [or] 'nudity' type violations, which are really weird. Right now I mainly get like dangerous activity. Even if there's nothing in the*

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[5]https://otter.ai/

video... [When I get a dangerous activity violation] it's usually unhoused people [in the video]. -P5

Kenan (P4) who makes comedy content described his experience with frequent hate speech violations:

Whenever I use AAVE or slang that Black people will use, somehow that comes up as hate speech in my videos. However you have people [on TikTok] who are literally seriously hate speaking on other people and it goes on unchecked. - P4

These content moderation challenges suggest the existence of biases. Anti-Black biases in hate speech/offensive speech classification [27, 28, 46] and sexist biases in nudity classification [20] have both been identified in prior literature on content moderation. Content violations are a serious challenge for the Black content creators we interviewed. While there is an appeal process for challenging these erroneous violations, the appeal process comes with its own challenges.

4.1.2 Appeal Process. When content creators receive a violation, they have the option to appeal it. In this process, the video goes under additional review and violation may be revoked and the video re-posted. Because many creators in our study had false violations, many had experience with the appeal process and many identified challenges with the appeal process. Many creators described the loss of viewership while the video was taken down as a disappointment and a hindrance to growing their platform. One participant described frustration with a recent update to the appeal process, explaining that content creators can no longer provide an explanation of why the video did not violate the guidelines participant described needing to involve their audience to make repeated support requests to TikTok to have the video reinstated after unsuccessful appeals. Furthermore, an account can be banned after receiving many violations, regardless of them being appealed, causing creators worry about being banned temporarily or losing their platform altogether. Darius (P7) described their frustration with the content moderation and appeal process in their interview:

Every time I've gotten a content violation, it's been appealed. Why? Because I was never wrong in the first place. But I feel like TikTok gives you those content violations to justify banning your account, because they're like, "Okay, you on your eighth strike now. So if you do this thing again, we're going to take your account away," but then I'm like, what did I do? You just said you were wrong. -P7

A successful appeal also does not guarantee a video will remain re-posted. In particular, if many people repeatedly report a video it may be removed again. Multiple participants found that the community guidelines can be manipulated in this way. If enough people report a video consistently it will likely be removed again, regardless of the truthfulness of the reports. Creators find this is likely to happen when they discuss marginalized identities, or when another content creator with a larger following responds negatively to them and their audience retaliates. Imani (P11) gave her perspective on this:

[Submitting appeals] works every so often. But again, if you have somebody with a larger following than you who's intent on saying that you bullied them, there's nothing you can do. -P11

Prior research identifies that Black women and femmes are disproportionately targeted in online harassment [1, 35, 40], making this issue particularly worrisome when considering the experience of Black creators. This phenomenon connects similarly to Lawson's work as mentioned in Section 2.1.2; affordances on social media platforms can be exploited to further racist harassment, especially towards Black women and femmes [35]. Outside of content violations, another challenge related to content moderation is the review process which many participants found unclear and deceptive.

4.1.3 Review Process. Videos on TikTok can also be placed 'under review' which many participants experienced. However, there was no uniform understanding among the participants of what it means for videos to be 'under review,' aside from the video appearing to no longer be viewable to anyone besides the creator. It is not well understood why videos go under review, what the review process entails, or how long it takes. Creators are not even notified when videos go under review which many found frustrating. Creators have developed strategies to create transparency around the 'under review' status, such as attempting to share their videos or attempting to view them from another account. Kendra of @Kendra.reads on TikTok (P2) explains how a creator can figure out if their video is under review:

> *You don't [get a notification] ... you'll be able to tell because, maybe five minutes will go by and you have zero views, and you're like "zero, not a single person?" And then that's when I'll click "copy link," and it'll say "your video's under review." ... they're not very straightforward of like, what exactly is under review? What is that review process? -P2*

The lack of transparency around the review process heightens distrust between creators and the platform. The final challenge related to content moderation is content suppression or 'shadowbanning.'

4.1.4 Content Suppression/"Shadowbanning". Finally, content being 'shadowbanned' was repeatedly highlighted by creators as a significant challenge that they experienced or knew others experienced. While some creators used other terms such as "TikTok Jail" or "content suppression" to explain this phenomenon, all descriptions were similar. Creators identified a phenomenon of videos and live-streams on TikTok not being placed under any formal review or violation, but also not being shown to anyone, even for creators with hundreds of thousands of followers. This can happen immediately upon posting or suddenly after the video has gained traction, but commonly occurs shortly after posting. This phenomenon seems especially common when creators discuss topics related to Black identity or other marginalized identities. Kimmy (P10), explained the difference between shadowbanning and going under review and how a content creator can tell if their account is 'shadowbanned':

> *[If your video is under review,] if you try to click a link to share your video, it will say "cannot send, under review" ... But if it's shadow ban, I can send you a link ... [but] no one else can see the video and ... when you're shadowbanned, sometimes your videos won't post for hours, like you posted them, and they won't get any views, any likes, and they won't appear to be there to other people. I have a different account, like a personal account where I would go and check and be like, my video isn't up. -P10*

Creator @zipporahthevegan (P6) described their experience as well as that of a friend with content suppression on TikTok livestreams, identifying that it seems connected to discussing identity:

> *One of my friends who's a [marginalized] vegan content creator, whenever she's making videos that has the term[s] "vegan" or [her marginalized identity] [6] in it, it gets flagged. And I also actually noticed that, [with] the word "Black" [on the screen] if ever I went live, [TikTok] wouldn't allow me to post. So if I was going live, and I just wanted to say, "Black vegan chat" it wouldn't allow me because ... I think that's banned on the app or something, which is just so ridiculous to me. -P6*

Similar to content violations discussed in Section 4.1.1, these 'shadowbanning' experiences imply the existence of biases against Black folks and other marginalized groups, consistent with content moderation biases identified on other platforms [6, 27, 28, 46]. Some people in the study

