You can't block people offline

Examining how Facebook's Affordances Shape the Disclosure Process

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/ **Introduction**

Self-disclosure includes *any information exchange that refers to the self*, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future. (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979)

/ Introduction

/ Theoretical Framework

Figure 1. The Disclosure Decision Model.

Situational Cues

Individual Differences

Possible Goals
Approval Intimacy
Relief Identity
Control

Stage 1
Is a Particular Goal Salient?
No
Yes

No Disclosure Occurs

Stage 2
Is there an Appropriate Target?
Is Disclosure an Appropriate Strategy?
No
Yes

Stage 3
What is the Subjective Utility?
What is the Subjective Risk?

Disclosure Breadth
Disclosure Duration
Disclosure Depth

Contexts of self-disclosure

Goal saliency*

Appropriateness**
(Target, Strategy)

Potential Risks***

Decisions of self-disclosure
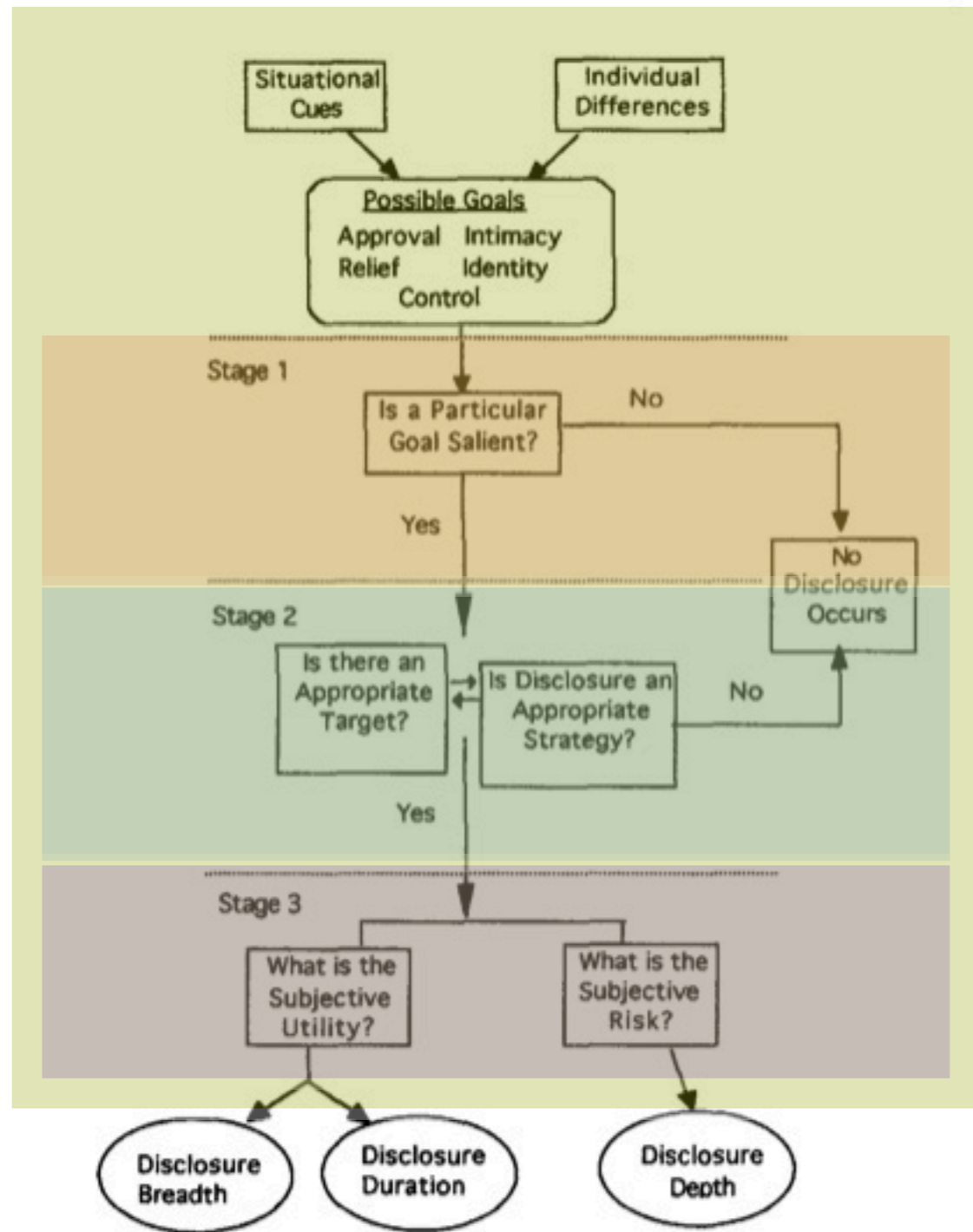
Omarzu, J. (2000). A disclosure decision model: Determining how and when individuals will self-disclose.

