Privacy as Social Norm:

Systematically Reducing Dysfunctional Privacy Concerns on Social Media

LINK TO SLIDES

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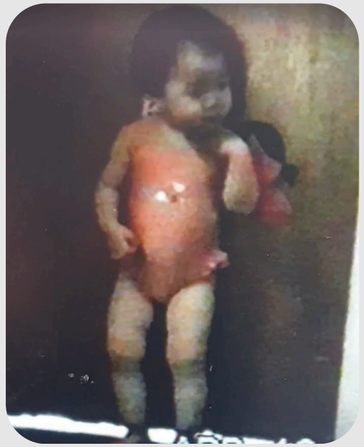
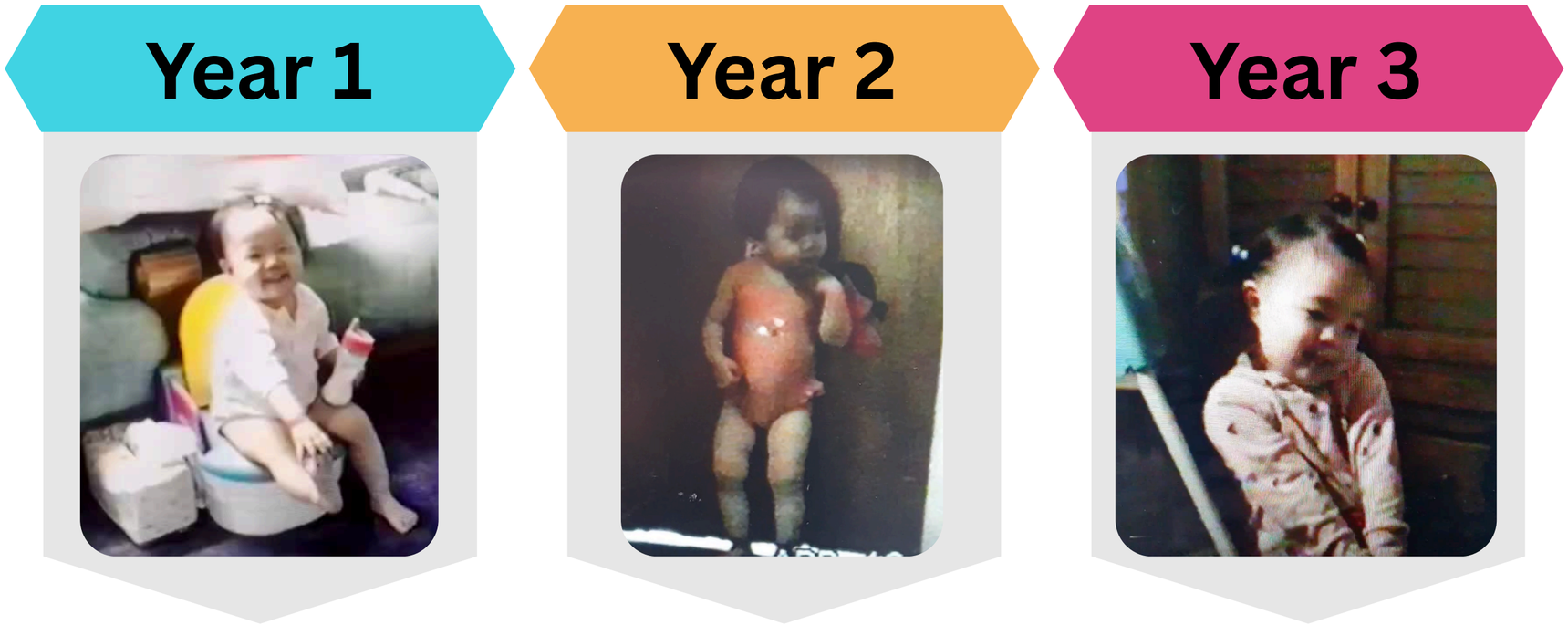
Year 2



Year 3

This Paper



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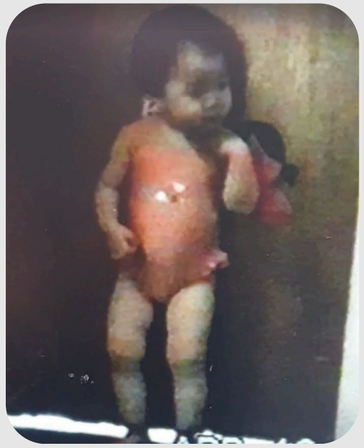

Year 2

Year 3

Year 4

Trust-Enabled Privacy:

Social Media Designs to Support Adolescent User Boundary Regulation

Proceedings of the USENIX Conference on Usable Privacy and Security (SOUPS '25)

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Trust-Enabled Privacy:

= interpersonal trust (the belief that others have one's best interests at heart)

Support

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Ramya Subramanian

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Trust-Enabled Privacy:

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= broadcast social media

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METHOD

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19 teens participated in the interviews and diary study, and 136 teens took part in the survey.

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Entry Interview

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- 60 minutes
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Survey
- avg. 48 minutes
- Evaluating design prototypes

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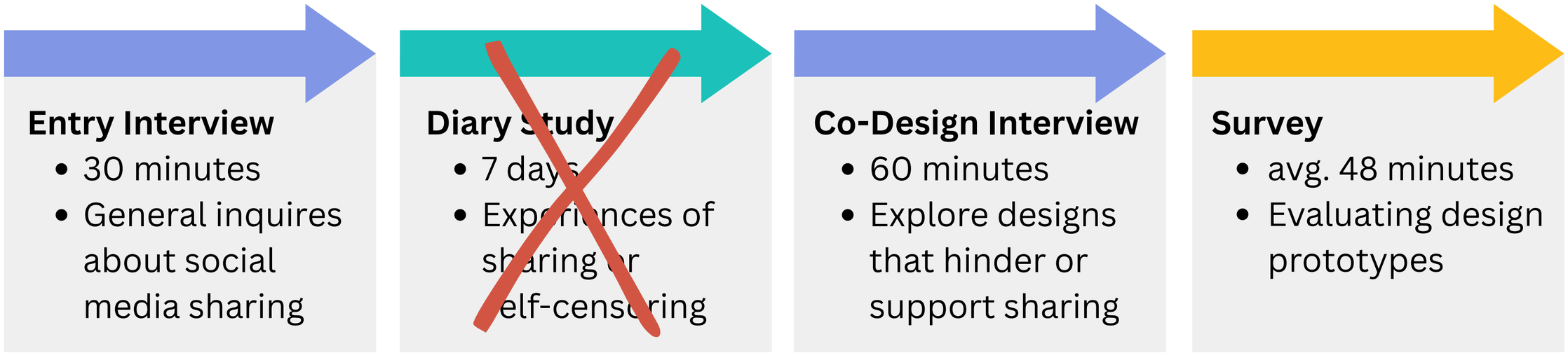

Old Paper

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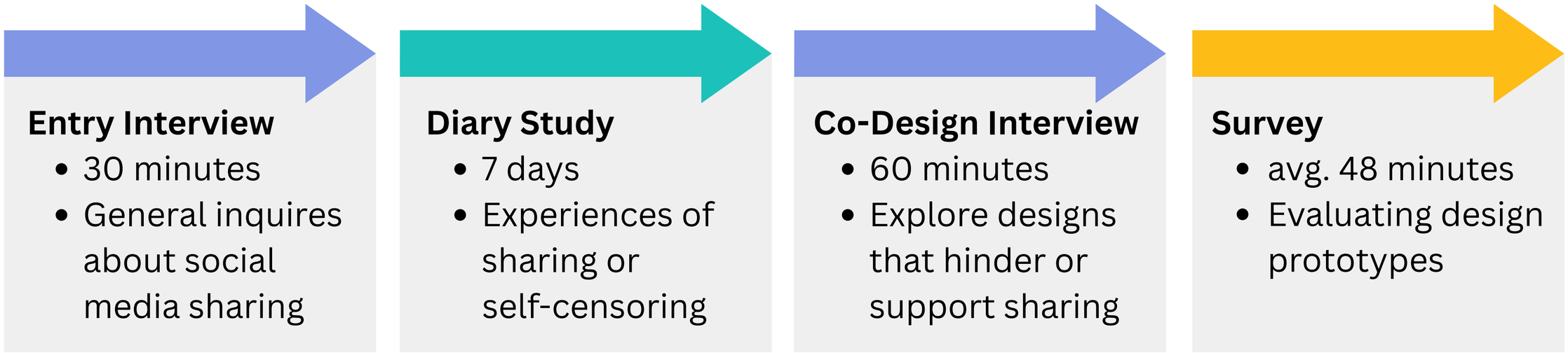
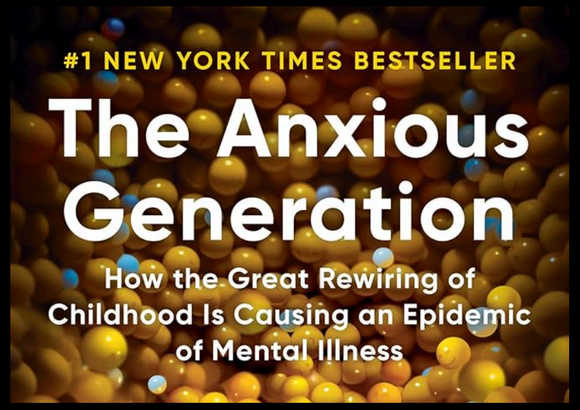


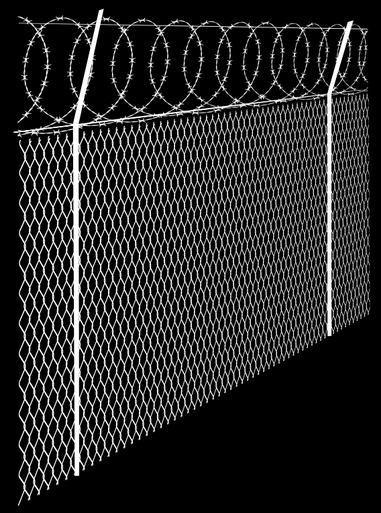
MOTIVATION

During interviews with teens, participants often expressed strong anxiety around sharing posts on social media.

Such anxiety is understandable, given the prevalence of alarmist narratives and restrictive policies about social media.

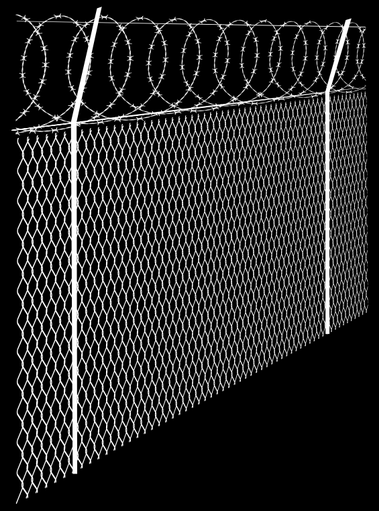


These narratives are well-intentioned attempts to protect youth.



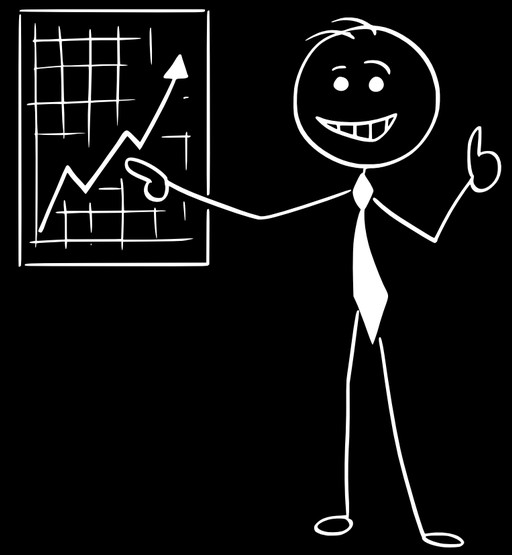
These narratives are well-intentioned attempts to protect youth.

However, approaches like outright bans oversimplify a complex reality in which social media is an integral part of teens' social lives.

