

Amanda Lenhart:

I'm Amanda Lenhart program director for the health and data team. And I'll be your host alongside the events team, mostly behind the curtain, Rigo and Eli, and my colleagues, Joan and rat. I also want to acknowledge my co-author and research partner, Kelly Owens, bioethics researcher at the university of Pennsylvania medical school, who is hopefully joining us from the audience today while on parental leave. For those who don't know about our work, um, Data & Society is an independent research Institute studying the social implications of data and automation. We produce original research and convene multidisciplinary thinkers to challenge the power and purpose of technology in society.

So we'll be spending the next hour or so together. So let's get ourselves grounded. Please reference our chat for our participation guidelines and join me as I recite our digital land acknowledgement Data & Society began in New York city, an island in a network of hills and rivers in the Atlantic, Northeast known as Lenovo hooking, the ancestral land of Lenni-Lenape people. Today, we are connected online via a vast array of servers and computer devices. In the United States much of this infrastructure sits on stolen land acquired under the extractive logic of white settler expansion. As an organization, we recognize this history and uplift the sovereignty of indigenous people, data and territory. We commit to dismantling all ongoing settler colonial practices and their material implications in our digital worlds.

So under hurting our conversation today are the findings from our brand new report, The Unseen Teen: the challenges of building healthy tech for young people. So as a part of this presentation, as a part of this event today, I'll walk us through the main findings from the report, and then we'll kick off our discussion with our panelists and then have a Q & A with audience questions, um, including some questions from youth themselves. But before I do that, I'd like to introduce our panel. First is Adan Van Noppen. Aiden is a co-founder and CEO of Mobius, an unconventional collective of technologists, scientists, activists, and spiritual teachers working together to create a world in which technology brings out the best in humanity. She is also a former senior advisor to the US Chief Technology Officer in the Obama White House and a former fellow at the Harvard Divinity School.

Charlotte Willner is the executive director of the Trust and Safety Professional Association and the Trust and Safety Foundation. She's worked for more than 14 years within tech companies starting her career at Facebook in user support and safety operations, and moving on to Pinterest where she built and led their trust and safety team. A little bit later, we will also be joined by my Data & Society health and data team colleague, Joan Mukogosi during the Q & A. So now with that, I'd like to start off with a short presentation about the main findings of our report.

On May 5th, uh, we released the fruit of more than two years, uh, of research, uh, this report, the Unseen Teen, um, and as a part of this work, my colleague Kelly, and I really wanted to know what workers within tech companies, particularly social platform companies and game companies, what if at all, they were thinking and doing, as they thought about producing the, as they thought about the idea of digital wellbeing in the production of their products and platforms and features, um, that they worked on, and particularly how did they think about wellbeing for their youngest users, their younger users in particular, from our perspective, adolescents. So over the spring and summer of last year, we interviewed 24 people in both senior and junior roles, current and former employees of social media and game companies. We interviewed folks in product management, in research, in design, in engineering, in legal teams and on trust and safety teams. We also offered all of our participants complete anonymity. So you will not see names. You won't see, uh, products and you won't see a companies named, so let's get started.

So why adolescents? So, you know, for us a big question is, um, why, why that focus in this work? So first, um, they're an understudied group as a whole, they're difficult to study. Um, but that also means, um, they need more study from our perspective. Um, but also adolescents is really a unique time of life. Um, it is a time of rapid social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Um, and because of that rapid moment of change and that sort of movement in our culture from child to adult, we also have created adolescents as, and children to a certain, to a degree as well as a protective legal category. There's a greater duty of care for young people. And we, we believe that they don't have the same opportunities to consent and that we, we have, um, a lot of legal regimes in place that acknowledge that young people aren't adults yet, and don't have the same power or ability to make decisions. Um, we also think that designing for young people improves design for everyone, right? Any time the sort of principles of universal design tell us that anytime we designed for people with specific and perhaps even specialized needs, we almost always are creating better products for everybody. So curb cuts and sidewalks are a great example. Um, initially perhaps designed for people who used wheelchairs. Um, they're also a boon to parents with strollers people with pulling wheeled, suitcases, anybody who needs to wheel something up onto a sidewalk. And so one of the other main questions we asked ourselves as we kicked off this research is, what is digital wellbeing?

What do people think it is? Right? It's something we talk about a lot. It gets kicked around a lot in Silicon valley when we're thinking about tech products, but what is digital wellbeing? Well, it turns out there's very little agreement about what it actually is. It's a slippery topic. Everybody has a slightly different way of defining it. As you can see, even in the academic literature, from some of the quotes I've provided here, we have everything from psychological functioning, to mental health, to the full gamut of physical health, mental health, and sort of effective experiences. Um, similarly in our research participants, there was no consensus about what digital wellbeing really was. And in fact, as you can see from our last, uh, last quote I'm sharing, um, from another one of our research participants, there's even some question as to whether young people, themselves think of digital wellbeing as something that's separate from wellbeing as a whole.

So this lack of consensus and sort of slipperiness of the definition of digital wellbeing definitely has impacts downstream. So one of the things that we really learned is that because digital wellbeing is hard to define, um, tech companies are looking for some way to make it concrete there, they're looking for something to hold on to, and that ends up focusing them on a thing they can, they can measure, which is screen time, how much time is the person spending on my platform and spending with a screen. And that is a very highly thing. But as our research participants really told us, we had some research participants who focused a lot on screen time as a measure they were concerned about and others who felt that it really wasn't nuanced enough, their point was, what are you looking at on the screen? What is your experience of the thing you're, you're engaging with on the screen?

Is it positive? Are you feeling supported? Are you feeling loved? Are you learning new things? Are you meeting new people or are you feeling attacked? Uh, are you feeling sad? Are you worried about the state of the world? So lots of different ways that screen time can land and have lots of different impacts. Um, and so screen time as a metric is, uh, certainly not capturing the complexity of what's happening when people engage with the platforms. Another issue that came up in our research is this concept of the imagined average user. Um, and this is, as companies are trying to understand where to focus their energy and how to build the next phase or the next iteration of their product. Um, they're trying to think about different users that might be using this product. And of course, they're thinking about the largest group of these users.

In many cases, this group is white. Um, this often this group may be male. Um, and this group is almost entirely an adult adults. Um, unless a platform is specifically aimed directly at young people, even if young people, the majority of American young people may use a particular platform. If they're not the direct audience for the platform, they're an afterthought. Um, they kind of come in at the end, the legal teams come in and give you some additional advice, but they're, they're not front and center, uh, as a part of the design product process. Um, and the other big issue with this idea of the sort of average user is that averages really miss what we call person specific effects. Um, this comes out of some research, um, that the folks at the university of Amsterdam and others are doing to look at how social media is impacting particularly young adults, um, and this, these different people over time have different effects, have different impacts and different experiences with these platforms.