/ Theoretical Framework

Disclosure Goals*

- Social approval : to garner support and affection
- Intimacy : to build a closer relationship with others
- Social control : convey 'packaged information' for impression management
- Identity clarification : to formulate his/her ideas clearly
- Relief of distress : to release emotions and gain some sense of catharsis

Disclosure Risks*

- Social rejection : formal or informal isolation/exclusion
- Hurt feelings : if the disclosure is negatively valenced or imprudent
- Reduction of Integrity : if disclosed information is inconsistent with existing impressions
- Loss of control : the discloser may lose power to regulate situations and outcomes

* Derlega & Grzelak. (1979). Appropriateness of self-disclosure.
*** Baxter & Montomery. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues and Dialectics.*
*** Parks. (1982). Ideology in interpersonal communication: Off the couch and into the world

/ Theoretical Framework
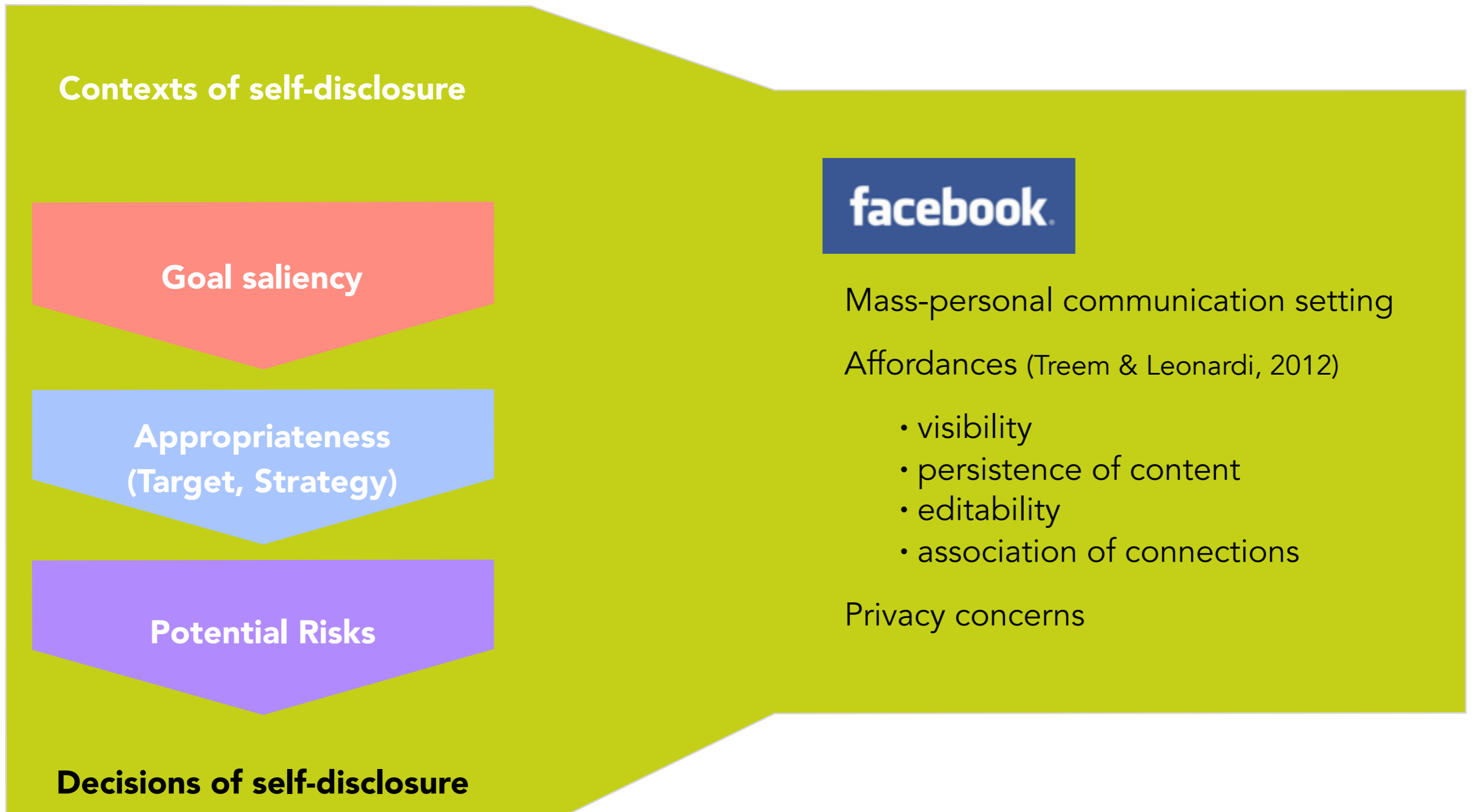
Contexts of self-disclosure