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[6] We remove reference to the individual's identity to protect their privacy

also reported this issue occurring when they discuss other platforms in their videos. This could potentially be a strategy by TikTok to keep users on the app. @DonnellWrites on TikTok (P1) discussed this phenomenon in his interview:

> *This is something that I've noticed recently ... when I talk about Instagram, or try to get people to follow me on Instagram, those videos don't get pushed ... when I talked about the launch of my YouTube channel, that video didn't get pushed and I had to do paid promotion to get it pushed. -P1*

Our findings make it clear that content moderation is a major challenge for Black content creators on TikTok. Black content creators, particularly those with multiple marginalizing identities may be more vulnerable to biased content moderation practices on TikTok. Furthermore, content creators hoping to support their other platforms may struggle to do so on TikTok. This is especially concerning considering another challenge Black creators struggle with on TikTok, monetizing their platforms.

4.2 Monetization Challenges

4.2.1 Sponsored Videos. Despite our participants amassing large followings, many expressed issues with effectively monetizing their platform. Many content creators report 'lowball' offers for sponsored content much below their worth, or 'offers' to create content for no monetary compensation at all. This is consistent with prior works on the creator economy, finding that Black creators typically receive lower compensation than their white counterparts, and are more likely to report 'lowball' offers from brands [2, 24]. Interestingly, Darius (P7) who had the largest followings of all participants in this study at 513k followers on one account and 498k followers on another at the time of interview expressed difficulty with obtaining paid offers for sponsored content:

> *I'm still in the process of getting sponsorships. Most of the sponsors that I get are not like, "Here's this product, can you promote our product? Here's some money." They're like, "Do you want to be a brand ambassador? Do you want to use this software for free?" Like no, I want money. Sorry, but this isn't going to pay the bills. -P7*

Many creators also expressed frustration with seeing their non-Black, typically white, peers with similar followings reporting how much they make on TikTok as much higher than what they have had the opportunity to make. Kenan (P4) explains his experience with this in his interview:

> *I can see the white creators who have less viewers than me, less followers than me ... saying "here's how I made 10,000 [dollars per month] on TikTok" and they ... will only have their account for a year, some of them only for a couple months... But me as a Black creator, I've been here for three years and I'm not making nowhere near 10k, I haven't even scratched 1,000 ... When it comes to advertising, I will say the lighter faces always seem to get the better deals. -P4*

For the three creators in this study who were satisfied with their earnings from TikTok, most indicated they either had some type of manager representing or assisting them or discussed compensation, sponsorships, or personal branding extensively with other creators. Kimmy (P10) a 'BookTok' creator, noted in her interview that TikTok is her primary source of income, when asked what advice she'd give to other creators to successfully monetize their TikTok platforms, she stressed the importance of having a community of mutuals who make similar content to discuss sponsored deals and payment with:

> *I was being low balled for a while and I know they do it to a lot to people of color, so it's not just me. Some my hijabi friends or my Indigenous friends [experienced this too]... [My content creator friends and I] all talk about our prices to each other and it's like, oh, "I got*

offered 1000," "whoa, I got offered 400 for the same video." ... If I didn't have those friends I would definitely still be [accepting] low balling. -P10

The frustrations that creators experience come not just from TikTok itself, but also from companies that pay for sponsored content on the site. While this issue extends beyond TikTok as the platform is not directly responsible for the majority of brand deals offered to creator's on the app, the platform can play a role in improving these experiences. Facilitating relationships between creators and brands, and cultivating standards of pay equity could help alleviate these issues. Although TikTok has limited ability to resolve the concerns with low ball offers from third party companies, it can more directly address other monetization challenges raised by participants with its own direct payment system, the Creator Fund.

4.2.2   Creator Fund. A consistent pain point of monetization for the study participants was the TikTok Creator Fund, TikTok's internal mechanism for paying creators. The Creator Fund is only available to creators who have at least 10k followers and are located in the US, leaving 8 of our participants eligible. Of those eligible, some stated they joined the Creator Fund and quickly left due to it seeming to result in lower views and engagement. Kimmy (P10) described her experience with the Creator Fund before leaving it:

The Creator Fund screws everyone over no matter what race you are ...I tried it when I hit 20k [followers] ... and my views [were] cut in half, my interactions were close to nothing. And you can see in your insights when your videos hit a For You Page or a Following page, and most of it was just on Following ... Yeah, it really sucks. -P10

Others who were in the Creator Fund at the time of interview expressed dissatisfaction with the pay offered. Multiple creators noted that other platforms pay more for the same or similar content. Darius (P7) expressed their frustration with the Creator Fund:

Well, Instagram definitely pays you more money than TikTok, which is weird ... What I like about TikTok is that anyone can go viral overnight ... but they they don't like paying their creators. The Creator Fund is really only good for like people who are getting millions of views every day because the views that I get, I only get like a couple cents a day. -P7

Those who were eligible that never joined had the same worries that other creators in this study expressed, that joining could result in losing views and engagement, and the pay was too low to risk that. @DonnellWrites on TikTok (P1) discussed this in detail:

I didn't even sign up for the Creator Fund because ... I've just been hearing Black creators complain about it nonstop ... I've heard people say that once they get on it, their videos don't get pushed as much. I don't know how much truth there is to that but it wasn't going to make me enough money for that to be worth it. -P1

Some creators employed unique strategies to receive compensation without sponsored brand deals or the Creator Fund such as donations or promoting their other platforms or products. Imani (P11), who creates disability advocacy content, discussed her alternative monetization strategy in detail:

Not a single one of my [social media] platforms is monetized. And I do that specifically because as a Black disabled person, there's way too much to lose. If I say the wrong thing ... or if I say something that people don't like, specifically white people don't like, they [will] have my video taken out, my content taken down, my profile taken down, or my views get shadowbanned ... What I do is I try to drive people to my Patreon ... or I do speaking engagements outside of social media. And so a lot of my work is pushing people towards contacting me offline based off my presence online. -P11

Our findings make it clear that company sponsors are the more lucrative and personally fulfilling way to monetize one's platform compared to the Creator Fund. However, Black creators often struggle to obtain sponsored offers that they find worth their value, especially without management or community support.