Um, and, uh, so understanding more about the specific in-person effects, um, is really critical for understanding how these products are being used and how they affect the people who use them. Um, and similarly by ignoring the marginalized groups, you're actually ignoring the people who are experiencing the biggest harms and missing opportunities in many ways to mitigate where the biggest harms are happening on your platform. And so what is directing us? What is, what is leading us towards these things? Well, it's a variety of things. It's business models, right? We have business models, we have need to provide value to shareholders and to investors. Um, and those investors want to see growth and they want to see increased revenue. And so focusing on the averages allows you to find the way to bulk up your biggest group. Um, focusing, uh, a culture that focuses a lot on metrics, whether that's daily, active users or key performance indicators, all of these things are things that are the sort of spoken vernacular language of Silicon Valley.

Um, a lack of diversity in the tech workforce means you don't have people on your teams who are like, actually it turns out that people like me have these kinds of problems on the platform. And all of this contributes to this emphasis on this imagined user instead of actual users and this focus on stickiness rather than what might be optimal for the users, for the user themselves, for their wellbeing. And you can see that, you know, we talked to a founder who really, I think, laid this out pretty clearly about the pressures too, you know, for people that you like and respect to provide a return on their investment, otherwise you don't get to build the thing you want to build. Another really important finding from our, uh, our product was this idea of strategic ignorance, which is that companies, um, often don't collect certain kinds of data because they don't with the idea that they can shield themselves from responsibility for things that they, that, that they don't, that they decide not to know or that they don't know.

And, and this really actually ultimately is enacted in three different ways. One is through the, you know, sort of the central, I think the most obvious way is by not collecting the data, right. We just don't collect it about users. Often. That's a privacy position. Like if we don't know this about our users, we can't violate their privacy, but it ends up having downstream effects. Um, similarly, when we have, you know, age requirements for typing in your age that are really easy to circumvent, we call those age gates. We end up with a sort of a fictionalized idea of how old our users are because people can very easily lie about that. Um, another way of, of having sort of being strategically ignorant is collecting too much data. Is it having the opportunity for people to put so much content on your platform that you can't possibly moderate at all?

And you can't possibly know with the tools that you have available, even with, you know, good machine learning. Um, it can be very, very difficult to know how to moderate everything that comes onto your platform. And that's, that's a choice too. Um, and then creating internal structures within companies that

locate the responsibility for thinking about these things on a small team of people, but then also has the outside effect of absolving everybody else from meeting to think about it. Um, and so we'll talk a little bit more about what we might do about that in the future. Um, I'm going to move quickly cause I'm, uh, we have a lot to get through today, but, um, this is a quote from one of our, um, respondents who was talking about why they don't collect data about they don't collect any data about their users and specifically about their younger users.

Of course, there are people within platforms for whom it is their job, their responsibility, to think about these issues, to think about it in relation to young people, to think about it in relation to wellbeing more broadly. Um, but what we heard when we talked to many of them is that they often lack power within those, within these organizations to stop a launch, to really make a big change. Um, particularly if it was perceived that that change was going to have costs to user retention or cost to the company. And so they instead learned lots of different, um, techniques to try to convince people to lay out various options. Um, and there was a lot of concern amongst these folks about being seen as a blocker is the one thing we got, it was mentioned number a number of times, um, about people who didn't want to be seen as stopping the forward motion of the companies that they worked for and that they loved. Um, but wanting to try to get people to understand what they saw about some of the hazards ahead, um, for, for particular launches.

So what worked, so one of the questions we asked people at the end is like, what makes change, like what really, what really creates change within your company? And some of the recommendations here are sort of aimed at two different groups. Some are for people within companies who would like to make change. And some are for outsiders who would like to encourage companies to make change, um, and starting with the ladder. Um, one of the things we heard is that outside pressure does have an impact on people told us that trusted civil society, orgs with good research and information, um, can, can affect change, um, regulators, either threatening or enacting regulation, uh, also provokes change. Um, and similarly media attention, particularly negative media attention can also, um, shape policies inside companies. Um, we also heard that organizations that embed empowered people to think about wellbeing into product teams from the very, very beginning when the idea first blossoms to launch talked a lot more about how they felt like they never got to the end of the process and had to stop a process or blow it up, they were able to have much more successful launches because they were thinking about these things all across the whole part of the process.

We also heard about making these thinking about these things, responsibility, a responsibility for all roles, right? So it's not just on the trust and safety folks. It's not just on the legal team to drop a bomb at the end of a process and, and stop a launch. But instead everybody's thinking about this and that the trust and safety folks become your, your experts, the people you escalate, a complex question to, it's also really important to talk to young people and bring in diverse voices, um, through research and through outreach and through conversation. Um, uh, we also heard some really interesting ideas around eliminating H gating and thinking about rehabilitating young people, um, so that you weren't just banned for transgressions that happened when you were under 18, but that there was opportunities for rehabilitation, which we thought was a really interesting question about how to handle youth and youthful indiscretion and sort of youth development.

And finally, we are the first people to say this, but, um, increasing the diversity of the workforce. And of course the broad-based education, um, more ethics training, more thinking about humanities for people, particularly in technical roles, um, would go a long way to helping us to think more about these issues. Um, from the very beginning with that, um, there's so much more in the report and I commend it to you.

Um, but I would love to start a conversation with Charlotte and Aiden about how we might talk about how the rubber meets the road for this. What's it really like on the ground? So I'm going to stop sharing and bring Aiden and Charlotte onto the virtual stage. Um, and, um, say welcome again. And, um, I'm so glad you're here. Um, and you know, I'd love to actually start off. I realize one of the things we haven't really talked about yet in this presentation is like, what is trust and safety? And so hearing just from Charlotte briefly about how you would describe that, I think might help set up, um, that role within these tech companies for those who aren't familiar. Totally.

Charlotte Willner: Um, and thank you so much for the invitation to be here. This is just, I love this report. This is like, I don't know any of the people who responded, but I want to be their friend because it was just like what great interviews and insights. Um, yeah. So what is stress and safety trust and safety is a really, really broad term in our industry. Um, the way that we define it here at TSP is basically anybody who's job is to think about or enforce rules about what is, what makes something online acceptable, right? So a lot of folks think, oh, it's content review. It's like content moderation. And yes, that is a huge part of what trust and safety is in this ecosystem. Uh, but it's, it's a lot more than that too. It's about, okay, you know, you're moderating based on these rules who writes those rules, how are those rules, um, you know, put together in a way that it scales and is working for the product, uh, that are, you know, making sure that the rules are equitable, those sorts of jobs, um, is it folks who, uh, you know, do incident management when something goes wrong, who shepherds that process sort of through the organization and make sure that there's a resolution and that things change for next time.

Um, it's folks who work on, um, product policy development, it's people who build the tools and the algorithms that support safe experiences online, uh, often it's legal compliance, which is a big part of what we'll touch on today, I think as well. So, um, it's a very, very broad turn and it's, it's pretty much anyone who touches a product that might be, might have a safety issue in a broad sense is a trust and safety person.