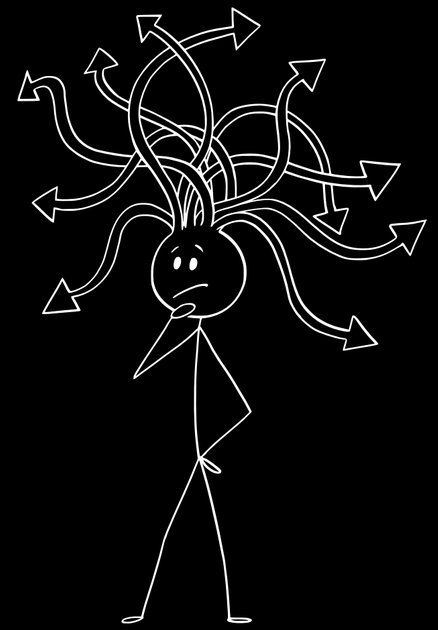


because...

Opportunities for relationship and identity building through self-presentation and disclosure on social media are vital to teens' development.



Further, it remains unclear whether such measures are actually helpful, as they may undermine resilience and well-being by fostering anxiety and mistrust.



“Dysfunctional Fear”

Worried &&
  Worry has impact on quality of life &&
  ((Don’t take precautions) ||
    (Take precautions && Precautions have no impact on worry) ||
    (Take precautions && Precautions have impact on quality of life))

Jonathan Jackson and Emily Gray. 2009. **Functional Fear and Public Insecurities About Crime**. The British journal of criminology 50, 1: 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azp059

Out of 64 teens with a public account, **28.1%** reported experiencing dysfunctional fear.

Out of 72 teens with a private account, **15.3%** did.

RQ1: What, if anything, do teens fear in their social media experiences?

How do these fears affect their social media experiences?

Teens wish to share small, personal moments that could lead to meaningful connections.

> *“(I want to be able to share)* ***Just some of the more mundane details of my personal life you know, like … yesterday I was really happy because I made some microwave popcorn and at the end there were only 11 unpopped kernels at the bottom of the bag. Just little things like that.”*** (P_e19)

Example of Social Media Privacy Fear:

Fear of Online Hostility

“…not very good” (P18)

“…not so positive” (P18)

“hellscape” (P15)

“awful (leadership)” (P15)

Example of Social Media Privacy Fear:

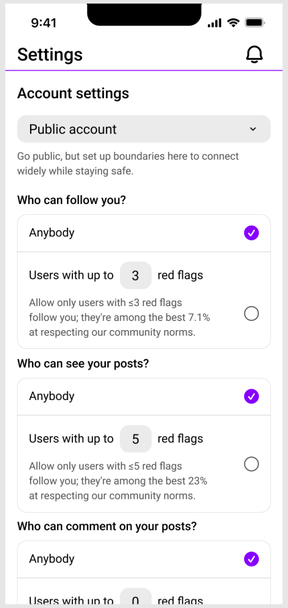
Vague and Persistent Fear

> *“I don’t post my face right now, but I have an inner monologue that keeps telling me what I’m doing could get me into trouble. It’s really just paranoia.”* (P03)

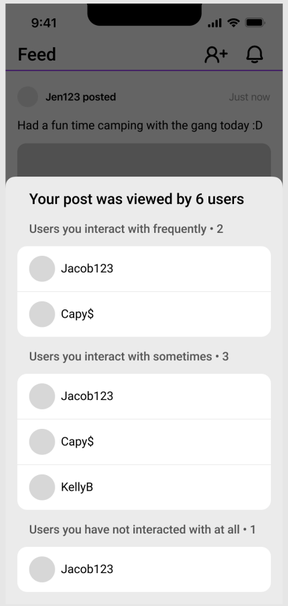
The disempowerment caused by such fear often lead to two kinds of responses: **withdrawal and self-censorship** on one hand,

The disempowerment caused by such fear often lead to two kinds of responses: withdrawal and self-censorship on one hand, and **privacy resignation and oversharing** on the other.

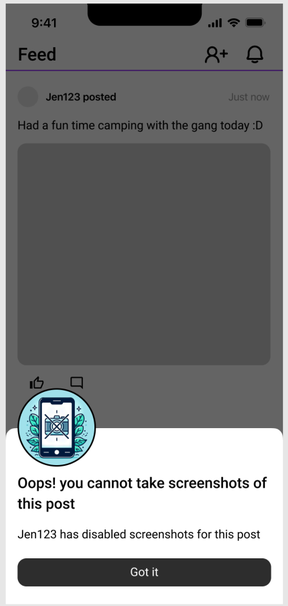
RQ2: How might the design of social media mitigate dysfunctional fear for teens? What are the implications of these designs?



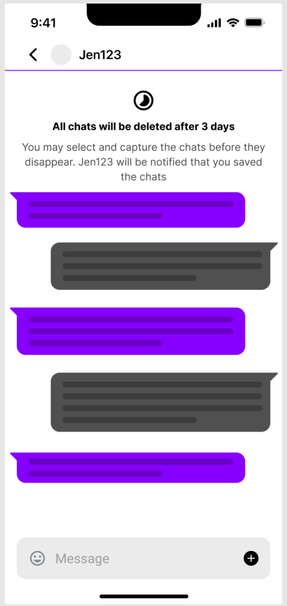
(a) Account protection



(b) Categorized viewer list



(c) On-demand screenshot blocking



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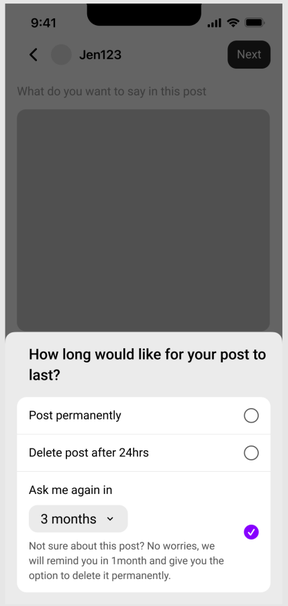
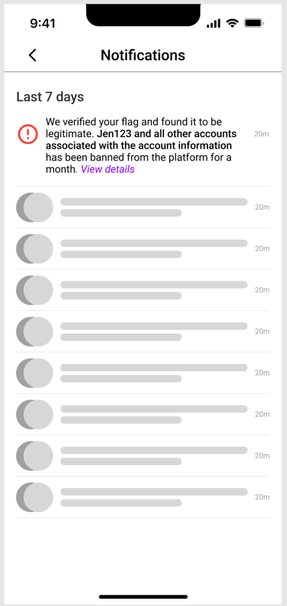
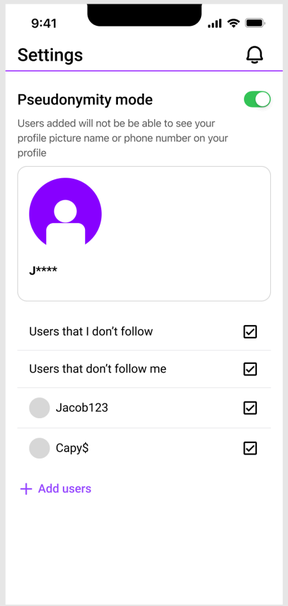


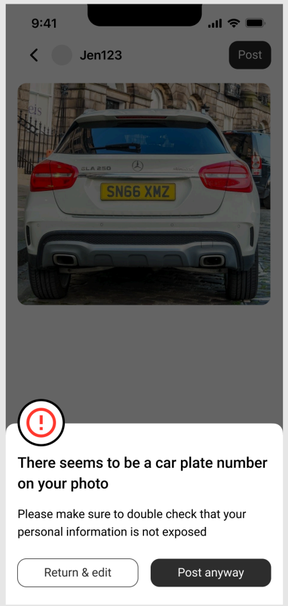
(e) Reminder to review



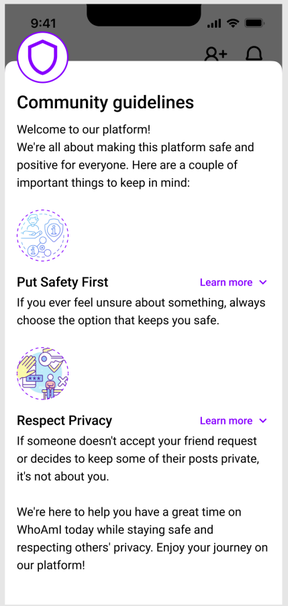
(f) Red flag & follow-up



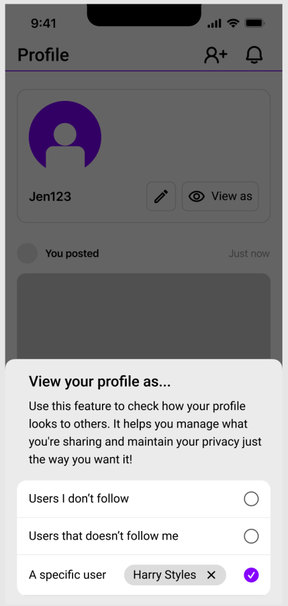
(g) Pseudonymity mode



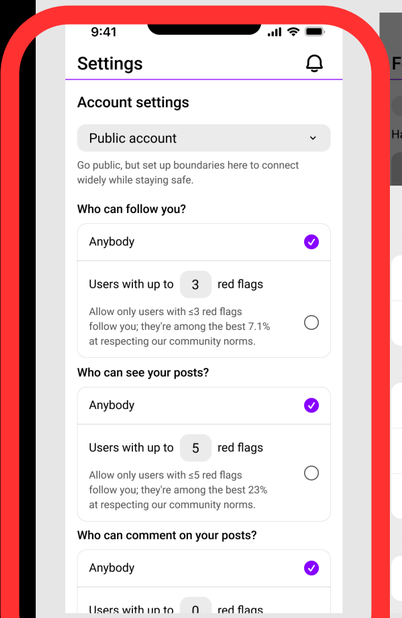
(h) Personal information alert



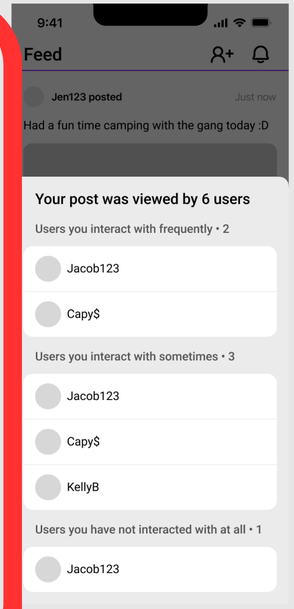
(i) User privacy norms



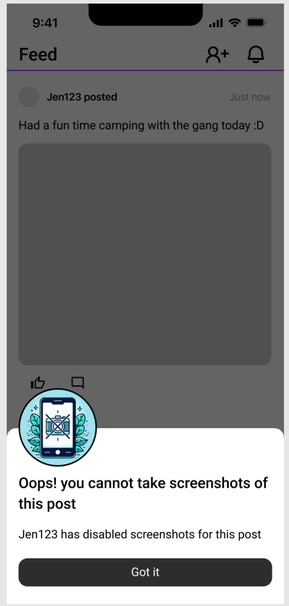
(j) "View as"



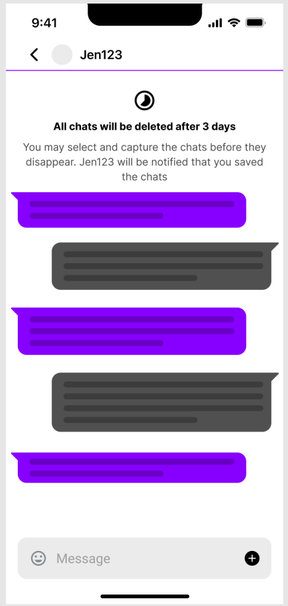
(a) Account protection



(b) Categorized viewer list



(c) On-demand screenshot blocking



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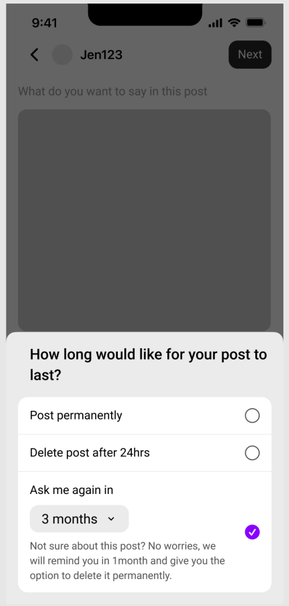
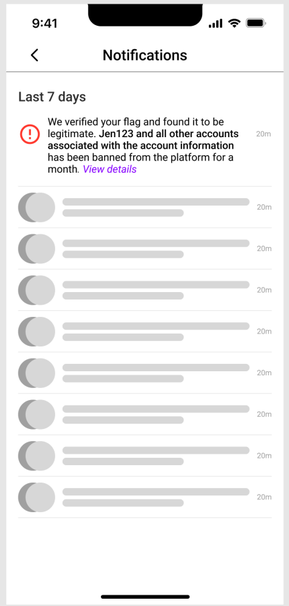