4.3 Viewer Engagement and Response

Many of the challenges of content creation come from the response and engagement of the viewership, which can be exacerbated by anti-Blackness influencing the expectations and perceptions of creators held by viewers. The following sections include discussion of hateful rhetoric that some readers may find disturbing.

4.3.1 Hate Speech. One of the major challenges arising from viewer engagement and response is hate speech, in particular anti-Black hate speech. Many participants in this study mentioned receiving some form of anti-Black or other hate speech or response from viewers. @DonnellWrites (P1) explained in his interview that some of his best performing videos in terms of views result in the most hate and negative responses:

> I've noticed that whenever my [Black Lives Matter related] videos do "well" on the platform, its because it got into the hands of the wrong people ... There's an account called Libs of TikTok [on Twitter] that sometimes posts TikTok videos of Black creators and then they get doxxed and harassed ... I have a video about Ahmaud Arbery that did well, I have a video about Jalen Walker that did well, but they're filled with ... racists in the comments saying that I'm lying [or] defending the murder[s] of Jalen Walker and Ahmaud Arbery. It seems like whenever the videos do well is because they're attracting a lot of hate comments, because those are still views and [those comments are] pushing your video even more. -P1

Despite the FYP being touted as one of the most accurate algorithms for showing viewers' desired content, many Black creators struggle with having their content shown to racist and hateful viewers. There are multiple explanations as to why this may be the case. The first is the existence of accounts like 'Libs of TikTok,' a Twitter account that P1 mentions that actively seeks out creators of marginalized identities to expose their content to an audience that would disagree or respond with racism and other forms of bigotry. As long as they are kept active, accounts like these will continue to direct hate speech to Black and other marginalized creators indirectly via their following. Another explanation is the way the TikTok engages with user behavior. Creator @ziporahthevegan (P6) provides some valuable insight on this in their interview:

> I think that what people don't realize about TikTok, and just algorithms generally, especially when it comes to hate commenters ... they don't discriminate between, this is a positive comment, or this is a negative comment. So as a user, if you're commenting on someone's video, they're gonna see that as like, "Oh, you want to see more of this content?" And then it just pushes more of that content on your page. -P6

Users who leave disrespectful, hateful, and even racist comments on TikTok, due to how the platform functions, will likely continue to receive similar videos on their FYP, resulting in even more Black creators being exposed to hate speech. One may expect content moderation to remove these comments, preventing the issue. However, multiple creators in our study reported moderating their own comments section to avoid hateful or racist responses. Unlike video content, comments are not nearly as monitored by TikTok. As a creators' platform grows and they become more visible, it can make moderating one's own platform even more challenging. Similar to hate speech, bullying is another challenge on the platform.

4.3.2 Bullying. In addition to hate speech, the heightened visibility of being a content creator also can invite generally mean and negative comments, bullying the creators. This can have a hugely negative impact on the self esteem and mental health of content creators. Kenan (P4) describes his experience with texturism, anti-Black discrimination towards kinkier hair textures, on TikTok:

> *People praise white creators for having a messy bun. But there is no 'messy bun' hairstyle for Black people. They call it unkempt, they call it unprofessional, they call it dirty, nasty, nappy ... nine times out of 10 the negative comments that I will get is because I do have locs ... You'll get comments from like random accounts about your hair, or you need a re-twist, or just something about your appearance. -P4*

Imani (P11) also discusses her experience with fatphobia and appearance based comments on TikTok:

> *People call me fat, say I need to lose weight, or I'm eating my way through A, B, or C. -P11*

Similar to the hate comments, a user bullying creators in the comments may continue to receive videos from that creator and similar creators on their FYP, and creators are largely on their own to moderate these comments. Another unique challenge for marginalized creators is dealing with a demand to be educated by viewers.

4.3.3 Demand for Education. Another frustrating form of viewer engagement is a demand for education. Two interview participants mentioned having viewers demand to be educated on topics related to Black identities or other aspects of creators lives. Creator @zipporahthevegan (P6) described in their interview that this type of engagement typically comes from people who don't follow them and instead come across them on the FYP. They go on to say that although many Black creators are made to feel they must play an educational role, they do their best to avoid falling into that expectation:

> *I will deliberately refuse to talk about certain topics, I won't take it upon myself to educate people on certain things ... I want to show people that you can be Black and just live your life, and not that these issues don't affect you, that they're not on your mind. But you're not the person responsible for educating everyone about everything. -P6*

The concept that Black people are responsible for educating non-Black people about racism and discrimination is one that upholds racism as it puts the burden on Black people to prevent their own victimization. Being met with this demand on a regular basis was incredibly frustrating for the Black creators impacted by this in this study.

4.3.4 Positive Engagement Challenges. The final challenge we present related to viewer response is on a more positive note: when creators receive many positive comments, they struggle to engage with all or most of them. Two creators in this as a challenge. Zuhyab (P3) recalled earlier on in his time as a creator he was able to respond to all the positive comments, but as his following increased, he struggled to engage with his following:

> *So many people ask me in the videos like, "Can I get a hi?", "Please, do [you respond]?" I get those comments. And I don't have time to respond to every single one of them. Because now I get so many comments. -P3*

Although content moderation seems to be hypersensitive for videos, content moderation of comments appears incredibly minimal. This work is primarily left up to the creator themselves. This can leave Black creators' exposed to frequent hate speech, bullying, and other unwanted engagement, and making staying engaged with viewers through the comments section more difficult,

especially as their platforms grow. Content moderation, viewer response, and monetization are the main challenges faced by Black content creators in our study.

