

Legitimacy Work: Invisible Work in Philanthropic Crowdfunding

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ABSTRACT

Crowdfunding, the practice of funding a project by soliciting donations via the internet, allows organizations and individuals alike to raise funds for a variety of causes. In this paper, we present the results of a study of philanthropic crowdfunding, aimed at understanding some of the practices and needs associated with raising money for charitable causes. Our analysis highlights the diversity of stakeholders and roles in philanthropic crowdfunding and the immense amount of work associated with legitimizing many of these roles, including the fundraiser, organization, platform, and project. We introduce the construct of *legitimacy work* and discuss ways in which current crowdfunding systems both support and thwart this work.

Author Keywords

Articulation work; Crowdfunding; Invisible work; Facework; Legitimacy; Peer-to-peer fundraising

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H.5.3. [Information Interfaces and Presentation]: Group and Organization Interfaces—Collaborative Computing

INTRODUCTION

Crowdfunding is an internet-based open call for donations to support initiatives for specific purposes [15]. Although it is often viewed as an opportunity for individuals to raise money for their own commercial ventures, crowdfunding has also been appropriated for philanthropy, by nonprofit organizations and by individuals raising money for informal and formal charities [30, 37]. In all cases, fundraisers face the challenge of convincing potential donors that their efforts are legitimate and worthy of support [17].

In philanthropic fundraising, concerns about legitimacy are grounded in perceptions of whether or not the work benefits the public good [2]. Reports of fraud in the popular press often complicate the efforts of philanthropic organizations and fundraisers to convey legitimacy to their audiences

(e.g., [1, 38]). While individuals working for nonprofit organizations may be more likely to have formal training in fundraising and public relations, training that might help them navigate issues surrounding legitimacy, crowdfunding is heralded as a “democratization of philanthropy” [29] and it is unclear what experience other fundraisers might have in managing perceptions of legitimacy. Understanding the ways that crowdfunding platforms have anticipated the need for and provided support for managing these perceptions is an open question.

Previous research has acknowledged and advocated for the importance of collaborative computing in the domain of philanthropic fundraising [12]. Other previous research has found that the values underlying the nonprofit sector shape the way it appropriates (and does not appropriate) technology [25, 35]. Taken together, this prior work suggests a need to study the role of crowdfunding in the philanthropic context and to better understand how this context shapes use. Existing studies of crowdfunding, particularly within the domain of collaborative computing, focus almost exclusively on commercial crowdfunding systems [11, 19, 20]. While the infrastructure underlying commercial and philanthropic crowdfunding systems share many similarities, there are significant differences in the practices that these systems support. Commercial systems typically provide structure for incentivizing donations through access to a product or service, similar to venture capital practices [9]; philanthropic systems do not. In commercial crowdfunding, the fundraiser (or “creator”) is typically an integral part of the organizational enterprise for which he or she is fundraising; in philanthropic crowdfunding, the fundraiser is not always affiliated with the organization—if there is one—except for his or her role as advocate and fundraiser. The economic model and terms of service for commercial crowdfunding also tend to offer some protection to donors. Most philanthropic crowdfunding donors are not offered the same protections.

In this paper, we present results of a design space analysis of philanthropic crowdfunding platforms and an empirical study of the experience of philanthropic crowdfunding fundraisers. Our analysis reveals numerous ways that fundraisers feel that they must establish legitimacy and we describe the many forms that this *legitimacy work* takes on.

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RELATED WORK

Crowdfunding is a topic of interest for scholars in both human-computer interaction (HCI) and philanthropic studies. Both disciplines agree that crowdfunding has advantages over traditional methods of raising funds, but they approach the subject of crowdfunding from different perspectives. HCI researchers have explored the practices and motivations of crowdfunding participants as a unique model of soliciting financial resources, but have mainly done so in the context of commercial crowdfunding, which tends to overlook some of the complexities of philanthropic crowdfunding [11, 19, 20]. Research from philanthropic studies provides us with a better understanding of how organizations and fundraisers generate donations for altruistic causes. Philanthropic studies, however, tends to view crowdfunding as a form of social media rather than as its own complex entity [27].

Commercial Crowdfunding

The goal of commercial crowdfunding (e.g., via a platform like Kickstarter) is to fund the development of a product or service that will subsequently be marketed and sold for profit. Several early studies of crowdfunding focused on why people participate, whether as creators or supporters. Gerber and Hui demonstrated how crowdfunding allows an organization or an individual to raise funds quickly, while simultaneously developing a network of supporters [11]. Hemer found that donors tend to be motivated by a personal identification with a product or the campaign's goals or the satisfaction and enjoyment one gets from being a part of the crowdfunding campaign's community [18] (see also [11]).

Legitimacy in Commercial Crowdfunding

Legitimacy in commercial crowdfunding is often associated with organizational legitimacy, which can drive investments and increase access to outside stakeholders [9]. Frydrych et al. demonstrated that reward-based crowdfunding (76.5% of crowdfunded commercial ventures, according to one study [3]) achieves legitimacy through activities that improve the perception of the venture's potential for success [9].