(e) Reminder to review



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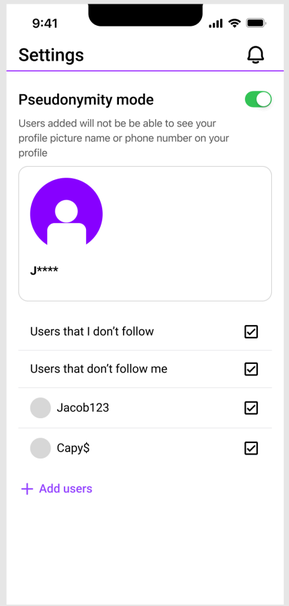
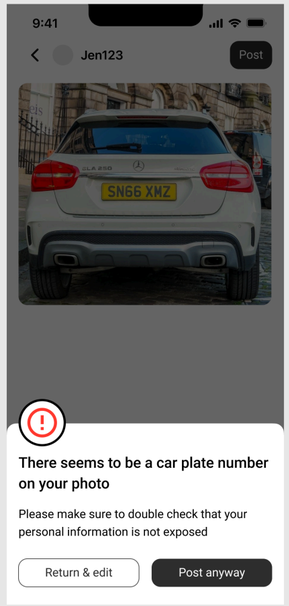
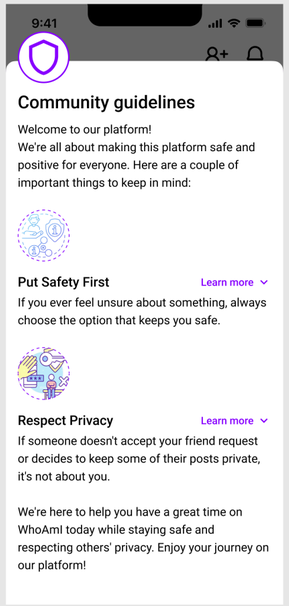


(g) Pseudonymity mode



(h) Personal information alert



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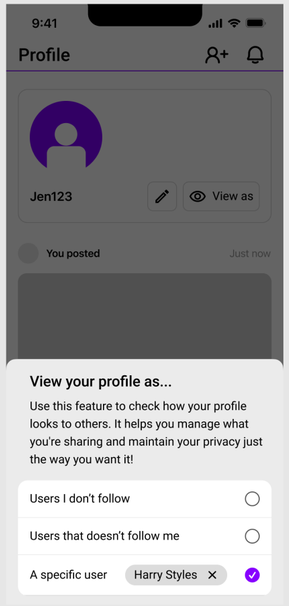

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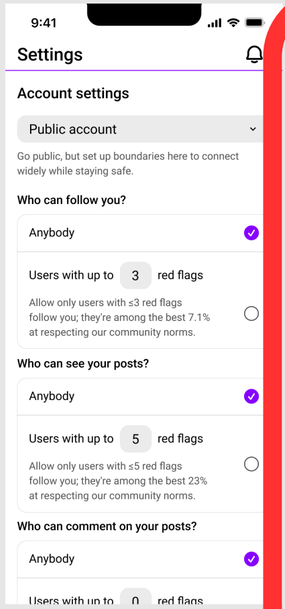
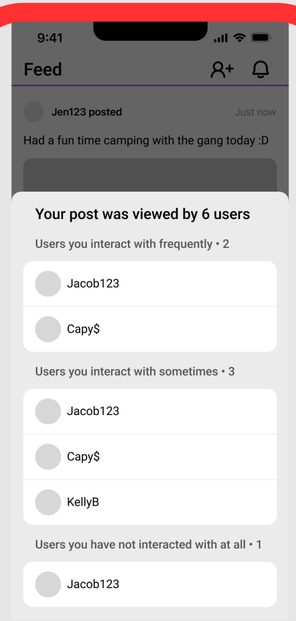


(a) Account protectio



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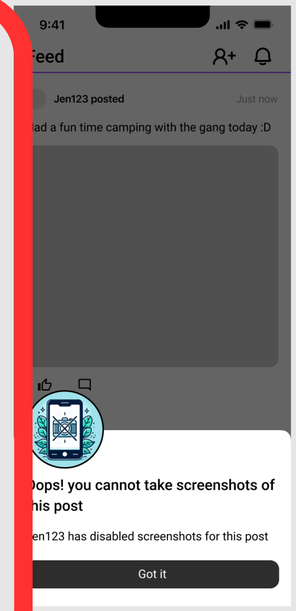

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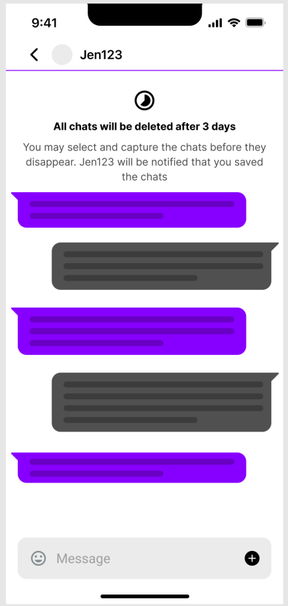

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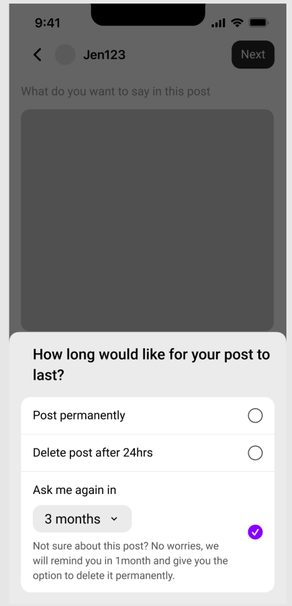

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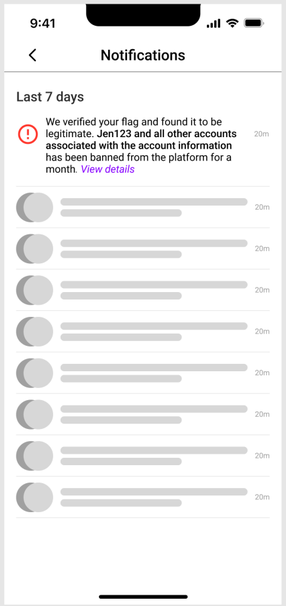

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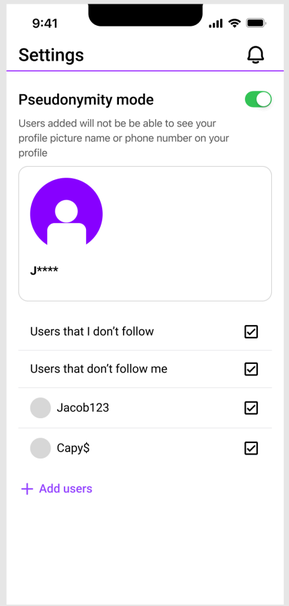

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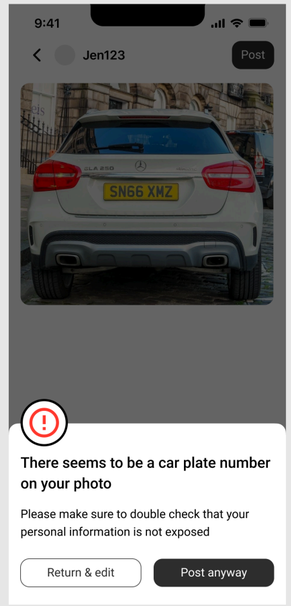

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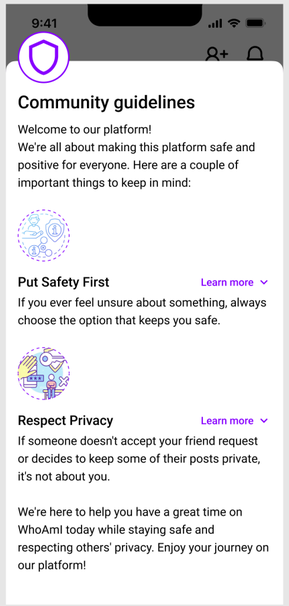

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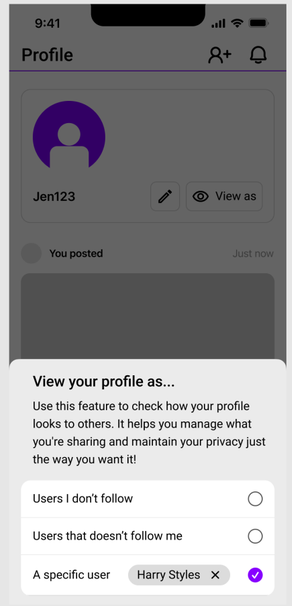

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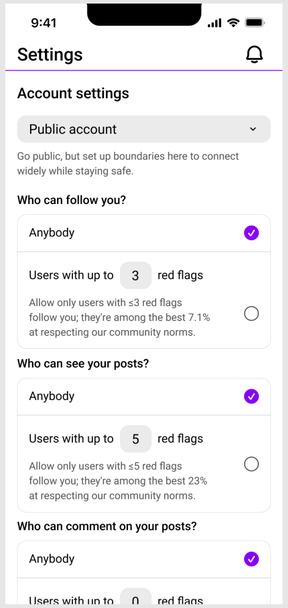
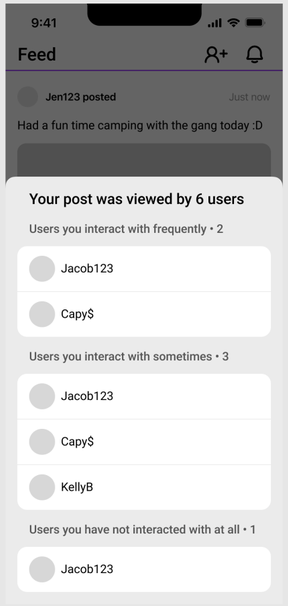


(a) Account protection



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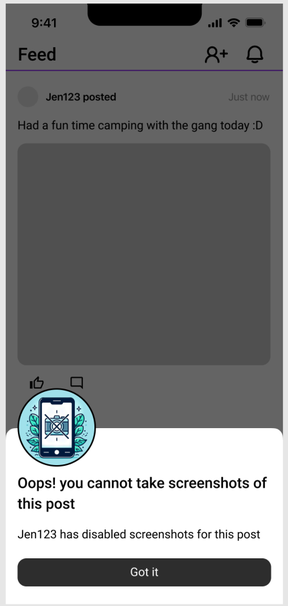
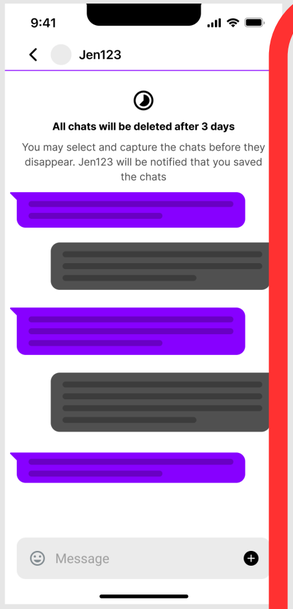


(c) On-demand screenshot blocking



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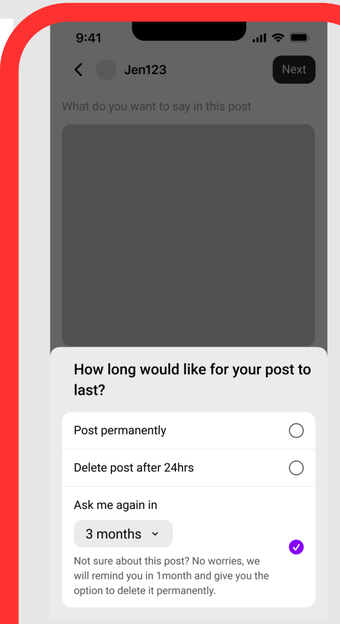