4.4 Creators' Perceptions of the FYP Algorithm

To investigate RQ2 on Black content creators perception of the TikTok algorithm, interview participants were asked to discuss their understanding of how to perform well on the TikTok algorithm, any concerns they had about it, and anything they wish they understood better. In this section, we refer to 'the algorithm' as the For You Page algorithm (FYP), a recommender system that places videos on a user's feed. The exact mix of content, how the content is selected, and how the order is determined, are all proprietary information. However, some aspects of the algorithm are understood. FYP content is tailored for "you," the viewer, as such it includes content from creators that the viewer follows, and content recommended based on sounds used, hashtags used, location data, user engagement, and other factors. The FYP is touted for how personal it is to viewers. While viewers have the option to scroll through a page of just the accounts they follow (the Following Page), the default is the FYP. As such many content creators have worked to build an understanding of the algorithm, how it functions, and how to ensure their content performs with it. Because these concepts and ideas held by users cannot be verified due to the proprietary nature of the algorithm we refer to these as algorithm folk theories—unofficial theories created by users to explain a technological system. We identify two common understandings of the FYP algorithm- identity filtering, and lacking transparency. We discuss these theories and perceptions and how our participants arrived at them.

4.4.1 Identity Filtering. In their work on TikTok creators and users, Karizat et al. proposes a new algorithm folk theory, the "Identity Strainer Theory." As explained in Section 2.2.2 this theory describes the user belief that the TikTok FYP algorithm filters out and suppresses content from some identities [30]. Similar to many interview participants from Karizat et al., we find that all of our participants hold similar beliefs about the algorithm on TikTok. Participants believed this general concept based on either things they have witnessed on the platform with other creators, or a combination of both their experiences and others' experiences. Anon (P8) relayed this sentiment in her interview, believing that unless people specifically search for Black TikTok creators, they don't come across them organically when using the platform:

> *[If I could change TikTok,] I would allow BIPOC, but especially Black creators to be able to be seen more. [I] don't think unless you're ... actively searching out those videos, or only liking videos of Black people, you're not gonna see them on your For You Page, even if they're doing similar or the exact same thing that the white content creator counterparts are also doing. -P8*

Participants also had different explanations for why this concept may hold true on TikTok. For instance, multiple participants thought this was a symptom of algorithm bias influenced by the personal biases of users and/or the technologists behind TikTok. Sadé (P5) for example, explained that TikTok's algorithm likely mirrors existing societal inequities:

> *I think the algorithm is probably pretty racist because algorithms learn, right? And people are racist. So, even if TikTok didn't intentionally build that in, which jury's still out, algorithms learn. -P5*

Some participants also believed that Blackness specifically is deemed undesirable by TikTok and its advertisers, and by extension the algorithm. Darius (P7) explained this by referencing his experience as a Black creator on TikTok amidst the 2020 racial uprisings in the United States connected to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. He believes Black people discussing their

identities or experiences with racism is not deemed profitable or palatable for TikTok and thus may be intentionally monitored and suppressed:

> *I honestly think that TikTok has a vendetta against Black creators ... when Black creators would come out on TikTok to spread information about BLM or to spread their experience of the riots and how the police were brutalizing them, TikTok would ban those creators ... the Black community had to come together and put in support request to get these people's accounts unbanned ... TikTok was like, "Yeah, we don't want you talking about that ... We want you to make funny jokes. We wants you to do makeup. We want you to sing, dance. But no, you can't spread information about race, you can't do that." -P7*

Regardless of their their explanations of why it holds, Black creators experience real harm from their experiences on TikTok, motivating the belief in this theory. While it cannot be verified without internal access to TikTok, all participants in this study believe some variation of the Identity Strainer Theory in relation to TikTok's FYP algorithm. In particular, all of our participants believe that content from Black people and other marginalized identities could be filtered out from being shown on the FYP. This user perception is of great concern for Black content creators seeking to build a career on social media.

4.4.2 Lack of Transparency. In addition to Karizat et al.'s Identity Strainer Theory, another common perception of the TikTok algorithm is that it lacks transparency. When asked about their thoughts or concerns about the algorithm, many participants expressed that it was confusing or they wish they knew more about it.

Kenan (P4) who is an undergraduate student and comedy content creator even went as far as to do his own research on the TikTok algorithm, not just for his own knowledge but for a school project, and was frustrated to find no meaningful information on how it works:

> *Understanding the algorithm is something that could really help creators. But even when I was trying to do my own project for school about the TikTok algorithm, I couldn't find nothing. There's no real information about how the TikTok algorithm is portrayed. -P4*

Imani (P11) explained her perspective on the lack of transparency, saying that it likely keeps creators constantly making content in hopes of being recognized by the algorithm while TikTok is able to change how it works as it wishes:

> *I think that these things are kept extremely vague on purpose ... they're vague to make people compete for its attention. Even though I feel like there are higher powers at play manipulating it. - P11*

Echoing this sentiment, when asked about any concerns about the algorithm, Kimmy (P10) discussed that the uncertainty around the algorithm made her scared to take breaks from creating content:

> *I have concerns about [the algorithm] every day. I'm so scared if I take a week or two break ... TikTok will never push my videos again [or] the interactions will fail. -P10*

All of these negative perceptions, lack of transparency and identity filtering, are compounded by another concern that many creators pointed out, that as a TikTok content creator, their performance largely depends on the algorithm. Unlike other social media platforms where most viewers can see the content immediately from the people they follow the day it is posted, most TikTok viewers primarily scroll through the FYP and thus all of the videos from all the accounts they follow may not be shown. Therefore the success of a video largely depends on how it fairs on the FYP.