Researchers have identified several factors that correlate with the success of a campaign, all of which are used to establish a positive perception [9, 15, 26]. For example, researchers have found that Kickstarter pages containing phrases that emphasize the reciprocity of the reward structure are more likely to reach their funding goal [26]. In Greenberg and Gerber's study of re-launched campaigns that had previously failed to reach their goal, researchers found that 70% of creators adjusted the reward structure in an attempt to gain success [15]. Researchers also suggest that reward structures with tangible as well as social-psychological rewards tend to be more compelling and more motivating to a community [9].

Mitra and Gilbert found that Kickstarter campaigns with language that demonstrates social identity, social liking, and social proof are also more likely to reach their

crowdfunding goal [26]. Social identity is the idea of belonging to a group or community. Social liking phrases praise donors and offer them a sense of community. Social proof is the concept of looking towards others to determine the appropriate way to behave. Researchers suggest that these factors are effective in driving the crowd.

Frydrych et al. found that projects with lower fundraising goals tend to be more likely to reach their goal [9], perhaps because achieving organizational legitimacy requires more effort and justification with high funding targets. Successful projects tend to be over-funded, suggesting that projects closer to meeting their goal and thus being more likely to succeed have more legitimacy.

Campaigns that used language that implied authority or expertise were also found to have more success in reaching their goal [26]. The perception of project creators' expertise could also explain why Frydrych et al. found that projects run by teams or pairs were more likely to be funded than projects with a single creator [9]. Frydrych and colleagues suggest that this could be related to traditional venture-capital reasoning in which enterprises with a "balanced team" are more apt to succeed.

Philanthropic Fundraising Online

Philanthropic studies researchers and professional practitioners are interested in online fundraising and its effects, as well. Traditional fundraising strategies such as direct mail, door-to-door, and telemarketing campaigns need a significant investment of time and money in order to be successful [27]. The internet provides an opportunity for nonprofit organizations to reach, inform, and connect people without the constraints of physical distance [30].

From a philanthropic studies perspective, crowdfunding most resembles a practice known as peer-to-peer fundraising—a method in which individuals solicit donations from their social networks to raise funds for an organization. Studies have shown that donors are more likely to give, and in larger amounts, to an organization if solicited by someone they know [24]. Crowdfunding, then, is seen as a form of peer-to-peer fundraising that solicits donations through online media rather than traditional forms of communication [19].

Because crowdfunding utilizes a fundraiser's social network, the concept of social capital helps explain how these methods drive donations. There are two forms of social capital: *networks* and *norms* [6]. *Networks* consist of how involved one is with a community and the diversity of one's friendships. High density social networks enhance the frequency of social interactions and can thereby increase charitable giving. *Norms* refer to trust and participation within a group or community. Trust has been shown to be an important factor in the decision to give and the amount of the donation [14]. Participation is guided by an exchange of the attitudes and behaviors that is grounded in trust [6]. Graddy and Wang found that social capital positively

influences an individual's philanthropic giving and volunteering by spreading norms of reciprocity that promote social good and by helping those in need through his or her social networks [14]. Organizations also stand to benefit from leveraging their fundraisers' social capital through crowdfunding [6].

In a study of organizations using Facebook as a medium for fundraising, researchers identified three phenomena occurring in the move to online fundraising: the ability to fundraise through crowdfunding, soliciting donations through peer-to-peer fundraising, and a transparency of donation information that then leads to social pressure to donate [27]. These factors, which describe the changes that charitable organizations experience when embracing social media, are referred to collectively as the "social network effect."

Of the three "social network effect" factors, transparency may be the most disruptive. From a study of the crowdfunding efforts of London Marathon charity runners on JustGiving and Virgin Money Giving, researchers found that displaying the amount of a previous donation affects the amount of the next donation [31]. Large donations led to larger donations while small donations led to smaller donations. Transparency of donors' names and amounts led to social status and prestige within the donor network, which, in itself, motivated donors to participate.

Legitimacy in Philanthropy

Heydemann and Toepler argue that legitimacy for philanthropic institutions is a complicated concept that shifts depending on the cultural, social, and economical climate [17]. They make a distinction between procedural legitimacy—adhering to legal requirements—and normative legitimacy—the socially accepted standard of benefitting public good—but recognize that laws and regulations emerge from socially held beliefs of morality and what is appropriate. Other researchers contend that philanthropic legitimacy is based on abstract ideas of public and societal good that are influenced by the norms of the social networks in which a philanthropic organization exists [2]. In this research, we take up the more normative and subjective understanding of legitimacy [2, 9].

METHOD

We carried out this research in two interdependent phases—a design space analysis of 15 philanthropic crowdfunding sites and interviews with 12 fundraisers.

Design Space Analysis

We identified 15 crowdfunding sites that are used for philanthropic crowdfunding, including ALA Climb for Clean Air, American Cancer Society, CrowdRise, DonorsChoose, Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children, GiveForward, GoFundMe, Heifer International, ImRaising, PayPal, Pitch In, Rally, Susan G Komen, and YouCaring. Our initial feature comparison of these sites highlighted a more diverse ecology of

stakeholders than in commercial crowdfunding systems, as well as a more diverse set of economic models than are found in existing studies of commercial crowdfunding systems. The diversity of systems identified in our initial feature comparison led us to undertake a qualitative empirical research phase, exploring the experience of fundraisers in philanthropic crowdfunding—particularly whether their experiences were as diverse as the platforms we examined. Our empirical phase highlighted the importance of the various stakeholders, and so, following the analysis of our interview data, we refined our design space to highlight the diverse stakeholder configurations.

