Band of blood brothers: exploring visibility management and networking among Twitter users identifying as Filipino men living with HIV

Article

Accepted Version

Band of blood brothers: Exploring visibility management and the network structure of Twitter users identifying as Filipino men living with HIV

Journal:	*Convergence*
Manuscript ID	CON-24-0082.R2
Manuscript Type:	Specia Issue: Negotiating Digital Visibility in Asia
Keywords:	HIV, networked publics, social network analysis, Twitter, visibility management, X, social media, online ethnography

Abstract:	The Philippines continues to grapple with a rising number of HIV cases, particularly among Filipino men who have sex with men. Notably, Filipino men living with HIV (FMLWH) are visible on Twitter (now X), despite Facebook's prevalence in the Philippines. The Twitterverse of FMLWH may be imagined as networked publics, with these users negotiating visibility management in the face of HIV-related stigmas and navigating context collapse in a high-visibility space. In this study, we explore the visibility management practices of Twitter users identifying as FMLWH and subsequently map their network structure. Our mixed-methods approach combined analysis of online trace data from 1,447 public Twitter accounts with in-depth interviews conducted with 24 Twitter users. Findings revealed that FMLWH employed a range of visibility management practices on Twitter, including the use of succinct identifiers to disclose HIV status, the maintenance of pseudonymous identities, and a strategic shift from partial to greater visibility when engaging with other FMLWH in private communication spaces. Participants expressed a strong inclination to connect with fellow 'blood brothers' and were frequently directed to these users through algorithmic recommendations rather than word-of-mouth. An expansive network comprising 302,934 'follow' ties connected all but two of the 1,447 users. Network analysis also showed high reciprocity and short distances between actors. Despite these metrics, a relatively low degree of interconnectedness was found, suggesting that users formed their own smaller pockets of conversation. Overall, FMLWH exhibited a deliberate effort to manage their visibility on Twitter and demonstrated a level of connectivity and engagement that might not naturally occur in real-world settings. Furthermore, the affordances of Twitter facilitated the open disclosure of HIV status, traditionally considered a private and sensitive matter. These findings warrant further investigation into the formation of networked HIV social identities and the emergence of pseudonymous networked counterpublics among FMLWH.

ABSTRACT

The Philippines continues to grapple with a rising number of HIV cases, particularly among Filipino men who have sex with men. Notably, Filipino men living with HIV (FMLWH) are visible on Twitter (now X), despite Facebook's prevalence in the Philippines. The Twitterverse of FMLWH may be imagined as networked publics, with these users negotiating visibility management in the face of HIV-related stigmas and navigating context collapse in a high-visibility space. In this study, we explore the visibility management practices of Twitter users identifying as FMLWH and subsequently map their network structure. Our mixed-methods approach combined analysis of online trace data from 1,447 public Twitter accounts with in-depth interviews conducted with 24 Twitter users.

Findings revealed that FMLWH employed a range of visibility management practices on Twitter, including the use of succinct identifiers to disclose HIV status, the maintenance of pseudonymous identities, and a strategic shift from partial to greater visibility when engaging with other FMLWH in private communication spaces. Participants expressed a strong inclination to connect with fellow 'blood brothers' and were frequently directed to these users through algorithmic recommendations rather than word-of-mouth.

An expansive network comprising 302,934 'follow' ties connected all but two of the 1,447 users. Network analysis also showed high reciprocity and short distances between actors. Despite these metrics, a relatively low degree of interconnectedness was found, suggesting that users formed their own smaller pockets of conversation.

Overall, FMLWH exhibited a deliberate effort to manage their visibility on Twitter and demonstrated a level of connectivity and engagement that might not naturally occur in real-world settings. Furthermore, the affordances of Twitter facilitated the open disclosure of HIV status, traditionally considered a private and sensitive matter. These findings warrant further investigation into the formation of networked HIV social identities and the emergence of pseudonymous networked counterpublics among FMLWH.

Keywords: HIV, networked publics, online ethnography, social media, social network analysis, Twitter, visibility management, X

INTRODUCTION

In this study, we explore the visibility management practices of Filipino men living with HIV (FMLWH) on Twitter (now X) and subsequently map out their network structure. The emphasis on FMLWH is driven by the Philippines' continuous struggle with an upward trend in HIV cases, particularly among Filipino men (Department of Health- Epidemiology Bureau, 2019; UNAIDS, 2022). Moreover, the substantial presence of FMLWH on Twitter—a high-visibility space—underscores the significance of this social platform for this vulnerable and stigmatised user base.

HIV Incidence and Stigma in the Philippines

While new HIV infections are declining in most of Southeast Asia (UNAIDS, 2023), the Philippines stands out with a rising HIV incidence, marking it as the country with the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in the Western Pacific region (Gangcuangco and Eustaquio, 2023). New infections surged by 327% between 2010 and 2021, with daily diagnoses reaching 41 by 2022 (Department of Health- Epidemiology Bureau, 2022; UNAIDS, 2019). Moreover, Filipino men bear the brunt of the epidemic, comprising 94% of diagnosed cases, with a significant portion involving men who have sex with men (Department of Health-Epidemiology Bureau, 2022).

Unlike other chronic conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, HIV is disproportionately burdened by social stigma (Herek, 1999; Taylor, 2001). In the Philippines, negative attitudes toward people living with HIV (PLWH) persist, encompassing stigma and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual preferences (Laguna and Villegas, 2019). This is further compounded by the influence of Roman Catholic values, which can contribute to the intersectional stigma experienced by Filipinos who are both queer and living with HIV (Adia et al., 2018; Pamoso et al., 2024). Adia et al. (2018: 322) found that Filipino men who have sex with men with HIV experienced both HIV-related stigma and stigma associated with homosexuality, often linked to concepts of "morality, uncleanliness, and sin." Furthermore, Pamoso et al. (2024: 9) described the stigma affecting Filipino gay and bisexual men living with HIV as being perpetuated by norms of "heteronormativity, patriarchy, and machismo."

FMLWH and Twitter Use

The literature acknowledges the potential positive impact of social media on the lives of PLWH (Cifor and McKinney, 2020; Gaysynsky et al., 2015; Taggart et al., 2015). Among the array of available social media platforms in the Philippines, FMLWH or 'blood brothers' are prominently visible on Twitter, a microblogging platform known for its 280-character limit (Murthy, 2013: 3). While it has since been renamed to X, we will continue to use the original platform name—Twitter—throughout this paper as the research was conducted prior to the rebranding.

The most popular social media platform in the Philippines is Facebook, being used by 96% of Filipinos aged 16–64 (Kemp, 2022: 54). By comparison, Twitter ranks only fifth and reaches 60% of this user base (Kemp, 2022: 54). Nevertheless, the growing presence of FMLWH on Twitter suggests a special attraction to this platform for this community. On Facebook, connections are inherently reciprocal, resembling traditional friendships. Conversely, Twitter allows for one-way connections, enabling a more decentralised and interconnected communication style (Schmidt, 2014: 6).

Moreover, Twitter allows users the option of maintaining a higher degree of anonymity compared with platforms like Facebook, which encourages account owners to supply their singular, 'true' identity (van Dijck, 2013). As Froomkin (1995) points out, the internet facilitates both anonymity and pseudonymity, which can be either traceable or untraceable. Despite integrity concerns surrounding online anonymity, (Donath, 1999; Johnson, 1997), maintaining pseudonymous or anonymous identities can afford social media users a sense of online disinhibition (Suler, 2004). This allows them to disclose sensitive information about themselves, including aspects that might otherwise lead to stigmatisation (Boudewyns et al., 2015; Schlosser, 2020).

While considerable research has examined the role of social media as a platform for coping (Strand, 2011), obtaining information (Malik et al., 2021; Taggart et al., 2015), and seeking social support (Bar-Lev, 2008; Chen et al., 2019; Chen and Shi, 2015; Cifor and McKinney, 2020; Mo and Coulson, 2010; Strand, 2011), the practices employed by PLWH to regulate their visibility on public social media platforms remain underexplored. Moreover, despite significant research showing the positive impact of online networks on the quality of life of PLWH (Emlet, 2006; Harris et al., 2015; Nobre et al., 2016; Sandstrom, 1996; Veinot, 2009; White and Cant, 2003), empirical data mapping their actual social media ties is lacking.

These arguments, coupled with a research gap in men's experiences with technology (Lohan and Faulkner, 2004), most notably with digital media (Light, 2013, 2017a), support the need to foreground the social media experiences of men living with HIV.

Negotiating HIV Disclosure and Visibility

The management of visibility is a crucial aspect of HIV communication. Visibility plays a central role in decisions about disclosing one's HIV status, a process that can cause significant distress for PLWH (Buseh et al., 2006; Doyal and Anderson, 2005; Paxton, 2002), despite HIV disclosure being necessary as it serves as the first step toward obtaining social support (Greene et al., 2003; Serovich, 2001). In turn, the invisibility of PLWH presents significant challenges to the effective provision of HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services (Zhou, 2013).

For PLWH, virtual platforms can be more advantageous than in-person interactions, as they afford "space independency, anonymity or 'pseudonymity', invisibility, disinhibition, and status neutralization" (Prestin and Chou, 2014: 189). Reframing HIV disclosure in online spaces as an act of empowerment can challenge stigma by shifting the focus from burdensome disclosure to informed self-expression, fostering a more nuanced and compassionate public discourse surrounding HIV (Philpot et al., 2022; Zhou, 2013).