5 DESIGN SOLUTIONS AND DISCUSSION

In June 2020, TikTok released their "Statement to our Black Community" where they apologize to Black creators who felt suppressed, unheard and unsupported, and make a commitment to creating a more inclusive environment on TikTok. Based on our findings, we discuss several design recommendations and changes to TikTok to help support this stated commitment to welcome the voices of the Black community, which can be categorized into four primary areas: 1. Messaging capabilities and community building, 2. Content moderation, 3. Creator Fund and monetization, 4. FYP and content recommendation system.

5.1 Design Recommendations for TikTok

5.1.1 Direct Messaging Settings. As alluded to in Section 4.2.2, building community and having discussions with other creators is an important component of successfully monetizing on TikTok. Furthermore, engaging with the audience creates a more invested community and a more fulfilling experience for the creators and their followers. Yet, TikTok lacks full messaging capabilities that are standard to other social media platforms, limiting the ability to successfully build community. This leads many participants to turn to other platforms to message and engage with other content creators or their following.

Kimmy (P10), a BookTok creator who said TikTok is her primary source of income, stressed the importance of being in a community with similar creators to successfully monetize. She elaborated that buidling these connections is much easier on to make Instagram:

> *[I'd recommend] having friends in the community in general, like reaching out, it's much much easier to reach on Instagram, everyone knows that like on Instagram, it's a more personal place. If you want to reach out and talk to someone directly you should go to their bookstagram if they have one. -P10*

In addition to connecting with other creators, messaging is also important for meaningfully engaging with one's following. Smith (P9) expressed the importance of Instagram for connecting with his TikTok followers:

> *I've had a lot of people [on Instagram] message me from TikTok about videos that impacted them and they want to send me like a personal message. But if I didn't have Instagram, they may not feel comfortable commenting, they may not want to send me an email, you know? -P9*

Being able to freely message other creators and one's followers is certainly an important component to success and fulfilment as a content creator. On the other hand, the current limited direct messaging capabilities on TikTok are not without reason. Given the wide level of exposure creators typically receive on TikTok, especially compared to other platforms, more expansive messaging capabilities could expose creators to more hate speech. Multiple creators mentioned receiving hateful direct messages in their interviews.

To resolve this design tension, we propose multiple alternatives for TikTok privacy settings that offer greater nuance for messaging than open to all or open to mutuals only. First, we propose an option to only allow messages from those who have mutuals in common or 'friends of friends.' This is a privacy setting offered on other social media platforms including Facebook. This would improve community building between creators who have similar content and are a part of similar communities on TikTok.

Second, we propose the option to allow DMs from followers who have been following a creator's account for a specified amount of time. This can be a pre-determined amount of time, such as one month, or an amount specified by each individual creator. Allowing followers who have been following for a specified amount of time to DM prevents trolls and harassers from messaging these

creators, while also allowing loyal followers to engage. The time specification would deter someone with malicious intentions from following for a moment just to send hate messages.

Finally, we propose a "Block Chain" [7] feature. 'Twitter Block Chain' is an Google Chrome extension and unofficial Twitter privacy measure that Twitter users can use to evade harassment. This allows Twitter users to automatically block all users who follow a certain account without blocking their friends or re-blocking already blocked accounts. We propose enabling a similar feature on TikTok, where creators can block all of the followers of a given TikTok account. In relation to Direct Messages, this would prevent dog-piling and targeted attacks from specific accounts' followers. This would also assist with other issues such as the manipulation of community guidelines as mentioned in Section 4.1.2. Prior work has shown "Block Chains" also called "Block Lists" can protect users from harassment [29].

5.1.2 Content Moderation Improvements. Content moderation is also an area we identified as needing improvements. We first propose enabling creators to appoint comment moderators who will have the power to remove comments, disable users from commenting on the creator's account, or block them from the creator's account. Prior work has shown improved user experience when they are able to appoint trusted moderators [39]. Appointing moderators is already available on TikTok for livestreams, but not for the comments sections of typical TikTok videos. This would reduce the workload on creators, reduces volume of hateful comments, and can also help cultivate a more engaged community between the creator and their volunteer moderators.

Next, we recommend implementing hate-speech classification for the comments section of creators' videos but with caution. Many prior studies have found hate-speech classification to be biased against Black people [16, 27, 28, 46] and other marginalized groups [54]. This is particularly worrisome when applied to TikTok because of the already existing notions of Identity Strainer Theory held by many users, and the potential for racial and other bias to influence Black creators' video moderation as discussed in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.4. We propose a hate-speech classifier for the comments section of videos should be first beta tested with the comments sections of TiKTok users, centering the experiences of marginalized creators, especially those at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. As put forth by Youjin Kong, practitioners and researchers can work towards true intersectional fairness by analyzing the overlapping systems of structural oppression, and working towards eliminating them through algorithm development [34]. By conducting a user-centered algorithm development process centering the marginalized individuals most negatively impacted by both hate speech classification bias and hate speech itself, TikTok could potentially create a more accurate and fair hate-speech classification system, not only improving the experience for content creators, but potentially contributing positively to natural language processing and content moderation research as a whole.

Furthermore, we suggest creating a clear policy about discussions of race, racism, anti-Black violence, and other issues of identity and bigotry. Currently, there are no guidelines on how racism and bigotry are to be discussed in the TikTok community guidelines. The only mentions of race in the community guidelines bar the promotion of racist ideologies use of slurs or insults based on protected attributes. This is contrary to the experiences of the creators in our study. Many Black content creators have received community guidelines violations for discussing race or racism, or highlighting the racism of another creator on TikTok. Once a clear policy is articulated, moderation practices on the site need to match that policy.