Empirical Interviews with Fundraisers

We interviewed six female and six male informants, each of whom engaged in philanthropic crowdfunding as fundraisers. Five interviews were conducted during an active crowdfunding campaign, while the remaining interviews were held following their campaign's conclusion. Informants raised funds for a range of causes including medical research, school supplies, mission trips, and veterinary bills.

We recruited informants who used a variety of different crowdfunding platforms, to provide some degree of generalizability for our findings. Platforms included GoFundMe (n = 4), Crowdrise (2), DonorsChoose (2), PayPal (1), Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children (1), a local dance marathon site created through Convio (1), and the American Lung Association's Climb for Clean Air site (1).

We conducted semi-structured interviews focused on four primary topics: how informants decided to crowdfund a project, their experience with the crowdfunding technology (-ies), how they chose to recruit donors, and how they maintained contact with the donors during or after the end of the campaign. All interviews focused on the fundraisers' experiences with a specific campaign; the campaign's page was used as a concrete point of reference during the interviews. Interviews lasted 40 minutes, on average; they were all audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

We analyzed the data using grounded theory [8]. The open coding process resulted in conceptual categories that represented different behaviors and attitudes involved in philanthropic crowdfunding. Through the axial coding process, we discovered that many of these behaviors and attitudes were oriented towards or the result of an immense amount of work legitimizing their crowdfunding campaign.

DESIGN SPACE OF PHILANTHROPIC CROWDFUNDING Stakeholders and Roles

For the 15 platforms that are used for philanthropic crowdfunding campaigns, we analyzed the varied relationships among the *organization*, *fundraiser*, *donor*, *platform*, and *project* on these platforms. We use the term *crowdfunding campaign* to refer to the overall interaction among these roles in the process of crowdfunding.

Commercial crowdfunding researchers often describe the stakeholders in crowdfunding in dichotomous terms: either as *creators*, the person or persons who put out the call for funds, or as *supporters*, the person or persons who donate funds to the creator [11]. While these terms also apply in philanthropic crowdfunding [19], the practices of crowdfunding in this context complicate these categories. Both the charitable organization and the volunteer can occupy the creator role, as both can create and manage a campaign. For this research, then, we distinguish between the organization and the fundraiser. The *organization* is the organized body that can determine how the charitable crowdfunding campaign operates. The *fundraiser* creates and maintains a crowdfunding page. In some cases, the organization requires their fundraisers to meet certain goals by set deadlines in order to participate in their events. In these instances, the fundraisers choose the images, videos, and text to use on each of their crowdfunding pages.

Note that not every crowdfunding campaign involves an organization. We refer to individuals who crowdfund without an organization as *independent fundraisers*. We also diverge with commercial crowdfunding research to refer to those who contribute funds to a campaign as *donors*, to more closely reflect the language used by our informants.

In addition to the fundraiser, organization, and donor, we have identified two additional roles central to philanthropic crowdfunding: *platform* and *project*. The *platform* is the website and related forms of infrastructure that host crowdfunding pages. The platform, itself, can influence how the campaign operates. Some platforms restrict the type of projects it will host. GiveForward.com, for example, is dedicated to allowing independent fundraisers to raise money for medical expenses. Donorschoose.org restricts projects to those funding supplies or field trips for classrooms in need. The platform can be created and/or owned by an organization, causing those roles to overlap. The platform can also be a third-party site that maintains its own identity and is used by an organization or independent fundraiser. The John Ritter Foundation's use of Crowdrise.com is an example of this type of relationship. Third-party platforms typically operate by charging a percentage of the donations given, often offering registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits a discounted rate. Third-party platforms also enable crowdfunding without an organization stakeholder. Many independent fundraisers use platforms such as GoFundMe.com, Rally.org, or PayPal widgets to raise money for a philanthropic project that they choose, often to help friends and family in need.

The *project* refers to the fundraiser's objective for raising money. Projects are central to the idea of crowdfunding. A project can be quite specific, e.g., purchasing livestock to provide food and a sustainable living to a family or raising money to cover the medical expenses of a friend. A project can be very general, such as raising money for an

organization. A project can also be a mix, with money raised to allow the fundraiser to participate in an event, such as a walk or marathon, with the project additionally raising money for a cause, such as cancer research.

In our design space analysis, we identified two broad classes of platforms, each supporting different configurations of roles. One class of platform, including sites like DonorsChoose and Heifer International, support overlap between the platform and the organization; here, the system design assumes the presence of at least one nonprofit organization. The second class of platform, including sites like CrowdRise or GoFundMe, do not, in contrast, assume the presence of an organization. These platforms are designed to support an overlap between the roles of the fundraiser and organization or to support individual fundraisers in stakeholder ecosystems where no organization is involved. Of this second class of system, only two platforms, GiveForward and ImRaising, are limited to the independent fundraiser model; most platforms support some form of organizational involvement as well as independent fundraiser campaigns.