Building upon these ideas, Lasser and Tharinger's (2003) theory of visibility management provides a framework for understanding how FMLWH navigate the process of disclosing their HIV status, and the extent to which they choose to do so. According to Lasser and Tharinger (2003: 237–238), visibility management describes the continual process by which individuals utilise a range of strategies and modes of communication to disclose private information to others. Moreover, visibility management exists on a continuum ranging from minimal to extensive disclosure, reflecting the dynamic interplay between individuals and their social environments (Lasser and Tharinger, 2003: 237–238).

Although visibility management has primarily been applied to research on the coming out of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, Lasser and Tharinger (2003) contend that it is applicable to other contexts involving active self-management (Dewaele et al., 2013, 2014; Song et al., 2022; Twist et al., 2017), including the experience of living with HIV.

Visibility and Social Media

While extensive research on HIV disclosure exists (Ankrah, 1993; Arnold et al., 2008; Chaudoir et al., 2011; Doyal and Anderson, 2005; Evangeli and Wroe, 2017; Smith et al., 2008), research specifically examining how PLWH manage their visibility in socially mediated environments is limited (Davis and Flowers, 2014; Milosavljevic, 2018; Philpot et al., 2022). Davis and Flowers (2014) explored the use of 'metaphorical identity talk' as a form of strategic in(visibility) on social media, allowing for nuanced disclosures without explicitly mentioning their HIV status. Similarly, Milosavljevic (2018) utilised the concept of strategic in(visibility) in an ethnography of gay dating sites to explore the HIV disclosure strategies of gay men in Serbia. Philpot et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of context in visibility strategies, highlighting the value of limiting audiences to those knowledgeable about HIV and likely to respond positively (Philpot et al., 2022: 883).

Negotiating visibility on social media may be further understood through Couldry's concept of 'presencing,' which encompasses "individuals' and groups' acts of managing through media a continuous presence-to-others across space" (Couldry, 2012: 38). Given that presencing involves strategically circulating information and self-representations online to establish a public presence (Couldry, 2012: 38–39), it is understood to occur primarily within high-visibility social media spaces. On Twitter, presencing is achieved through a series of actions: registering a handle; providing a name and biographical description, uploading profile and header images; and ultimately, engaging in public tweeting (O'Reilly and Milstein, 2009).

Presencing practices on Twitter are shaped by platform affordances, defined by Ronzhyn et al. (2023: 3181) as the "perceived actual or imagined properties of social media, emerging through the relation of technological, social and contextual that enables and constrains specific uses of the platforms." One key affordance for users is visibility, allowing them to intentionally make personal information, user activity, and connections accessible to others (Devito et al., 2017; Ramirez, 2018; Treem and Leonardi, 2013). According to Malhotra (2024), social media environments can be delineated into high-visibility platforms, like Facebook and Twitter/X, and low-visibility platforms, like instant messaging applications and private chats within social media. Therefore, the presencing practices of

FMLWH on Twitter, a public space where they interact with others without anticipating complete privacy (Light, 2017b: 232), merit study.

Visibility and presencing become particularly complex for PLWH participating in Twitter where multiple audiences may encounter them. Unlike the more controlled environments of HIV discussion forums, social media platforms often exhibit 'context collapse' (Marwick and boyd, 2011; Marwick and Ellison, 2012), where the diverse social circles of an individual converge. This blurring of social contexts can lead to diminished privacy (Marwick and boyd, 2014) and necessitate more nuanced performance strategies for PLWH to navigate the complexities of visibility and maintain control over their online identities.

PLWH as Networked Publics

When participating in social media, individuals shift from being mere media audiences or consumers to 'networked publics' comprised of "reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception" (Ito, 2008: 3). boyd (2011: 41) further describes networked publics as "simultaneously a space and a collection of people," structurally distinct from other publics. Bypassing 'real-name web' expectations (Hogan, 2013), Twitter creates a user collective that can also be understood as 'pseudonymous networked publics,' which Light (2017b: 244) defines as "public spaces in which we do things alongside or with others, where there is no expectation of complete privacy but where the use of real names is not warranted." Moreover, these public spaces facilitate counterpublic communication, allowing users to explore ideas related to identity, community, and relationships, and to develop strategies for asserting or adapting their identities (Renninger, 2015: 1516).

boyd (2011) argues that information flows and social interaction within networked publics are reconfigured by four affordances: 1) persistence (online expressions are automatically recorded and archived); 2) replicability (content is easily reproduced); 3) scalability (content is widely visible to others); and 4) searchability (search engines may be used to locate other users or expressions made by other users).

Alongside affordances, algorithms shape user connectivity and interaction in datafied spaces (Galloway and Thacker, 2007; Hartley et al., 2023; van der Nagel, 2018). Algorithms produce 'calculated publics' (Gillespie, 2014) or 'algorithmic publics' (Christin, 2020; Hartley et al., 2023), comprising imagined collectives based on shared affinity, as seen in Twitter recommendations like 'who to follow' and 'you might like.' Thus, both affordances and algorithms facilitate the visibility of FMLWH on Twitter, resulting in new communication dynamics that connect them in ways that might not occur in ordinary circumstances.

Study Objectives

Drawing on these theoretical perspectives on visibility and publics, we conducted this study to analyse, firstly, the visibility management practices of Twitter users identifying as FMLWH, and, secondly, the network structure of these users.

METHODS

Ethical Considerations and Researcher Reflexivity

The primary researcher's interest in this study arose from discovering Twitter as a significant platform for FMLWH. Witnessing the role of Twitter in his friend's recovery from HIV diagnosis sparked curiosity about how individuals leverage social media for health and support. Recognising his position as an outsider to this online community, the primary researcher employed unobtrusive ethnographic methods to gain an empathic understanding of their Twitter practices. Informed by Hine (2000), these involved observing the community's online interactions, analysing their self-presentation practices, and identifying prominent voices within the community. To uphold user privacy, the primary researcher alone had access to raw data; the rest of the research team worked with aggregated, anonymised data.

The study was guided by the ethical principles for internet research set forth by the Association of Internet Researchers (franzke et al., 2019), with a particular emphasis on protecting involved subjects from potential harm. The study also adhered to the standards for research involving PLWH, as outlined in the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board, 2022).

Given the focus on publicly viewable Twitter accounts, online lurking was deemed ethically justifiable. These accounts constitute a 'public and open setting' (Lofland and Lofland, 1995: 32), accessible to anyone with internet access, regardless of whether they follow users or have their own account. Considering these factors, we presumed that users behind these accounts were aware that their Twitter content was publicly accessible.

Informed consent was obtained from all users whose Twitter content is showcased in this paper. To protect users' privacy and thwart possible information retrieval, we employed pseudonymisation, heavy disguise techniques (Bruckman, 2002), and ethical fabrication procedures (Markham, 2012). Moreover, all photographs presented in this paper are artificial intelligence-generated.

Aware that discussing HIV, even voluntarily, could be emotionally challenging for participants, the researcher offered essential HIV support helplines and prepared a distress management protocol based on Dempsey et al. (2016). Moreover, participants were contacted two and four weeks after interviews to check for distress, using a follow-up care protocol adapted from Sque et al. (2014).

We acknowledge the tension between visibility and vulnerability within the socio-cultural context of FMLWH. Our study emphasises how FMLWH exercise agency in creating supportive online spaces and managing their identities. By carefully attending to language and representation, this research hopes to contribute to destigmatisation, offering counteracting narratives and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the FMLWH community.

Research Design

We implemented an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, analysing digital trace data through both qualitative and quantitative methods, and then expanded upon this with a qualitative case study. Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), this mixed-methods design allowed insights from the initial qualitative phase to shape the subsequent quantitative phase. This approach was particularly suitable for this study, as qualitative methods were necessary to explore visibility management, while quantitative techniques were required to map the network structure. Practically, identifying relevant accounts and analysing their connections necessitated a prior understanding of how these individuals

presented their identities as FMLWH on Twitter. To further explore the findings, a qualitative case study was conducted, employing trace interviews with select Twitter users.

Sample

The study identified 1,447 Twitter users who met the inclusion criteria, such as having a publicly accessible account, having posted at least one tweet, and showing indications of being FMLWH in their account. Filipino users were identified either through an explicit statement of Filipino nationality in their bio or the presence of at least one tweet written in Filipino or a combination of Filipino and English, as determined by Google CLD2 and Twitter's language detection algorithm. A series of systematic search queries incorporating 84 HIV-related keywords and 170 masculinity-oriented keywords were conducted using both R and Twitter's advanced search function to find Twitter accounts showing indications of being owned by FMLWH. Subsequently, two rounds of manual verification ensured that all candidate users employed identifiers in the intended context and in reference to themselves. Some examples of the search terms we used include:

- For HIV status: Aluvia, CD4, PLHIV, poz, and TLD
- For masculinity: Blood brother, guy, he/him, *kuya* (Filipino for older brother), and *tito* (Filipino for uncle)

Potential interviewees were selected through purposive sampling, prioritising accounts with the highest and lowest activity, influence, and popularity metrics (Riquelme and González-Cantergiani, 2016). This resulted in a final sample of 24 interviewees: 19 of the most prominent users and five of the least prominent users within the network. Table 1 shows pertinent participant characteristics.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

ATTRIBUTE	VALUE
1. Average age	34
2. Average number of years living with HIV	7
3. Average number of years on Twitter	9
4. Average number of original tweets (21 October 2021–21 April 2022)	1,186
5. Average number of tweets per day since account creation	9
6. Average number of Twitter accounts	2
7. Average duration (hours) of Twitter use per day	5

Data Collection

To address the first research question, the primary researcher lurked on a now defunct public Twitter list comprising self-identified FMLWH. Data collection commenced in April 2020 and continued until April 2022, when theoretical saturation was reached. Fieldnotes were written to catalogue textual indicators of masculinity and HIV status. To supplement online trace data, trace interviews were conducted with 24 participants, via Zoom. These interviews, following the framework of Latzko-Toth et al. (2017: 203), involved user reflection on their own traces within Twitter, including their tweets, profiles, and activity metrics.