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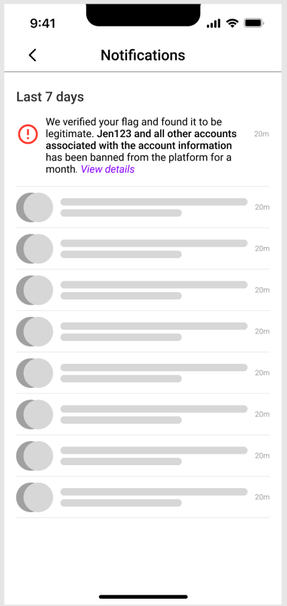

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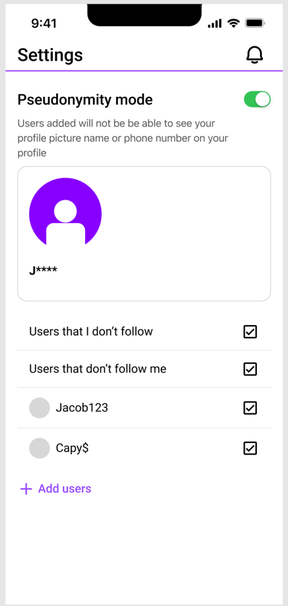

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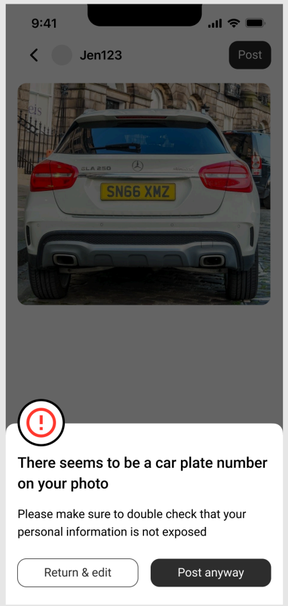

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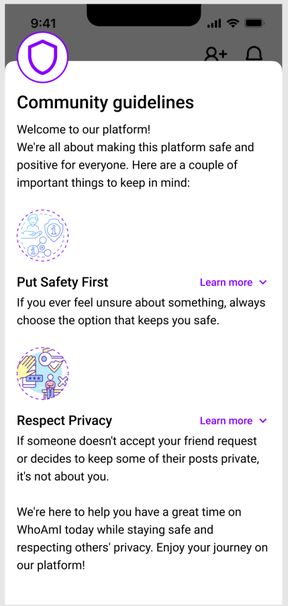

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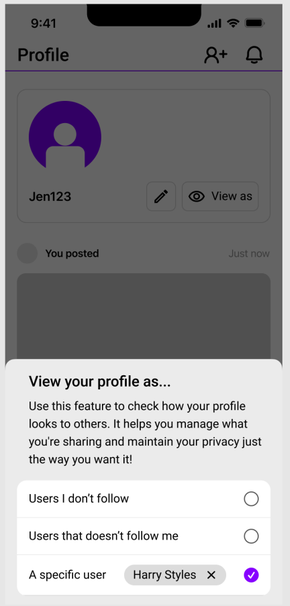

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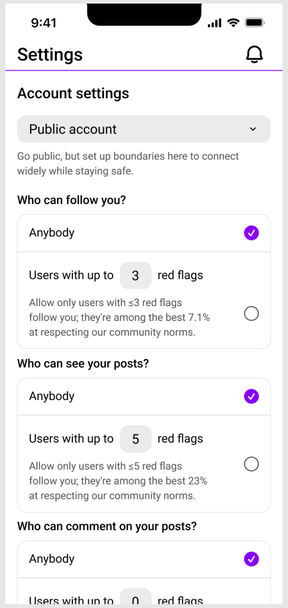

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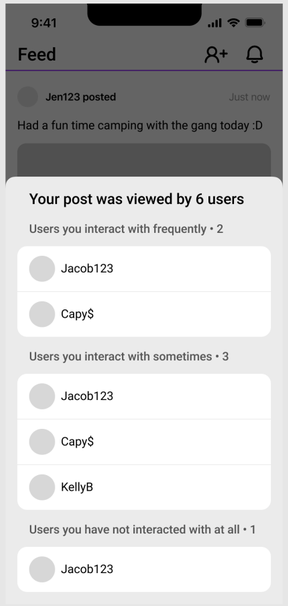

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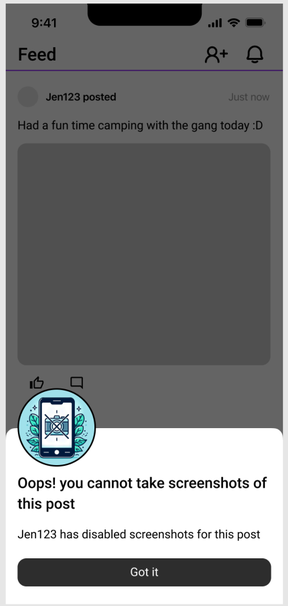

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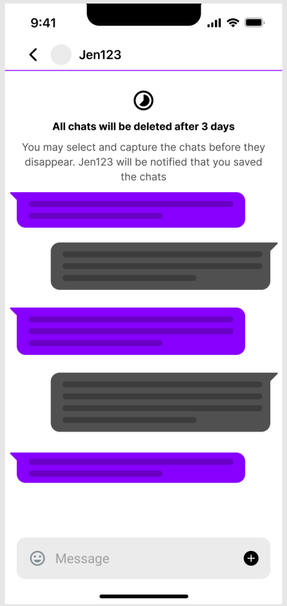

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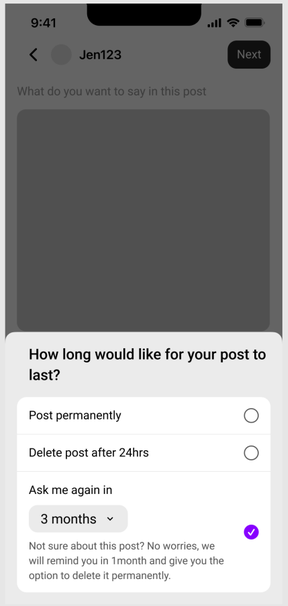

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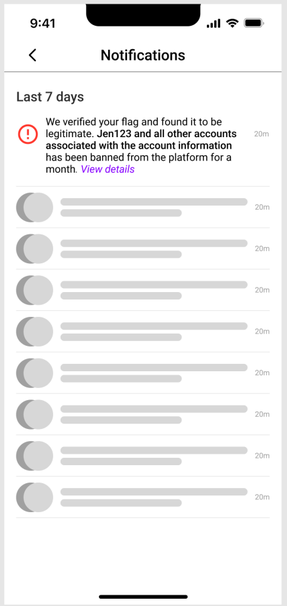

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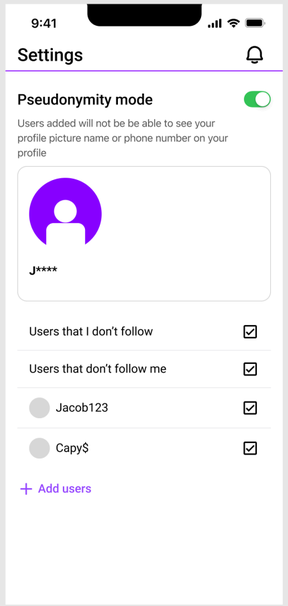

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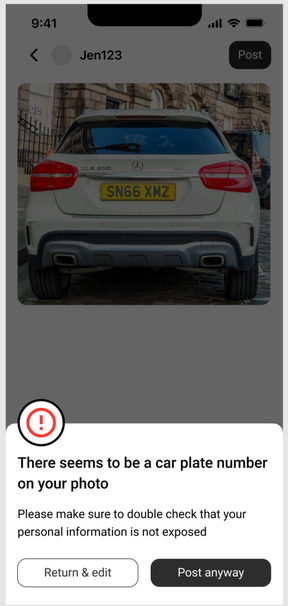

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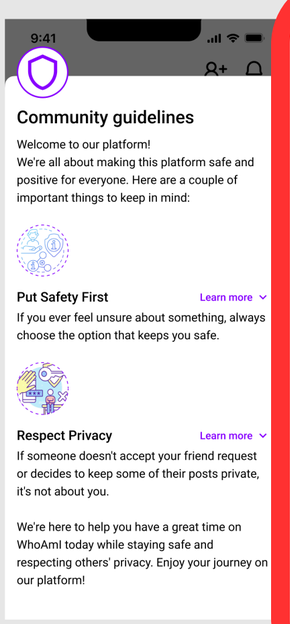

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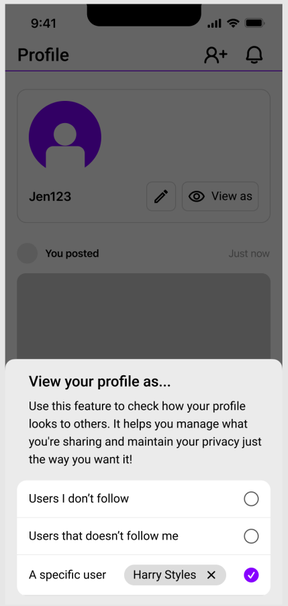