Economic Models

The economic models used in philanthropic crowdfunding are often structured differently than those in commercial crowdfunding. In commercial crowdfunding, the platform either operates using an all-or-nothing funding model, like Kickstarter, or an all-and-more funding model, like IndieGoGo [11]. With an all-or-nothing model, the creator only receives the funds if the goal is met; otherwise, the funds are returned to the supporters. The all-and-more platforms allow creators to keep funds even if they do not meet their crowdfunding goal.

Most philanthropic crowdfunding platforms operate more similarly to the all-and-more model, but this characterization becomes muddled when we delve into the specifics. For example, when using Crowdrise.com, an organization may set a specific goal for the fundraiser to meet in order to participate in an event, such as a marathon. If the fundraiser solicits more than his or her goal, all the money goes to the organization. However, if the fundraiser does not raise the goal amount, the organization still keeps the funds, but the fundraiser cannot participate in the event. While commercial crowdfunding tends to operate on a system of rewards between *creators* and *supporters* [19], we found there can also be an exchange of rewards (e.g., event participation) between organizations and fundraisers in philanthropic crowdfunding.

Among the philanthropic crowdfunding platforms, DonorsChoose.org is most closely related to the all-or-nothing model but there are differences here, as well. On DonorsChoose.org, the fundraiser does not receive the funding if the project is not fully funded by the deadline. However, funds are only returned to the donors via credits towards another campaign on the site. Furthermore, fundraisers do not directly receive funds even if the goal is

met. Instead, DonorsChoose.org uses the funds to purchase the requested educational supplies and sends them to the fundraisers' school. The educational supplies belong to the school rather than the fundraiser (often, a teacher) who created the project.

In general, when an organization is involved, details about how funds are allocated tend to be more ambiguous. The organization may provide some information about how donations are used (i.e., research, treatment, awareness), but specifics such as the percentage of each donation that goes towards a designated project are often undefined or reported separately from the campaign page. In these cases, donations collected through crowdfunding are typically sent directly to the organization, and the fundraiser has no influence on how the funds are spent. For independent fundraisers, or those campaigning without an organization, specifics of the allocation of funds tend to be outlined in detail on the campaign page. The platform then delivers the funds to the fundraiser who has full discretion over how they are spent.

EMPIRICAL BASIS FOR LEGITIMACY WORK

Through inductive analysis of the interview data, we found that the primary concern for fundraisers in philanthropic crowdfunding was conveying the *legitimacy* of their campaign. This “legitimacy work” took multiple forms—with the fundraiser, platform, organization, and project all requiring their own forms of legitimization. Here, we characterize prominent forms of legitimization and legitimacy work carried out by or attributed to various stakeholders in the crowdfunding ecosystem. We discuss how the design of crowdfunding systems both supported and thwarted this work.

Legitimacy of the Fundraiser

Informants discussed the need for conveying their own legitimacy at length. Fundraisers were concerned not only with how their donors perceived their efforts but also with how other fundraisers—mainly those raising money for the same cause—regarded their intentions. Fundraisers worked to articulate a personal connection to the project and/or cause, to interact directly with donors, to reciprocate donations, and to provide updates on the campaign to build their social network and establish trust. Together, these acts of legitimacy work were all aimed at maintaining and strengthening the legitimacy of the fundraiser her- or himself in the eyes of donors and potential donors.

Personal Connection

Fundraisers often articulated a personal connection to the project or cause. For example, when teachers campaign for school supplies on DonorChoose.org, the connection to their students and education is made clear by the choice of platform (e.g., I11, I13¹). Elsewhere, fundraisers include an explanation of their connection to the project on their

crowdfunding page. By establishing a personal connection, the fundraiser demonstrates a desire to provide their donors with information about how the campaign would contribute to a public good, but also a direct motive for their actions toward this public good. For example, one informant raised money for a medical research nonprofit because a family member had experienced that particular disease:

I think it's important for people to know who they are donating to and why and to have that personal affiliation. To see a picture, much less a video, of that person's family that was affected can be very strong and moving... and it will cause people to donate. - 17

Donor Interaction

Because fundraisers directly solicit donations in crowdfunding, much of their legitimacy revolves around how they are perceived by donors. As such, donor interaction is a key aspect of campaigns. Crowdfunding platforms often allow fundraisers to send links out through social media. Some fundraisers chose—or even prefer—to extend their fundraising efforts offline as well, though this is not generally supported by existing technologies. An informant who raised money for a coworker's son's funeral describes how her offline efforts were more successful than relying on social media and email alone:

On the paper that we circulated, we actually had [the coworker's] picture so people would know who it was for. And then, you know, like [potential donors] would ask, 'What happened with [Laura]? What's going on?'.... It would start conversations, and they would donate. - 15

Donor interaction does not end at solicitation. Fundraisers felt it important to thank donors and keep in contact with them. One fundraiser for a dance marathon details her effort to maintain contact:

I tried to, of course, keep in contact with those people. You know, a lot of them are alumni who used to dance with me.... For the most part, it is a year-round effort to stay in contact with them. - 12

This participant, who conducted crowdfunding campaigns for the same cause over several years, relied on a spreadsheet she had created to track donors and donations. The crowdfunding platform used by her organization did not allow her to access donor information once the campaigns were complete, and she wanted to recognize those donors who had repeatedly supported her campaigns. Because maintaining social networks is significant for fostering legitimacy, accessible longitudinal records are important [13].