For the second research question, Twitter data from the 1,447 identified accounts were unobtrusively collected using the R package *rtweet* (Kearney, 2019). Specifically, each user's Twitter bio, account details, and up to 3,200 of the most recent tweets posted, as permitted by Twitter's application programming interface, were extracted. A total of 287,554 original tweets were harvested from the 1,447 accounts. To create a more manageable corpus for analysis, the dataset was refined to 1,516 tweets and 171 Twitter profiles, representing the Twitter data of 171 account owners who had provided informed consent for the study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data such as fieldnotes, transcripts, and Twitter content were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis framework. This involved multiple readings of textual data, coding, and iterative development and refinement of themes. Focusing on visibility management practices, the primary researcher generated descriptive, process, and structural codes (Saldaña, 2016) through close reading of a sample

of textual data. As the analysis unfolded, regular meetings with the other authors were conducted to discuss and refine emerging themes. Following the approach taken by Talbot et al. (2020), the primary researcher formed an advisory team comprising three active FMLWH on Twitter who were not included in the study sample. This team validated the emerging interpretive framework to ensure its alignment with their personal experiences on Twitter. Member checking was also done with the study participants to confirm the interpretation of findings.

Harvested online trace data were pre-processed by removing followers and friends not part of the pseudo-population, duplicate tweets, and tweets written in languages other than English or Filipino. The primary researcher used the processed datasets to identify follower–friend connections within the pseudo-population. Social network analysis was subsequently conducted using Gephi to generate network-level metrics.

FINDINGS

Our presentation of findings unfolds in two sections. Firstly, we explore visibility management strategies, focusing on how FMLWH enact HIV disclosure on the platform. Subsequently, we present the network structure of this user base on Twitter.

Visibility Management on Twitter

We describe three key themes surrounding the visibility management practices of Twitter users identifying as FMLWH: 1) negotiating HIV disclosure through succinct identifiers; 2) maintaining pseudonymous identities; and 3) shifting from partial to greater visibility within the community of FMLWH.

Using Succinct HIV Identifiers

Conveying HIV status through succinct labels emerged as a prominent strategy within the presencing practices of these Twitter users. We categorised these labels into three types: 1) clinical details; 2) biomarkers; and 3) social identifiers. Clinical details commonly included users' highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) regimen and treatment hub. For

example, the acronyms 'TLD' and 'LTE' appeared numerous times in Twitter bios. As clarified by Fred, a study participant, 'TLD' is a triple drug combination that stands for 'tenofovir disoproxil, lamivudine, and dolutegravir,' while 'LTE' refers to 'efavirenz, lamivudine, and tenofovir.' Some users, for practical reasons, indicated their HAART in their Twitter bio to assist other PLWH who might need to borrow medication if the need arose. In Figure 1, a sample tweet crowdsourcing for medication is presented.

INSERT FIGURE 1

Carl recounts that during the pandemic, the Philippine government recommended that LTE users transition to TLD, a superior HAART regimen. However, lockdowns presented challenges for many PLWH accessing treatment hubs. Twitter facilitated the rapid exchange of information for these individuals, as it was on this platform that Carl discovered he could obtain a prescription via teleconsultation and have his medication delivered to his home. This case highlights the value of circulating these identifiers within their network to exchange peer support.

It was also common for these users to disclose HIV treatment hubs in shorthand. Among them, 'MMC' was frequently recorded; Fred explains that this stands for 'Makati Medical Center,' his treatment hub in Metro Manila. This practice enabled them to connect with other PLWH enrolled in the same healthcare facility. This finding stands out considering the culture of avoidance within HIV treatment hubs described by participants. "Even if we happen to run into one another for laboratory tests or medicine refills, we really don't talk," Brad observes. He attributes these evasive behaviours to the stigmas associated with HIV, prompting individuals to maintain a discreet presence in settings where they could be potentially identified as PLWH. Although Brad is now personally acquainted with some patients in his treatment hub, he acknowledges that he first connected with them through Twitter.

Additionally, account owners used biomarkers to disclose their HIV status. HIV attacks the human body by targeting CD4 or white blood cells; a CD4 count below 200 cells/μL indicates AIDS. The goal of HAART is to improve CD4 counts and reduce viral load (Gill et al., 2002). "CD4 numbers are important for us," explains Gio, whose initial CD4

count was only 16. “It took me about two years to raise my CD4 to 200. Then I ended up with 700. So if I was able to do it, so can you.” Like Gio, many Twitter users listed their CD4 count as a series of values, typically showing a progression: 16 → 200 → 700.

Moreover, these Twitter users related to their HIV status as a social identity. Some used straightforward keywords such as ‘HIV+’ and ‘PLHIV’ (person living with HIV). Other users employed slang terms such as ‘blood brother’ (a term of endearment for FMLWH), ‘octopus’ (a play on the word ‘positive’), and ‘pusit’ (the Filipino term for squid, also a play on the word ‘positive’) to discreetly signal their HIV status. Noah observed that PLWH on Twitter commonly labelled themselves ‘poz,’ prompting him to do the same. The arithmetic plus sign (+), which frequently appears in Twitter names, serves as a clear indicator of HIV status for Kyle. He remarks: “If I see the plus sign, the plus symbol, okay, that’s one major indicator.”

Similar to Philpot et al. (2022), this study found that public posts showcasing HAART without context held significant meaning for PLWH but might be less meaningful to outsiders. Interestingly, our analysis showed that several terms were commonly used in contexts unrelated to HIV. Some examples include ‘LTE,’ an HIV drug mentioned earlier, which could also refer to ‘long-term evolution’ in the context of wireless data transmission; and ‘VL,’ which could stand for either ‘viral load’ or ‘vacation leave.’ Furthermore, the use of implicit HIV social identifiers, such as ‘squid’ and ‘octopus,’ including their corresponding emojis (□ and 🎗), may have served as ‘metaphorical identity talk’ (Davis and Flowers, 2014) alluding to users’ HIV status (see Figure 2).

INSERT FIGURE 2

Practicing Pseudonymity

Most of the participants had not publicly come out as PLWH on Twitter so a common presencing strategy was to employ nicknames (e.g., ‘Keyser So Slay’) or personal descriptions (e.g., ‘poz athlete’) as their unique identities on Twitter. Froomkin (1995) describes this online practice as untraceable pseudonymity, wherein digital personas are maintained over time without making creators identifiable. Despite their reluctance to reveal

their 'real' identities, FMLWH typically presented complete Twitter profiles, including a bio, a profile image, and a header image. Notably, many profile images featured photos of themselves with their heads cropped out or their faces covered by emoji stickers. Figure 3 presents a sample Twitter profile.

INSERT FIGURE 3

A remarkable observation within this user base was the adherence to a similar format in Twitter bios. Fred admits that he simply imitated others: "I was strictly following only the poz accounts before. I also saw that's what they had in their bio, so I thought, 'all right, I'll copy it too.'" For Diego, including HIV identifiers in one's Twitter bio was a way to signal to other PLWH users that they belong to the same community: "I only picked it up from them that, ah, this is what's nice to have on a Twitter account for easier recognition by other blood brothers or sisters."

On average, these users managed two Twitter accounts: a 'legitimate' account and an 'alter poz' account specifically for connecting with other PLWH on the platform, as shared by Kyle. Stigmas surrounding HIV motivated users to create a secondary Twitter account. Jairo elaborates: "There is still this kind of thinking in the Philippine context that having HIV is something that you should be ashamed of, in a sense, that you won't go around broadcasting it to everyone." For this reason, his 'alter poz' account allows him to interact with other PLWH cautiously, without compromising his 'real' identity.

Shifting Toward Greater Visibility

Although the use of succinct identifiers and pseudonymity reflected overall minimal visibility in Twitter's public spaces, participants gradually increased their self-disclosure as trust developed through multiple interactions, leading to deeper engagement in direct messages and, eventually, in-person encounters with other PLWH. A common practice involved welcoming newly diagnosed individuals through public tweets where a designated ambassador from the community would tag them (see Figure 4).

INSERT FIGURE 4

This practice not only provided emotional support but also facilitated the expansion of social networks by connecting new users with other members of the PLWH community on Twitter. Ben believes that providing a friendly welcome to newcomers is a solid first step in connecting them with other PLWH. To further facilitate this process, he initiated a group chat dedicated to PLWH on the Telegram app, with designated peers serving as administrators. This 'extension of Twitter,' as Ben describes it, has created a safe space for users to share more intimate details about themselves.

Crowdsourcing for emergency HIV medication also exemplifies the need for increased visibility within the community. When PLWH find themselves in need of medication while traveling to Siargao, an island in southern Philippines, Sandro is known as the go-to person. This typically involves initial exchanges over Twitter direct messages, which often lead to in-person meetups, demonstrating a gradual transition from minimal to full visibility. Like Sandro, Nick often receives direct messages from Twitter users seeking peer support, some with no indications of a positive HIV status in their profile: "We'll chat in a private message and then they'll suddenly say, 'ah, I'm also part of the community' or 'I'm also a blood sib.' So, first of all, of course, you need to protect the identity of that person, you can't disclose it [to others]."

In-person get-togethers are also occasionally organised within this Twitter community. Participants identified Vic as the lead organiser of out-of-town getaways exclusively for PLWH. These events were often announced with great fanfare, including publicity materials, online registration, and raffle draws. Gio, one of the participants, shared his experience attending one of these trips, which brought together approximately 50 individuals. He reminisces: "It was fun to see a lot of the poz people [from] different walks of life and shapes and sizes."

