

# A Design Framework for Friendship-Supportive Youth Social Media

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**Thesis:** Platform design can shape the conditions under which youth friendships form, deepen, and are influenced by factors across three pillars—social understanding, placeness, and identity alignment.

**Method:** Cross-study synthesis of five empirical studies (interviews, co-design, surveys, diary studies, field deployment) with 331 youth participants ages 13–25; meta-analysis of 209 design-relevant design principles coded over four rounds.



[Link to Paper](#)



PILLAR 1

## Social Understanding



### Interaction Norms

Defaults and nudges that signal what behavior is normal.



### Interaction Cues & Scaffolding

Lightweight openings that lower the perceived risks that comes from initiating.



### Social Accountability & Governance

Mechanisms that make actions interpretable and consequential.



PILLAR 2

## Placeness



### Third Place & Community

Persistent spaces where regulars and shared memories accrue.



### Boundaries & Personal Spaces

Intuitively legible audience scope, from bedrooms to neighborhoods.



### Shared Presence

Ambient awareness of who is around, without demanding effortful engagement.



PILLAR 3

## Identity Alignment



### Identity Currency

Keeping self-presentation on platform current with one's present sense of self.



### Identity Plurality

Multiple coexisting facets across contexts and audiences.



### Relational Identity Signals

Early cues that help people decide whether to connect and initiate conversations.