Aden Van Noppen: Amanda, I'd love to jump in on that really quickly too. Um, one of the things that I think about a lot is what does it mean to be trustworthy? Like how can a tech company be worthy of the trust of its users and what does it take, um, to earn that. And so when I think about trust and safety, kind of in the broad sense, my hope is that people who work on it see it in that way, which also then broadens a frame from purely mitigating harm, which we need, we need to, as some companies to say, like deal with the badness, but I also get really excited when I think about trust and safety also being about supporting goodness on the platforms proactively. Um, so just wanted to add that because I think that sometimes, um, trust and safety gets siloed in a certain way around, um, mitigating the harms. And I feel that there's also an opportunity to really broaden that in a way that's inspiring for people that's so, right.

AL: That's super helpful. And I'm thank you both for that grounding. I think that's, that's a great start. So in our report, we've outlined some big challenges we've outlined, um, some of the things we heard in our research and I would just love to hear from both of you and we can start with, um, Aiden. Um, how, how does this process, w how does, how does your experience working with tech companies and working with inside tech companies, Charlotte, how does this map, what we've documented mapped to your experience? What's what, what have you experienced the different, what do you, um, what do you, where does this resonate?

AVN: Sure. Yeah. Well, I'll just say first off at the report resonates hugely, um, uh, full disclosure. I also was on the advisory council for the report. Um, but I really do feel that you touch on so many. Um, so

many of the things that we see all the time inside of tech companies. And so just to give a sense of a little bit of how we do the work that we do, we both build community amongst, um, people who mostly are in leadership positions across the major tech companies who share our mission to put wellbeing at the center. And then we also advise companies on how to do that. Um, and so we kind of see that inside, outside, and I would say that, um, while both Charlotte and I do a lot of work with people who share this concern, um, and even so it's really hard as Amanda and as the report says to do this work because people are working inside of systems that oftentimes don't incentivize, um, caring for the wellbeing of the users of their platforms, um, and at least in the short term.

Um, and so I would just say that, um, because of that, because of the difficulty of that real deep change requires a level of moral courage and follow through from leadership that we almost never see at scale within major tech companies. And it's not just the tech sector, it's our economic system that incentivizes people to act a certain way. And therefore leaders have to act with moral courage and compassion, um, in a way that really is, um, outside of the norms. So we see small examples of that all the time, but it's oftentimes reactive and one-off. Um, so that's one thing that I feel that, um, you all did speak to a lot, um, in, in the report, but I'll just reiterate that these companies are made up of human beings, making decisions all the time, and those decisions can be in service of the greater good or not.

And I feel like oftentimes when we talk about tech companies, we talk about them as these like giant monoliths that are totally impenetrable. And I find it really helpful to remember, like, actually these are humans making decisions. Um, and so I really appreciate that the report, I think really speaks to that. I'll also just say on the imagined average user that really resonates. Um, and it's something that, um, I just want to kind of double click on the way in which getting beyond that really requires bringing in the voices of more diverse users as the report talks about, um, and recognizing the limitations of imagining, um, the experience of someone else. So Amanda mentioned that I spent some time at Harvard divinity school, and while I was there, I learned about a lecture that was given there. And, um, 2014 by Rowan Williams, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury, and it was called the paradox of empathy.

And it really hit me. It was about the concept of, um, empathy can be dangerous because it can assume that we even have the ability to understand someone else's experience and therefore it ignores power dynamics and culture differences. Um, and so he, he said, um, uh, the, the real empathetic position is one in which we know that we are not the other, the empathetic position, um, is, is the significant expression of this sort of empathy would be in saying not, I know how you feel, but I have no idea how you feel. And so that sort of brings in this notion of bringing in the teens, bring in others whose voices are not represented. Um, I'll, I'll, I also love the issue of self-concept. I, I don't want to spend too much time saying much more, cause I know I've been talking on and on forever.

Um, but I think that like has such a huge effect on, um, how tech and how tech companies operate. Um, and when the rubber hits the road, we need the metrics, um, to incentivize these things. Um, and that's where I, I think, um, I've seen over and over that if you don't have the incentives in place, if you don't train employees on these things, if you don't create company-wide, um, outcomes and key results, if leadership doesn't talk about it all the time, it's just going to be silent with interest in safety. And we aren't going to see it holistically baked into the company's, um, way of operating.

CW: Yeah. I mean, a big plus one to all of that. And I do regret that we have the limited time that we have, not that all of you necessarily want to hang around and listen to eight hours of this, but I think we

could because, um, you know, there's just so, so much, uh, to unpack in the report. Um, I was just going to say, you know, to this question of like, does it resonate? The answer is, you know, I am, um, it's been a while since I've been a teen, right. I think that's probably clear I'm doing like the side parts still. This is just where I'm at. And part of that process of being old for me is I still print, um, and take notes on all of my report reading. And what I noticed when I was consuming this report was I would get to a point and be like, oh no, no, okay.

Here, but this is why, and I'd be making notes about, and if I turned the page, it covers it. Right. It was like, oh, and one of the factors I'm like, yes, this is right. And, um, what I really appreciated about the positioning of a lot of the points that the report made so often, I think certainly as a trust and safety professional reports come in like this, and it feels like a prescription to the profession where it's like, you folks got to figure out the following and it's like, you know, that's true. That is often very true. But what I thought was really good about it was that it was a prescription to a lot of other structures in our society as well. Right. It, it, it does acknowledge that sort of fundamentally yes, there are these incentives at play and that starts to get you to start to get you thinking about like, okay, investors and capitalism and how do we incentivize the right types of decision-making structures in an organization to ensure this sort of wellbeing. Um, and it just felt like, to me, it felt like the report was really partnering with the professionals and of course it was interviewing the professionals. So that makes sense. But, um, you know, so much of, of what was described, how this operates internally absolutely. Is, is the way I've perceived it. Um, you know, a company's begins.

AL: Yeah. And I guess that's actually a good segue, you know, I know both of you have worked with companies of varying sizes. Is this sort of ability to manage and think about digital wellbeing, something that you see as varying by the size of the company, or is it really something that companies struggle with across, across size and across, uh, across the, across the ballot leap?

CW: It really, um, you know, I think it's tempting to say, ah, yes, well, the bigger you are, the more time and money you have to focus on this. And the answer is like, yeah, maybe, um, and you know, you see large companies sometimes expending a ton of effort to now understand things like, you know, what's good for young people on our platform. You see plenty of large ones that don't necessarily. Um, but I think especially now, we're actually really starting to see small companies sort of center this question and, and put questions of wellbeing at the forefront. Um, a company that recently joined up with GSPA, uh, is called somewhere good nausea Austin's company. And if you go to somewhere good.com, they just relaunched their website. They're a tiny, tiny company. I think there's nine people there. And their entire ethos is like, how do we make social interaction really healthy? How do we make it feel so good and so helpful to you? And so, you know, people do have a choice to be able to, to focus their business around those principles. I don't know that that would have been as popular 20 years ago. Right. I think we're learning a lot about being humans online and what that means for our species, uh, that now perhaps incentivizes that approach more than you used to see.