These cases demonstrate why FMLWH might prefer Twitter over Facebook, the most widely used social platform in the Philippines (Kemp, 2022). Participants shared that engaging with Twitter allows them to disconnect from Facebook, a platform where they may encounter less receptive audiences regarding HIV-related content. Nick contends that PLWH

are more engaged on Twitter due to the prevalence of HIV-related stigmas on Facebook. Drawing from his own experience, he recognises the persistent need to debunk HIV misconceptions within his family, who are part of his Facebook network. Winchel acknowledges Twitter as a safer space where he can openly share his HIV status, including his adherence to treatment and his thriving lifestyle as a PLWH. For him, the supportive community of PLWH on Twitter creates a sense of safety and acceptance. "It is the only platform," he comments, "that I can be an HIV-positive person and not be afraid of people knowing about it."

Network Structure of Twitter Users Who Identify as FMLWH

Following our exploration of visibility management, we now present two key findings that emerged from our analysis of their network structure on Twitter. Firstly, despite an expansive network size, these users were loosely interconnected. Secondly, these users demonstrated a strong tendency to connect with fellow PLWH and were often directed to these users through algorithmic recommendations.

Aggregate Network Characteristics

We constructed the network of Twitter users identifying as FMLWH based on 'follows.' The median number of followers (171) and friends (152) was comparable, indicating that these users had each built a substantial network of connections within the network. However, these figures potentially underestimate their actual network size, as the analysis did not include accounts that did not meet inclusion criteria, including protected accounts.

Although the network comprises a substantial number of 'follow' ties (302,934), they represent a small fraction (15%) of the total possible connections in this network of 1,447 Twitter users. Despite this low density, only 16 sources (users who have made connections but received none), 10 sinks (users who received connections but made none), and two isolates (users with no connections) were identified within the network.

The network exhibited moderately low modularity (0.1450), indicating the presence of five communities where users follow each other more frequently within their groups than

with those outside. These communities may have overlapping memberships, suggesting that users can belong to multiple clusters simultaneously. High reciprocity (0.6921) further supports this notion by showing that many users follow each other back. The shared identity among FMLWH users potentially contributes to this high level of reciprocity, as will be discussed in the next theme.

With a maximum distance of four nodes between any two users, this network has a relatively short diameter. Alongside an average geodesic distance of 1.83, it highlights its 'small-world' nature (Watts and Strogatz, 1998). However, these short path lengths are typical of online platforms and do not necessarily imply close familiarity among users. Algorithms or shared interests may drive these connectivity patterns, which will also be further explored in the next theme.

Moreover, the network showed very low centralisation (0.0016), indicating a decentralised structure where no single user or group dominated connectivity. Instead, ties were distributed across a broad set of users. This suggests that within this network, Twitter users identifying as FMLWH with public accounts tended to follow multiple users rather than concentrating ties on a few central figures. Table 2 summarises relevant network characteristics, while Figure 5 displays the connection network, with all actors pseudonymised.

Table 2. Network characteristics

ATTRIBUTE	VALUE
1. Number of nodes	1,447
2. Number of edges	302,934
3. Median in-degrees (followers)	171
4. Median out-degrees (friends)	152
5. Number of sources	16
6. Number of sinks	10
7. Number of isolates	2
8. Diameter	4
9. Average geodesic distance	1.8315
10. Reciprocity	0.6921
11. Density	0.1448
12. Modularity	0.1450
13. Centralisation	0.0016

INSERT FIGURE 5

Networking with Other FMLWH on Twitter

Interviews showed that algorithmic recommendations facilitated the circulation of information and connections within the FMLWH community on Twitter, with many users discovering other FMLWH through this mechanism rather than through word-of-mouth. Encountering HIV-related content and other PLWH on their Twitter timelines prompted Carl, Marcus, and Jairo to create separate accounts for engaging with the community. While browsing his Twitter feed on his 'legitimate' account, Carl noticed that a friend had followed an account that appeared to belong to a PLWH. Intrigued, he explored this user's profile, followers, and friends, leading to his discovery of the Twitterverse of PLWH. "That was when I realised that we actually have a community," Carl notes.

Marcus had no prior knowledge of the PLWH community on Twitter when he was diagnosed in 2017. Coming across these users unexpectedly in his timeline piqued his interest, leading him to establish a separate Twitter account to become part of the community. After being @mentioned in a public 'welcome' tweet, as previously described, Marcus observed a substantial increase in his followers. This motivated him to tailor his content to better connect with his 'blood brothers' on Twitter.

Jairo's eventual Twitter practices were shaped by his understanding of algorithmic recommendations, as he avoided liking or reposting HIV-related content to prevent notifying the followers of his original, 'legitimate' account. This led him to create a secondary account where he could engage more freely with HIV-related content and connect with other PLWH: "Maybe it's time for me to create an account where I can freely follow, retweet, communicate, and interact regarding those discussions which are still taboo." This example demonstrates Jairo's deliberate avoidance of Twitter actions that might expose his HIV status to individuals he did not intend to inform.

A key downside of enacting visibility on Twitter, even with pseudonymous profiles, is the risk of encountering scams or catfishing attempts targeting PLWH. Ozzy has become wary of blindly following users who appear to be PLWH, concerned that they may be seeking information about his HIV status. He shares that some users with 'alter poz' accounts have experienced being catfished: "When you've established a connection with the person

you're talking to, of course, you'll reveal yourself… there might be exchanges of actual pictures, only for the other person to go, 'got you, you have HIV!'" Ozzy adds that these individuals have ended up being ostracised by their real-world circles upon finding out about their HIV status.

In other instances, scammers pose as PLWH to solicit funds. Gio recounts falling victim to a fraudulent fundraising activity for the PLWH community. Immediately after donating, Gio discovered that the user had deactivated their account. Finn also encountered instances where scammers used deceased individuals' photos to solicit funds. As these examples show, Twitter affords FMLWH opportunities for connecting with others and exchanging social support. However, enacting visibility on Twitter, while offering benefits, also presents risks, particularly given the platform's proneness to context collapse.

DISCUSSION

Here, we examine the findings in relation to the theory of visibility management (Lasser and Tharinger, 2003), the theory of networked publics (boyd, 2011; Ito, 2008), as well as other perspectives on publics within datafied spaces (Gillespie, 2014; Hartley et al., 2023; Light, 2017b). We identify two key implications. Firstly, FMLWH demonstrated an intentional effort to be visible on Twitter, primarily within their own community of 'blood brothers.' Secondly, the affordances of Twitter facilitated the open disclosure of HIV status, which is traditionally considered a private matter.

A Desire to be Seen on Their Own Terms

Lasser and Tharinger (2003: 238) argue that visibility management operates on a continuum, ranging from least to most restrictive in terms of disclosure. Our findings align with this premise, with FMLWH employing a range of disclosure strategies, from minimal self-disclosure in public Twitter timelines to more extensive sharing in private channels and in-person interactions.

Regarding visibility control, users primarily engaged with Twitter to connect with their community, employing presencing practices that emphasised relationship building. Their Twitter bios were crucial for presenting a balanced self-portrait, combining relevant

HIV identifiers with other personal characteristics, highlighting that their identities extended beyond their HIV status.

Furthermore, our data show that most FMLWH embraced pseudonymous personas on Twitter while a smaller proportion revealed their 'real' identities. These practices support past research, highlighting the prevalence of anonymous communication among individuals with stigmatised health conditions (Boudewyns et al., 2015; Rains, 2014). While illness-related embarrassment and HIV-related stigmas likely drive a preference for anonymity (Boudewyns et al., 2015; Rains, 2014), many users still completed their Twitter profiles, albeit often choosing to use censored self-portraits. As such, these practices do not result in complete anonymity, which is more prevalent in other platforms like Reddit and Tumblr (Triggs et al., 2021: 7). Following Couldry (2012), these users negotiated their visibility on Twitter by presencing their identities as FMLWH while revealing minimal, and often unidentifiable, details about themselves, as if to affirm the presence of a 'real' person behind the screen. This suggests a complex interplay between the desire for privacy and the need for social connection. Our findings challenge the notion that total concealment is the typical approach to managing stigmatised identities, as previous work has shown (Baider, 2010; Carricaburu and Pierret, 1995; George and Lambert, 2015).

The circulation of HIV identifiers in profile bios and tweets exemplify boyd's (2011) affordances of scalability and searchability, facilitating user connections. Despite the network's loose interconnectedness, the considerable median followers (171) and friends (152), and high reciprocity (0.6921) support our finding that users form their own private conversation pockets. This highlights the dynamic nature of visibility management on Twitter, where individuals carefully manage HIV disclosure, beginning with limited sharing in high-visibility spaces like timelines and Twitter Spaces, and progressing to increased self-disclosure in low-visibility spaces such as direct messages and group chats. Future research could focus on these 'bounded social media places,' as conceptualised by Malhotra (2024), to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of visibility management within these low-visibility spaces.

However, recent platform changes since Twitter's transition to X have included restrictions on direct messaging functionality to paid subscriptions (X, 2024). As observed by participants during member checking, these changes have already impacted user interactions, with a noticeable decline in interactions with fellow PLWH. This raises concerns that newly

diagnosed people living with HIV may no longer have the same level of access to community support and information.

Socially Mediated Visibility

While traditional perspectives on HIV disclosure emphasise intimate and personal disclosures (Jourard, 1971; Pearce and Sharp, 1973), the affordances of social media enable open disclosure among PLWH (Philpot et al., 2022). Our work has highlighted the ways in which users encounter traces of other FMLWH on Twitter, leave traces of their identities as FMLWH within the platform, and limit their own activity to avoid leaving traces of themselves in public Twitter spaces.