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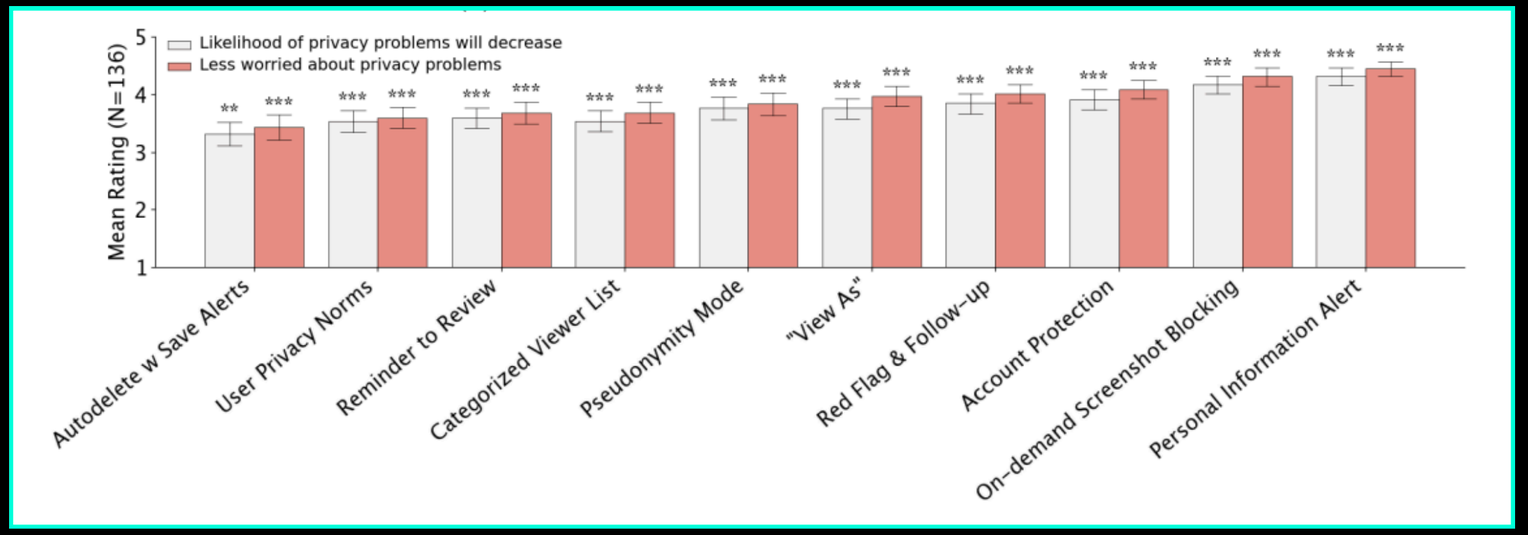
Likelihood of privacy problems will decrease
Less worried about privacy problems
Mean Rating (N=136)
1
2
3
4
5
Autodelete w Save Alerts
User Privacy Norms
Reminder to Review
Categorized Viewer List
Pseudonymity Mode
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Red Flag & Follow-up
Account Protection
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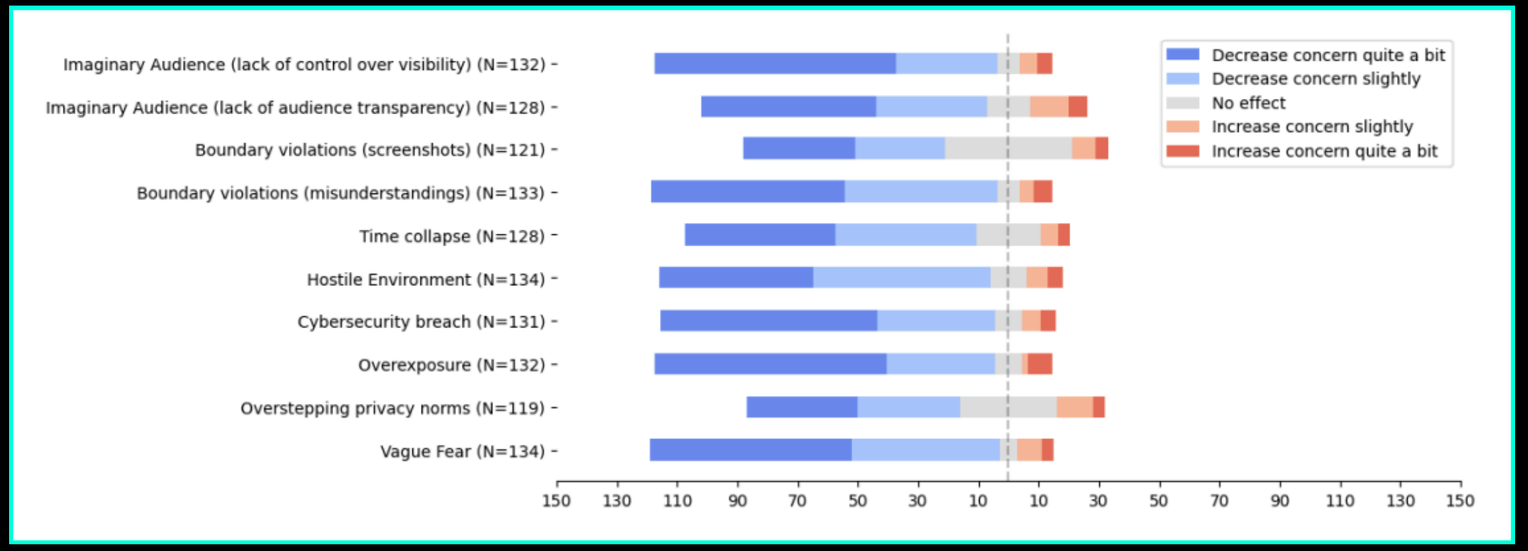
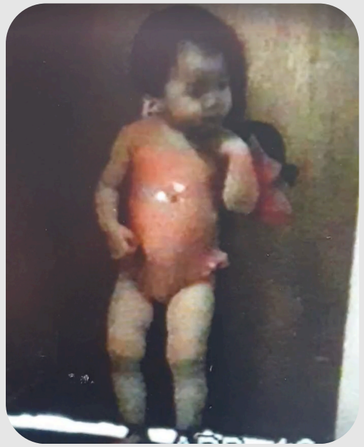

Imaginary Audience (lack of control over visibility) (N=132)
Imaginary Audience (lack of audience transparency) (N=128)
Boundary violations (screenshots) (N=121)
Boundary violations (misunderstandings) (N=133)
Time collapse (N=128)
Hostile Environment (N=134)
Cybersecurity breach (N=131)
Overexposure (N=132)
Overstepping privacy norms (N=119)
Vague Fear (N=134)
Decrease concern quite a bit
Decrease concern slightly
No effect
Increase concern slightly
Increase concern quite a bit
150 130 110 90 70 50 30 10 10 30 50 70 90 110 130 150

but…

Year 1

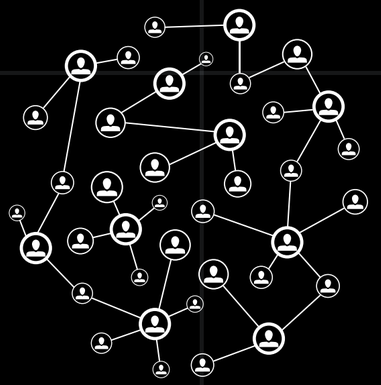
Year 2



Year 3

Year 4

Privacy in social media, especially for teens, is not solely about restricting access to personal information.



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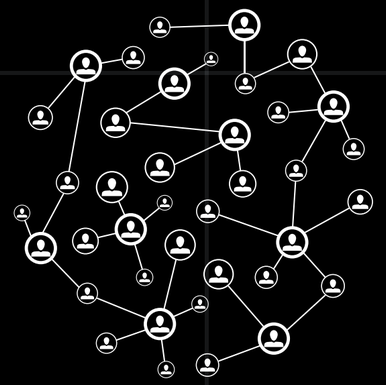
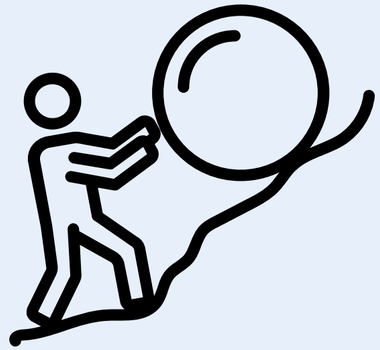


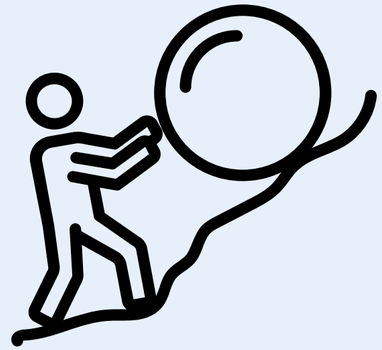
It is an ongoing process of interpersonal boundary regulation.

Social media privacy narratives and platform designs often frame privacy as a trade-off between disclosure and control. However,



Social media privacy narratives and platform designs often frame privacy as a trade-off between disclosure and control. However,

- **Privacy-as-control is ineffective in a networked environment where information is co-owned:**



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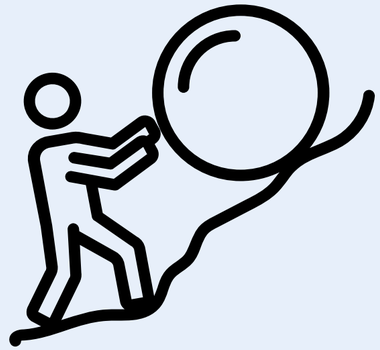

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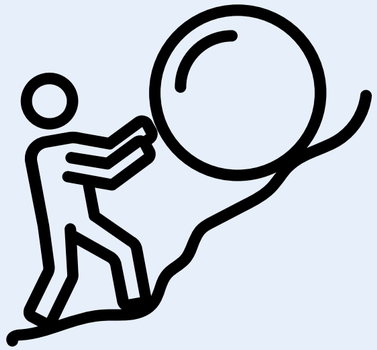

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- Privacy-as-control is ineffective in a networked environment where information is co-owned:
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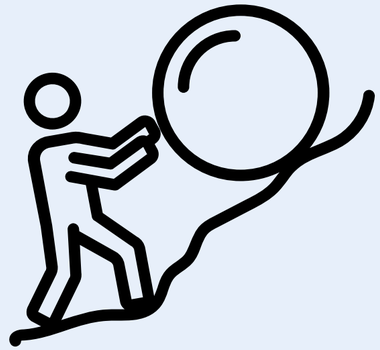
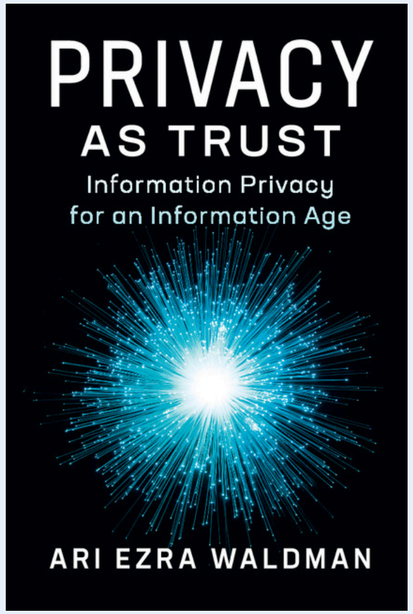
  - Implies sharing == giving up rights to privacy
  - **Hence encourages withdrawal from sharing**

    → **users miss opportunities to connect**



Then what is the alternative perspective on privacy?

Trust emerged among teen participants as the key moderator of perceived privacy on social media, a view echoed by existing frameworks such as Waldman's "*Privacy as Trust*."



How does social media design support or undermine trust-based self-disclosure among teens?

This study introduces two major barriers to trust-building, meaningful self-disclosure among teens:

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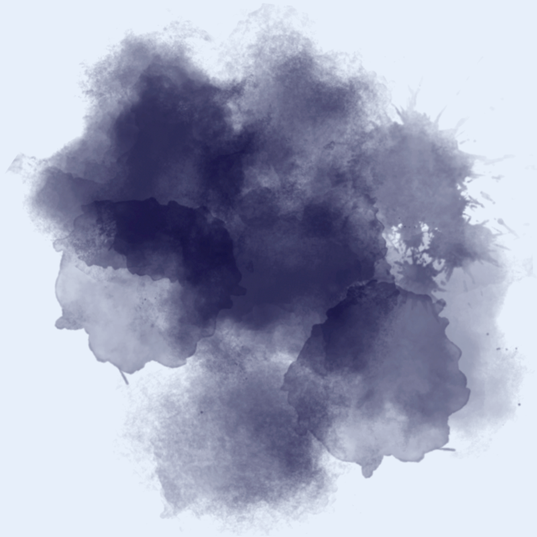

Communication Fog

ambiguous norms and audience

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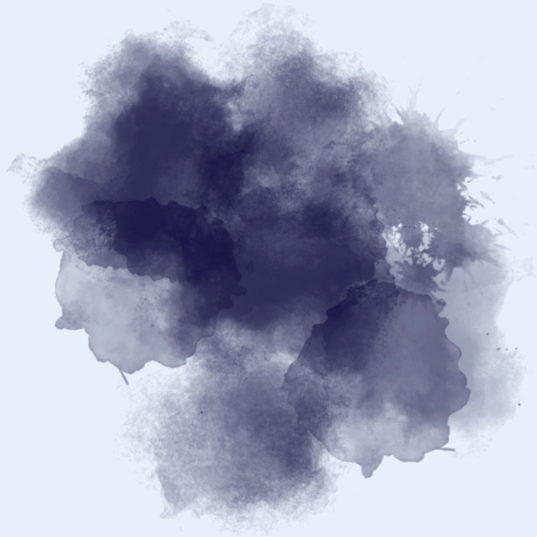