AVN: Yeah. I completely agree. Um, I think that in the big tech companies, there's oftentimes more resources to build teams around this, which is really happening. I mean, um, we know countless people as to Charlotte who are, um, in roles where they're explicitly meant to care for users, but, um, and protect users. But ultimately what I'm seeing is that that work inside of big tech doesn't really make its way out of harm reduction or mitigation. Um, very much it's oftentimes reactive and dealing with the latest ethical fire drill. Um, and so I get really excited about trans true transformation that's coming from outside of the existing giants and like the example that Charlotte just spoke to of companies that really

do place wellbeing at the center, from the outset and build the incentive structures around that, um, and build their self comes up, um, around that from the outset.

So that's their DNA. Um, and we really, we work really closely with Marco polo, which is a video messaging app, um, that was created by a woman named blada Bortnick, who immigrated from Poland. And when she had kids, her family, she felt like there wasn't really a good way for her kids to stay connected to family members abroad and the text messaging wasn't doing it. So they created this really, um, very connected, um, way that people can message with, um, with their family members. But they did it in a way where they created a business model that, um, did not rely on advertising. They did not, and do not sell our data. Um, they, at first it was really a generosity model, um, where people who downloaded it paid what they thought it was worth to them. Now they have a, um, like a premium model. You can pay more for it, but it worked, they have millions of users around the world, um, and vilada stands up to her investors and she says, no, this is not about scaling as quickly as possible. This is about doing right by our users. And so I just find that that sort of thing is so inspiring. She can say that and she built a culture around it. Um, and we need more companies that, that are, um, that are doing that from the outset.

CW: Though. You know, I do want to be sure we acknowledge in the segment of the conversation. Like it is wonderful when companies are able to like get out there and like, I'm, I'm just going to tell the investors. And, but those are probably exceptions rather than the rule when it comes to like being able to do that and succeed. Right. Um, and so I think there's a, there's a lot of work that we, as sort of the tech ecosystem need to do on what do we like, what are our expectations when it comes to success? You know, um, how do, how do we, um, how, how can investors reward the right outcomes? And that, again, speaks to, I think, some very deep structural questions that, um, tech alone, isn't going to have the answers to.

AVN: Totally, it's like, we should not rely on the Intrepid founder who is like doing everything they can to work against us, a structure structures and systems that make this hard for them. It should, it needs to be part of the whole ecosystem. I appreciate you calling that out. Charlotte.

AL: That's a great, a great question. Right. So, I mean, I think absent remaking late-stage American capitalism. What, what are, what are, I think we're ready, but absent that, what are some things, what are some critical things that we can do? Are there some tweaks, maybe these are things about changing how industry models work, but are there things within tech companies that you've seen, um, that, you know, perhaps we didn't capture in this report, are there things that you've seen that would make an impact and particularly let's think about with adolescents, what are things that we can do to really improve this for teenagers? Start with either one?

AVN: Yeah. I can speak to that first. Um, I mean the highest level thing is, um, expand how you define value. Um, and we've spoken to that. So I won't spend a lot of time on it, but it really does come down to, um, working within the structures of how things are valued within a certain company. And so, um, that oftentimes means create top line metrics, um, that do reward caring for the wellbeing of teens, um, caring for the wellbeing of users overall. And I love how in the report you guys talk about, um, if you design with teen wellbeing in mind, you're going to improve it for everyone or any vulnerable population, you'll improve it for anyone. Um, and so, um, there are examples of that, like for example,

apple, um, they were really ahead of the industry on baking privacy in to everything and they kind of made it, um, if you talk to employees there, it's like the thing everyone talks about.

Like everyone's trained in it when they get there. Like there's all these gating mechanisms throughout like product development process. Like it's part of what they pride themselves on. You know, so there's like the ecosystem within the company, that's really incentivizing those things. So that's kind of the top line. Um, there's also, um, this one's really hard, but I feel really is really, really important, which is around culture. And we find oftentimes that innovation right now is fueled by anxiety. If you really think about it because people in these companies are rushing, rushing, rushing, trying to perform as much as possible, trying to release as much as possible. And if those that are creating the technology are not, well, they're not going to create products that care for our wellbeing. So I think that kind of human element is oftentimes missed in these conversations. Um, but it's really, um, really necessary, uh, to actually do the work.

And then the last thing I'll say, and this, um, this applies to teams and to everyone is that I believe we aren't going to solve these problems unless we brought in the frame of what, how we think about the role of a technologist, because technologists technology is literally the portal through which we're experiencing so many aspects of our lives from the most intimate to the most macro. And so being a technologist comes with a level of moral responsibility, caring for wellbeing, but throughout, throughout human history has actually been in the hands of people who are trained to be caretakers, whether that's in the form of like a minister or a rabbi or a chaplain or a therapist or a neuroscientist, or, um, you know, you can think of it from all different sorts of, um, disciplines, whether secular or religious or whatever, but it's not, it's not touchy feely stuff.

It's like when technology is integrated into our lives, this much, we need to have expertise that knows how to care for our wellbeing at the table, because doing that is not something that CS degrees, um, train us for. It's not something that, um, the companies are incentivized to do. And so this really comes to understanding, um, that we need to bring people with expertise on caretaking to the table, just as much as we need to bring lawyers and FSS, um, to the table, um, when it comes to caring for wellbeing. And, um, I think that that notion of the technologist actually being the de facto caretaker for us, and to either take that on with responsibility or not is something that I think we need to be talking about.

CW: I think that's exactly right. And you know, one of the, one of the notes I kept making in my margins was there was this returning. So recurring theme in the report about people with expertise and wellbeing need to be embedded in these processes at every step. And I kept saying like, yeah, but what is expertise? What is wellbeing? Who are these people? Right. And, you know, the report, I think does a good job of acknowledging like, Hey, no one has really like, defined exactly what this is. It moves all the time. You know, it acknowledges that there is that sort of, um, we gleaned this to it right now, but, uh, certainly in my experience, as, as a trust and safety professional, um, you often are sort of the first and only line of defense when it comes to figuring out what should we do here.

And that's true for crises, crisis moments. Um, and that's true for general product decisions, right? Like, do you think increasingly you are seeing companies saying, oh, we are going to solve this by bringing in our trust and safety teams. And that is great. Like, yes, you should do that. That is always a thing that should be done, but it is not always sufficient. Right. And I think what certainly we discover at varying points in our practice, but usually almost immediately is like, we're not experts on this we're experts on

online content moderation, we're experts on, you know, how people move through the system and, and the types of trouble they might get themselves into. But like, we are not therapists, right? Most of us anyway are not trained therapists. We're not a trained mental health expert. It's we, we don't necessarily have the ability, even if we wanted to be able to study this, right. We're not unqualified. And so understanding and helping the industry understand, like where can you find people who can, who can do that sort of work, who can come alongside, train your teams or collaborate with your teams in a way that will help them more sustainably incorporate those insights? I think that's good, obviously for teens, but really for everyone.