The affordances of Twitter foster the replication of user-generated content, both in terms of its substance and its format (boyd, 2011). Replicability was evident in the circulation of common HIV identifiers within the Twitter network of FMLWH, as well as in the adherence to established norms of profile work and pseudonymity. Further, expressions of their identities are not only curated in their own profile (Hogan, 2010), but are also rendered scalable through retweets and searchable via Twitter's search engine. These affordances foster user connections (boyd, 2011; Treem and Leonardi, 2013), potentially explaining the network's extensive 302,934 follows, linking all but two of these 'blood brothers.'

While these findings highlight the dynamic interplay between the agency of FMLWH in managing a sustained presence on Twitter and the role of platform affordances in shaping user engagement, it is essential to acknowledge that socially mediated visibility grants users only limited control over content archiving and access (Neumayer et al., 2021; Pearce et al., 2020). Despite user freedom, algorithms can potentially expose online traces of vulnerable individuals' identities without their realisation. As algorithmic recommendations also facilitated connections among 'blood brothers,' this user collective exemplifies not only networked publics but also 'calculated publics' (Gillespie, 2014) or 'algorithmic publics' (Christin, 2020; Møller Hartley et al., 2023). While acknowledging the role of algorithms, this study did not explore the 'black box' of algorithmic curation as it pertains to the Twitterverse of FMLWH, whose mechanisms are exclusively known to platform developers (Gillespie, 2014; Møller Hartley et al., 2023). The downside of algorithmic curation is that socially mediated visibility can expose these users to risks, such as catfishing, fraud, and

exposure. To mitigate these risks, these account owners must carefully monitor the content they publish on Twitter, and regularly review their privacy settings.

Findings also revealed the use of coded talk, which has been investigated in related studies on PLWH, although outside the sphere of networked publics (Selikow, 2004; Wood and Lambert, 2008). Social steganography, which involves the encryption of messages accessible to multiple publics but decipherable only by those knowledgeable about the codes in use and aware of the message's existence (boyd and Marwick, 2011), offers a valuable conceptualisation of this practice. This visibility management strategy shows that even pseudonymous account owners, when faced with context collapse, tended to tailor their visibility on Twitter, primarily performing for fellow PLWH and others within the broader HIV community. This technique of hiding in plain sight affords them an additional layer of protection on top of their already pseudonymous persona. Liam, a research participant, neatly captures this idea, stating: "If you're one of us or are very familiar with these terminologies, [you] would easily get it—'okay, he's a blood brother'."

Finally, our analysis shows that Twitter may serve as a gateway platform for newly diagnosed PLWH to encounter similar others and subsequently access the support they require to cope with their condition. However, Twitter may not be a platform for sustained activity for individuals who have been living with HIV for longer periods. As participants shared, Twitter initially allowed them to establish connections with other PLWH, but they have since extended their interactions to other instant messaging apps. Additionally, a number of online connections have developed into real-world friendships, indicating that Twitter is not the sole platform facilitating communication among this group. This invites further exploration of the evolving role of networked technologies in supporting connections and interactions among stigmatised and vulnerable populations such as PLWH.

CONCLUSIONS

Living with HIV is often undermined as an isolating experience, yet our study illustrates that FMLWH form networked publics on Twitter, displaying a level of connectivity and engagement that might not unfold organically in real-world settings. Drawing on online trace data and trace interviews, this mixed-methods study explored how

FMLWH negotiate visibility management on Twitter, enabling them to integrate into the network of 'blood brothers' on the platform.

While visibility management has traditionally been theorised in the context of minority and marginalised groups, its application has primarily focused on the coming-out process for individuals identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Dewaele et al., 2013, 2014; Lasser and Tharinger, 2003; Song et al., 2022; Twist et al., 2017). By exploring the strategies employed by FMLWH, our study not only illuminated their experiences on Twitter but also provided valuable theoretical insights into the enactment of visibility management by individuals facing the complex stigmas of gender identity, sexual orientation, and HIV status. Overall, the study contributes to the ongoing theoretical development of socially mediated visibility in a datafied world (Neumayer et al., 2021; Pearce et al., 2018), particularly regarding hard-to-reach populations like PLWH.

The theory of networked publics (boyd, 2011) provided a valuable lens for understanding how platform affordances shape user participation on Twitter. However, this research argues for a more critical approach when examining marginalised populations. Light's (2013, 2014, 2017b) exploration of networked masculinities and pseudonymous publics exemplifies this need for deeper theorisation. Furthermore, although HIV social identities have been a subject of theoretical inquiry (Rintamaki, 2009), the ways in which such identities are produced and managed within networked publics remain under-explored. Our study shows empirical evidence that FMLWH form pseudonymous networked publics on Twitter and employ genre knowledge to guide their self-presentation practices. These insights pave the way for a theoretical exploration of networked HIV social identities.

Lastly, the study offers alternate understandings of the concept of networked publics, which often hews to normative perspectives. The reluctance of marginalised individuals to participate in the 'real-name web' (Hogan, 2013) gives rise to pseudonymous networked publics, which Light (2017b) has explored with men who have sex with men on a hook-up site. This study extends its theorisation by framing pseudonymous networked publics within the broader contexts of chronic illness, intersectional stigmas, and peer support. Specifically, our study sheds light on how Twitter provides FMLWH a public and visible space to disclose their HIV status, connect with blood brothers, and engage in conversations about HIV—opportunities that may not be available in other settings. Accordingly, this user collective

may be recast as potential networked *counter*publics, which Renninger (2015) describes as embodying a different set of practices, norms, and expectations of participation.

LIMITATIONS

Our analysis was limited to publicly accessible Twitter accounts at the time of data collection. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of all FMLWH on Twitter/X, or the broader PLWH population. Moreover, the analysis period was restricted to six months, from 21 October 2021 to 21 April 2022. The ever-changing nature of Twitter/X suggests that the data collected may not accurately represent current user behaviour on the platform.

It is also worth noting that the study was conducted before the rebranding of Twitter to X in July 2023. Consequently, the study may not fully capture the evolving dynamics of online interaction and community engagement among FMLWH on X, particularly considering these recent changes. Further research is needed to understand how these platform changes have affected the visibility dynamics of vulnerable users on X.

REFERENCES

Adia AC, Bermudez ANC, Callahan MW, et al. (2018) "An evil lurking behind you": Drivers, experiences, and consequences of HIV-related stigma among men who have sex with men with HIV in Manila, Philippines. *AIDS Education and Prevention* 30(4): 322–334.

Ankrah EM (1993) The impact of HIV/AIDS on the family and other significant relationships: The African clan revisited. *AIDS Care* 5(1): 5–22.

Arnold EM, Rice E, Flannery D, et al. (2008) HIV disclosure among adults living with HIV. *AIDS Care* 20(1): 80–92.

Baider L (2010) My illness, myself: On the secrecy of shame. *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention* 11(Suppl 1): 59–62.

Bar-Lev S (2008) "We are here to give you emotional support": Performing emotions in an online HIV/AIDS support group. *Qualitative Health Research* 18(4): 509–521.

Boudewyns V, Himelboim I, Hansen DL, et al. (2015) Stigma's effect on social interaction and social media activity. *Journal of Health Communication* 20(11). 2015: 1337–1345.

boyd d and Marwick AE (2011) Social steganography: Privacy in networked publics. In: *Proceedings of International Communication Association 2011*, Boston, MA, USA, 26 May 2011. Available at: http://www.danah.org/papers/2011/Steganography-ICAVersion.pdf.

boyd dm (2011) Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In: Papacharissi Z (ed.) *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*. New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 39–58.

Braun V and Clarke V (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bruckman A (2002) Studying the amateur artist: A perspective on disguising data collected in human subjects research on the Internet. *Ethics and Information Technology* 4(3): 217–231.

Buseh AG, Stevens PE, McManus P, et al. (2006) Challenges and opportunities for HIV prevention and care: Insights from focus groups of HIV-infected African American men. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* 17(4): 3–15.

Carricaburu D and Pierret J (1995) From biographical disruption to biographical reinforcement: The case of HIV-positive men. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 17(1): 65–88.

Chaudoir SR, Fisher JD and Simoni JM (2011) Understanding HIV disclosure: A review and application of the Disclosure Processes Model. *Social Science and Medicine* 72(10). Elsevier Ltd: 1618–1629.

Chen L and Shi J (2015) Social support exchanges in a social media community for people living with HIV/AIDS. *AIDS Care* 27(6): 693–696.

Chen L, Guo Y and Shi J (2019) Social support seeking on social media among Chinese gay men living with HIV/AIDS: The role of perceived threat. *Telemedicine and e-Health* 25(7): 655–659.

Christin A (2020) *Metrics at Work: Journalism and the Contested Meaning of Algorithms*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cifor M and McKinney C (2020) Reclaiming HIV/AIDS in digital media studies. *First Monday* 25(10).

Couldry N (2012) *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. London, UK: Polity Press.

Creswell JW and Plano Clark VL (2011) *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Davis M and Flowers P (2014) HIV/STI prevention technologies and 'strategic (in)visibilities'. In: Davis M and Manderson L (eds) *Disclosure in Health and Illness*. London, UK: Routledge, pp. 72–88.

Dempsey L, Dowling M, Larkin P, et al. (2016) Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health* 39(6): 480–490.

Department of Health- Epidemiology Bureau (2019) *HIV/AIDS & ART registry of the Philippines: September 2019*. Manila, Philippines. Available at: https://www.ship.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/EB_HARP_September_AIDSreg2019.pdf.

