

# Snapchat



- Social Media and Communication application
  - A principle design feature is that photos, videos, and messages disappear after a short time, and become inaccessible to recipients.
    - “Stories” is a feature that allows users to post a video or photo for all of their friends to see.



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Which theory lies behind the thought process with developers, when adding these fundamental features into Snapchat?

# Self-Presentation

- The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life – Erving Goffman’s theory published in 1956
  - Presentation of ourselves towards others revolves around performances that are acted out
  - First to make distinction between the front stage self, and the backstage self

## Front Stage

-The performer “acts” out an idealized version of themselves.

-An act that the performer believes is refined enough to display in front of the public.



## Back Stage

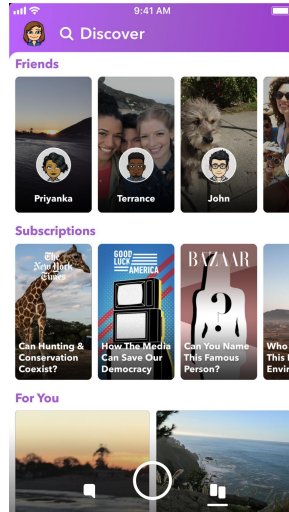
- The performer “acts” out their “true-self”
- The performer is allowed to remove their front-stage “mask” and step out of character
- Audience is generally trusted and smaller than the front-stage audience



# Self-Presentation on Snapchat

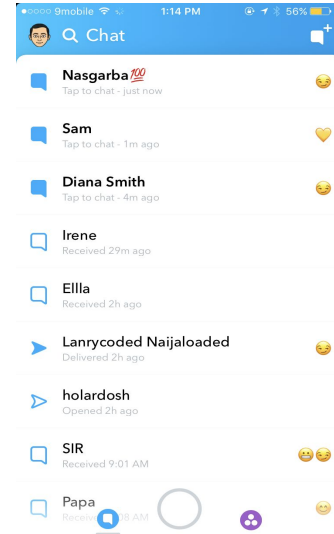
## Front Stage

- Snapchat Stories
- Discover Page



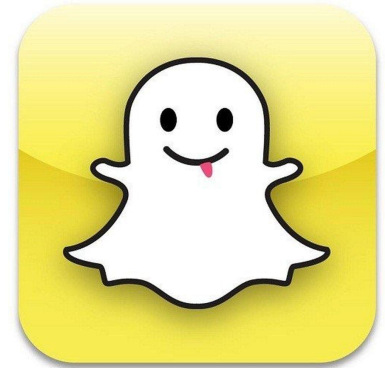
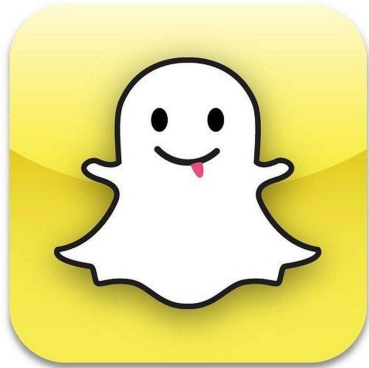
## Back Stage

- Direct Messaging
- Small Group Chats
- Private Stories



In 2013, Snapchat added a “Stories” feature to compete with other platforms that focused more on the front stage self. With stories, anyone the user has added as a friend will be able to view and interact with the uploaded content. This correlates to Goffman’s idea of the front stage self because stories aren’t typically considered private information by the user who posted.

The original idea behind Snapchat was largely based off the idea of performativity at the back stage level. Once a message has been sent and opened, the message no longer appears on either device. The application will also notify the sender if the receiver has saved or screenshotted the message. These two features nurture backstage performativity.



# Design Question

What would Snapchat look like if the developers based the application on Tajfel's theory of social identity rather than Goffman's theory of self-presentation?