Lastly, our final moderation recommendation is to improve transparency in the review and appeals processes. Transparency around content moderation is a delicate balance. On the one hand, it is important to set guidelines to prevent too much unwanted content from being posted to begin

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[7]https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/twitter-block-chain/dkkfampndkdnjffkleokegfnibnnjfah?hl=en

with. On the other, making all aspects of content moderation obvious makes discovering ways to break rules and go undetected easier. We believe there are some simple changes TikTok can make to give greater transparency to creators without giving too much information. The first is providing a clear definition of what it means for a video to be 'under review,' what exactly the review process entails and Informing creators via a notification that their video is going under review. This will provide greater transparency and could work towards building trust between creators and the platform.

5.1.3 Creator Fund Transparency and Monetization Tools. As discussed in Section 4.2, monetization is a major challenge for several of the Black content creators in this study. We found multiple participants lacked clarity in how TikTok determines value. We propose TikTok to change its communication around the Creator Fund and how it assigns value. The first suggestion is to provide a calculator to determine the pay or estimated pay, that creators can expect to receive. TikTok does not provide well-defined rules on how creator fund pay is determined. We assume this allows TikTok to adjust these factors based on their own budget, and their own understanding of video engagement metrics, both of which may shift. However, providing an estimate calculator could at least help creators to set expectations for what they could reliably expect to make on the app, and help creators set goals toward their desired income. Similarly, providing information on the earnings from each specific video rather than the money earned in one day would help creators determine which videos contribute most to their earnings and influence their content creation.

Our next suggestion is that TikTok could be more transparent about how participation in the Creator Fund impacts performance on the FYP algorithm. Failing that, researchers could conduct an audit study of the FYP algorithm with respect to creators who join the Creator Fund and release the findings. While TikTok's official stance is that the Creator Fund does not impact a creator's views, most creators in this study indicate experiencing this issue or hearing about it from others. This is a commonly held perception with TikTok creators regardless of background but paired with the Identity Strainer Theory, these perceptions would indicate Black creators and marginalized creators more broadly are at greater risk for making little money from the Creator Fund. Even if no changes to the FYP and Creator Fund are made, clearly communicating the relationship between FYP performance and joining the Creator Fund would provide transparency to the aid creators.

The final suggestion is for TikTok to create an analytic report of all creators displayed as a downloadable media kit. A media kit displays a creator's relevant analytic data such as the number of followers, follower demographics, average monthly views, average monthly likes, etc. One participant (P12) explained the importance of having a media kit to establish relationships with brands for sponsored posts. TikTok provides some of this analytic data, but some analytic information, such as average monthly views and likes, is difficult for creators to gauge because it is not provided and views and likes fluctuate frequently on the platform. Providing all of the relevant analytic information and highlighting a creator's strongest metrics would help creators better market themselves to company sponsors. Furthermore, providing this information in a downloadable media kit would give creators the agency to better advocate for themselves and establish sponsored deals. While TikTok does not necessarily benefit directly from creators getting sponsorships, it does benefit indirectly. The TikTok Creator Fund, compared to the internal mechanisms to pay creators on other platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, typically pays lower and is less predictable. Therefore if creators are looking to monetize their platform and are struggling to establish sponsorships, it may be in their best interest to turn away from TikTok and build their presence on other platforms. By providing the resources to more easily monetize one's TikTok platform, TikTok can maintain the creators it has and continue to attract more, even if the Creator Fund pay remains low and unpredictable.

5.1.4   FYP and Content Recommendation System. As discussed in 4.3.1, Black creators' TikTok content can frequently be exposed to audiences that perpetuate racism and other harmful ideologies. Even when these audiences are not interested in the content, if they leave hateful comments on Black creators' posts, this may be interpreted as engagement, leading these hateful audiences to receive similar recommendations in the future. Currently, TikTok has the "Not Interested" feature that allows viewers to express that they would like to receive less content related to the video; however, it does not seem to work well. Creator @zipporahthevegan (P6) spoke about this feature in their interview:

> *I use the "Not Interested" button quite a few times on some creators, and they keep showing up to the point where I just have to block them. But I don't want to block that person. I just don't want to see them on my For You Page anymore -P6*

We suggest an improvement that was recently implemented by TikTok, improving the Not Interested feature. At the time of interviews, viewers had the option to click 'Not Interested' on a video, but as discussed by P6 above, the feature does not always work as expected. Since this interview, clicking the 'Not Interested' button on TikTok occasionally shows an additional pop up that asks additional details about why the user was not interested. We believe this feature can be used to avoid exposing Black influencers' content to people who hold hateful and prejudiced beliefs, and reduce the amount of hate and negative comments creators deal with in general. Finally, we also recommend allowing viewers more agency in the content that appears on their FYP in general. This would include allowing users to explicitly select content types, topics, and creators they are most interested in seeing on the FYP. Not only would this assist with avoiding the cold start problem within recommender systems, we believe this will also prevent prejudiced audiences from seeing Black creators content that they are not interested in and engaging in hate speech.

Overall, there are many opportunities for TikTok to improve experiences for Black creators. These opportunities mainly rely on addressing the common challenges that Black creators face, such as the content moderation, monetization, and viewer response challenges. These opportunities also rely on changing the perceptions of the TikTok FYP algorithms including identity filtering and lack of transparency. Lastly, TikTok can better support Black creators by providing tools and affordances necessary to succeed as a content creator, monetarily and through content. Any software change costs money. The unanswered question is whether the proposed changes fit with Byte Dance's strategic objectives for the platform. We suggest that they do: better supporting Black creators will help the platform thrive.