Department of Health- Epidemiology Bureau (2022) *HIV/AIDS & ART registry of the Philippines: December 2022*. Manila, Philippines. Available at: https://doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/statistics/EB_HARP_December_AIDSreg2022.pdf.

Devito MA, Birnholtz J and Hancock JT (2017) Platforms, people, and perception: Using affordances to understand self-presentation on social media. In: *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, CSCW*, Portland, OR, 2017, pp. 740–754. Association for Computing Machinery.

Dewaele A, Van Houtte M, Cox N, et al. (2013) From coming out to visibility management: A new perspective on coping with minority stressors in LGB youth in Flanders. *Journal of Homosexuality* 60(5): 685–710.

Dewaele A, Van Houtte M and Vincke J (2014) Visibility and coping with minority stress: A gender-specific analysis among lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in Flanders. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43(8): 1601–1614.

Donath JS (1999) *Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community*. New York, NY: Routledge.
Doyal L and Anderson J (2005) 'My fear is to fall in love again...' How HIV-positive African women survive in London. *Social Science and Medicine* 60(8): 1729–1738.
Emlet CA (2006) An examination of the social networks and social isolation in older and younger adults living with HIV/AIDS. *Health and Social Work* 31(4): 299–308.
Evangeli M and Wroe AL (2017) HIV disclosure anxiety: A systematic review and theoretical synthesis. *AIDS and Behavior* 21(1). Springer US: 1–11.
franzke as, Bechmann A, Zimmer M, et al. (2019) *Internet research: Ethical guidelines 3.0*. Available at: https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf.
Froomkin AM (1995) Anonymity and its enmities. *Journal Online Law* June(Article 4): 1–28.
Galloway AR and Thacker E (2007) *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Gangcuangco LMA and Eustaquio PC (2023) The state of the HIV epidemic in the Philippines: Progress and challenges in 2023. *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease* 8(5): 1–16.
Gaysynsky A, Romansky-Poulin K and Arpadi S (2015) "My YAP Family": Analysis of a Facebook group for young adults living with HIV. *AIDS and Behavior* 19(6). Springer US: 947–962.
George MS and Lambert H (2015) 'I am doing fine only because I have not told anyone': The necessity of concealment in the lives of people living with HIV in India. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 17(8): 933–946.
Gill CJ, Griffith JL, Jacobson D, et al. (2002) Relationship of HIV viral loads, CD4 counts, and HAART use to health-related quality of life. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 30(5): 485–492.
Gillespie T (2014) The relevance of algorithms. In: Gillespie T, Boczkowski PJ, and Foot KA (eds) *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 167–193.
Greene K, Derlega VJ, Yep GA, et al. (2003) *Privacy and Disclosure of HIV in Interpersonal Relationships: A Sourcebook for Researchers and Practitioners*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
Harris GE, Corcoran V, Myles A, et al. (2015) Establishing an online HIV peer helping programme: A review of process challenges and lessons learned. *Health Education Journal* 74(5): 507–517.
Hartley JM, Bengtsson M, Schjøtt Hansen A, et al. (2023) Researching publics in datafied societies: Insights from four approaches to the concept of 'publics' and a (hybrid) research agenda. *New Media and Society* 25(7): 1668–1686.
Herek GM (1999) AIDS and stigma. *American Behavioral Scientist* 42(7): 1106–1116.
Hine C (2000) *Virtual Ethnography*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
Hogan B (2010) The presentation of self in the age of social media: Distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30(6): 377–386.
Hogan B (2013) Pseudonyms and the rise of the real-name web. In: Hartley J, Burgess J, and Bruns A (eds) *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*. West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 290–307.
Ito M (2008) Introduction. In: Varnelis K (ed.) *Networked Publics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 1–14.
Johnson DG (1997) Ethics online. *Communications of the ACM* 40(1): 60–65.

Jourard SM (1971) *The Transparent Self*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand Company.
Kearney M (2019) rtweet: Collecting and analyzing Twitter data. *Journal of Open Source Software* 4(42): 1829.
Kemp S (2022) *Digital 2022: The Philippines*. Available at: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-philippines.
Laguna EP and Villegas JK (2019) The Philippine people living with HIV (PLHIV) stigma index 2.0 (2019). Quezon City, Philippines: Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. Available at: https://www.aidsdatahub.org/resource/philippines-people-living-hiv-plhiv-stigma-index-2-0-2019.
Lasser J and Tharinger D (2003) Visibility management in school and beyond: A qualitative study of gay, lesbian, bisexual youth. *Journal of Adolescence* 26(2): 233–244.
Latzko-Toth G, Bonneau C and Millette M (2017) Small data, thick data: Data thickening strategies for social media research. In: Sloan L and Quan-Haase A (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 157–172.
Light B (2013) Networked masculinities and social networking sites: A call for the analysis of men and contemporary digital media. *Masculinities and Social Change* 2(3): 245–265.
Light B (2014) Creating pseudonymous publics with Squirt: An expansion of the possibilities for networked publics. In: *35th International Conference on Information Systems 'Building a better world through information systems', ICIS 2014* (eds E Karahanna, A Srinivasan, and B Tan), Atlanta, GA, USA, December 2014, pp. 1–16. Association for Information Systems. AIS Electronic Library.
Light B (2017a) Men and networked life. In: *Selected Papers of #AoIR2017: The 18th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers*, Taru, Estonia, October 2017.
Light B (2017b) Producing sexual cultures and pseudonymous publics with digital networks. In: Lind RA (ed.) *Race and Gender in Electronic Media: Content, Context, Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 231–246.
Lofland J and Lofland LH (1995) *Analyzing Social Settings*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
Lohan M and Faulkner W (2004) Masculinities and technologies: Some introductory remarks. *Men and Masculinities* 6(4): 319–329.
Malhotra P (2024) "What you post in the group stays in the group": Examining the affordances of bounded social media places. *Social Media and Society* 10(3): 1–13.
Malik A, Antonino A, Khan ML, et al. (2021) Characterizing HIV discussions and engagement on Twitter. *Health and Technology* 11(6): 1237–1245.
Markham AN (2012) Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts. *Information Communication and Society* 15(3): 334–353.
Marwick AE and boyd d (2011) I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media and Society* 13(1): 114–133.
Marwick AE and boyd d (2014) Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media. *New Media and Society* 16(7): 1051–1067.
Marwick AE and Ellison NB (2012) 'There isn't Wifi in heaven!' Negotiating visibility on Facebook memorial pages. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 56(3): 378–400.
Milosavljevic Z (2018) Virtual ethnography of HIV: Positive health status in gay virtual intimacies in Serbia. In: Garnett E, Reynolds J, and Milton S (eds) *Ethnographies and*

Health: Reflections on Empirical and Methodological Entanglements. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, pp. 35–50.
Mo PKH and Coulson NS (2010) Living with HIV/AIDS and use of online support groups. *Journal of Health Psychology* 15(3): 339–350.
Murthy D (2013) *Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
Neumayer C, Rossi L and Struthers DM (2021) Invisible data: A framework for understanding visibility processes in social media data. *Social Media and Society* 7(1): 1–10.
Nobre NR, Kylmä J, Kirsi T, et al. (2016) Social networks of older adults living with HIV in Finland. *AIDS Care* 28(2): 186–190.
O'Reilly T and Milstein S (2009) The Twitter book. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc.
Pamoso AHG, Scholz B and Ferolino A (2024) "Because of HIV, it opened my mind": Intersectional stigma experiences among Filipino gay and bisexual men living with HIV. *Qualitative Health Research* 0(0): 1–16.
Paxton S (2002) The paradox of public HIV disclosure. *AIDS Care* 14(4): 559–567.
Pearce KE, Vitak J and Barta K (2018) Socially mediated visibility: Friendship and dissent in authoritarian Azerbaijan. *International Journal of Communication* 12: 1310–1331.
Pearce KE, Gonzales A and Foucault Welles B (2020) Introduction: Marginality and social media. *Social Media and Society* 6(3): 1–9.
Pearce WB and Sharp SM (1973) Self-disclosing communication. *Journal of Communication* 23: 409–425.
Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (2022) *National ethical guidelines for research involving human participants*. Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines. Available at: https://www.pchrd.dost.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Annex-5.-National-Ethical-Guidelines-for-Health-and-Health-Related-Research-2017-1.pdf.
Philpot SP, Murphy D, Prestage G, et al. (2022) Using social media as a platform to publicly disclose HIV status among people living with HIV: Control, identity, informing public dialogue. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 44(6): 881–898.
Prestin A and Chou WYS (2014) Web 2.0 and the changing health communication environment. In: Hamilton HE and Chou WS (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Health Communication*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, pp. 184–197.
Rains SA (2014) The implications of stigma and anonymity for self-disclosure in health blogs. *Health Communication* 29(1): 23–31.
Ramirez FA (2018) Social media affordances in the context of police transparency: An analysis of the first public archive of police body camera videos. *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 46(5). Taylor & Francis: 621–640.
Renninger BJ (2015) "Where I can be myself … where I can speak my mind" : Networked counterpublics in a polymedia environment. *New Media and Society* 17(9): 1513–1529.
Riquelme F and González-Cantergiani P (2016) Measuring user influence on Twitter: A survey. *Information Processing and Management* 52(5): 949–975.
Ronzhyn A, Cardenal AS and Batlle Rubio A (2023) Defining affordances in social media research: A literature review. *New Media and Society* 25(11): 3165–3188.
Sandstrom KL (1996) Searching for information, understanding, and self-value: The utilization of peer support groups by gay men with HIV/AIDS. *Social Work in Health Care* 23(4): 51–74.
Schlosser AE (2020) Self-disclosure versus self-presentation on social media. *Current Opinion in Psychology* 31. Elsevier Ltd: 1–6.
Schmidt J-H (2014) Twitter and the rise of personal publics. In: Weller K, Bruns A, Burgess J, et al. (eds) *Twitter and Society*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., pp. 3–15.

