PLATFORMED RACISM AS ARTICULATION OF WHITENESS: VISUAL SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ADAM GOODES BOOING CONTROVERSY

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Issues of race and identity are being increasingly discussed on the Internet (Nakamura, 2002), especially on social media platforms, since they are embedded in our everyday social practices (Burgess, 2015), and are surrounded by rising concerns about the thriving of hate online (Shepherd, Harvey, Jordan, Srauy, & Miltner, 2015) and how to tackle it (Banks, 2010).

As platforms sustain the majority of online sociability and creativity (van Dijck, 2013), they are a critical locus of research to understand the socio-cultural constructions of broader phenomena such as racism. This paper considers platforms as having an active role in the construction of racism through their corporate logic and technical infrastructure. Platformed racism is the entanglement between the governance and ideology of platforms, their technological affordances and the user practices that they mediate. Platforms intervene in public discourse by "their choices about what can appear, how it is organized, how it is monetized, what can be removed and why, and what the technical architecture allows and prohibits" (Gillespie, 2010). These choices are cultural statements and contribute to legitimize some information over others. Platforms also mediate cultural knowledge by algorithmically finding and suggesting content to users (Gillespie, 2013). At the same time, users' practices shape algorithmic logic to both foster creative vernacular solutions to issues (Abraham, 2014), or perpetuate old behaviours such as sexism (Author, 2016) or racism (Sharma, 2013).

This paper examines platformed racism by focusing on social media as issue spaces, and especially the uses and contributions of visual social media content in response to a recent racist controversy in Australia, the booing of indigenous footballer Adam Goodes in 2015. In December 2015, *The Guardian Australia*'s Indigenous affairs editor Stan Grant argued that that booing was a "familiar" sound to every Indigenous Australian like himself (The Ethics Centre, 2016). The familiarity to which Grant alludes speaks to the complex questions of domination rooted in Australian history, which are still visible in many levels of contemporary Australian society (Jayasuriya, Gothard &

Walker, 2003). The booing of Adam Goodes follows similar incidents linked to racism and the articulation of whiteness within Australian culture, but also exemplifies a paradigm shift. Adam Goodes not only received a public backlash from fans and from media personalities, but the booing campaign was also orchestrated on social media platforms (Wu, 2015).

Following key media objects and their publics

This paper investigates the cultural dynamics of racism through the study of the booing campaign targeting Adam Goodes on Australian social media, and acknowledges the role of the platform in this techno-cultural construction. This paper uses issue mapping to uncover the role of visual media objects as mediators in this controversy. Building on Author (2016) and Marres & Moats (2015), this paper applies and advances digital methods to understand the social construction of issues in different social media sites. This study focuses on visual content (i.e. images, gifs, videos), an important element of Internet culture (Nooney & Portwood-Stacer, 2014) which provides an opportunity to understand public discussions about race and racism (Nakamura, 2008). This research moves beyond the study of news discussions on Twitter (Bruns & Burgess, 2012) and textual-based analysis to detect racism discourse (Hughey & Daniels, 2013), to analyse visual digital objects and their publics.

The initial dataset of this study comprises 170,000 tweets containing the keyword 'goodes'[1], posted by Australian Twitter users between March 2008 and September 2015. This dataset was then filtered to identify tweets with images specific to the booing campaign.

Visual social media and platformed racism: The role of affect and humour in the booing controversy

Within the dataset, most of the images that circulated were uploaded locally through Twitter. However, other platforms emerged from the data as being relevant resources in the Adam Goodes controversy, including YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Whereas Instagram was mainly used to show support for Adam Goodes, analyzing the images[2] shared on Twitter suggests that discussions about race and racism were digitally mediated through the use of different image genres, including: Expressions of support from fans, abject humour towards Adam Goodes and political cartoons commenting on the controversy.

Twitter was used both to support Adam Goodes and to foster antagonistic practices. Affect and humour played a significant role not only in countering racism online, but also in racial vilification practices. These findings also inform platformed racism. The surfacing dynamics of different platforms (i.e. search algorithms, most shared content and top domains) have an impact upon what is seen and shown. However, by applying

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[1] Tweets were collected using the Tracking Infrastructure for Social Media Analysis (TrISMA) (Bruns, Burgess & Banks et al., 2016)
[2] 1,300 images from Twitter were categorized in an first exploration of the data

digital methods it is possible to make visible hidden discussions that are relevant to understand the dynamics of racism on social media. Twitter is a useful starting point because of its uses as a repository of content that users post from other platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook or Tumblr. However, platformed racism goes beyond Twitter and content points to other platforms that might have other, more openly racist debates.

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