# Social Identity Theory

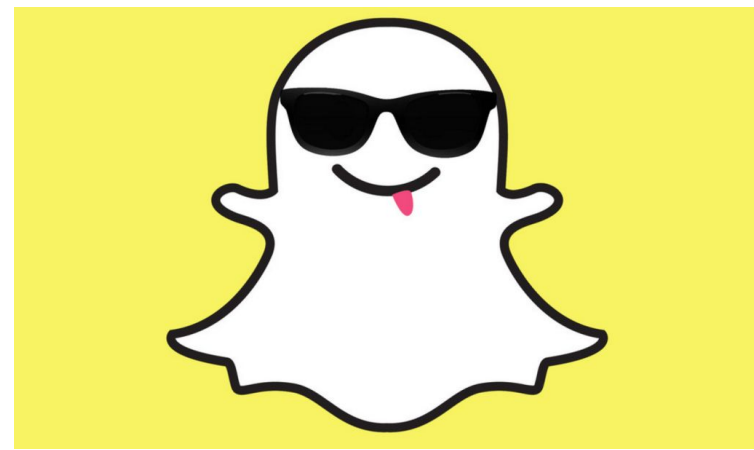
Basic overview:

- The knowledge of belonging to a group with some emotional bond
  - Knowledge of attributes that define membership in that group
  - Knowledge of group's social standing in comparison with other groups
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- Theory states that one's social identity can be broken down into three aspects.
    1. Categorization - The observation that there are many categories that set people apart. Major examples include religion, nationality, gender, however there are endless smaller categorizations such as hair color, shoe size, etc.
    2. Identification- Once an individual realizes there are categories, they move to the identification level. Naturally, individuals require a need for belongingness as defined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. At the identification level, individuals decide which category/group to align with.
    3. Comparison- Once an individual has identified with a group, they will make comparisons and judgements towards members of other groups or "out-groups".

# Snapchat Redesigned

## Removing Features

- Direct Messaging
- Small Group Chats
- Private Stories
- Messages disappearing



Removing these features eliminates the ability for the user to effectively perform their back stage self. These features allow the user to communicate with small groups as well as individuals in hopes their messages won't be seen in the future.

In the redesigned Snapchat app that centers around Social Identity Theory, we want users to focus on the larger groups and categories that they align with. The redesigned app will have a group member minimum of 100 people, to ensure a focus on social identity.

The process of using the redesigned Snapchat app is users acknowledge all the different group options, identify with chosen groups, and compare their groups to other groups.