Selikow TA (2004) 'We have our own special language.' Language, sexuality and HIV/AIDS: A case study of youth in an urban township in South Africa. *African Health Sciences* 4(2): 102–108.

Serovich JM (2001) A test of two HIV disclosure theories. *AIDS Education and Prevention* 13(4): 355–364.

Smith R, Rossetto K and Peterson BL (2008) A meta-analysis of disclosure of one's HIV-positive status, stigma and social support. *AIDS Care* 20(10): 1266–1275.

Song C, Buysse A, Zhang WH, et al. (2022) Sex differences in the romantic relationships of same-gender couples: The role of visibility management. *Psychological Reports* 125(2): 1103–1120.

Sque M, Walker W and Long-Sutehall T (2014) Research with bereaved families: A framework for ethical decision-making. *Nursing Ethics* 21(8): 946–955.

Strand C (2011) Blogging: A new tool for coping and accessing psycho-social support for people living with HIV? In: Smedberg A (ed.) *E-Health Communities and Online Self-Help Groups: Applications and Usage*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 106–120.

Suler J (2004) The online disinhibition effect. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior* 7(3): 321–326.

Taggart T, Grewe ME, Conserve DF, et al. (2015) Social media and HIV: A systematic review of uses of social media in HIV communication. *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 17(11): e4387.

Talbot C V, O'Dwyer ST, Clare L, et al. (2020) How people with dementia use Twitter: A qualitative analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior* 102. Elsevier: 112–119.

Taylor B (2001) HIV, stigma and health: Integration of theoretical concepts and the lived experiences of individuals. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 35(5): 792–798.

Treem JW and Leonardi PM (2013) Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Annals of the International Communication Association* 36(1): 143–189.

Triggs AH, Møller K and Neumayer C (2021) Context collapse and anonymity among queer Reddit users. *New Media and Society* 23(1): 5–21.

Twist ML, Bergdall MK, Belous CK, et al. (2017) Electronic visibility management of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities and relationships in young adulthood. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy* 16(4): 271–285.

UNAIDS (2019) *UNAIDS data 2019*. Geneva, Switzerland. Available at: https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2019-UNAIDS-data_en.pdf%0Aaidsinfo.unaids.org.

UNAIDS (2022) *UNAIDS data 2022*. Geneva, Switzerland. Available at: https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2023/2022_unaids_data.

UNAIDS (2023) *UNAIDS data 2023*. Geneva, Switzerland. Available at: https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2023/2023_unaids_data.

van der Nagel E (2018) 'Networks that work too well': Intervening in algorithmic connections. *Media International Australia* 168(1): 81–92.

van Dijck J (2013) 'You have one identity': Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, Culture and Society* 35(2): 199–215.

Veinot TC (2009) Interactive acquisition and sharing: Understanding the dynamics of HIV/AIDS information networks. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60(11): 2313–2332.

Watts DJ and Strogatz SH (1998) Collective dynamics of 'small-world' networks. *Nature* 393(6684): 440–442.

White L and Cant B (2003) Social networks, social support, health and HIV-positive gay men. *Health and Social Care in the Community* 11(4): 329–334.

Wood K and Lambert H (2008) Coded talk, scripted omissions: The micropolitics of AIDS talk in an affected community in South Africa. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 22(3): 213–233.

X (2024) About X Premium. Available at: https://help.twitter.com/en/using-x/x-premium (accessed 28 February 2024).

Zhou YR (2013) Morality, discrimination, and silence: Understanding HIV stigma in the sociocultural context of China. In: Liamputtong P (ed.) *Stigma, Discrimination and Living with HIV/AIDS: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Science + Business Media, pp. 117–132.

Figure 1. Sample tweet crowdsourcing for HIV medication

266x167mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Note

To maintain user confidentiality, the original post is not shown, with the profile image replaced, the tweet reworded, and other details changed.

Figure 2. Sample tweet showing coded talk

266x298mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 3. Sample Twitter profile

124x127mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Figure 4. Sample 'welcome' tweet

266x202mm (300 x 300 DPI)

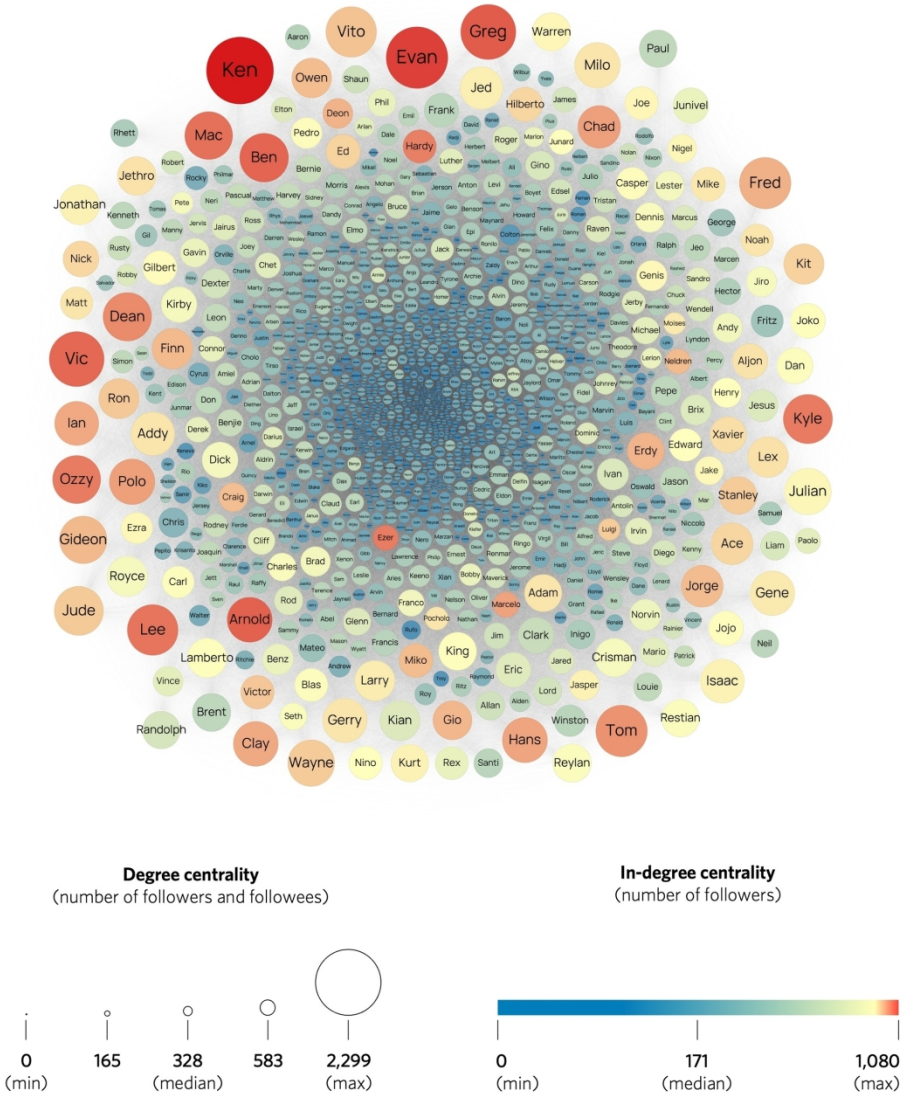

Figure 5. Connection network based on number of follows

190x219mm (300 x 300 DPI)

28 March 2025

Dear Reviewer:

We are deeply grateful for your thorough review and the valuable feedback you provided. We have implemented all suggested changes and revised the manuscript as follows:

- The introduction has been expanded to provide a more detailed discussion of how affordances facilitate visibility on social media.
- Light's work has been integrated into the literature review.
- Figures 1-3 have been updated with a footnote explaining that the posts have been modified to protect user privacy.
- The research design section has been clarified to better describe the sequence of qualitative and quantitative studies.
- The ethical considerations section now includes details on the support provided to interviewees.
- The discussion section has been expanded to address network metrics.

In reviewing the revised portions in the paper, please refer to the line numbers adjacent to the text, rather than those at the page edge.

Thank you once again for your insightful comments.

Kind regards,

The Authors

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS OF REVIEWER 2

COMMENT	RESPONSE	PAGE
Argument in relation to digital visibility and health and its connection to the literature and the discussion		
1. How is the process enabled by platform affordances, or at least X? By answering this question, the logical connection between "Negotiating HIV Disclosure and Visibility" and "Visibility and Social Media" can be clearer. It will also likely to improve the link between the Literature Review and "Socially Mediated Visibility" part of the Discussion. It might be good to elaborate on lines 516-518 on p. 18.	We deepened the discussion of affordances in the introduction, emphasising visibility as a key social media affordance (Devito et al., 2017; Ramirez, 2018; Treem and Leonardi, 2013).	Page 5 (See lines 143–148 highlighted yellow.)
	We introduced Malhotra's (2024) distinction between high-visibility and low-visibility social media spaces to better illustrate visibility management as a process and to enhance the connection to our discussion of Malhotra's (2024) 'bounded social media places.'	Pages 5–6 (See lines 148–153 highlighted green.)
	To better connect to our findings concerning algorithmic recommendations, we also incorporated the role of algorithms in social media visibility, citing literature on algorithmic curation (Galloway and Thacker, 2007; Hartley et al., 2023; van der Nagel, 2018), 'calculated publics' (Gillespie, 2014), and 'algorithmic publics' (Christin, 2020; Hartley et al., 2023).	Page 7 (See lines 182–189 highlighted yellow.)