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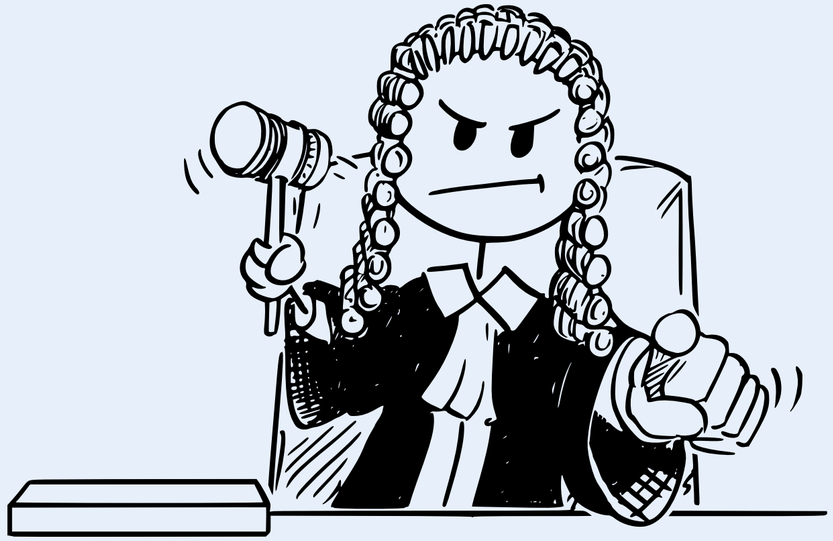
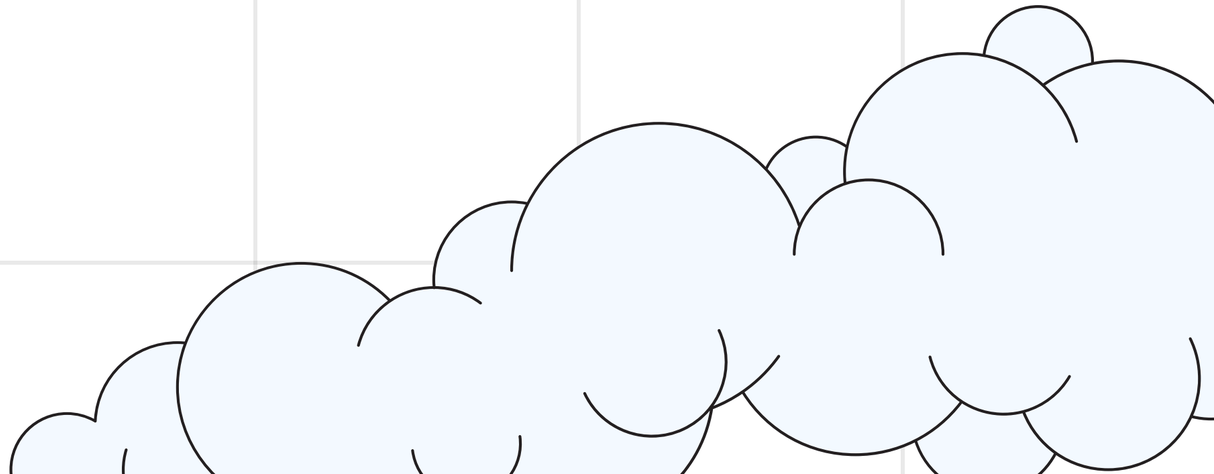


Low-Grace Culture

high-stakes environment with (perceived and actual) distrust and hostility

Example of Communication Fog



Ambiguous Loyalty creates challenges in boundary regulation based on trust.

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  → untrustworthy audience

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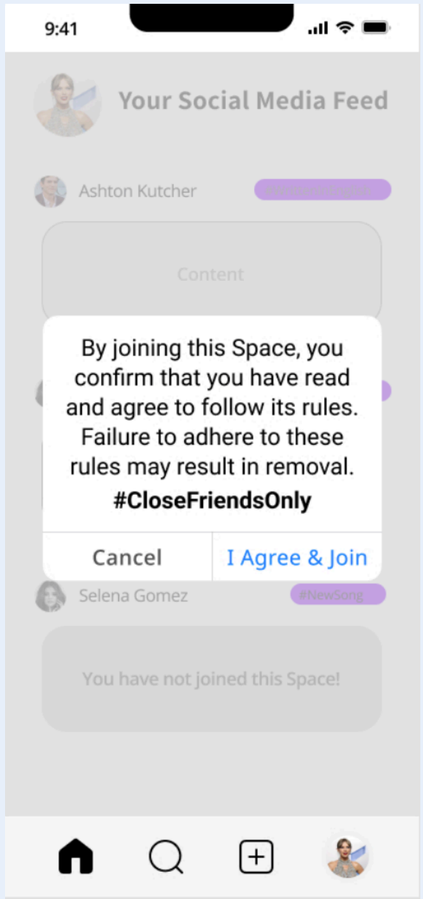
> ***“You never can really know who’s viewing your content or who’s REALLY following you.”*** (P_c08)

Teens propose Mutual Commitment to content consumption to share accountability.



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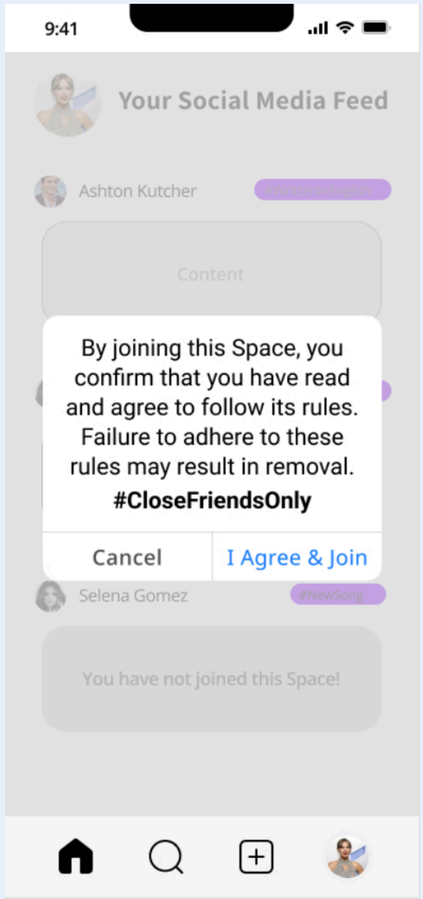

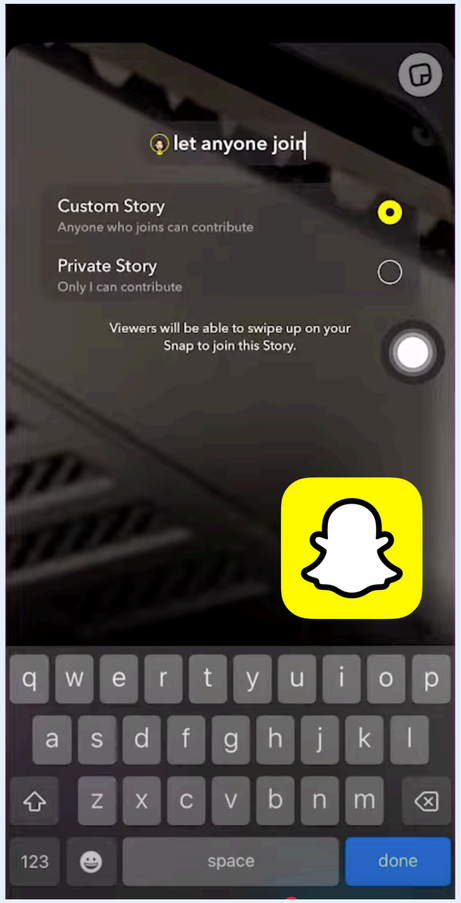

> ***"[On Snapchat's Private Story] If they joined that story, [then] they're kind of the ones subjecting themselves to it. If they didn't want to see it, they'd never had to join it."*** (P_e12)

Example of Low-Grace Culture

Nonconsensual Exposure makes teens fear burdening others and being judged by public standards.

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- Following someone == implicitly agreeing to see their content in your feed
- Sharing content == implicitly agreeing to appear in others' feeds

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- Following someone == implicitly agreeing to see their content in your feed
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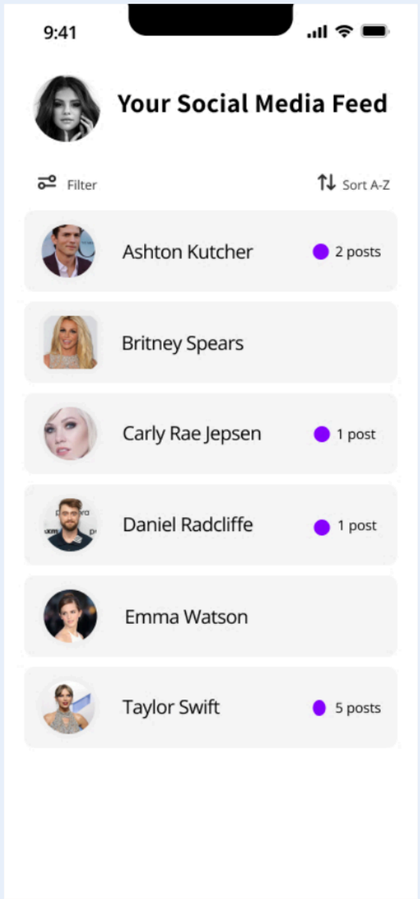
- **Viewers feel "buried" in posts**
- **Sharers fear "spamming" or "clogging" feeds**

Teens believe Self-Contained Disclosure will reduce unnecessary friction in sharing.



- share without imposing on others

> ***“Like little status updates”***
> (P_c05)

We Introduce “Trust-Enabled Privacy” as a framework that recognizes trust—whether building or eroding—as central to social media boundary regulation.

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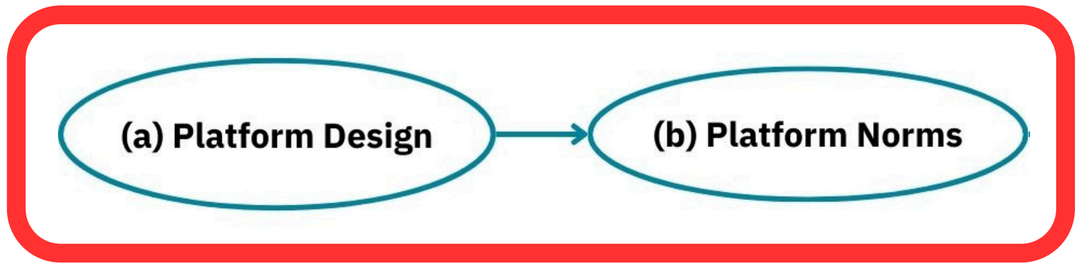

shapes →

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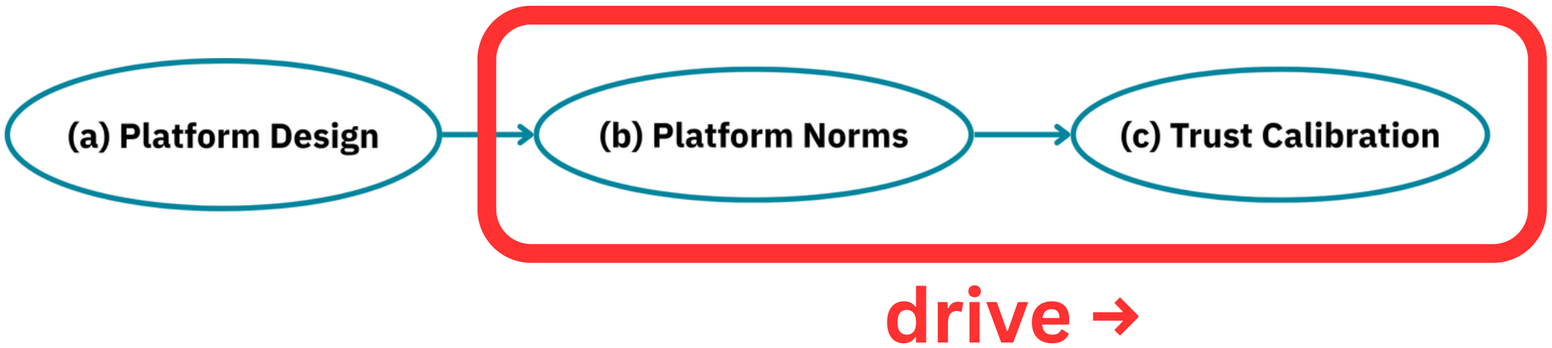