Most of the crowdfunding platforms we surveyed provide fundraisers with a messaging feature to communicate directly to donors, even including templates for ‘thank you’ letters. Some informants chose not to use these features, however, because they found them to be too impersonal, and so relied on personal emails, instead. Others would

¹ Informants are referred to anonymously by informant number.

tailor their communication based on their relationship with the donor, as one fundraiser explained:

For my grandparents and stuff, I sent out handwritten letters, but for other people I wrote individual emails and just [...] you know, said, 'You've donated for X amount of years, you've donated X amount of money to me.' - I2

Fundraisers often gave donors some kind of public recognition. While most platforms generally include a list of the project's donors and donation amounts, fundraisers also drew attention to a donor's actions through social media, even when this was unsupported by the platform, e.g., "If they were Facebook users, I would thank them on Facebook with the link to my Crowdrise page" (I7). Some fundraisers had difficulty recognizing donors who made offline donations, due to the platform's limitations. One fundraiser solicited offline donations for her campaign and described the difficulty in thanking each of these donors:

... because you want to make sure that the people who have donated have been acknowledged. [...] So after I put those in [the system], if it's possible, like I sent the [donors] an email with the link so that they could see where the donation was. - I7

Donor Reciprocity

Several participants discussed the work required to build a perception of their own legitimacy through donation reciprocity. Donation reciprocity is an exchange of donations among fundraisers that strengthens ties and creates stronger networks. Reciprocity can establish societal norms, which can strengthen social capital, and has been shown to have a positive effect on crowdfunding campaigns [6]. In commercial crowdfunding, the terms of reciprocity are defined and structured. In philanthropic crowdfunding, donation reciprocity is more of an act of social decorum, as one fundraiser explained: "I think you're more inclined to give to people who give to you... I'm quicker to donate to people because they have helped out." (I6)

Donation reciprocity also occurs among fundraisers for the same cause. Fundraiser-to-fundraiser donation reciprocity builds networks, increasing social capital:

When it came down to the wire, a lot of people didn't have their totals yet [...] and so, like, a lot of people would post other people's pages to their sites saying, "Hey, donate to this person." And they would pass it along to their family, friends... so it was just a lot of connecting people to other people who could help them out. - I2

Donation reciprocity is also effective in soliciting donations. Fundraisers encourage donations by promising donors that they will donate to their favorite causes or charities in return:

So my, "gimmick" for the year was, 'If you donate to me, then I'll do a favor for you, or I'll donate to a charity of yours.' So my uncle donated twenty-five dollars to me, and in return, I donated twenty bucks to the ALS association. - I2

In fulfilling this promise, the fundraiser creates a sense of trust between herself and the donor. Because legitimacy is based in the perception of morality [17], establishing trust is likely to strengthen the moral perception of the fundraiser and to increase the legitimacy of the campaign.

Updates

Trust can also be fostered through updates on the progress of the campaign or project. One informant described how editing her campaign page helped generate donations:

I tried to keep it updated like every couple of weeks [...] You know if people can actually see where their money is going and stay updated I feel like they are more apt to donate... -I8

However, regular update features were not available on most platforms. Informants either made changes to the main text describing the campaign or posted updates on social media sites outside their crowdfunding page. For donors to be aware of the progress, they would have to be friends with the fundraiser on social media or remember to check back in on the campaign page. The lack of platform support for pushing updates limits fundraisers' ability to communicate campaign progress and fuel enthusiasm.

Legitimacy of the Organization

Though organizational involvement is not necessary for crowdfunding campaigns, fundraisers generally believe that organizational involvement increases confidence in campaigns. For informants, the perceived legitimacy of the organization is dependent on three factors: the organization's allocation of funds, its structuring of crowdfunding, and its mission. These factors have the potential for fostering trust in organizations and reinforcing the perception that the organizations—and, therefore, the organizations' fundraisers—are acting in good faith.

Allocation of Funds

Much of the organization's legitimacy rests on reputation and evidence about how they spend the money that has been donated. Nearly all informants mentioned this aspect of organizational legitimacy, either with respect to their organization or organizations that others might be crowdfunding for.

However, one of the ways that financial allocation is most explicitly foregrounded for donors is in how the administrative costs of collecting crowdfunded donations are reflected during the donation process. Fundraisers who solicit donations for organizations through the organizations' own crowdfunding platforms are not subjected to the same fee-related concerns from donors as are third-party platform fundraisers. The organization usually manages any operating and payment processing costs the platform may charge. To the donor and the fundraiser, then, all donations appear to go directly to the project. When asked if there were any fees associated with fundraising on Crowdrise.com, for example, one participant

told us there was not and explained how donors could opt to “donate” to Crowdrise.com, as well:

I think most of the time there's an auto-populated field that says, "Add on a 10% fee for costs." However, you can click that box and say I don't want to pay this fee, and it'll zero out. [...] And I think that's really cool on their part because that tells me they're finding another way to cover their costs administratively and therefore your donation that you want strictly to go for that foundation, and it is. -112

This account, however, is not entirely accurate. Crowdrise.com takes up to 3% of donations, whether the donor pays that amount above and beyond their original donation or not. Nevertheless, because legitimacy is based on perception, this can be a powerful advantage for organizations.