AVN: Yeah. And I'll just say one more thing about that, which is that I think tech teams often get really overwhelmed about how to solve these problems, how to deal with them, because it's like, I'm not an expert on wellbeing and it's like, well, luckily those people do exist. There are people who can answer these questions. And what we see so often is that when you bring people together who come from a different discipline and are doing this work offline, and you put them together with technologists, there's this like magic and alchemy that can happen. Um, and yeah, I just want to encourage people to, to remember that, um, that there is the, the knowledge and the wisdom about how to care for, for user wellbeing and people inside tech companies know about products. And, um, so we could all get together and make products that help care for us.

AL: It seems, it seems like we've, we maybe we've just solved the problem now I'm kidding. Um, but I do have a question. Um, I wanna shift us a little bit and ask about policy. Are there, are there policies that you could see a company enacting about itself or conversely like federal or state policy, probably federal policies that you see as being beneficial to helping companies prioritize well-being a little bit more in there, or any kind of policy that you would see a policy change that you would see that might ultimately end up benefiting the users in, in these, uh, of these products?

CW: Yeah. I mean, there's kind of a carrot and stick effect here. Um, I'm not a public policy expert, right. I, I tried in my time in tech to never be that, but, um, my observation is that, uh, all policy incentivizes something. Um, and, uh, certainly for going back to this concept of like development through anxiety, right. Uh, they don't even need to be particularly good policies that are proposed for people to say, oh, no, don't want that. Um, and that's honestly a lot of, a lot of how I've seen a shift towards like, oh, we should care more about, this is the threat of perhaps a bad policy being enacted. And this, this is something where the report talks about, like there are unintended consequences and you gotta be careful. Um, I do think that, uh, there is, uh, there's a real role for federal or sort of, you know, you, whatever it is, level policy, um, around certain around certain metrics and around certain practices, but often, and this is just me riffing, right?

But like often I think that when politicians or policymakers or the public, the interested public come to the table, they're expecting like something very specific and concrete that they're going to be able to ask for and get, and that will solve the problem. And when you work on the back end, you realize like, well, that, that may look like it's solving a problem, but in fact, you know, it may not be getting us where we want to go. And so I think that the best thing that folks can do is really enter into dialogue or, or, you know, build out those dialogues that already exist to be able to talk about a lot of the nuances behind the work and around how people behave, why, you know, it's maybe not a good idea to say, all right, if you're this age, you do that. And you're that age you do that, like, you know, what's that actually going to do. Um, but I, I do think, and as the report says that there's absolutely a very beneficial role that policy can play in terms of setting those incentives and making sure there's accountability.

AVN: Yeah, totally. Um, building off of that, I would say that in terms of company policy, um, having more gating mechanisms basically, um, for, uh, wellbeing. So as a product is being created, that there are more opportunities along the way to say, um, ask a series of questions, what are the harms that this might create? How could we make this more beneficial to users, et cetera. And so creating healthy friction in the process, um, which sometimes again, kind of work against, um, tech cultures of get things out as quickly as possible, but it's absolutely necessary to be able to create the conditions to slow down and reflect, um, and play things out into the future in terms of federal policy. I'll just quickly touch on that. Um, two things. One is that, uh, many of you may know that the, um, in the UK they've passed the age appropriate design code, which is specifically for young people that, um, the, the regulation says that tech companies must, uh, it's like design.

I'm going to get the exact words wrong, but like designed to, um, enhance the wellbeing of youth or something like that. And it doesn't come with a lot of, um, guidance on exactly how you do that, but tech companies are having to figure that out. And so what I want to, uh, invite companies to do is like use the most stringent, um, global policy as your standard. Um, maybe that's also in, in tech companies interest long in the long run because hopefully other countries will follow suit. Um, but it is, it is, I think generally Europe is ahead of us on these things. And there is that specific regulation in the UK. That's very much targeted at young people and their vulnerability. I'd also say that, um, so often, I mean, this is like I beat the drum on solutions all the time. Right. But it's like, we need to have policy that doesn't just mitigate harm, but we also need to enable the new solutions and make it easier for companies like the ones that Charlotte and I spoke about that are smaller companies to like have different sorts of governance structures and have different funding structures and those sorts of things like make it as easy as possible for people to do the right thing as well.

AL: All right. I want to ask one last before we go to the Q and a, um, and that question is where do you see, where, where are we headed over the next five years where our company w what do you think, do you think there's impetus within companies to start thinking about these things differently? Or do you think that if we do nothing, that we're just going to kind of end up where we are right now.

CW: To me, it feels like the winds are shifting. Um, you know, I mean, frankly, the fact that we are having this panel at all, and you know, that we have something called the trust and safety professional association now, and I'm here, you know, like I think, I think that, um, there is a lot more interest in how people can be, can be hurt and how their realities can be shaped for the negative. Um, that again, I think we're just getting this growing body of evidence as we travel through, you know, this time period. Um, and I do think that we are charting. Like, there's just a lot of really interesting work happening in this space that I think is charting a potential new path forward for safety in general and positive experiences in general online. But I think thinking about young people in particular, uh, I think the pandemic actually in some ways is a, um, is a motivator here because suddenly a lot of young people are spending a lot more time online than otherwise they even would have been. And that has really brought to the fore, I think a number of issues that otherwise could have laid dormant for quite some time. So, um, you know, I, I think the future, like I said, like the future is bright because, but, uh, you know, I think the future is possible. Um, and I think we have a lot to look forward to, it's going to just, it's going to depend on the choices that certainly we make as, as individuals in the space and the companies make.

AVN: Yeah, definitely. Um, yeah, I have some of that sort of optimism. That's also like, and it's going to be hard. Um, yeah, the, uh, I feel like we're at this point with the role of technology in our lives where, um, it's like tech has taken off like this and our nervous systems and our ability to regulate ourselves is like

still down here. And we're like, wait a minute, like, hold up, hold up. Like, you know, we haven't figured out quite how to interact with you in a way that actually is in line with how I want to live my life. Um, and so I kind of have faith that hopefully we're at a moment where we start to say like, okay, well, let's rebalance things a little bit and like, take some control over this. And then consumers are going to start voting with their feet around it and making more demands of tech companies that tech companies are going to recognize that it's really in their longterm interest to care for the wellbeing of their users and particularly youth who are the, the future of not just their users, but like the world.

Um, and, and that's one of the reasons I believe this is because we've worked with, um, some tech companies recently where talked with people across many different functions in the companies about how they think about wellbeing and their users. And it is existential to almost every team we talked about for different motivations. Um, for some people it's, you know, we really see the trust and safety people tend to be the, the, like, you know, the heart of a lot of this work, the engine of a lot of it, but, you know, marketing sees it as really important public policy obviously sees important. They see regulation coming down the line products. I mean, it's everyone. And so I do believe that that is going to start to shift, um, things particularly in companies that are really growing, um, more and more as we speak, um, that they're going to bake this stuff in from the outset.