Goal saliency

**Appropriateness
(Target, Strategy)**

Potential Risks

Decisions of self-disclosure

facebook.

Mass-personal communication setting

Affordances (Treem & Leonardi, 2012)

- visibility
- persistence of content
- editability
- association of connections

Privacy concerns

Omarzu, J. (2000). A disclosure decision model: Determining how and when individuals will self-disclose.

/ Research Question

RQ1. What self-disclosure (a) goals and (b) risks do Facebook users identify when using the site?

RQ2. What strategies do Facebook users employ to mitigate self-disclosure risks and privacy concerns?

/ Method

Sample

Follow-up interview data

Criterion sampling - advanced privacy settings or Friend Lists

26 American graduate students

30-95 minutes-long interview

Analysis

Qualitative analysis software - Dedoose

Line-by-line coding by 2 coders

Meta-matrix

/ Findings

RQ1 (a). Self-disclosure Goals on Facebook

1. Social approval goal

   • share information that friends might be interested in

   • entertain friends

2. Social control goal

   • navigate self-presentation

   • selectively disclose information to shape a desired self-image

   • Graduate students were connected with faculty members, previous or current students.

"I just wanted to be on the safe side and I also have classmates who I just feel like I should keep some professionalism with, so I just try to, still show my personality, but not everything."

/ Findings

RQ1 (a). Self-disclosure Goals on Facebook

3. Intimacy goal

• increase or maintain relational closeness

• some participants preferred personal channels

4. Identity clarification goal

• clarify opinions or beliefs on various issues

e.g.) sharing news links on issues from abortion, politics, to research field

• focus on a specific aspect of one's identity

"I have an 8-year-old so my life is SpongeBob most of time, and that is not reflected [in my profile]...I'm not a wife, I'm not a mom, I'm just Dana on Facebook and these are Dana's interests and this is Dana's space. And if you meet me, it's going to be different. I'm going to have mayonnaise on my shirt from fixing that sandwich or something like that. So I think that's the primary difference. It' s not a different me, but it' s just me **undiluted** if that makes sense."

/ Findings

RQ1 (a). Self-disclosure Goals on Facebook

5. Relief of distress goal

  • cathartic role of self-disclosure

  • yet, Facebook is often not considered a place for this goal

6. Personal record goal

  • online diary of events

  • Facebook's affordances facilitate this goal

  • potential online repository for digital records

"I status update a lot, mainly because we [academics] have a job where you don't get to see a lot of your products, so as soon as I'm done with something, I'm like, 'Ooh, I just finished X.' So I feel like something has happened."

/ **Findings**

RQ1 (b). Self-disclosure Risks on Facebook

1. Interpersonal-based Risks

• Social rejection

‣ oversharing, complaints, boring contents

‣ taboo, inappropriate topics

‣ might interfere interpersonal goals (e.g., social approval)

• Hurt feelings

‣ difficulties in selective self-presentation on Facebook

"When I got accepted here into the PhD program, I knew some of my Facebook Friends had applied and been rejected and so I kind of kept it to myself. ...I guess kind of always worried about sounding braggadocio, you know, I just don't want to put myself out there in that way. I think **I try to think about how people's feelings are impacted because it is a social space**."