Organization's Structuring of Crowdfunding

The way that an organization structures and coordinates its crowdfunding events—project guidance, moral support, or fund matching—can also influence its legitimacy. Many of our informants believed that the structure provided by the organization gave them support essential for producing a successful campaign. Informants valued networking with other fundraisers and learning from their experiences. Networking increases fundraisers' social capital, which, in turn, helps to foster increased legitimacy. One fundraiser explained the benefits of his organization's mandatory practice hikes:

It's a chance for people to meet and start building that feeling of being a team, you know.... I've found that you can get ideas... from people that maybe you didn't get from these organizers. - 13

The organization's structuring can, however, place a disproportionate amount of work on some fundraisers over others. Another informant explained how her organization divides all fundraisers into groups that a seasoned fundraiser then leads (17). In exchange for participation, the organization offers fundraisers moral support and fundraising ideas from the seasoned fundraiser. Fundraisers are then guided in establishing their legitimacy, benefiting both the fundraiser and the organization by increasing the likelihood of a successful campaign. However, the organization is increasing the seasoned fundraiser's workload without necessarily increasing the success of his or her campaign.

Some organizations also provide financial assistance that can make the project appear more legitimate in the sense that the project has some funding from the start and is, therefore, more apt to be perceived as likely to succeed [9]. One fundraiser's school foundation agreed to match funding for any of their teachers' crowdfunding campaigns. The fundraiser's goal was listed as “half off” on his crowdfunding page. This informant felt that the organization's financial assistance was critical to his campaign's success:

...the partnership of a local foundation with the school has worked well as a model—that way the foundation doesn't have to fund everything but they're helping to get these projects funded. - 111

Organization's Mission

The organization's mission is also key to the legitimacy of a campaign. When the mission of an organization is perceived as being legitimate, communities and networks build around the mission, extending the social network of the fundraiser. One informant was surprised to see who had contributed to his project, explaining how he believed that donors were motivated not by the specific project, but by a desire to help the larger mission of the organization:

So it was really interesting to see who contributed. Like there were [...] graduates of the high school that look on DonorsChoose and look for things from [my local school system] to fund. So several of the people that gave were alumni of the school. - 111

Independent fundraisers do not need to justify the legitimacy of an organization and can focus on establishing their own legitimacy as well as the legitimacy of their platform and project. However, they also do not benefit from the advantages that organizations can provide or the legitimacy the organization has independently established.

Legitimacy of the Project

Fundraisers worked to convey the legitimacy of their project through social proof, quality of information, and the project's mission. Together, this work fosters communication and builds trust among philanthropic crowdfunding participants.

Social Proof

As with commercial crowdfunding, social proof, or the determination of what is appropriate through the observed behavior of others, is also an important mechanism for fostering legitimacy [26]. Platforms can aid in the construction of social proof by displaying previous donation amounts or the number of donors. Most platforms will also suggest a few donation amounts to help establish norms. Some of the informants were the first to donate to their own page, setting norms. Other informants noted that the organization put part of their registration fee toward their crowdfunding goal, also helping to set expectations and convey the legitimacy of the project:

I think it's nice and encouraging for others to see, 'well this person has, gosh, it looks like about a hundred plus different donors. So, that must be a more legitimate fundraising site to donate to.' -17

Quality of Information

The project's legitimacy also depends on the quality of information provided. Many fundraisers needed to compile and communicate detailed information about the project to donors, particularly justifications for the project's fundraising goal. Because the perception of legitimacy hinges on the appropriate use of funds, enabling fundraisers to provide this class of information, in particular, would be

valuable [17]. GoFundMe and Donorschoose.org were, however, the only platforms informants used that allowed them to itemize the costs of the project; other informants had to find workarounds.

Project's Mission

The legitimacy of the project is also bound in its mission and how it will benefit those in need. Fundraisers want to underscore the reasons why their project is important. Fundraisers using crowdfunding sites are often limited in the amount of information that they can share to describe the project in detail. One participant (I1), instead, chose to build his own website for his crowdfunding project and used a PayPal widget to process payments. Not only was he not limited to a single page, he also included a blog detailing his journey, sold photographs, and dedicated a page to donors.

Legitimacy of the Platform

Informants were also concerned about the extent to which the crowdfunding platform was, itself, perceived as being legitimate. A platform's legitimacy is mainly assessed by the features and services provided, including factors such as name recognition, infrastructure for connecting to other social media, support for multimodal donations, and fee structure. In turn, the platform enforces social and economic policies that affect the legitimacy of the campaign.

Name Recognition

Fundraisers believed that the platform's name recognition bolsters confidence in a campaign. Many fundraisers had more faith in a platform if friends had used the platform. When asked if she would have changed anything about her campaign, one fundraiser commented on how the popularity of the platform affected her decision:

So I think I would research more, the other sites to see if there's a better deal, a better bargain. But at that time I think GoFundMe was the one that I saw that, you know, [was] a known name to me. - 15

Name recognition for a platform can also be derived from a relationship with an organization. Organizations partner with third-party platforms, which their fundraisers are then required to use. Third-party platforms demonstrated efforts to build legitimacy by partnering with and displaying logos of well-known, prominent philanthropic organizations. The fundraisers' and donors' trust in the platform was bolstered by the trust of these organizations (e.g., I7). For campaigns where the roles of the organization and platform overlap, name recognition of the platform depends entirely on the organization.