And, um, and I'll just say, in order to get there, we need the whole ecosystem. Like we've, we've touched on that, but we need policy change. We need consumer demand. We need new incentive structures. We need more diverse teams. Um, and we need values oriented, courageous leader leaders. Like I said, um, mob has a lot of our work is about building community. As I said at the beginning, bringing together tech leaders that, um, share our mission and helping to, to kind of take from good intentions to really courageous action. And I believe that by locking arms in community, um, that people are able to see the work that I'm doing is bigger than my company identity right now. And it's for the greater good. And I know that's, um, a lot of the power of what Charlotte, what you're doing too. Um, and so that's another thing that helps me believe that we're going to get to, um, a brighter future where technology and humanity really feel like more in balance. Great.

AL: Thank you both. I'd love to transition us now to Q & A rom the audience. So if you're an audience member and you've been sitting on your hands and you have a question, please put it into the Q & Abox, please upvote the questions that you like. And I'm delighted to invite my colleague, Joan [inaudible] to our, uh, digital virtual stage here. Um, Joan is going to help us, uh, with the Q & A and bring in some outside voices. So John, maybe you can, uh, you can take it away.

Joan Mukogosi: Yes, thanks so much. Um, so hello everyone. Um, my name is Joan and I'm one of the research assistants for the health and data team here at Data & Society. Um, and when our team was thinking about this event and this report, um, we really wanted to make sure that young people were included in the discussion of our findings. Um, so I'm really excited to ask our lovely panelists, um, some questions that were submitted by teenagers at a performing arts high school in my hometown, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Um, alright. So the first question from this group of teens is for Charlotte. Um, so they ask, uh, kids lie about their age online all the time. Are tech companies working on making it more difficult for kids to use social media? Why or why not?

CW: A great question and a great observation? Uh, yes. Uh, uh, it turns out all kinds of people live out their age online for all kinds of reasons. Um, but yes, it is, it is very commonly recognized that folks, um, under 18 in particular are often incentivized by the restrictions placed on a product the age, getting, uh, to lie about their age. And, um, I think the approach on like a hair tech companies making this hard. Yes

and no. Right. Um, often those restrictions are in place because there is a law, right. Or there's going to be a law about, um, making sure you're taking care of people under a certain age. And I think what is useful is to look at that and say, all right, well, how, how is barring someone from a service taking care of them, right. Um, obviously certain kinds of services where maybe okay, yeah, that is right.

But a lot of the way we connect as people now is online, right. And we, we learn as online the way that we, we grow and are exposed to new ideas and to new, um, new groups and, and, and sort of structures is all online. And so, um, I think the simple answer is, yeah. When folks run into that, it is, it is, yes, that is a barrier and it's an intentional barrier. I think the challenge is one that shared between products in between, um, the, the laws that dictate what we do, uh, to find a way to figure out how to let more people in, uh, in a way that is respectful of, you know, sort of the, the, um, the power they have in their lives and, and the decisions they're able to make, uh, but also allows them to have more agency rather than having that decided for them. I know that's a theme in the report and certainly in some of the Q&A as well.

JM: Wonderful. Um, awesome. And then the second question is for Aiden. Um, so they ask, is it possible for teenagers to be asked about changes to platforms and how these changes will affect us before they are made?

AVN: Yes, it is very possible and very necessary. Um, this kind of goes back to what Charlotte and I were saying before about, um, oftentimes, uh, people can be mystified by, well, how do I care for, you know, user wellbeing? And in this case, it's like being mystified about, well, what would young, young people need? And, um, it's like, involve them, ask them, you know, like they're here, they can, they know. And I think it's sort of respecting the authority that teens have about their own desires, their own wellbeing. And, um, I actually love to think about some examples of this happening offline. And this is, this is not teens. This is much younger kids, but there's a, I used to work on stuff related to urban planning and urban development and poverty alleviation. And, um, there was this organization called Kaboom, which is a nonprofit that goes to neighborhoods and actually works with kids in the neighborhoods to design the playground they want, and then they'll build it together.

And I just love that. It's like, of course kids know what playgrounds they want. Um, and I just think that, um, we, sometimes we horde authority basically. Um, and that, that actually in this case, teens, teens, um, should have tech tech should be built so that teens have agency also over, um, their relationship with that technology. And, um, and, and they get to define what wellbeing means for them, which kind of goes also to the, the notion that, um, is spoken about in the report a lot. And Amanda, that you mentioned of, um, it's not just about screen time. Um, it's much more nuanced than that. Um, and I think that there are some organizations that have done a really good job of this. I think I saw that David Ball from head stream is on the call and they do a really amazing job of involving youth and youth councils in, um, uh, to advise, uh, startups that are focused on digital wellbeing for teens, um, and all tech companies have a lot to learn from that.

AL: All right. Thanks, Joan. Please stick with us, um, uh, for the, for the Q&A, and please jump in if you have other questions. Um, I know you have a few more and if some, um, if some seem that you should, you should pop up if they seem super, like we need to ask them. Um, but I want to switch to a question now from Steve. Um, Steve asks children's have rights as codified in the convention on the rights of the child for the UN a child has any person under 18 thinking of those rights. There should be different treatment of data protections and provisions, et cetera, for users between 13 and 18. If we think of like

many social media providers, it doesn't seem like the rights angle came up in the research. He asked you have thoughts on why, and I do, but also, but I would, I'd rather hear Aiden and Charlotte answer this. Do you, are there pro our product teams, not aware of these? How can we highlight the rights, um, for, to help, to help product teams? Think about this in terms of this UN framework.

CW: I mean, I can't speak for product teams being like, yeah, they are in general aware or not aware. Um, and this is Steve. I don't even know if this is going to really be a good answer to your question, because this is starting to be the public policies out and I get nervous. But, um, you know, one point I would make is that a lot of the emphasis of the report is being able to understand more about young people online and, and being able to, to like, and there's complications around, like, for example, how we collect their data. Right. Uh, and the answer to a lot of, for a lot of companies, it's like, well, we're just not going to collect it. And a lot of incentive is actually created by things like folks coming over and being like, remember, there's all these privacy rights you need to be thinking about.

And that's true, right? Like, yes, we do need to be thinking about that as, as tech, but, um, then there's kind of this, there's always going to be this tension between like how much do you know and how much can you use and pass on to people to then like incorporate into the product development cycle versus how much should you definitely not know, because this is a child man. Right. And that's, that's a really interesting dynamic in a lot of companies. I think a lot of companies treat that in very different ways. Um, but thank you for giving me an opportunity to make that point. I should have made earlier. It's not an answer, but I think it is an important component of that conversation when we think about, okay, how do we incorporate this into the process?

AVN: Yeah, totally agree. And, um, one of the other things that I think is really helpful about these sorts of frameworks is that, um, they exist, they're vetted, they are respected around the world. And oftentimes when I see tech teams starting to ask the question of, well, what should we, how should we think about user wellbeing and how do we measure it? And w w what's within, and what's not within it. And how do we define it? Um, there, it's oftentimes really helpful to say, well, um, these things have been figured out before on a global scale. And oftentimes that is within the realm of rights. Um, and I think that it's oftentimes tech companies have work that's done around human rights, but it needs to be, um, there needs to be an integration of that work into work around responsible innovation. Um, the ethics teams it's, um, these frameworks should be, that should be at least the floor for everything that's done when we think about responsibility, um, and ethical tech. So that's what I would say about it is like, absolutely it needs to be considered and can, can be a really useful tool that again, can help teams feel less overwhelmed that they have to answer these questions from scratch because actually they don't.