/ **Findings**

RQ1 (b). Self-disclosure Risks on Facebook

2. Impression management-based Risks

- Reduction of integrity & Loss of control
    - ‣ potential damage of their public image
    - ‣ diverse social roles as a student, teacher, and potential employee

3. Affordance-based Risks

- Visibility & Persistence of content
- Association
    - ‣ difficulties in various self-presentation
    - ‣ Context collapse

/ **Findings**

RQ1 (b). Risk management Strategies

1. Network regulation Strategy

   • limits the recipient of disclosures

      ‣ preventive strategy for boundary regulation

      ‣ e.g., rejecting Friend request, hiding Friends, becoming invisible

2. Targeted disclosure Strategy

   • segregate the recipient of disclosures

      ‣ e.g., Friend Lists

      ‣ laborious and requires self-efficacy

> "I guess it's kind of hard to do on there. You have to really know what you're doing with the privacy settings, and I don't want to bother with it. It's not that important to me to post [things I wouldn't want my mom to see] anyways, so I just let it be."

/ Findings

RQ2. Risk management Strategies

3. Self-censorship Strategy

  • decide to not engage in self-disclosure

  • Hogan's lowest common denominator

  • sacrifice self-disclosure goals

> "I definitely consider who is going to see it, if I want them to see it. Obviously if I don't want one person to see it, I'm not going to put it up there. Period."

4. Content regulation Strategy

  • moving to personal channels or communicating in code

    ‣ social steganography

/ Discussion

Contexts of self-disclosure

Goal saliency

Appropriateness
(Target, Strategy)

Potential Risks

Decisions of self-disclosure

- Self-disclosures in a non-traditional communication context
  ‣ a new goal and risk
  ‣ expanding previous theoretical framework

Mass-personal communication setting

Affordances (Treem & Leonardi, 2012)

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/ Discussion

- Social control Goal & related risks
  - ‣ Goffman's front stage and backstage
  - ‣ blurry boundary for self-disclosure on Facebook
  - ‣ evolving strategies
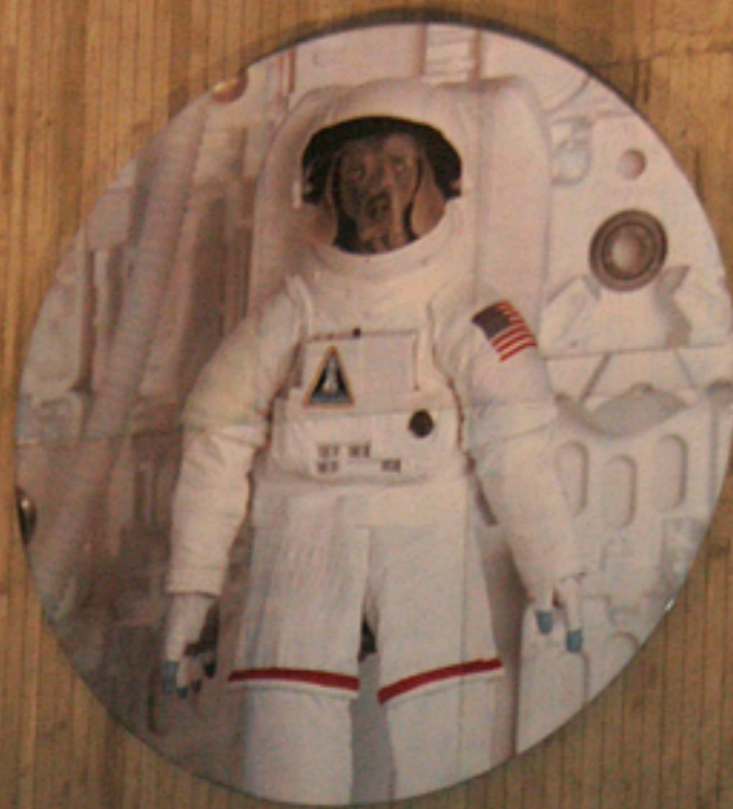
Backstage image by Monty Coles

Thank you.

Contact to authors

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