# Snapchat Redesigned for Social Identity

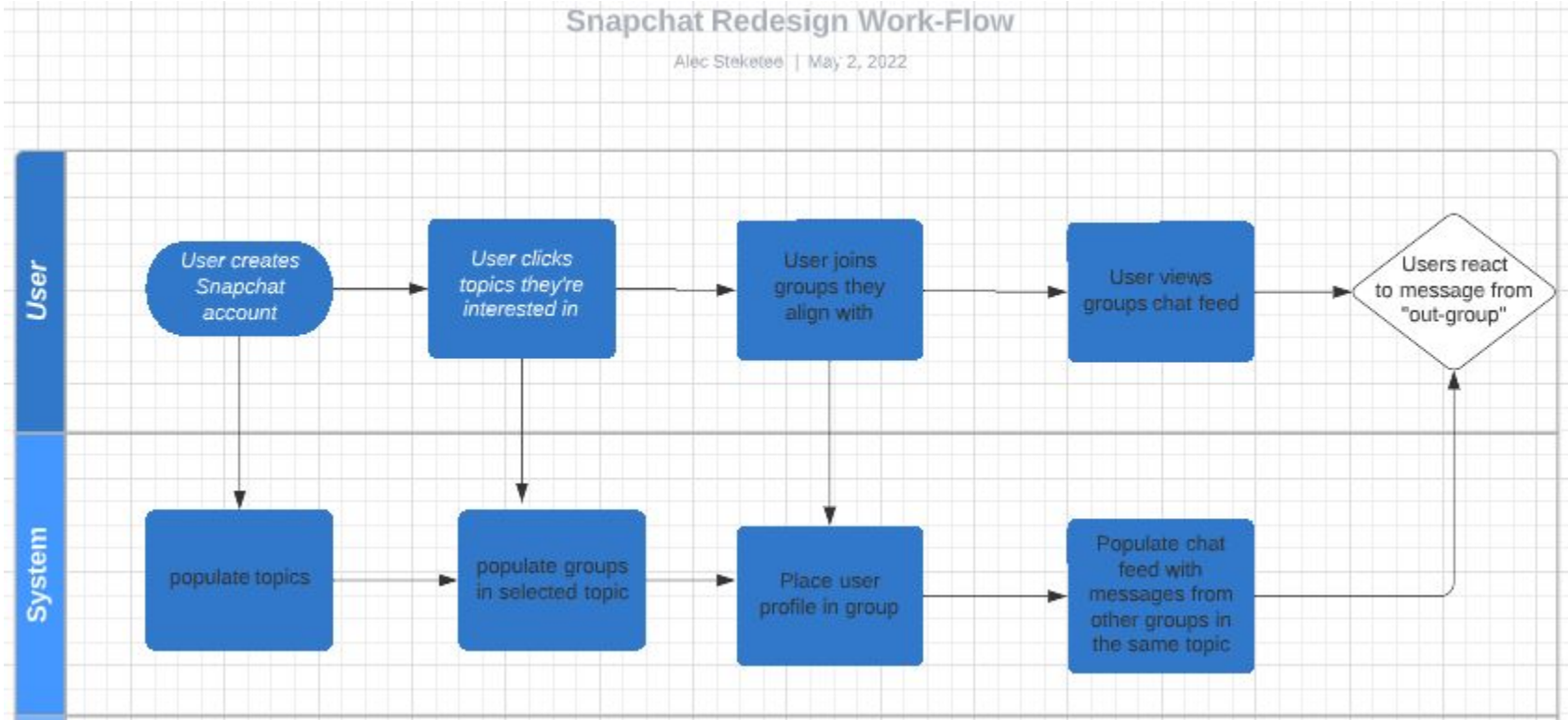
1. Categorization- When a user creates a profile, existing groups are put on their interface along with a search bar. This is so that the user acknowledges the different categories of groups. The user can search and scroll through an endless list of groups with different attributes.
2. Identification- Once the user has seen the options for possible groups to join, they can join the groups that they align with. Users can join as many groups as they want but a group can be deleted if there are less than 100 members.



3. Comparison - Once a user has joined a group, the group chat feed is populated with messages from other groups centered around the same topic. By putting a voice from an “out-group” into the “in-groups” feed, we ensure that the conversation centers around the groups comparing themselves to the other. Random messages from one group chat are sent as an alert in another group chat.

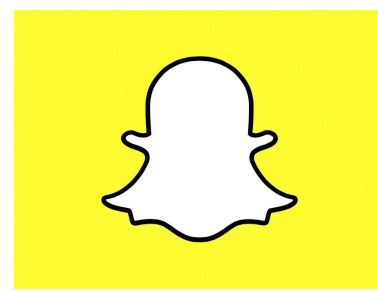


# Snapchat Redesign Workflow Diagram





## Redesigned Functionality



The new Snapchat has completely different functionality. No longer can users present themselves as front and back stage actors with the use of direct messaging and the feature of disappearing messages.

With the new redesigned Snapchat, users only interact with large groups of people and messages stay forever. To keep group conversations centered around the topic of the group, random messages are selected from other groups talking about the same topic and populated into the feed.

This design will have a huge impact on the human need to compare, and I suspect that these “intruder” messages will create an environment of intense passion over topics.

Centering Snapchat around social identity theory will cause the app to function more as a group discussion board that centers around social topics rather than a direct messaging app.