5.1.5   Supportive Affordances and Black Joy. While we found many areas in which TikTok could make changes to improve Black content creator experiences, our interviews also revealed features that work well in offering support and facilitating positive experiences for Black creators. Therefore in addition to providing design recommendations, we provide details on the features that are currently successful in supporting Black creators. The main source of Black joy for our creators was sharing their life and experiences with their audiences, relating to them, and making their audiences happy. Donell (P1) expressed finding joy in relating to his followers through a playlist of videos sharing his story, and connecting with followers who engage with the playlist:

> *I talk a lot about the trauma and my story, like religious trauma and other forms of trauma [in my 'My Story' playlist]. But I also share moments of joy from my story and things that I've accomplished, or things that I've tried to work on that I've achieved, or encouraging and uplifting messages to try to inspire joy, especially for Black folks who have gone through similar experiences or who are navigating similar challenges, so that they can feel affirmed in their journeys and feel heard and feel seen. And I think that facilitates joy*

> *for people because it's a joyful thing to be understood and to be seen, especially for Black*
> *people.-P1*

Similarly, Darius (P7) expressed the joy of exploring fashion and makeup, sharing that with their audience, and encouraging his audience to do anything that makes them happy:

> *I'm a black person, and I do what I want and I wear what I want. And I don't let nobody*
> *tell me what I can do. And I try to let my supporters know, that you shouldn't let people tell*
> *you what you can and can't do, what you can and can't wear. I wanted to wear makeup,*
> *so I wore makeup. I wanted to wear a dress, so I wore a dress. And everybody seen me do*
> *that ...[My followers] are saying that I look pretty, thank you, but you know, you could do*
> *that too! I'm not the only one to do that, you can do that. So I'm always trying to push*
> *that, I'm always trying to spread that. -P7*

The basic features of TikTok–being able to share short-form videos with a large audience and to connect with a substantial community–are helpful in facilitating Black joy and supporting creators. While TikTok has many avenues for improvement, in its current form, Black creators are still able to use the platform to create supporting and uplifting spaces for themselves and their viewers.

5.2   Broader Implications and Discussion

Anti-Black racial biases are commonly identified in algorithm fairness research [22] and can have detrimental implications. These include increased likelihood of being denied a loan [59], denied a job [18], or receiving inaccurate and lethal health predictions [13]. Public awareness of these issues has increased tremendously in the last few years as algorithmic systems have played an increasingly large role in our lives. As such, many Black people are justifiably skeptical when their success relies largely on an algorithm, particularly one that lacks transparency around how it works. This issue is exacerbated for Black creators on TikTok relative to other social media platforms. In addition to the perceptions of the algorithm filtering Black creators' content, TikTok's success compared to success on other platforms relies heavily on the FYP algorithm, more-so than building a consistent following. This makes concerns about TikTok's algorithm striking as content creators have greater dependency on it for success. TikTok's timing in popularity also contributed negatively to the distrust. TikTok gained popularity in the U.S. during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Thus, during the racial unrest events of mid-2020 in the United States, many Black creators took to their TikTok platforms to discuss racism, discrimination and police terrorism. Many of these creators experienced having this content removed and their accounts banned, despite the fact that there is nothing in the community guidelines barring discussions of race and racism. This event made the treatment by TikTok of content discussing racism hyper-visible to Black creators and those engaged in race-related discussions. Even now at the time of writing, two years after those events, while the volume of this type of content has decreased, creators who discuss these topics still report content suppression. A large challenge for TikTok will be repairing trust between Black users and creators and the platform. Doing so must include enabling Black creators to more freely express Black identity on the platform including allowing discussions of race and racism.

Beyond TikTok, the findings of this work can be applied more broadly to improve inclusivity across platforms. One of the most common challenges for content creators in this study was the hypersensitive content moderation with high incidence of false violations. Other works on Instagram [20, 23] and Twitter [16] have also identified biases that can cause this high incidence of false-positive violations for marginalized groups on these platforms. Furthermore, across our work and prior research, users believe content recommendation algorithms such as TikTok's algorithm [30] and YouTube's algorithm [14, 37], filter content from Black and other marginalized creators. Social media platforms can cultivate algorithmic inclusivity by putting greater research

and product development efforts towards fairness and transparency, especially with respect to content moderation and recommendation systems.

Another significant challenge for Black content creators in this study was monetization. Social media platforms can play an active role in improving this experience for Black creators by settings clear expectations around their payments systems. Furthermore, platforms can play an active role in advocating for pay equity among companies that turn to creators on their platforms for sponsored video content, and facilitating opportunities for sponsors and creators to connect. Additionally, prior works on Black Twitter identify affordances that help cultivate a strong Black community on the platform [8, 21]. Providing features to better enable community building between Black users can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment, also helping Black creators to connect with peers and openly discuss pay and collaboratively navigate monitization challenges.

Finally, as shown in our results, often times when a Black creator experiences high volumes of hate speech, it is because their content is re-posted and shared by accounts that primarily seek to promote bigotry. Platforms should work to more effectively cultivate inclusivity by better tracking, monitoring, and reprimanding accounts that promote bigotry towards marginalized groups.

6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This work is subject to a few limitations. First, our study only reflects the experiences of 12 Black content creators on TikTok, leaving gaps in our sample. Limiting participation to only individuals age 18 or above left out a large portion of the user base of TikTok from being included in our analysis. Multiple prior works [17, 51], and interview participants note the commonality of content theft from Black creators of dance content. But because this content type tends to skew towards this under-aged population, our ability to study content theft from Black creators, one of the largest concerns of this population, was limited. Furthermore, all participants had a high education level, with all having at least some college experience, limiting our ability to analyze any difference across education. While we had fairly diverse representation across various Black ethnic groups, we did not observe any significant differences on this basis in our sample. This may be attributed to minimal difference in experience across ethnic groups, however a larger-scale analysis is needed to fully understand the role of this axis of identity. Furthermore, another important axis of identity among Black people that we did not thoroughly engage in this work is skin tone. Prior work has shown that colorism plays a large role in media depictions of Black people, especially women, with lighter-skinned individuals often being portrayed as preferential depictions of Black people, and darker-skinned individuals often not being depicted or depicted more frequently in relation to anti-Black stereotypes [41]. However, within digital media, many Black content creators and social media users have used their platforms to discuss and challenge colorism, despite also experiencing its impacts online [12, 41]. While some participants reported being darker-skinned as a basis for bullying or negative comments, we did not explore the impacts of colorism on Black content creator experiences beyond this. We believe further exploration of the impacts of colorism on content creator experiences is a potential area for future work. Lastly we had the least participant diversity with respect to country of residence, with 2 participants in Canada, 1 in Norway, and the remaining 9 in the United States. We did gain minimal insights such as understanding the additional challenges of users outside of the U.S. due to not having access to the creator fund. However, our ability to understand potential impacts of geographic location on content creator experiences was again limited. This may have been influenced by TikTok itself, introducing another limitation: our recruitment strategy.