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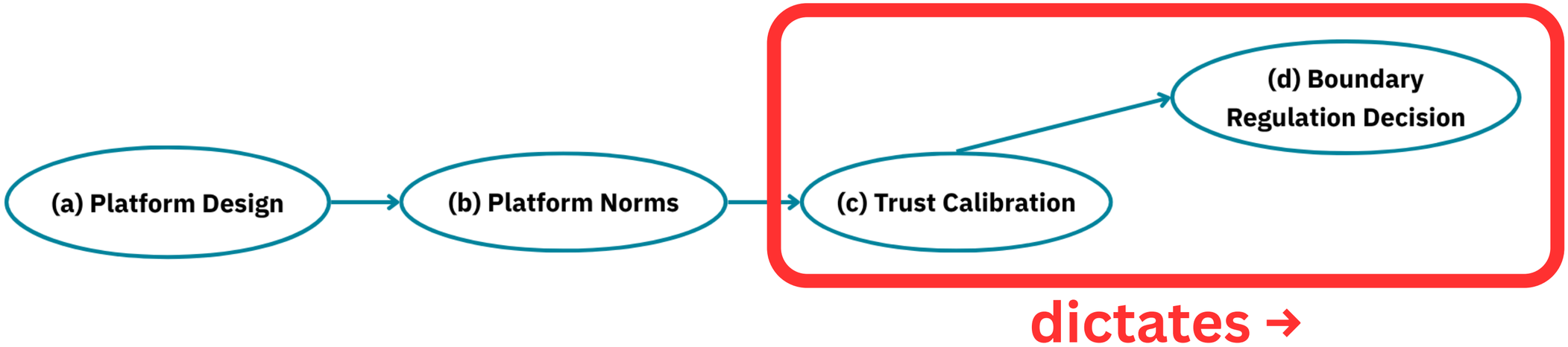

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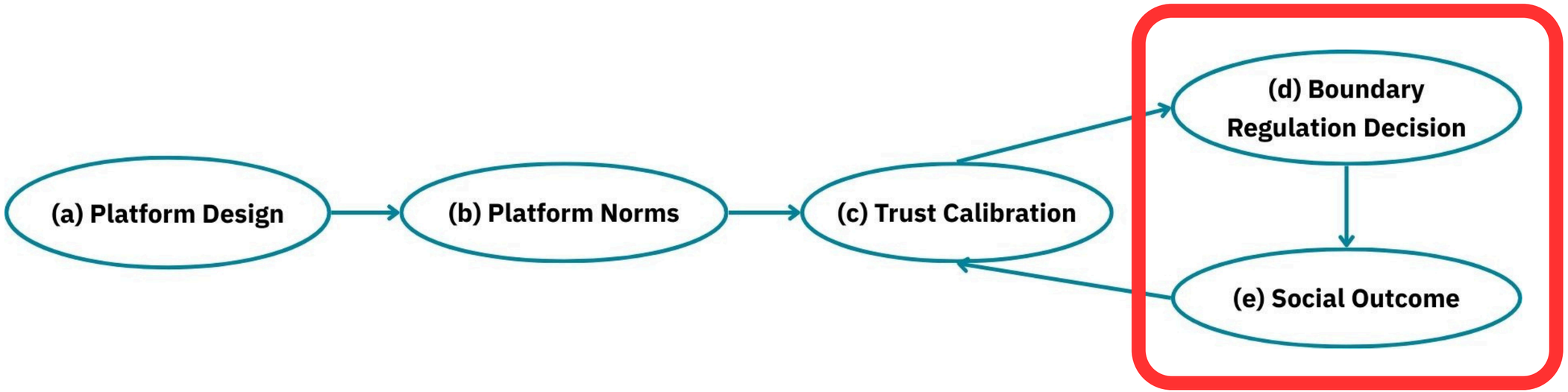

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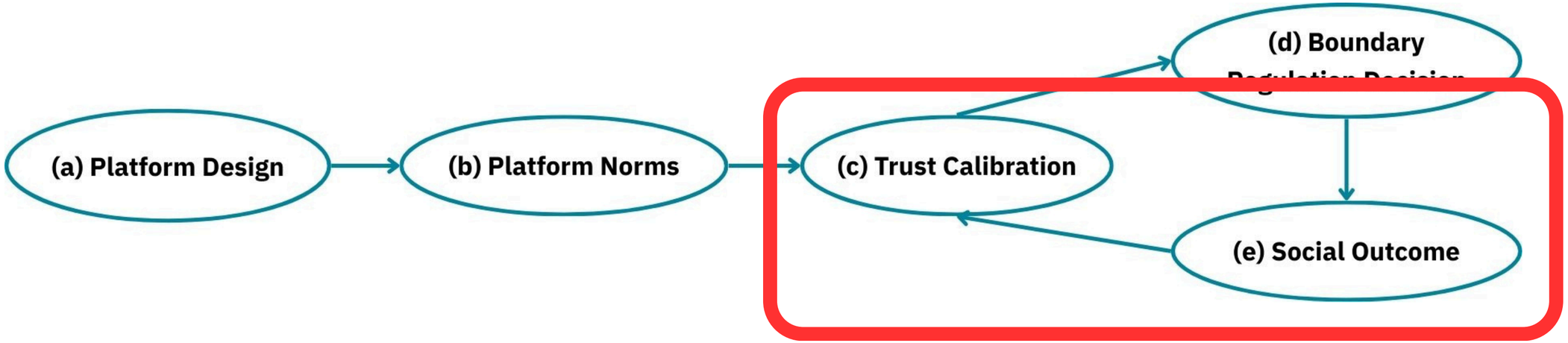

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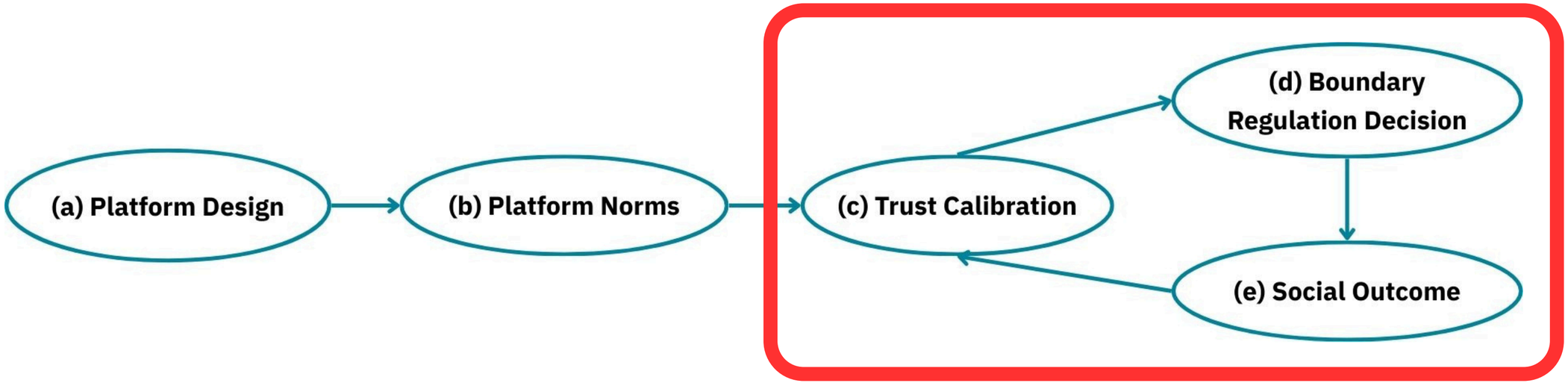
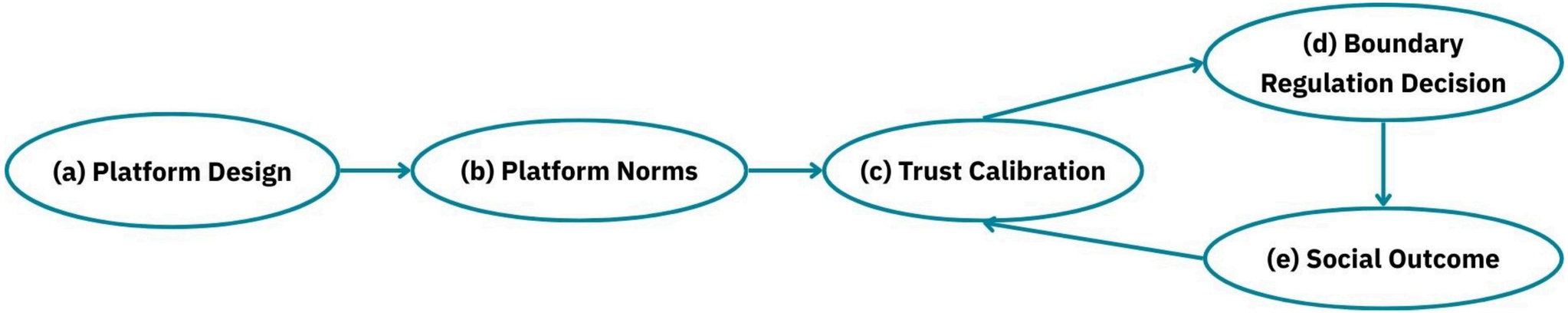


We Introduce “Trust-Enabled Privacy” as a framework that recognizes trust—whether building or eroding—as central to social media boundary regulation.



The framework also foregrounds the *role of platform design in shaping platform norms*, which influence trust, privacy, self-disclosure, and ultimately, opportunities for social connections.

To sum...

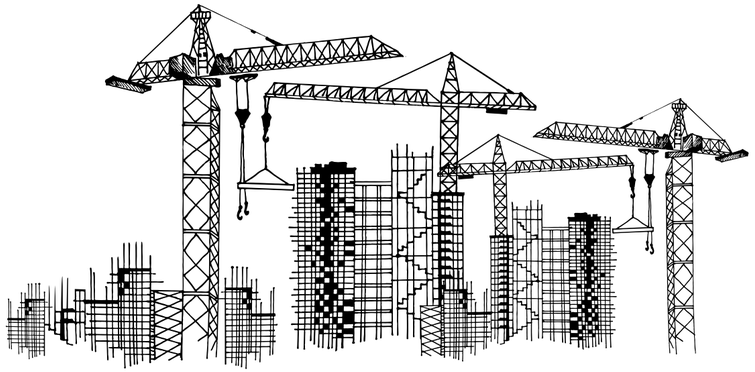
Teens want to share small, everyday moments to build trust and connection, but face high emotional stakes due to *ambiguous social norms* (i.e., "Communication Fog") and environments that often feel *judgmental or unforgiving* (i.e., "Low-Grace Culture").

To sum...

Teens want to share small, everyday moments to build trust and connection, but face high emotional stakes due to ambiguous social norms (i.e., “Communication Fog”) and environments that often feel judgmental or unforgiving (i.e., “Low-Grace Culture”).

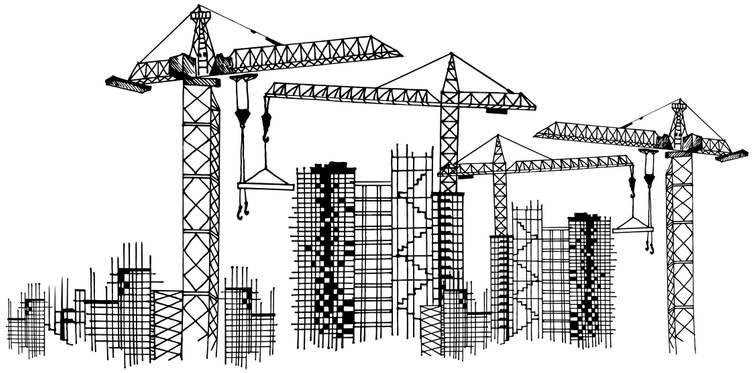
This can escalate into a dysfunctional kind of fear that undermines constructive action.

Building on frameworks like *Privacy as Trust* (Waldman, 2018), we challenge the assumption—rooted in the view of privacy as information control—that privacy and sharing are a trade-off.



Building on frameworks like *Privacy as Trust* (Waldman, 2018), we challenge the assumption—rooted in the view of privacy as information control—that privacy and sharing are a trade-off.

Our approach calls for platform designs that intentionally cultivate trust, making privacy and sharing *mutually reinforcing* and *expanding the frontier* of interactions that are safely possible on these platforms.