Connecting to Social Media

Posting to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter was also an important part of crowdfunding and often was critical to the success of the campaign. Social media increases the visibility of the campaign, directing the crowd to the campaign, but it also helps to create additional name recognition for the platform, itself [9]. Most crowdfunding

platforms support some kind of social media integration, but several limit the interaction to sharing the crowdfunding page along with a link. The fundraiser's social media followers can then comment on the shared post, but they cannot post directly to the fundraiser's crowdfunding page. While most platforms support posting to Facebook, not all platforms support posting to all relevant forms of social media. One participant, for example, advertised her campaign via Instagram and SnapChat, but had to do so without support from her crowdfunding platform:

A little bit of Instagram this year. This year we used a lot of Snapchat. Which was kind of neat, so people would go through their stories and they say, "Five days to donate. Here's my link." Ten seconds long. - 12

Multimodal Donations

Many of the fundraisers we interviewed solicited donations both online and offline. But only one of the platforms used by informants allowed them to add totals from offline donations without an organization's intervention.

Some philanthropic organizations that host crowdfunding campaigns also accepted donations in the form of prizes for giveaways or venue space. Most crowdfunding platforms, however, have no way to accept or recognize non-monetary forms of donation.

The lack of support for multi-modal donations is a significant limitation because the success of a campaign can hinge on offline and non-monetary forms of donations. Because the project's page acts as a record of donations, donors turn to the page to confirm that their donation has been acknowledged. When platforms do not support multimodal donations, they compromise the fundraiser's legitimacy by opening them up to questions about whether donations have been received or managed appropriately. Research has also found that records of donations can encourage subsequent gifts [31], so the inability to record offline or multi-modal donations can also limit future fundraising.

Fee Structure

The main hindrance to the legitimacy of third-party platforms, according to informants, were the fees associated with collecting and processing donations. Platforms often take a percentage of each donation in order to cover their operating costs. Fundraisers recognized the necessity of the fees but were dismayed that the full donation would not reach the project or the cause, particularly as they felt that platform fees reflected poorly on them, for example: "And it was, it was almost embarrassing to see that, you know, someone made a \$500 dollar deposit, but you're only getting \$420" (I5).

Some platforms clearly displayed the percentage that went to the platform or made the fee to platform optional. Fundraisers who used these platforms were generally placated by these practices.

Negotiating Multiple Legitimacies

In philanthropic crowdfunding, the fundraiser is largely responsible for stewarding the legitimacy of the various roles. The fundraiser is the main point of contact for the campaign's donors and is responsible for communicating all the factors necessary for legitimizing the platform, organization, project, and him- or her- self as a fundraiser. The scope of legitimacy work that the fundraiser is ultimately responsible for is complicated by the blurred boundaries among fundraiser, organization, and donor in philanthropic crowdfunding. In some cases, the fundraiser might act as a representative for the organization, designing and implementing a fundraising effort while spreading awareness of the organization and its mission. Fundraisers become donors at the same time by paying registration fees that then become donations to their project. They donate other resources, mainly time, that go unrecognized. There is also an interesting relationship among fundraisers and donors when donors become fundraisers, themselves, helping to promote the project and soliciting donations by sharing a link to the project through social media.

LEGITIMACY WORK

The diversity of roles in philanthropic crowdfunding is not remarkably different from other complex collaborative systems. Yet what is striking in this research is the extent to which the legitimacy of each role was held up as a form of work that, ultimately, the fundraiser felt accountable for. While crowdfunding is heralded as a “democratization of philanthropy” [29], it comes with the unstated expectation that individuals bear the burden—however willingly, because that is part and parcel of being altruistic—for legitimizing every aspect of the crowdfunding experience. Legitimacy work, then, characterizes the primarily invisible form of work (e.g., [32, 34]) required to justify any of the multiple facets of an arc of work or to persuade others to contribute to such an arc. In this sense, legitimacy work is situated at the intersection of articulation work [10, 28, 33] and facework [13].

Articulation work is a “supra-type of work in any division of labor, done by various actors” [33]. In CSCW, articulation work has most typically been invoked in reference to the myriad forms of coordination involved in deconstructing, reconstructing, and negotiating the contingencies of collaborative work (e.g., interpretation work [28] or adaptation work [10]). Yet, Strauss highlights that...

None of this arc of work is called into play automatically. Some actor—person or acting unit—must be “responsible” for deciding and planning that... a project is necessary or desirable [33].

It is in service of “calling into play” that legitimacy work contributes to the articulation of work, justifying and persuading other potential contributors that an arc of work is necessary or desirable. But it is the multifaceted nature of these arcs that complicate legitimacy work. Each facet of

the work—each individual, organization, technology, project, et cetera—implicated may require its own legitimization. In practice, then, legitimacy work manifests as a form of facework—the interpersonal behavior intended to manage impressions formed by an audience [13]. In CSCW, impression management is typically used synonymously with self-presentation, although impression management is crucial for organizations, as well (i.e., as public relations). Legitimacy work in philanthropic crowdfunding is further complicated by the once-removed nature of the facework involved. In this context, legitimacy work isn't just about the fundraiser managing perceptions of his or her own legitimacy; it is about the fundraiser managing perceptions of the legitimacy of others' organizations, technologies, and, sometimes, projects.