While we believe the method we developed for recruitment is well tailored to TikTok and to identifying Black creators, the methods are not without limitations. The location-based features of TikTok may have unintentionally influenced recruitment. Part of the recruitment method was to

scroll through the FYP after searching several hashtags and sounds popular to Black users. These searches then influenced the recommended FYP content, allowing us to identify more participants. However, geographic location is also used by TikTok to influence recommended FYP content. Two participants were from the same city as the researchers, and nearly all participants were from the same country, which may have been influenced by the researchers' location data. Future researchers using the FYP for recruitment may consider using a VPN or using multiple accounts across multiple geographic locations to diversify hashtag, search, and FYP results. They also may consider relying entirely on sounds for recruitment; search results for sounds are sorted by popularity rather than location.

Another limitation in this study is the number of different 'niches' or video content themes on TikTok. Each 'niche' has different communities of creators and viewers, and each can offer its own challenges and experiences that are more unique for that particular content type. We quantified reaching saturation for our study by seeing repeated ideas in interviews that were less related to the specific niche. But to get a more comprehensive understanding, future studies would benefit from seeking out creators of a wider variety of niche areas.

The final limitation of this study was the lack of compensation for participants. While it is common to not pay participants in similar academic studies, the unique nuances of the population being studied should be considered in deciding to compensate participants in future studies. Given that Black content creators face the challenge of not being appropriately compensated for their work, future studies especially focusing on Black content creators or other marginalized groups should provide some compensation for participants.

7 CONCLUSION

In this work, we conduct semi-structured interviews with 12 Black content creators on TikTok to better understand, their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of TikTok. We identify some of the challenges experienced by Black creators on TikTok, the perceptions they hold about the FYP algorithm, and the platform changes that would most likely contribute positively to improving Black creators experiences and supporting their creativity. We find that Black creators struggle most strongly with TikTok's content moderation practices and potential content suppression, monetizing their platforms for reliable income, and dealing with hate speech, bullying and other negative responses from viewers. We find that common perceptions held by Black creators of the algorithm are that it lacks transparency and filters out marginalized identities from being shown to a wide audience. Lastly, we find that platform changes on TikTok should focus on improving transparency, the content moderation system, and the Creator Fund, providing tools enabling content creators to more easily monetize their platforms, enhancing messaging capabilities, and allowing users to have more control over their FYP and the accounts they see, and the accounts who see them on TikTok. Furthermore, we provide some generalized understanding of our findings and how they apply to Black experiences on social media overall and how online platforms can work towards creating inclusive spaces for Black people and marginalized groups more generally. Overall our work builds on the body of research exploring the intersections of race and technology. We believe more research focusing on Black experiences online and with technology is crucial to cultivating more inclusive computing systems in the future.

8 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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APPENDIX

A   Recruitment Hashtags

Hashtag	Hashtag Description
Black Identity Related Hashtags	
#blacktiktok	Black TikTok users
#blacktok	Black TikTok users
#blackhijabi	Black Muslim women who wear hijab on TikTok
#somalitiktok	Somali TikTok users
#nigeriantiktok	Nigerian TikTok users
#haitiantiktok	Haitian TikTok users
#jamaicantiktok	Jamaican TikTok users
#ethiopiantiktok	Ethiopian TikTok uers
Content Related Black Hashtags	
#blackbooktok	Black creators who create book content
#blackvegan	Black vegans sharing their meals and vegan lifestyle
#4chair	4C is a hair type common hair type of Black people
#blackalt	Black people with alternative style or music interests
#darkskinmakup	Makeup options for dark skin tones
#blackowned	Black owned businesses and products from Black owned businesses
#blackcosplayer	Black cosplayers (costume players), those who wear costumes of movie, TV, and video game characters
#blackgirlluxary	Black girl luxury trend on TikTok, showcases Black women living luxurious lifestyles

Table 3. Hashtags searched to find Black creators to interview, searching these hashtags also increased the number of Black creators on the FYP

B Recruitment Sounds

Sound Name/ Search Term	Sound Creator	Sound Description
	Songs	
Last Last	Burna Boy	Afrobeats song
That's My Juvie	Magnolia Shorty	New Orleans Bounce song
Gimme My Gots (Radio)	Shardaysa Jones	Dance song
Bloodclaat Rawseclaat	Blak Ryno	Reggae song
	TikTok Original Audio	
I might tell you a joke	TikTok Creator @riccarius	Original video, "I might tell you a joke, but I'll never tell you a lie"
Lemme get 2 quick	TikTok Creator @_yogi75	Original video, "How it be when old heads see a friend from back in the day"
The girls that get it get it	TikTok Creator @khaenotbae	Original video, "The girls that get it, get it and the girls that don't, don't."
Prepare to be sick of me	TikTok Creator @kymjenkins_	Original video, "Prepare to be sicka me! Prepare right now to be sicka me!"
What's your motto Nicki Minaj	TikTok Creator @highonika	Clip from musician Nicki Minaj, "What's your motto? I'm a bad b−−, I'm a c—-"
Druski have you lost your mind	TikTok creator @theylovemeeefr	Clip from Instagram creator @druski, "girl have you lost your d— sucking a− mind"

Table 4. Sounds searched on TikTok to find Black creators, searching these sounds also increased the amount of Black creators on the FYP 27