AL: And I just want to jump in and answer Steve's question as well in that I think some of what's happening is the UN rights. The United States is not a signatory to the UN rights of the child. And, um, it, not that it's not something that companies don't need to think about given their global scope. Um, but I do think the us subject position of so many of the workers we talked to you, but also the people who are making decisions about a lot of these means that it's a, it's a different landscape. And so I think doing more work to think about how to incorporate these ideas of rights into sort of the language, I think people and the legal teams and trust and safety are more familiar with it. But, um, certainly outside of that, um, doing a better job of, of explaining sort of where that comes from, I think would be, would be helpful.

Um, so that's, that's what I see as it's some of its absence from the, from some of the data that we collected. Um, and I'd like to ask another question and I know we are, we, I need to make it a good one because we are definitely, um, uh, definitely, um, well running out of time here. Um, I want to ask a question, um, uh, from, uh, I want to ask actually now there's so many good questions here. Um, one question we have is about this is from Jeff. Um, what is your research? This is a question for you and your panel colleagues. So, um, uh, what did your research tell you about the impacts of the ever-growing quest for monetization and influence, including the role of mergers, et cetera, that penetrate all the leading platforms and partners isn't regulation and other outside pressure needed to make sure wellbeing for the public, including youth and vulnerable communities is required the need for monetization grow daily, making other priorities difficult. So we've touched on this a little bit, but is there more to say about, um, you know, what are other, are there other is regulation needed? Are there other tools that we can deploy that would help, um, you know, unwind some of these issues?

CW: I think outside pressure is, is always something that folks are paying attention to, and therefore is often a good means of ensuring accountability here. Um, obviously it depends on the type of pressure and the, and the, sort of the nature of the campaign, right. If folks are just like dumping on ya and has no great reasons for it's like, okay, that's like, what is this going to do? But I think, especially in the last few years, we've really seen, um, a lot of very successful public pressure campaigns around various, um, various platforms are when it comes to certain rules around objectionable content. Um, you know, I think that the public is starting to get more engaged. You know, you see this phenomenon with things like sleeping giants, right, where, uh, the, the public are getting involved in sort of carrier decisions. And that I think suggests that it's not just regulation, that that can be effective. Um, so I think, yeah, th there's absolutely a role there.

AVN: Yeah, I'll build off that. I feel like there's, um, there's a lot of opportunity for more consumer pressure that is more like, um, comprehensive, I guess you see these kind of one-off examples that Charlotte is pointing to, but I actually feel that, for example, last fall, when the social dilemma came out and there were, I think, 30 million people who saw it or something like that, um, I think it was a huge lost opportunity that there wasn't just a massive movement at that point. Something that people could easily plug into to let their, you know, their feelings be known to tech companies about like demanding their own rights, our own rights. Um, and I think that sort of central organizing of a movement really happened yet. And I believe it's possible sort of, for the reasons I mentioned before, like tech has taken off like this and we don't really want it to be taking off like this in our lives. And so what's the mechanism for people around the world to, to, to demand, um, that technology becomes more humane and cares for our wellbeing. And honestly, I think youth and teens could be a really powerful, um, organ, like part of that movement. Um, as we've seen in other movements, the importance of teens and young people standing up and saying, well, adults, aren't going to figure this out, like in the climate movement, you know? Yeah, like what would it look like for teens to lead on some of that too? Not that they should have to, I mean, we, we should be coming out there and making, you know, creating more avenues for organizing. Um, but I do think that hopefully that's on the horizon and that it will have a huge effect that also leads to more employee organizing on the inside because employee retention is such an important, um, you know, lever basically for it's so powerful. If employees are not satisfied and start to leave, then tech companies pay attention.

JM: Right. Um, so there's another question in the chat. That's from an anonymous attendee that kind of echoes, um, some of the things that the teenagers that we spoke to, um, we're also wondering, uh, so the question is what organizing principles would you point a young people to, to make it easier for them to speak for themselves in this arena? Hm.

AVN: Which organizing principles like strategies, or

AL: I would say, how can we empower youth to have, where are the opportunities for young people to advocate for themselves and make tech companies pay attention if, if that's possible.

CW: I think it is possible. Um, and that's sort of an interesting way to think about it as, you know, tech companies in general really want people using their products and pay attention, especially to what happens on their products. You know, maybe not in the ways that we all would always wish, but, um, you know, there are a lot of folks on these platforms on platforms where they can be using those platforms to raise attention to their advocacy, they're advocating power, you know, um, I, I don't have a specific like, oh, here's the real issue you should get on tech talk and here's what you should make. Right. But, um, I think young people are often very, very good at content creation in a way that platforms do notice, and that is actually an incentive for them, uh, and working to figure out, okay, well, what kind of content creation perhaps could we be doing and working together on that does, um, that does draw attention, not just from the public, but you know, from the media, but also from, within the company themselves. I think that is certainly an avenue that, um, is almost more direct than if you were having to do it with like a bank or a hospital or a medical system, or, you know, um, there's sort of that automatic in.

AVN: Yeah. I, um, also really believe in the power of creators. So particularly thinking about Tech-Talk, um, that if people who are creating the content on a platform are demanding, um, other things from the company, then the company listens to it. And oftentimes the most successful influential creators are our young people. Um, and so that's really, um, a huge form of power that, um, young people have. And I wish there were more direct organizing, um, you know, uh, principles or ways for people to, to, um, teens to really influence the direction of tech. That's more at scale. Like I was speaking to, um, for the last question, I will say that, um, one of the things that we are experimenting with is what we're calling team next, which is essentially collecting, um, small artifacts and short form videos of people saying their vision for tech. And we want to particularly focus on young people and lifting up to young people's vision, um, for tech, but also lift up many other forms of, um, diverse voices that are typically left out of, um, the tech sector. And we don't know exactly what form those are going to take or how we're going to share them, or where are we going to share them. But, um, we do believe that it's important to kind of lift up a mosaic of visions for Tech's future that are that's inspiring. Um, and that, that future and those visions, um, can and should come from outside of the silos of Silicon valley. So we'll be asking a lot of teams to share their vision and hope that, um, that content is inspiring for people.

AL: Thank you. Um, I think we have time for one last question. Um, and then as I'm going to ask this question, but as long as you're thinking about answering it, think about if there's any last comments you'd like to add or share. Um, but this last question is, um, from Melissa who asks, I'm interested in how your, how your experience you have in terms of balancing paternalism and protectionism of youth versus respecting their emerging autonomy and valuing their authority over matters related to their own behavior. How, how does that get thought through in, you know, in thinking about how to both protect and empower, um, in, in helping to make things better for you or helping to empower, enhance wellbeing for youth in these platforms?