There is a significant tension between the often-invisible nature of the legitimacy work, itself, and the desire for some degree of visibility or awareness of the legitimacy of the multiple facets of the sociotechnical system, insofar as an extraordinary amount of effort is undertaken to convey enough legitimacy to compel others' contributions to the arc of work. This distinction is also highlighted in the sociological literature about legitimization. Bourricaud, in particular, warns that the plurality and heterogeneity of criteria for legitimacy compels us to attend to *processes of legitimization* rather than to the *state of being legitimate* (or not) [5].

Given the tension between legitimacy work or processes of legitimization and the state of legitimacy, designers need to be particularly wary of the potential ramifications of making invisible legitimacy work visible (or reified according to a singular set of criteria) through design. Suchman, in particular, highlights the tensions and tradeoffs in making work visible—that while visibility can enable legitimacy, empowerment, and creative appropriation, it can also serve to reify and stereotype work, enable surveillance, and create additional reporting work [34]. In particular, Suchman warns that...

...bringing [invisible] work forward and rendering it visible may call into question the grounds on which different forms of work are differentially rewarded, both symbolically and materially [34].

The question here is whether—or to what extent—making legitimacy work visible through design would provide the infrastructures or resources to reify abstractions of legitimacy (e.g., as reputation systems) and to what end or for which stakeholders? Will this additional visibility create extra work and for whom?

In the name of legitimacy and achieving public openness, an increased burden of accounting and tracking may be incurred. The phenomenon is one of tradeoffs and balances, not absolutes and clear boundaries [32].

One might, for example, argue that in order to support the legitimacy work of fundraisers, the legitimization of organizations should be better supported by the

organizations, themselves, or by third parties (e.g., Guidestar) that already provide ratings of organizations. Yet, scholars in philanthropic studies question whether the accountability metrics currently used to assess performance in the nonprofit sector really abstract away the right metrics and, indeed, argue that the additional work created by accountability efforts often impedes the organizational mission [4].

Strauss advocates for thinking of an “accountability ladder,” with accountability primarily being reported upward [33]. In the context of this research, we observe much more of an accountability network, calling into question whether designing for legitimization might support one role at the expense of another, relocating the burden of legitimization to another node in the network. This question is a political one—both in terms of who does the work and who benefits [16], a relationship that is already asymmetrical in altruistic work [36]—but also in terms of who decides what constitutes the representations of legitimacy (or, per Bourricaud, what criteria are used to determine a state of legitimacy [5]):

Things are made visible so that they can be seen, talked about, and potentially, manipulated. It is the last that constitutes the power, for better and worse, of the construction of representations of work. With agendas of intervention come questions of interests, questions that need to remain central and lively elements of research and design [34].

Designing resources for various stakeholders to undertake legitimacy work may, then, prove to be more appropriate than designing infrastructures that reify a particular state of legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

Goecks et al. argue that philanthropic fundraising is a key site for collaborative computing research because it is a fundamentally relational practice [12]:

The purpose of fundraising, then, is to build those relationships, or more simply put, the purpose of fundraising is not to raise money, but to raise donors. You don't want gifts, you want givers [21; qtd. in 12].

The legitimacy work of philanthropic crowdfunding may also be one facet of a broader theoretical turn in human-centered computing to better understand the ways that one's identity is constructed through and one's work complicated by multiple relational commitments, e.g.:

- Legitimacy work in crowdfunding derives from a relational commitment to a cause, whether organizational or individual;
- Stewardship on Facebook derives from a relational commitment to a deceased loved one [7] or to a child/minor [22]; and
- Caregiving in electronic health records derives from a relational commitment to a loved one [23].

The more we unpack the nuance in our digital identities and relationships, the more it becomes clear that the work of upholding these relationships requires special care in system design. The implications of this research, then, extend beyond the myriad crowdfunding features discussed throughout this paper that already do (or could better) support philanthropic fundraising efforts. This research also charges us to better understand the relational aspects of legitimacy work: how are various forms of legitimacy work perceived or undertaken by different stakeholders; how does legitimacy work move through networks of accountability; and does legitimacy work exist in other contexts and, if so, what form(s) does it take?

In this paper, we have made the following contributions:

- We distinguished among five, often overlapping, roles in philanthropic crowdfunding.
- We demonstrated that the legitimacy of a philanthropic crowdfunding campaign is a central concern for fundraisers and that they are largely responsible for conveying their own legitimacy, as well as that of the platform, the organization, and the project—all in order to establish the legitimacy of the campaign to donors, potential donors and other campaign participants.
- We described ways that technology both supports and thwarts the legitimacy work of fundraisers.
- We elaborated the construct of legitimacy work, a form of invisible work situated at the intersection between articulation work and facework.

In this research, we have unpacked one key aspect of the relational nature and relational work of philanthropic crowdfunding and direct the research community's attention towards designing for the work that individuals take on in upholding relationships across sectors, motivations, and contexts.

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