COMMENT	RESPONSE	PAGE
	Finally, we elaborated on lines 516–518 in the previous draft: ◆ We contextualised presencing practices within the affordance of visibility control, emphasizing users' ability to determine the visibility of their Twitter content. This context contrasts with our later discussion on algorithmic recommendations, where users have diminished control over visibility. ◆ We offered examples of how boyd's (2011) affordances of scalability and searchability manifest on Twitter, and how users transition from high- to low-visibility spaces after establishing connections. This discussion serves to further elucidate visibility management as a dynamic process.	Page 20 (See lines 571–578 highlighted yellow.)
2. What is the possibility of bringing Light (2013, 2014, 2017) also into the Literature? I am asking this question because the points of Light have been salient into the Discussion.	We appreciate the helpful suggestion and agree that incorporating Light's work would enhance the discussion. Referencing Light (2013) and Light (2017a), as well as Lohan and Faulkner (2004), we strengthened our rationale for focusing specifically on Filipino men living with HIV, rather than people living with HIV in general, given the identified research gap concerning men's digital media experiences.	Page 4 (See lines 91–93 highlighted yellow.)

COMMENT	RESPONSE	PAGE
	We also cited Froomkin (1995) and Donath (1999) to reinforce the connection with pseudonymous networked publics (Light, 2014, 2017b).	◆ Page 3 (See lines 76–79 highlighted yellow.) ◆ Page 13 (See lines 379–381 highlighted yellow.)
	We integrated Light (2017b) into the discussion on visibility as an affordance, linking it to Malhotra's (2024) distinction between high-visibility and low-visibility platform spaces."	Pages 5–6 (See lines 148–153 highlighted green.)
	Light's (2017b) concept of 'pseudonymous networked publics' was defined and linked to Light's (2017b) 'real-name web' and Renninger's (2015) 'counterpublic communication' to provide context for the study's conclusions.	Page 6 (See lines 169–176 highlighted yellow.)
Methods (in relation to the findings)		

COMMENT	RESPONSE	PAGE
3. Can the Author/s please ensure that Figures 1-3 have no traces? Is it possible to remove other possible identifier/s (e.g., X handle or put an "xxx" to some part of the X handle to make it extra difficult for tracing)? I am asking these questions given the nature of the topic (i.e., HIV/AIDS), and its impact on those who participated.	In compliance with ethical research practices, and to ensure anonymity, all figures showing Twitter content were stripped of identifying information. Furthermore, heavy disguise techniques (Bruckman, 2002) and ethical fabrication procedures (Markham, 2012) were applied to prevent tracing back to account owners. While the methodology addresses these points, we acknowledge that readers may not follow the paper's sequence and may instead focus on the images. To ensure that these ethical safeguards are consistently communicated, we have appended a footnote to each image, stating that the original post is not displayed, the profile image is replaced, the tweet is reworded, and other details are changed. Consequently, we decided against further redacting names and Twitter handles, as this would detract from the authentic look and feel of Twitter posts, which we sought to preserve.	Please see revised images attached to the main submission.
4. Based on lines 182-184 on p. 7, is it reasonable to say that the 24 interviews were conducted prior to the SNA? If YES, why not SNA first and then interviews? I am asking these questions to understand the point of reference of the stories of Fred, Carl, Brad, Gio, Kyle, Diego, Marcus, Jairo among others.	Thank you for this observation. We have clarified that interviews followed the social network analysis. Initially, the methodology employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design using only digital trace data. In the second draft, we incorporated a follow-up qualitative case study using trace interviews. We acknowledge the previous lack of clarity regarding the two qualitative studies and have revised the discussion accordingly.	◆ Page 7 (See lines 206–208 highlighted yellow.) ◆ Page 9 (See lines 242–243 highlighted yellow.)

COMMENT	RESPONSE	PAGE
5. What were the support available to the interviewees during/ after the interviews? For instance, were they given de-briefing or had the opportunity to avail of counseling sessions? If YES, can the Author/s declare it under the "Ethical Considerations and Researcher Reflexivity" part of the Methods. I am asking these questions as part of research ethics and informed consent (line 168 p. 6), especially in terms of beneficence.	Following ethics review recommendations, we offered relevant HIV helplines to participants after the interview. We also developed a distress protocol based on Dempsey et al. (2016) a follow-up care protocol, adapted from Sque et al. (2014), contacting participants two and four weeks post-interview. We have updated the ethical considerations section to reflect these procedures.	Page 8 (See lines 221–225 highlighted yellow.)
Objective 2 and "network structure of Twitter users who identify as FMLWH" in relation to the discussion		
6. Can the Author/s connect the network structure with "A Desire to be Seen on Their Own Terms" and "Socially Mediated Visibility"? For instance, in what ways do the findings about network structure (e.g., high reciprocity, decentralized structure) engage with the two points in the Discussion? I am asking these questions because the Discussion is silent about network structure, which is objective #2. By answering these questions, the manuscript might also help clarify this part of the Abstract "Despite an	Evidence of a considerable median number of followers and friends, and high reciprocity, in spite of the network's loose interconnectedness, allowed us to infer that platform affordances were influential in the network's structural formation.	Page 20 (See lines 571–578 highlighted yellow.)
	In our discussion of socially mediated visibility, we argued that platform affordances, which facilitate the circulation of HIV identifiers, likely explain the expansive network of over 300,000 follows, connecting almost all users.	Page 21 (See lines 601–603 highlighted yellow.)

COMMENT	RESPONSE	PAGE
expansive network size comprising 302,934 'follow' ties, social network analysis showed that FMLWH exhibited a relatively low degree of interconnectedness within the platform. Participants expressed a strong inclination to connect with fellow 'blood brothers' and were frequently directed to these users through algorithmic recommendations rather than word-of-mouth."	We addressed the role of algorithms in making users visible without their knowledge. The previous draft attributed this to platform affordances. We have since expanded the discussion, supported by literature in the introduction, which explains that algorithmic curation generates 'calculated publics' (Gillespie, 2014) or 'algorithmic publics' (Christin, 2020; Hartley et al., 2023).	Page 21 (See lines 604–615 highlighted green.)
Others		
7. Please consider removing "on the other hand" without using its counterpart "on the one hand" (see lines 44 on p. 2 and 243 on p.9).	Thank you for catching this. We have now removed this phrase from the original statement.	◆ Page 3 (See line 72 highlighted yellow.) ◆ Page 11 (See lines 299–301 highlighted yellow.)

References

Bruckman A (2002) Studying the amateur artist: A perspective on disguising data collected in human subjects research on the Internet. *Ethics and Information Technology* 4(3): 217–231.

Christin A (2020) *Metrics at Work: Journalism and the Contested Meaning of Algorithms*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Dempsey L, Dowling M, Larkin P, et al. (2016) Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health* 39(6): 480–490.

Devito MA, Birnholtz J and Hancock JT (2017) Platforms, people, and perception: Using affordances to understand self-presentation on social media. In: *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, CSCW*, Portland, OR, 2017, pp. 740–754. Association for Computing Machinery.

Donath JS (1999) *Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Froomkin AM (1995) Anonymity and its enmities. *Journal Online Law* June(Article 4): 1–28.

Galloway AR and Thacker E (2007) *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Gillespie T (2014) The relevance of algorithms. In: Gillespie T, Boczkowski PJ, and Foot KA (eds) *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 167–193.

Light B (2013) Networked masculinities and social networking sites: A call for the analysis of men and contemporary digital media. *Masculinities and Social Change* 2(3): 245–265.
Light B (2014) Creating pseudonymous publics with Squirt: An expansion of the possibilities for networked publics. In: *35th International Conference on Information Systems 'Building a better world through information systems', ICIS 2014* (eds E Karahanna, A Srinivasan, and B Tan), Atlanta, GA, USA, December 2014, pp. 1–16. Association for Information Systems. AIS Electronic Library.
Light B (2017a) Men and networked life. In: *Selected Papers of #AoIR2017: The 18th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers*, Taru, Estonia, October 2017.
Light B (2017b) Producing sexual cultures and pseudonymous publics with digital networks. In: Lind RA (ed.) *Race and Gender in Electronic Media: Content, Context, Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 231–246.
Lohan M and Faulkner W (2004) Masculinities and technologies: Some introductory remarks. *Men and Masculinities* 6(4): 319–329.
Malhotra P (2024) "What you post in the group stays in the group": Examining the affordances of bounded social media places. *Social Media and Society* 10(3): 1–13.
Markham AN (2012) Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts. *Information Communication and Society* 15(3): 334–353.
Hartley JM, Bengtsson M, Schjøtt Hansen A, et al. (2023) Researching publics in datafied societies: Insights from four approaches to the concept of 'publics' and a (hybrid) research agenda. *New Media and Society* 25(7): 1668–1686.
Ramirez FA (2018) Social media affordances in the context of police transparency: An analysis of the first public archive of police body camera videos. *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 46(5). Taylor & Francis: 621–640.
Renninger BJ (2015) "Where I can be myself … where I can speak my mind" : Networked counterpublics in a polymedia environment. *New Media and Society* 17(9): 1513–1529.
Sque M, Walker W and Long-Sutehall T (2014) Research with bereaved families: A framework for ethical decision-making. *Nursing Ethics* 21(8): 946–955.
Treem JW and Leonardi PM (2013) Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Annals of the International Communication Association* 36(1): 143–189.
van der Nagel E (2018) 'Networks that work too well': Intervening in algorithmic connections. *Media International Australia* 168(1): 81–92.