CW: This is a question that makes me wish we had more time to talk about this angle of, um, actually, because that's the, you know, there is this, this, there is this issue of, okay, you know, folks can make their own choices. What if they are bad choices or what if they end up being bad choices? Okay, well then do we like penalize them for all time because of that one bad choice they made depends. Right.

Um, and there's just a lot, I think there's just a lot of back and forth and uncertainty around the question of how much control, frankly you give any user, like the, we talked about like the average user we're designed for. It's like, okay, it's like this white male Silicon valley guy. They, they don't always make good decisions either. Right. So, you know, figuring out like, that's a question overall, when it comes to like, how much, how much leeway do you give folks to like, you know, set themselves on fire here.

Um, but the consequences are so much harder. Or I think we, as a society perceived the consequences to be so much more potentially detrimental to young people. And so there's this impulse to be like, okay, well, the best way we can protect them is like bubble wrap up, you know? Um, and I do think that we need to as a, as an industry, but also as a society address, how paternalistic that point of view is right now, some of that is incentivized again by the laws that we have. Right. And that's, that's for a reason too. Those are paternalistic laws perhaps. Um, but I think, you know, that that is something that, especially as we see folks grow up online, right. Which we've been seeing now for a while, but we're really seeing now, um, I think we're going to get some different answers to, and again, based on the data, you know, sort of the, what we're able to see happen over time.

AVN: Yeah. This is a question that comes up all the time. Um, and particularly with youth, but in general, um, user agency versus paternalism. And it's really hard. Um, I think w uh, one of there was somebody at a tech company I was talking to recently who works on this, who was saying that, um, when it comes to, uh, trustworthiness, for example, if we kind of lean back in for that, from the very beginning of the conversation, um, parents sometimes think that they can trust their kid when their kid is in their bedroom, because I know where their kid is. Um, but that's not exactly the epitome of maybe how the kid wants to be living their life is like locked up in their bedroom. And so, um, so what does it mean to, um, have an environment where there's protection, but also, um, freedom and, um, and so, you know, I also think about teams particularly where like feeling controlled by somebody else or something else is like many teens, worst nightmare, or the thing that like teens hate the most.

And so, um, that's another, another piece where there can be, um, user agency that's built in. So for example, um, going back to Tiktok, as an example, it's like, um, the algorithm very quickly gets to know the things that, um, you want to watch, right? Th um, and starts to adapt that. But what if you have a teen, for example, who's in recovery from an eating disorder and, um, they don't want to see all of the contents that they were seeing around dieting or things related to body image. Um, but the only choice they have is just to go off the platform, as opposed to saying, I want to reset this algorithm and like, sort of start over with it. I'm done, um, with this or something much more innocuous. Like I like Justin Bieber yesterday, and now I'm like into punk. It's like, I don't want to see Justin Bieber videos all the time. And so there's, there's that kind of control that can actually be a protection where the, where the team gets to say, I'm protecting myself now as well. And there's the ability to do that.

CW: And just to that point like that is that that's a set of controls that every user can benefit from. Right. And again, to this theme of like, when you develop for teens, you actually are probably benefiting the rest of your user base. You know, there's all kinds of instances across, especially recommendation platforms where, um, you know, you, you suddenly do not, for example, want to be getting recommendations about a particular thing, and maybe it's the Justin Bieber, you know, like a U-turn, but maybe it's like, I'm having a baby. And then I had a miscarriage, right? Like, there's, there's a lot of very human experiences that if we give more controls to users overall, maybe we develop them for teens in particular to allow this agency to develop. But like, that's good for everybody. Yeah.

AL: Thank you so much. And so I'd love to just, we're going to wrap this up. I'd love to hear if Aiden and Charlotte, you have a very short, final thoughts you'd like to share as we, as we, uh, as we end this event.

AVN: Sure. Um, well, first of all, just deep gratitude, um, today to, in society and to you, Amanda, for, um, writing the report for all the work, you all put into it for inviting me to speak on this panel. Um, it's so it's such important work and teens, um, are often unseen. Um, even though they are, uh, such an important like stakeholder, you could say, um, in our current and future, um, world with tech, and I just want to leave folks with, particularly if you are in technology and you're doing this work, um, sometimes it can feel really lonely. And I want to invite people to remember that you actually are not alone, that there are so many people across the sector, across the world that are, um, dedicated to caring for user wellbeing, um, and to taking risks to do that. And sometimes I find that even if we don't know people personally, just remembering that they're out and that actually metaphorically we're locking arms together can create, um, a lot of resilience. Um, and there are, um, organizations and institutions like Charlotte's like mine that exists to support you. Um, and I would just encourage people. Um, if you're inspired by that and want support in the work, then please go to our website, sign up for our newsletter. Um, we're in the process of really building and expanding our community a lot and we'll be revamping our offerings. And, um, we want to be there for folks to enable you, um, to do more of this work.

CW: I could not say that better myself. Thank you Aden. That's exactly what I would say as well in these closing comments, you know, many, many people think about these things, worry about these things, um, and can find community working in these things. And I think a lot of what, you know, our jobs are Aiden and myself and others like us is, is bringing those folks together and providing spaces where we can, you don't have a lot of these questions that came up in Q and a, like have a lot of those asked and, and maybe not answered, but, but addressed, you know, and, and starting to work on those together across the world, across industries. Um, that's a big part of why I'm frankly, fairly optimistic about our direction going forward. Um, you know, I think I just want to say thank you again to Data & Society, um, and to the researchers and the research assistants and everybody who put this together because, um, I think this report is such an important, um, it's such an important like public baseline for where we are today. And it gives a really good set of recommendations on how to start moving forward with what we now know. Um, and I'm really looking forward to certainly having that in our resource library and pointing people to that when they have these questions. But, um, you know, I'm really looking forward to how this develops over the next five years as well.

AL: Great, thank you so much. So we're going to leave everybody with a short video to kind of exit out on, and as Rigo tees that up, I'd like to think Charlotte and Ian for joining us today for a fabulous discussion. This has been wonderful. Um, I'd like to thank Rigo and Eli for their behind the scenes work today. Um, I'd like to thank our research assistants, Joan and Ireti for their work on this project, especially curating the questions for today. Um, and to Kelly Owens my coauthor on this report. Um, I want to let everyone know this event has been recorded and the video and audio recordings, as well as the report are all and will be available on our website. Uh, and thank you to, to all the members of the audience who joined us today. Um, I thank you so much. Take care.

VIDEO: If you had a wish, what would you wish technology could do for the world?

Do you think technology should be like when you were growing up, it would be helping my kids have fun and helping myself have fun. What is your wish for technology for the world? So if you guys don't know, I love dressy. I even have to have headbands, but I, there's only one old vinyl left in the world, which I think is really, really sad. And so I think that maybe they could help save drafts. Somehow. I still don't

know. I'm still coming up with an idea of how they could help save dress, but I know the last question is what is technology worthy of human spirit? I don't quite know what that question is, but I'm guessing what can technology do to help humans? I should not, I should not watch any more shows and I should cook and I should show my kids that they should be a good listener and listen to their parents when he was technology.

AL: Um, [inaudible] thank you all so much. Bye-bye thanks.