Privacy in the context of
teen social media use for meaningful social connections:

Privacy as an individual act

Privacy as Social Norm:

Systematically Reducing Dysfunctional Privacy Concerns on Social Media

JaeWon Kim, Soobin Cho*, Robert Wolfe*, Jishnu Hari Nair, Alexis Hiniker

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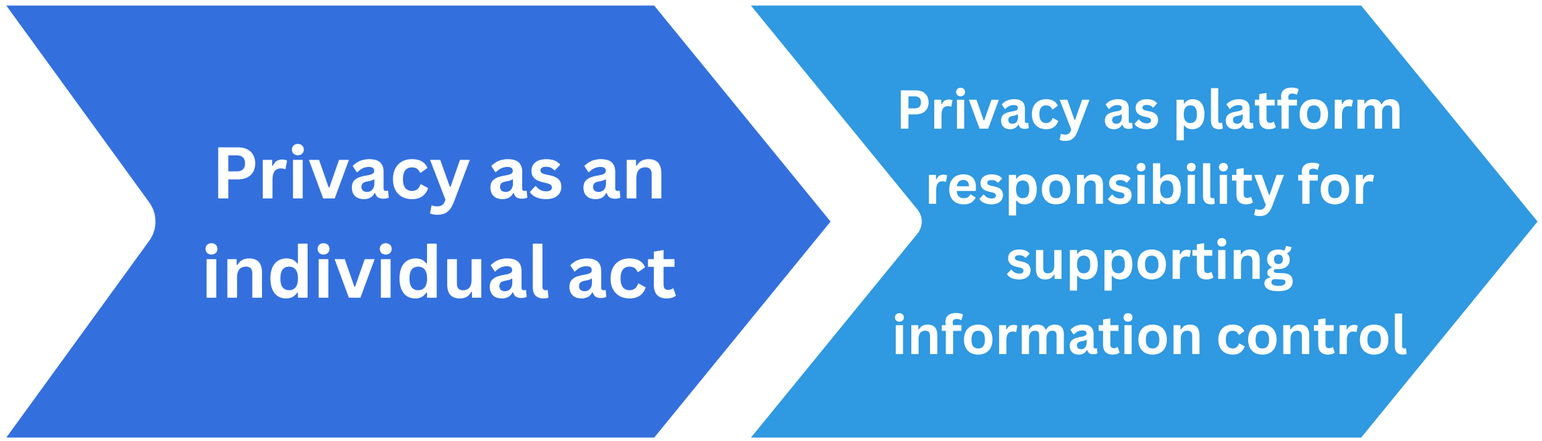
teen social media use for meaningful social connections:



Trust-Enabled Privacy:

Social Media Designs to Support Adolescent User Boundary Regulation

JaeWon Kim, Robert Wolfe, Ramya Subramanian, Mei-Hsuan Lee, Jessica Colnago, Alexis Hiniker

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Privacy in the context of
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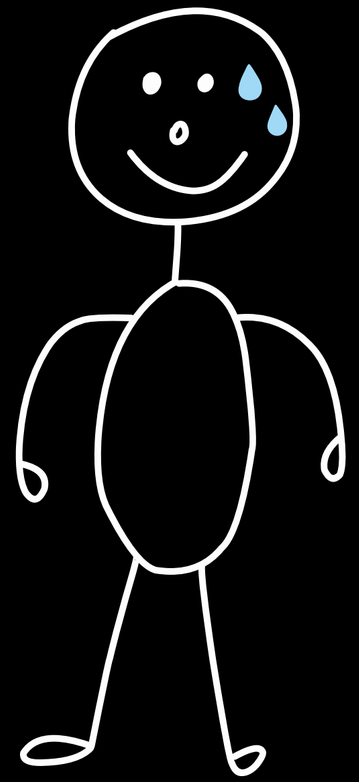
one more thing...



Mapping Privacy-Utility Tensions: A Framework for Feature Evaluation.

Table 2. Assessment of potential drawbacks and/or trade-offs for each prototype.

Feature Name	Impact on Other Users	Utility Restriction	User Burden	Community-Dependent
Auto-delete (with save)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reminder to review	No	No	Yes	No
Account protection	No	Yes	No	No
On-demand screenshot blocking	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Personal information alert	No	No	No	No
User privacy norms	No	No	No	Yes
Categorized viewer list	No	No	Yes	No
“View as”	No	No	Yes	No
Red flag & follow-up	No	No	No	No
Pseudonymity mode	No	Yes	No	Yes

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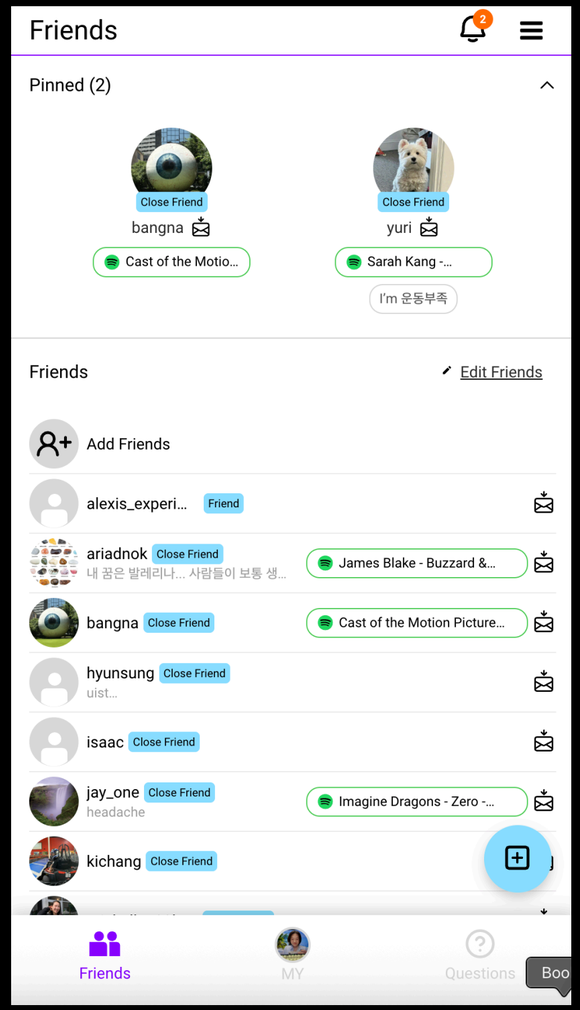
“Self-Contained Disclosure”



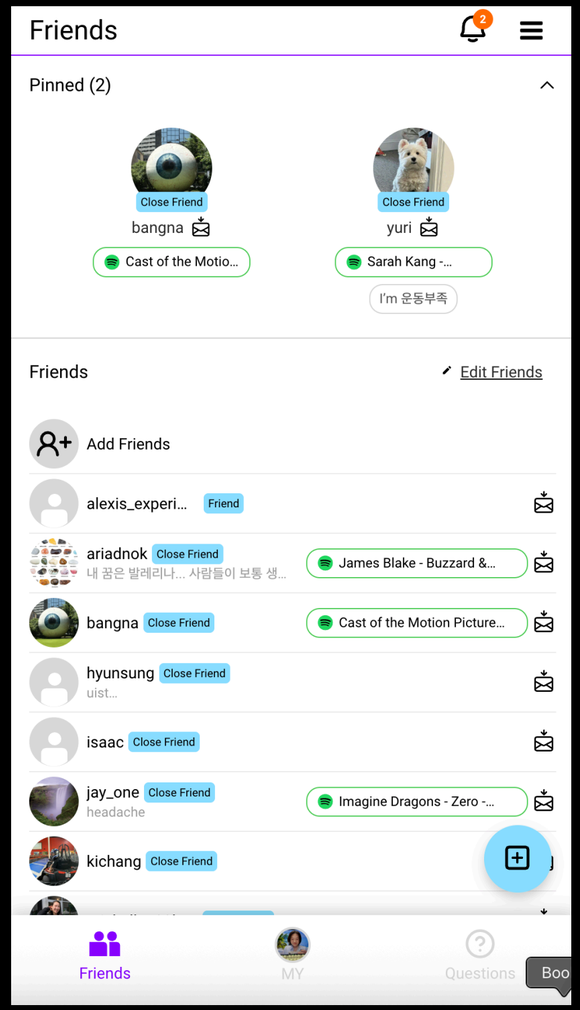
✓ **Impact on other users**

✓ **Utility restriction**

✓ **User burden**

✓ **Community-dependent**

“Self-Contained Disclosure”



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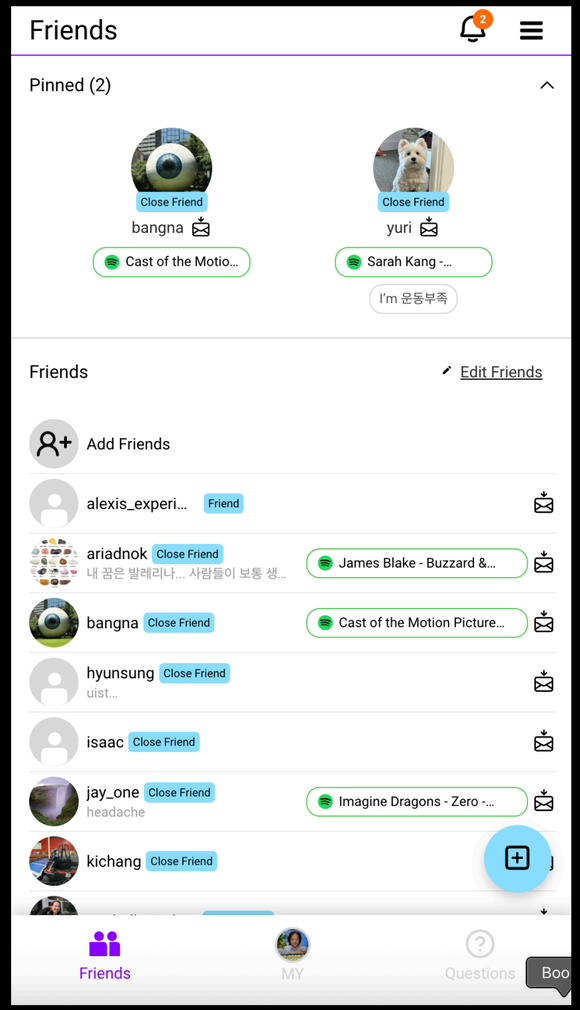

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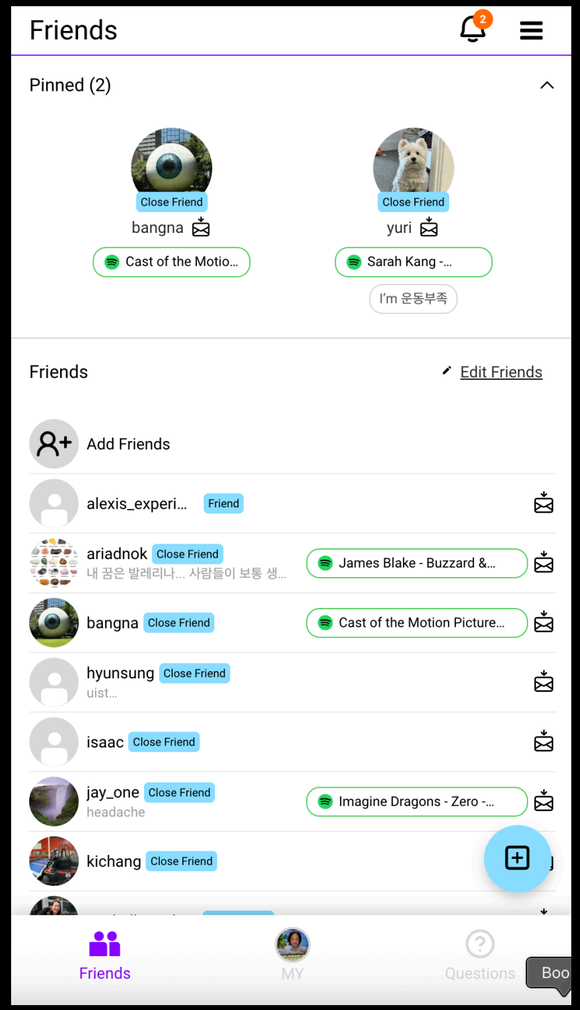

✓ Impact on other users

✓ Utility restriction

✓ User burden

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Privacy in the context of
teen social media use for meaningful social connections:

THANK YOU!

Privacy as an individual act

Privacy as platform responsibility for supporting information control

Privacy as trust

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Scan for *fear* paper:

Scan for *trust* paper: