Narrative Threat Zine-ing: Storytelling and Reproductive Privacy Communication

CORA SULA, George Mason University, USA
RAYHANA MOUAOUIA, Barnard College, Columbia University, USA
LUCY SIMKO, Barnard College, Columbia University, USA
NORA MCDONALD, George Mason University, USA

The U.S. reproductive health landscape is fragmented, with legal, digital, and interpersonal privacy risks that are highly contextual and often poorly addressed by conventional privacy guidance. Prior work has proposed narrative threat modeling as an alternative to predominantly technical approaches to reproductive privacy communication. Building on this work, we introduce *narrative threat zine-ing*, a qualitative method that invites participants to communicate reproductive privacy through story and form rather than checklists or technical instruction. We report findings from four zine-making workshops in which participants created zines for people they worried about in the post-*Roe* landscape. Participants consistently framed reproductive privacy through relationships, lived experience, and storytelling, positioning zines as tools for awareness, solidarity, and collective sensemaking rather than prescriptive guidance. We argue that narrative threat zine-ing offers a method for examining how people interpret and communicate reproductive privacy under conditions of legal and social uncertainty.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **Empirical studies in HCI**;

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Zines, privacy, reproductive health, narrative threat modeling

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1 Introduction

Note: the views expressed in the findings of this paper are those of participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors.

In the post-Roe landscape, reproductive health privacy risks extend well beyond clinical settings, emerging across patients' interpersonal and digital environments. While prior work has examined how providers manage privacy within institutional infrastructures—such as electronic health records (EHRs) and clinical communication practices [46]—these protections do not extend into the broader contexts where risk increasingly carries legal and prosecutorial consequences. However, reproductive privacy threats often emerge in idiosyncratic and difficult-to-anticipate ways, with seemingly innocuous interpersonal encounters or digital data acquiring significance only after device searches or retrospective investigations [15]. As a result, reproductive privacy cannot be

Authors' Contact Information: Cora Sula, csula@gmu.edu, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA; Rayhana Mouaouia, rm4098@barnard.edu , Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, New York, USA; Lucy Simko, lsimko@barnard.edu, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, New York, USA; Nora McDonald, nmcdona4@gmu.edu, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA.



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fully addressed through institutional safeguards alone, but must be understood as distributed across relationships, environments, and moments of uncertainty.

Building on feminist HCI [3], prior work suggests that privacy guidance is most effective when it is situated, interpretable, and responsive to lived experience, rather than prescriptive or narrowly technical [18, 23, 42, 45, 57, 62]. Sula et al. introduce *narrative threat modeling* as an approach to communicating reproductive privacy strategies through story, tone, and form—for example, via non-digital, community-based media such as zines—rather than through technical instructions or checklist-style guidance typically produced by advocacy organizations [71]. This approach considers how people make sense of risk through narrative, affect, and resonance, rather than through exhaustive threat enumeration.

To examine how people interpret and communicate reproductive health through narrative making, we conducted what we term *narrative threat zine-ing* workshops with university students. These workshops invited participants to create zines intended for themselves and/or the people they worried about most in the post-Roe climate. Rather than evaluating the resulting zines as privacy guidance, we examine the forms of storytelling, solidarity, awareness, and collective sensemaking elicited through narrative threat zine-ing, as well as how these are expressed in participants' narratives.

This study asks: When participants are invited to create reproductive privacy zines inspired by narrative threat modeling, what forms of privacy communication emerge, and how are reproductive privacy risks expressed through narrative?

We found that participants were highly attuned to the challenges women face in accessing abortion care, including the complex and often under-recognized dimensions of privacy risk. This awareness was especially pronounced among participants who straddled multiple cultural or national contexts, drawing on transnational and interpersonal perspectives to make sense of these risks through contrast. These perspectives resulted in narrative and situated zines grounded in personal experience, whereas participants with less direct exposure to reproductive restrictions tended to produce broader system-level critiques without centering a subject or specific scenario.

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of storytelling as a way to support others navigating these conditions. However, their approaches to storytelling varied: some remained at a more abstract, issue-oriented level, while others drew on intimate, situated accounts that shared characteristics of narrative threat modeling. Across both forms, participants highlighted the proximal risks abortion seekers face—from finances and legal systems to intimate partners and family members.

Our work contributes the following to the CSCW community:

- We examine narrative threat zine-ing as a qualitative method for eliciting situated understandings of reproductive privacy.
- We identify how participants transform lived, interpersonal, and transnational experiences into narrative accounts of privacy, illustrating when narrative communication becomes concrete, situated, and resonant.
- We show that participants positioned storytelling as a practice of awareness, solidarity, and collective sensemaking rather than prescriptive instruction, suggesting alternative ways of thinking about privacy communication in reproductive health.

Our work draws on narrative threat modeling [71] and feminist making [33, 56] while engaging broader scholarship on reproductive privacy and reproductive justice [59]. Our methodological contribution is to demonstrate how narrative threat zine-ing can function as a qualitative elicitation method for studying how people communicate reproductive privacy.

2 Related Literature

In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization overturned Roe v. Wade and removed federal constitutional protections for abortion. At the time of this publication, abortion is effectively banned in 13 states, with six additional states enforcing strict gestational limits [36]. Legislative activity continues to escalate and diversify, including efforts to restrict telemedicine access to abortion medication [28, 67], criminalize assistance to minors seeking care [78], and penalize those who help individuals travel across state lines [24, 52]. In some jurisdictions, individuals have been prosecuted for disposing of miscarried fetal remains [69], while officials have warned that miscarriages themselves may invite criminal scrutiny [22]. These developments build upon earlier patterns of criminalization that predate Dobbs, in which fetal abuse laws were used to prosecute women for miscarriages [19, 31, 53].

However, the risks introduced by these legal changes are not only defined by formal statutes or penalties, but by how enforcement unfolds in practice. In the post-Roe landscape, enforcement operates through hybrid legal and interpersonal channels, where the relevant adversary is often not solely the state or a technology platform, but a trusted actor embedded in everyday life—such as a partner, family member, or healthcare worker who may disclose information, interpret behavior as suspicious, or facilitate scrutiny.

In Texas, for example, the state's "bounty hunter" law, which enables private civil enforcement of abortion restrictions [6], and newer statutes allowing civil suits against abortion-pill provider—and potentially those assisting them—create expansive liability frameworks [29]. Investigations need not originate not from any formal state surveillance apparatus, but rather from reports by family members, acquaintances, or providers. In Idaho, a woman and her adult son were charged with second-degree kidnapping after he transported his minor girlfriend to Oregon for an abortion without parental consent; the case was initiated after the teen's mother contacted law enforcement, with authorities subsequently relying in part on cellphone data [64]. In Nebraska, a teenager's Facebook messages about abortion pills became evidence after a friend alerted investigators [38].

These cases illustrate a form of uncertainty that extends beyond the severity of penalties to encompass the conditions under which risk emerges. Individuals may not know whether miscarriages must be reported [1], whether abortion will be subject to incarceration or capital punishment, or critically, who might become an adversary. Enforcement commonly begins with a report from someone close, a medical emergency, or an otherwise routine interaction—like clinicians [15, 31, 61, 81], pharmacists [75], parents [64], or partners [44].

In this sense, reproductive privacy risks do not, at this time, primarily originate from omnipresent digital surveillance itself, but from an ecosystem in which ordinary digital data can later be mobilized as evidence. Although datasets such as clinic visit records [16, 77] or abortion-related website logs [28, 34] are theoretically obtainable, documented prosecutions to date have more commonly depended on interpersonal reporting, followed by device searches or warrants for digital records [15, 39]. Despite early media guidance suggesting that individuals delete tools such as period trackers [80], these forms of technical hygiene are unlikely to meaningfully mitigate risk in cases where investigations are initiated through suspicion or interpersonal disclosure.

At the same time, newly proposed laws, including some advanced in Ohio, would expand institutional surveillance by requiring pregnancy registration and treating miscarriages as reportable "cases of death," with failure to report potentially prompting investigation [51]. This suggests a growing convergence between interpersonal reporting and formalized monitoring infrastructures.

States have also been threatening to access medical records [30]. Although often invoked as a safeguard for these records, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the primary U.S. federal law governing the privacy and disclosure of health information, primarily

regulates routine medical data sharing rather than investigative access [70, 76]. Once a case is initiated—frequently through interpersonal reporting—protected health information may still be disclosed under legal compulsion, positioning clinical records as downstream evidence rather than a primary site of surveillance. As records move across systems, providers often have limited control over their subsequent use or redistribution [81]. Together, these dynamics reinforce a model of risk that unfolds across interconnected interpersonal, legal, and institutional pathways.

These structural vulnerabilities challenge dominant privacy frameworks grounded in notice and consent, which assume that individuals can meaningfully control data flows in environments where information travels across institutional, legal, and relational boundaries beyond their awareness or influence. As McDonald and Andalibi [45] argue, healthcare consent must be reconceptualized to address not only formal disclosure but also the downstream circulation and recombination of reproductive health data—including data generated through seemingly routine interactions—that can produce severe and unanticipated risk. Yet, case law suggests that investigations are often set in motion through interpersonal adversaries and leakage, placing the onus on individuals to anticipate highly contingent and situational forms of exposure.

Recent HCI scholarship has increasingly examined abortion and reproductive care as sociotechnical systems shaped by legal restrictions, care infrastructures, and community support networks. This work has explored designing for abortion care through metaphor and storytelling [43], documenting reproductive care infrastructures and the technologies that sustain them [49, 55], participatory approaches to reproductive justice and care activism [5, 54], and the role of narrative in communicating abortion experiences [40]. The collective emphasis is on reproductive technologies as something which are embedded within broader systems of care, activism, and structural constraints. Our work complements this literature by examining how participants themselves communicate reproductive privacy through narrative, focusing specifically on privacy sensemaking and communication rather than the design or evaluation of reproductive technologies.

2.1 Privacy guidance and the limits of technical threat modeling

Dominant digital privacy guidance for abortion-related threats [21, 27] inherits assumptions from computer security and usable security traditions, where threat modeling emphasizes identifying adversaries, enumerating attack surfaces, and prescribing technical protections [65, 72]. However, prior work has recognized that experts often fail to give actionable, comprehensive, and prioritized privacy and security advice, overwhelming and confusing a lay-audience [57], and that advice given in context can be dangerously generic [18, 62].

However, reproductive privacy risks often do not emerge through discrete technical attacks alone, but through diffuse interpersonal, institutional, and legal processes that are difficult to formalize within conventional threat modeling frameworks [15, 37]. Recent work in reproductive privacy has therefore questioned whether existing security paradigms adequately capture how surveillance and harm are actually experienced in practice [71].

Reflecting this, Human-centered security and privacy research has increasingly recognized that risks are contextual, socially situated, and unevenly distributed across populations [79].

In such contexts, checklist-style guidance and technical hygiene advice may oversimplify or fail to resonate with lived experiences of risk. Prior CSCW research has shown that responses to post-Roe reproductive surveillance are often shaped by symbolic and socially meaningful acts—such as deleting period tracking applications—rather than by comprehensive operational security practices [11]. This raises questions about how privacy strategies might be communicated in ways that better reflect the entangled, situational, and often unpredictable nature of reproductive privacy threats.

2.2 The need for feminist approaches to privacy that support situated risk and intersectionality

Feminist and intersectional scholarship offers critical insight into why much of the dominant privacy guidance for people navigating abortion restrictions may fall short. Reproductive privacy sits at the intersection of concerns about technological and informational harms, which are experienced within existing social, relational, and legal structures that shape both exposure to risk and the resources available for responding to it.

Crenshaw's articulation of intersectionality demonstrates how solutions that appear universal can fail those positioned at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalization [17]. In the context of domestic violence, for example, formal protections may be practically inaccessible to women whose economic dependency, immigration status, or language barriers constrain their ability to act on those protections. As Crenshaw illustrates, "freedom" from abuse may be illusory when exercising that freedom entails losing housing, legal status, financial support, or community ties. This attention to intersecting structures of power also foregrounds the importance of situated, contextual knowledge in that what people know about risk, and what responses are available to them, are shaped by their social and structural positions and legal contexts [13, 14]. Feminist HCI scholars have also emphasized the importance of culturally responsive and embodied design in women's health contexts, for example in menstrual tracking technologies (e.g., [41]), and more broadly in efforts to reimagine health technologies around lived, sociocultural experience rather than abstracted users [2].

Empirical work in reproductive healthcare contexts suggests that providers are often acutely aware of these relational and structural constraints. McDonald et al. find that providers recognize how language barriers, partner dynamics, and dependency relationships shape patients' privacy risks and, for example, proactively involve translators when they suspect coercion or dishonesty in clinical encounters [46]. Though McDonald et al. [46] discover that providers are attuned to risks their patients face related to identity-based harms and interpersonal abuse, they are less consistently attuned to the legal and prosecutorial risks that abortion patients face post-Roe.

This tension mirrors challenges documented in digital abuse contexts, where advocates assisting survivors report feeling underprepared to navigate the technical idiosyncrasies of cases, even when deeply attuned to relational dynamics [74]. The intimacy of the adversary and the little technical sophistication required to exert control [12, 25, 73]—combined with the ambiguity of everyday digital practices—renders risk difficult to enumerate in advance. Within HCI, feminist approaches have emphasized situated knowledge and the importance of designing with attention to structural power [3].

Feminist HCI and design scholarship has also explored participatory making as a means of surfacing and collectively reflecting on situated and embodied knowledge. D'Ignazio et al., for example, frame feminist making as a form of consciousness raising that can connect personal experiences to broader structural conditions [20]. In intimate and reproductive health contexts, Campo Woytuk et al. similarly use collaborative DIY making to explore embodied knowledge and intimate technologies [9], while related work uses the zine itself as a feminist design artifact for imagining reproductive technologies differently [10]. Participatory making can provide a means of articulating embodied and situated experiences otherwise difficult to capture through more conventional formats.

In the post-Roe climate, as in technology-facilitated abuse, power does not depend on technical mastery but on relational dynamics and proximity and the weaponization of ordinary digital data (e.g., [44, 50]). Reproductive privacy risks are shaped simultaneously by relationship dynamics, volatile state-level legal regimes, and health-related vulnerabilities such as miscarriage risk [42];

attentiveness within the clinic therefore does not resolve the broader challenge of anticipating reproductive privacy risks across these contexts, rendering generalized, technically oriented privacy advice structurally insufficient.

2.3 Zines as narrative threat modeling

Narrative threat modeling proposed in [42, 71] offers a situated practice in which privacy and surveillance risks are explored through story, aesthetic, tone, and lived experience rather than checklists or prescriptive instruction. The narrative threat model presses for guidance grounded in lived realities of digital harms. Rather than asking individuals to simply adopt generic privacy guidance without understanding its efficacy given their particular circumstance [42], narrative threat modeling surfaces how people make sense of risk through story, analogy, and emotional resonance.

Zines—a DIY, subversive, and collectively produced form of media—and other forms of media have long functioned as tools of counter-public expression and feminist organizing [48, 56, 60]. Their informal aesthetic, non-digital format—which has low production barriers even if high labor production costs—and circulation outside institutional channels make them particularly suited to marginalized or contested contexts. In HCI, Hay et al. [33] introduce "zineography" as a community-based research-through-design method that leverages zine-making to surface situated knowledge in unequal contexts in the process of design. Zines enable participants to articulate lived realities through narrative, imagery, tone, and materiality, rather than through methods that presuppose a certain perspective, values (even if well intended), and framing of a problem [26].

In reproductive health settings, where digital traceability of subversive material itself may pose risk, non-digital media such as zines carry additional significance. They allow for the communication of sensitive information without reliance on surveilled or censored platforms. Prior work introducing narrative threat modeling argues that such narrative forms may better support people navigating reproductive risk than prescriptive guidance [71].

Advocacy groups have used zine forms. For instance, Reproductive Equity Now distributes a free zine that teaches readers how to spot "crisis pregnancy centers" and protect their data when seeking abortion care [58]. Digital Defense Fund has published a zine-like privacy toolkit [27]. Library science research documents a growing network of academic and public libraries that preserve and circulate zines as alternative archives of marginalized knowledge [4]. Methodologically, zine-making is a participatory, justice-oriented research method that centers lived experience and critical reflexivity. In other words, zines, as both model and medium, offer relational and situated tools that may very well be uniquely suited to this moment in reproductive health privacy.

However, little empirical work has examined how individuals translate experiential knowledge into narrative privacy artifacts. Building on Sula et al.'s [71] formulation of narrative threat modeling—which conceptualizes zines as a medium for communicating privacy through story, tone, and form—we examine how individuals translate their knowledge and experiences into narrative representations of risk in reproductive health. Specifically, we study how university students, drawing on their own experiences and cultural contexts, produce zines intended to support those they worry about most in the post-Roe landscape.

3 Methods

3.1 Study context and participants

We conducted our study at Barnard College, a liberal arts college within a large university in the Northeastern U.S., which has an established zine library and culture.

Participants were students recruited through campus flyers inviting individuals to participate in a research-based zine-making workshop about reproductive health privacy. We were explicit that no artistic experience was required. Interested individuals contacted the research team via email and were scheduled for one of four 90-minute workshops.

We recruited a total of 19 participants, four to six participants per workshop (six in workshop one, five in workshop two, and four in workshops three and four). Students who attended the workshops were from a wide variety of undergraduate majors including, but not limited to, political science, computer science, environmental science, cognitive science, English, economics, psychology, history, and education. In addition, nearly all participants told us that they had at least heard of or read a zine, and some had experience making them. Participants were given a $65 honorarium.

Consistent with our interpretive approach, we did not systematically collect participants' ages, gender identities, sexual orientations, or geographic backgrounds beyond what participants voluntarily disclosed during workshop discussion. Rather than treating demographic characteristics as explanatory variables, our analysis focused on the experiences, identities, and social contexts that participants themselves brought into their accounts of reproductive privacy [47]. Recruitment materials described the workshop as addressing reproductive health privacy, although the workshop prompts and resulting discussion focused primarily on abortion and contraception.

While our participants were university students rather than individuals actively seeking abortion care, our goal was not to capture the experiences of abortion seekers directly. Rather, we sought to examine how participants interpreted reproductive privacy from their own social, cultural, familial, and legal contexts and translated those understandings into narrative artifacts intended to support others. As our findings illustrate, participants brought experiences involving peers, family histories, reproductive healthcare, transnational contexts, and shifting legal conditions to this process.

Particularly because of the sensitive topic of our work, we thought carefully about ethics and participant comfort throughout our study design, which was approved by our institution's IRB. Our approach emphasized minimizing unnecessary collection of identifying information, providing participants control over what they chose to disclose and create, and reducing institutional traces wherever feasible. We were particularly cognizant of creating pathways for participation without institutional surveillance: our recruitment flyers invited participants to contact us through *either* a ProtonMail account we had set up, or our university accounts (though none contacted our ProtonMail); we also did not collect participants' names on the consent forms, and paid them with physical gift cards. When we recorded participants during the workshops, we did so using dedicated digital audio/video recorders rather than our personal phones, creating professional distance and reducing the possibility that recordings might be accidentally uploaded to our personal cloud services. Finally, during the workshops, we did not pressure anyone to share anything, and did our best to create a welcoming, warm, and safe atmosphere.

3.2 Workshop design and procedure

Workshops were held in rooms on campus. We provided participants with food and refreshments, and all materials needed for zine-making (e.g., paper, markers, magazines for collage as shown in Figure **??**). We gave participants blank zines made by folding a piece(s) of paper into eight squares and cutting the middle two squares [35] or making one big fold into two squares. Zines came in three different sizes: small (2.75x4.25in—an 8.5x11in paper folded into eight pages) medium (4.25x5.5in—a 11.69x16.54in paper folded into eight pages) and large (5.5x8.5in—two pieces of 8.5x11in paper stapled together and folded in two to create four pages).

We began each session with discussion in which participants reflected on why they chose to attend, often sharing personal, cultural, or political motivations related to reproductive health and

privacy. This was followed by a brief introduction to zines and their potential role in communicating sensitive information. We emphasized several key properties of zines as a medium:

- Zines are small, handmade booklets often used to share wisdom, stories, or lived experiences.
- Zines are a non-digital (and thus, more private) way to express sensitive information and offer privacy from the author to the reader both explicitly and implicitly, like through art, image, metaphor, and stories
- Zine authors aren't identifiable if they don't want to be

While Hay et al. [33] emphasizes iterative design exploration, our objective differed. Rather than studying zine-making as a design practice, we used zine-making as a means of eliciting participants' understandings of reproductive privacy and communication.

Participants were given a selection of zines from the zine library to look through and discuss to familiarize them with the zine form. Participants were then given a worksheet describing the goals of the activity and a set of open-ended prompts. They were told that there was no "right" or "wrong" way to create a zine, and were given the following prompt:

The goal is to produce a zine using the following guidelines. How you do this is up to you. There's no right or wrong answer.

Zine ideas, in the context of reproductive health:

- *Something you wish people knew about privacy*
- *A story about supporting someone in a difficult moment*
- *Advice, comfort, or emotional guidance*
- *A scenario you've seen people struggle with*
- *What you want people to hold onto when they are scared, uncertain, or under scrutiny*

While we invited participants to tell personal stories in their zines and in the discussion, our prompts intentionally instructed them to anchor their zines in specificity without pressuring them to reveal something deeply personal—important for participant comfort and ethical research, as well as the elicitation of *organic* storytelling. At no point did we explicitly introduce or define the concept of "narrative threat modeling" to participants.

We intentionally asked participants to create individual rather than collective zines. Because reproductive privacy involves deeply personal, relational, and sometimes stigmatized experiences, individual creation provided participants greater autonomy in determining what to disclose and how to communicate it. This approach also enabled us to examine the diversity of participants' privacy narratives, rather than artifacts produced through negotiation or consensus.

We designed the zine prompts to be broader than explicit questions about privacy. We wanted to avoid priming participants to understand reproductive privacy primarily in terms of devices, data, or technical privacy practices. Instead, the prompts invited participants to begin with reproductive health concerns, experiences, relationships, and imagined audiences, allowing relational and situational dimensions of privacy to emerge through the zine-making and subsequent discussion.

We also provided minimal instruction regarding visual style or composition. Our goal was not to standardize participants' visual or narrative expression, but to understand how they naturally combined text, imagery, tone, and material choices when communicating reproductive privacy.

Participants were given approximately 30 to 45 minutes to create their zines.

3.3 Reflection

Following the zine-making period of roughly 30 minutes, participants shared their zines and reflected on their process, intended audience, and perceived impact. These discussions were facilitated as group conversations. Some participants continued to work on their zines during the discussion period.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 1. Participants making zines

Over the course of multiple workshops, we iteratively refined both the prompts and reflection questions to more explicitly encourage storytelling. In the second and subsequent sessions participants were asked to anchor their zines in a specific person, experience, or situation, as a way of scaffolding more situated narrative forms.

3.4 Other procedures

Each workshop was moderated by one researcher, with an additional one to two researchers taking notes, photos, and scanning zines before participants left. Researchers also made their own zines during the workshop primarily as a way to take pressure off of participants and foster a collaborative environment.

Participants were told that we might use their zines in publications without revealing their identity. They were also told they could take their zines with them if they chose to do so. Some opted to taking zines home with them.

3.5 Data collection and analysis

Analysis proceeded iteratively across the dataset, including workshop recordings, transcripts, zine artifacts, and analytic memos. While we draw on all materials to contextualize participants' intentions and interactions, the zines themselves served as the primary unit of analysis.

One author conducted an initial inductive analysis across early workshop memos and transcripts, developing preliminary themes and identifying variation in how participants constructed and positioned narratives within their zines. The other researchers also wrote memos, transcribed recordings, and engaged in regular discussions to evaluate interpretations and surface points of divergence.

While the analytic focus on narrative was informed by prior work on zines and narrative threat modeling [71], the themes emerged through engagement with the data. This process led to the development of a narrative spectrum that characterized different forms of reproductive privacy communication and was iteratively refined throughout analysis.

Our approach aligns with Reflexive Thematic Analysis [7, 8], in which themes are generated through iterative interpretation rather than formal reliability measures.

Analysis was primarily inductive, with narrative threat modeling serving as a sensitizing concept that informed interpretation rather than a predefined coding framework. We were open to themes emerging from the data while considering how participants' artifacts related to prior work on narrative threat modeling. Interpretations presented here integrate what participants said and what they produced, treating zines as both the primary unit of analysis and as artifacts of situated meaning-making.

Throughout analysis, the research team revisited workshop observations, analytic memos, participants' discussions, and the zines themselves to question developing interpretations, consider alternative explanations, and refine emerging themes. This iterative reflexive process informed our interpretations while preserving an inductive analytic orientation grounded in participants' accounts. Consistent with recent discussions of reflexivity in HCI, we treat reflexivity as an ongoing analytic practice embedded throughout the research process rather than as a standalone statement of researcher positionality [47].

Consistent with our reflexive thematic analytic approach, we do not assign participant identifiers to quotations. Our analysis focuses on patterns of meaning across participants and artifacts; moreover, linking quotations across the manuscript could enable reconstruction of individual-level profiles [8, 47].

The themes presented in the Findings (Section 4) are interpretive rather than mutually exclusive categories. Individual zines reflected multiple themes simultaneously, and the analysis focused on understanding patterns of meaning across artifacts rather than assigning each artifact to a single classification. Accordingly, the Findings are organized around these inductively derived themes rather than existing theoretical constructs. This organization preserves participants' own ways of describing and communicating reproductive privacy, while allowing the Discussion (Section 5) to interpret these empirical patterns in relation to feminist HCI, reproductive justice, and narrative communication scholarship.

3.6 Limitations

Our participant population—primarily university students in or from a legally protected state (New York)—limits the extent to which findings reflect the experiences of individuals navigating acute legal risk. Rather than characterizing abortion seekers directly, the findings illuminate how participants interpreted and communicated reproductive privacy from their own social, cultural, and legal contexts. Future work should examine narrative threat zine-ing with populations more directly affected by reproductive restrictions, including abortion seekers, providers, and community advocates.

We intentionally analyzed the zines as research artifacts rather than deploying them as public educational materials. Because many participants drew on personal experiences, family histories, and imagined audiences, broader dissemination would require additional ethical and design considerations beyond the scope of this study. Future work should examine how narrative threat zine-ing might be adapted for use by healthcare providers, community organizations, or reproductive justice advocates, including evaluating how narrative artifacts are received and interpreted by intended audiences.

4 Findings

Through four narrative threat zine-ing workshops, we examined how participants communicated reproductive privacy through zines. We found that participants' zines connected reproductive health to privacy both explicitly and implicitly through digital, interpersonal, and physical strategies, as well as through broad systemic critique and affective resistance. Participants drew heavily from their lived experiences and backgrounds, considering their own positionality in writing about privacy and reproductive health.

Our analysis begins by examining how participants understood reproductive privacy and surveillance more broadly, contrasting participants whose perspectives on reproductive restrictions were more distant—though highly empathic—with those who had more direct experience navigating reproductive constraints, particularly across transnational contexts (Section 4.1).

We then turn to the zines participants produced, treating the zines themselves as meaningful artifacts of analysis rather than merely reflections of interview content (Section 4.2). Like literary texts, zines communicate meaning across time, audiences, and contexts, inviting interpretation, extrapolation, as well as personal resonance. Their value lies precisely in this partial remove between creator and reader; indeed, zines frequently circulate without clear authorship. For these reasons, we intentionally distinguished between analysis of participant accounts and analysis of the zines themselves. We use our analysis of participant discussion to explore the *how* and *why* behind participants' zines, including how participants' backgrounds and contexts shaped the forms of reproductive privacy communication they produced.

Our analysis identifies four broad forms of reproductive privacy communication spanning a continuum from abstract, issue-oriented reflections to situated narratives grounded in lived experience. We then examine how participants' proximity to reproductive issues corresponds with these different narrative forms and the ways reproductive privacy was communicated (Section 4.3). Finally, we conclude with participants' reflections on the workshop process and their perceptions of storytelling, zines, and narrative approaches to communicating reproductive privacy (Section 4.4).

4.1 Situated understandings of reproductive privacy and control

In this section, we examine how participants' experiences of reproductive access and constraint provided the context through which they understood and made sense of reproductive privacy. Participants approached reproductive privacy through deeply situated lenses shaped by family histories, transnational politics, interpersonal risk, and shifting legal conditions. Across workshops, participants drew on stories of reproductive surveillance and control in the U.S., the Caribbean, and Asia. They tended to connect these experiences to broader questions about bodily autonomy, institutional power, gendered norms, and access to information about abortion.

Some participants from states where abortion remained legal reflected on the stark contrast between their own circumstances and those of friends in more restrictive states—pointing to states like Texas as emblematic of environments where legal risk and surveillance shaped an entirely different reality.

> *I have a friend who's from Texas and I know that—I don't know how strong the ban is, I think it's pretty strong. I [feel] concern for her. It's so crazy that she lives an entire different reality even though we are in the same country.*

Some shared that, despite living in states with legal abortion protections, they still faced logistical, systemic, financial, and social barriers to accessing care, highlighting that significant obstacles can exist even in supportive states.

> *We are in a relatively safe and privileged position and place but ... I'm thinking about how upset I was then to hear that still it took over an hour drive for her to receive an abortion.*

> *Regardless of whether it's legal or not, what I can tell you is it depends a lot on class, if you have the access to private healthcare ... It's about the resources you can access.*

One participant noted that being a minor created distinct vulnerabilities, recalling experiences volunteering for Planned Parenthood where minors from conservative households feared that reproductive disclosure could result in losing emotional, financial, or housing support if family members found out about their abortion.

> *When I was in high school, I worked as a peer educator for Planned Parenthood. I was in [Northeastern state], and abortion is legal there, but people were still worried [about] being underage and not able to access abortion, or if their parents found out, like having*

> *other aspects of their life be at risk: they could lose access to their housing, their familial support.*

A number of participants reflected on their own sense of bodily autonomy in relation to their families' countries of origin, where cultural norms and legal constraints shape what must be kept private—and from whom—in markedly different ways. For example, one participant grappled with the reality that in India, amid patriarchal norms and gender inequity, women may be prevented from learning the sex of a fetus out of concern about sex-selective abortion and femicide. In such cases, women are themselves denied access to information.

> *I grew up in [Northeastern state] so I'm grateful that I grew up with expansive reproductive rights but I think it should be that all people have access to that. And also thinking about ... My family's from India and whenever I go, in every hospital or medical offices, there are signs that it's illegal for anyone to find out the gender of their child there because femicide is such a prevalent issue. So how do you balance access to reproductive care with things like that?*

Another participant reflected on their mother's experience of being forced to undergo several abortions after becoming pregnant before the state-sanctioned age for childbearing while the participant's father worked for the Chinese government, illustrating how reproductive policies during the one-child era in China were enforced through workplace and state institutions [32]. These narratives complicate familiar understandings of "choice" and revealed other forms of reproductive control enacted through family structures, institutions, and policy.

Participants were also motivated by an awareness of shifting and reversing reproductive protections. They described tensions between what had once seemed stable and the current reality, in which rights and safeguards are increasingly uncertain. Their accounts reflected attentiveness to how reproductive conditions could change across time and place.

> *I'm from [Middle Eastern country], and I don't think abortion is legal there ... I remember there were often stories about girls who would come to Miami in America, and I don't know why Miami was popular for that, like to get an abortion. But now Florida is passing laws to make it illegal is an interesting thing ... to see the shift in states which were once like the standard for certain things.*

Participants also discussed uneven access to reproductive information within immigrant contexts. Some described how children of immigrants living with relatives didn't have access to information about abortion.

> *I grew up in [Northeastern city], so a lot of people at my school were born in the U.S. but their parents are immigrants. So a lot of times they leave their children here and have to go back to their country to work. So a lot of people I know, and friends, would live with distant relatives, and not have access to information about abortion or any type of health resources. I think what's really helpful now is the Internet, and finding channels through social media, especially if you don't have direct parent figures.*

Participants approached reproductive privacy not simply as a matter of protecting individual data, but as a complicated condition shaped by migration, family dynamics, institutional authority, legal instability, and access to trusted information infrastructures. These perspectives also appeared throughout the zines, as we discuss in Section 4.2.

4.2 Zines across a spectrum of narrativity

We next examine how participants' understandings of reproductive privacy became expressed in the zines themselves, identifying a spectrum from abstract, issue-oriented communication to narratives anchored in particular people and experiences.

Although some zines depicted more abstract representations of reproductive risks, others created situational stories that were either based on personal experiences or imagined possibilities. Participants engaged extensively with structural and political issues associated with reproductive risks; nevertheless, many zines stayed within abstract understandings and only suggested but did not fully reveal the concrete experience.

To characterize this variation, we identified a spectrum of narrative specificity in participants' zines:

- **Conceptual:** Zines that engaged in reproductive privacy at the level of abstract, issue-oriented, system-level or political critique (e.g., surveillance, legal restrictions, or bodily autonomy) without anchoring these concerns in an explicit person, story, or historical moment.
- **Scenario-based:** Zines that introduce a type of scenario or constraint (e.g., navigating birth control), but not a specific person or unfolding event.
- **Representational narratives:** Zines that incorporated narrative elements, but through symbolic, historical, or distanced figures—positioning risk through analogy rather than immediate lived experience.
- **Situated narratives:** Zines that center a specific person, story, or event—drawing on first-person narrative or ones about which they have intimate knowledge (e.g., family member getting an abortion). These zines most closely resemble the characteristics of narrative threat modeling described by Sula et al. [71].

Zines vary in the extent to which they articulate reproductive privacy risk through concrete, situated narratives (i.e., those most closely resembling narrative threat models) versus more abstract and symbolic representations. Below we describe the spectrum of specificity, ranging from conceptual to fully situated narratives.

4.2.1 Conceptual: system critique without a subject. Several zines critique systems and values—raising concerns about misinformation, government, tech company surveillance, and political representation, without anchoring a specific person or event, as we would expect in narrative threat modeling.

Taking up concern for misinformation, *Social Media is Not Your Doctor* (Figure 2) challenges the role of digital platforms as informal sites of healthcare advice, where influencers and anonymous users dominate the content that is consumed and circulated as fact. The zine's visual language emphasizes epistemic confusion: one collage depicts a figure on their phone being struck by darts from an angelic figure. The image is labeled "healthcare," juxtaposing the appearance of benevolent guidance with imagery of potential harm. Another page renders misinformation as a blurred struggle for visual dominance, evoking people fighting to run or gain situational awareness (as in a public disaster) from something in saturated information environments.

She Loves. So She Gives (Figure 3) frames reproductive rights through inter-generational struggle, juxtaposing the fight for Roe v. Wade by mothers and grandmothers alongside statistics about how many women live in abortion ban states. The zine draws our attention to statistics about limited access to abortion in the US (Figure 3a) and uses the metaphor of a labyrinth to convey a sense of constraint and disorientation, while simultaneously gesturing to the kinds of collective agency we do have—urging readers to vote, protest, stay informed. These actions are positioned as

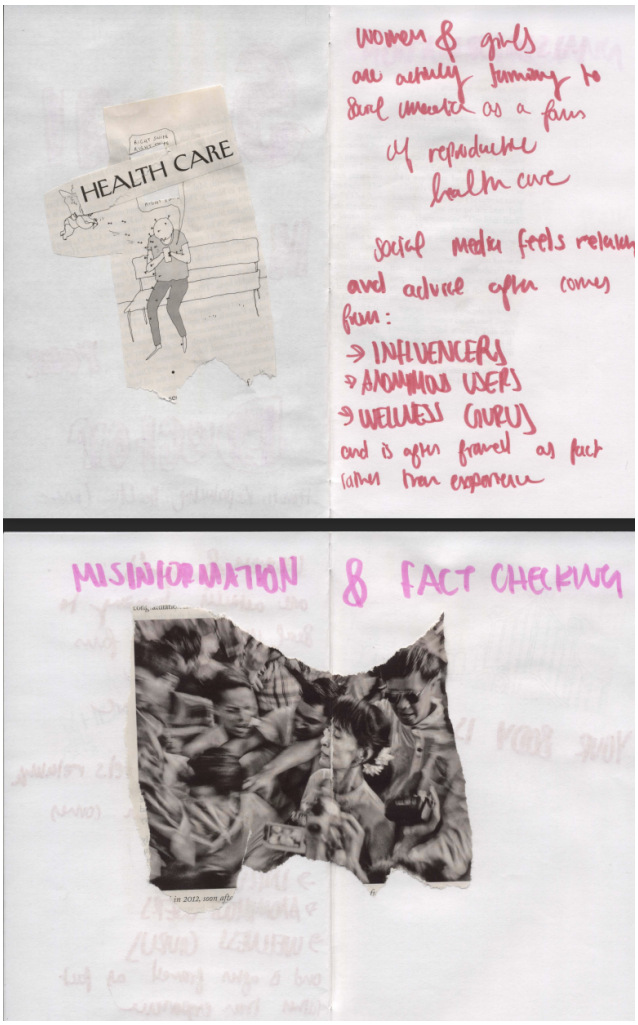


Fig. 2. *Social Media is Not Your Doctor*

continuations of past feminist efforts by ancestors, suggesting a present-day obligation to engage as they did even if there have been setbacks. Aesthetically, the zine blends collage elements, including protest imagery and political cartoons, to situate reproductive rights within the context of a broader history of activism. Inter-generational struggle is evoked through mother and daughter pictures (Figure 3b). Collective and political action, rather than individual or situated scenario, are at the center of this zine.

Her Body, Her Choice (figure not shown) centers structural inequality in political decision-making, using satire to critique the normalization of male authority over reproductive rights. The zine highlights the contradiction in the slogan "her body, her choice": those in positions of power and with the authority to regulate bodies are often men. Through cartoon imagery, it shows the absence of women in government positions that perpetuates reproductive injustice.

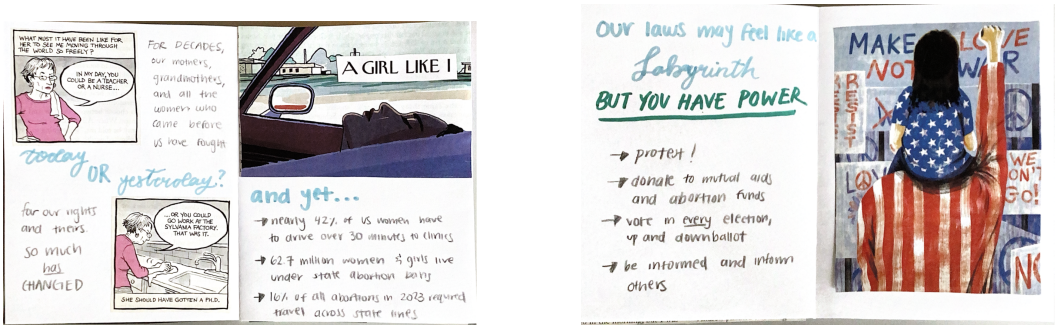


Fig. 3. *She loves. So she gives*

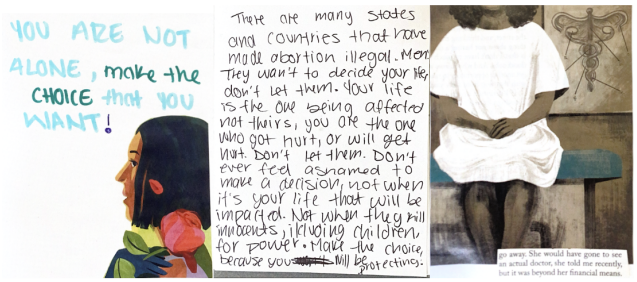
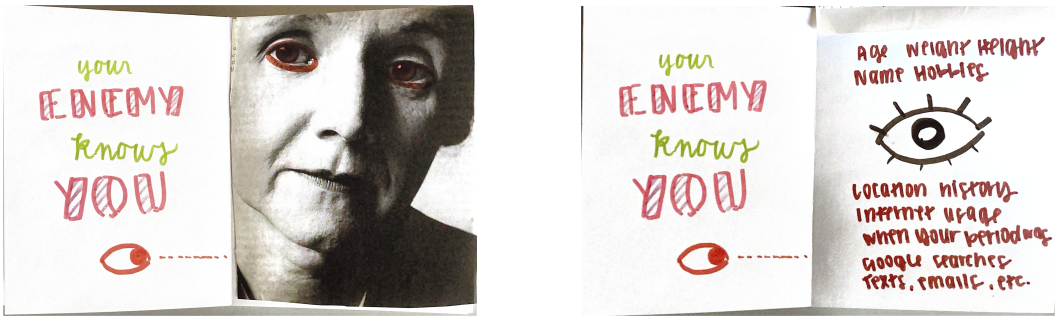


Fig. 4. *You Are Not Alone*

In *The Right to Privacy that We Give Up* (Figure 6) surveillance is an ambient and unavoidable condition of everyday life. This zine shows how routine interactions with people and platforms contribute to broader systems of data extraction. Its aesthetic reinforced this with disembodied arms extending into the frame with phones like microphones that demand personal information—like the public demand for media information. Bright colored app interfaces become monotonous and oppressive. Importantly, the zine does touch on some explicit risks, namely local data storage despite incognito browsing—an abstraction that is quite relevant to the way that women have actually been investigated [15]. That is, abstraction here serves to communicate important and grounded information about privacy risk.

Many zines in this category offered messages of empowerment, positioning political figures as central antagonists, as in *You Are Not Alone* (Figure 4). The zine depicts an immigrant figure alongside the American flag (Figure 9a) and a portrayal of a U.S. president stating "your health information is my business!" The zine also emphasized the financial barriers women face in obtaining timely abortion care through a de-contextualized expert from a collaged magazine article with little context saying "she would have gone to an actual doctor ... but it was beyond her financial means," alongside a picture of a women sitting in a hospital gown on an examination table (Figure 4).

Finally, *Your Phone is Not Your Friend* (Figure 5) is among the closest to conventional privacy guidance, framing the phone as the adversary from which the reader must defend themself. It features interactive elements such as a liftable flap with a magazine clip of a women's face with her eye outlined in red marker that reveals a hand-drawn eye surrounded by categories of personal data. This zine highlights a core paradox: that privacy advice is often accessed through the very



(a) (b)

Fig. 5. *Your Phone is Not Your Friend*

platforms that produce risk. Yet, despite the direct and assertive tone, the zine remains abstract, depicting surveillance as a general condition.

The Right To Privacy That We Give Up (Figure 6) is among the more explicit examples of privacy guidance, urging readers to delete period tracking apps while also questioning the reliability of commonly circulated advice, such as using incognito browsing. Visually, the zine adopts a familiar user experience aesthetic, incorporating images of phones and app logos. In one sequence, blood drops appear over a generic phone screen to represent menstrual tracking data. These same drops reappear within the Snapchat logo, paired with a caption warning that the platform exposes users' location data. This visual repetition suggests how sensitive data circulates across platforms rather than remaining contained within a single app. The zine conveys a broader sense that digital privacy risks are diffuse, leaving users with limited means of control.

While these conceptual zines do not provide narratives that articulate specific privacy threats or situations, they nonetheless represent privacy both implicitly and explicitly through systemic critique, connecting privacy in reproductive health to structural and political inequity and corporate surveillance.

4.2.2 Scenario-based zines. Some zines introduced recognizable situations or constraints but stopped short of grounding them in a particular individual narrative.

These zines offered guidance on birth control and abortion (with one title, *I wish I Knew This About Abortion*, for individuals like them who did not know that their fertility was not at risk) or those seeking to conceal reproductive care from family members, religious communities, or other forms of social oversight. Zines sometimes outline forms of abortion or multiple contraceptive methods (e.g., IUD, NuvaRing, oral contraceptives), with an emphasis on obtaining them without insurance as a strategy for maintaining privacy. They might also provide guidance on abortion-seekers rights (e.g., you can still get one if you are an immigrant) and list resources for obtaining one and for emotional support.

I Wish I Knew This About Abortion (figure not shown) begins with practical guidance about abortion pills and the reassurance that abortion does not affect future fertility. It provides links to specific websites alongside broader advice about finding verified clinics and caring for oneself during the process. The zine also takes an empowering tone, reminding readers that, for example, insurance in New York must cover abortion care and that abortion access is available regardless of immigration status. It concludes with information about Plan B.

The central scenario underlying the zine is an unintended pregnancy, and the zine attempts to anticipate the many constraints someone might face in that situation. It is never entirely clear

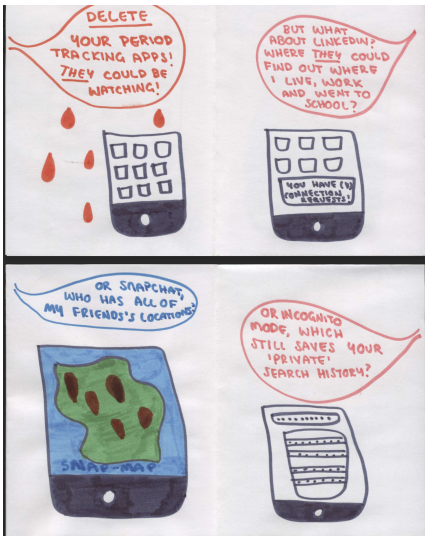


Fig. 6. *The Right To Privacy That We Give Up*

whether these constraints emerge from the author's own lived experience. Instead, the zine appears oriented toward preparing or protecting an imagined reader for whom the title itself—"I Wish I Knew This About Abortion"—might become true.

In *You Are Still You: A Small Guide to Difficult Moments* (Figure 7), the zine offers affirming, emotionally supportive messages that gently engage with what it feels like to have "something growing inside you." The zine reassures the reader that they are allowed to "change their mind," "ask questions," and that they are under no obligation to explain their decision—"your body, your timeline." At one point, the creator explicitly acknowledges distance, noting that while they do not know the reader, they understand that the situation is difficult.

Notably, the only explicit guidance offered—beyond empathy and affirmation—is a caution that the internet can be both informative and harmful. Rather than providing concrete strategies, the zine centers emotional validation and autonomy, positioning support not through instruction but through recognition and care.

The zine's aesthetic powerfully draws on cut-out images and quotes from the *New Yorker Magazine*, which work metaphorically alongside the text to convey emotional and moral complexity. The decision-making process is depicted through imagery of movement, including a cartoon of people rowing, suggesting effort, uncertainty, and collective struggle. The weight of the decision itself is represented through symbolic figures—such as a cartoon resembling Adam and Eve or a falling figure—evoking themes of judgment, consequence, and possible loss of innocence. Critics are illustrated with two crow-like birds perched in a tree, watching from a distance, suggesting scrutiny, surveillance, and moral condemnation.

Scenario-based zines occupy an intermediate position on the spectrum. They introduce recognizable situations but do not anchor those situations in a particular lived experience.

4.2.3 Representational narratives: symbolic or distanced storytelling. Occasionally, zines incorporated narrative elements through symbolic, historical figures and position risk through analogy.

3 Casuales on Abortion Access Under Total Ban (Figure 8) situates abortion access within the Dominican Republic (DR), drawing on the story of a DR artist who created an exhibit depicting

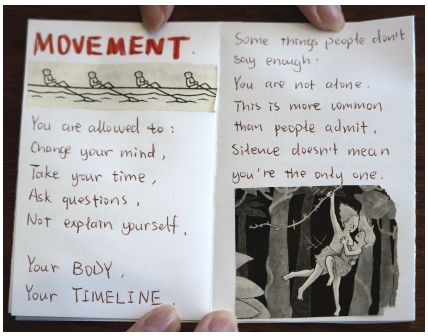


Fig. 7. *You Are Still You: A Small Guide to Difficult Moments*

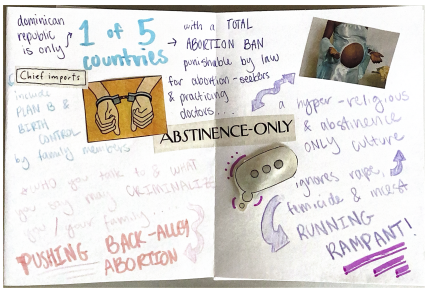


Fig. 8. *3 Casuales on Abortion Access Under Total Ban*

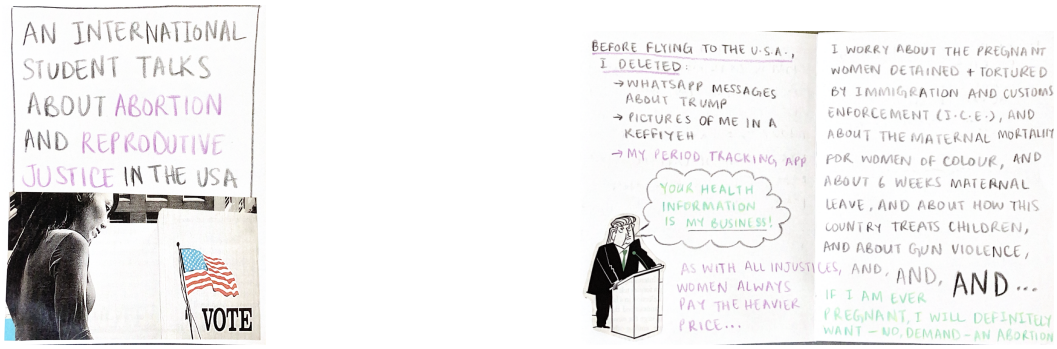
pregnant schoolgirls in their uniforms alongside statistics about school dropout rates. *3 causales* refers to the campaign (Les Très Causales) to legalize abortion under three urgent exceptions—life risk to the mother, fetal nonviability, and pregnancy from rape or incest—as minimum protections against the harms of a total abortion ban. The zine juxtaposes imagery of abstinence-only messaging with symbols of constraint (handcuffs, sexual violence, and unsafe abortion practices) to highlight contradictions between policy rhetoric and lived consequences.

The aesthetic contrasts handwriting and collage, visually juxtaposing official narratives, cultural representations of pregnancy, and embodied consequences (i.e., model wearing a ball gown with pregnant belly exposed).

While grounded in a real geopolitical context, the narrative is representational, conveying risk through public figures and symbolic imagery.

4.2.4 Situated narratives: anchored in real life. Some zines centered specific individuals, events, and lived experiences. These situated narratives most closely align with the characteristics described by Sula et al.'s [71] formulation of narrative threat modeling. We use this spectrum to describe variation in narrative form, not to establish a hierarchy of quality, completeness, or methodological success. Through these personal and situated narratives, they render how risk emerges through particular relationships and geopolitical contexts, decisions, and moments of exposure.

In *An International Student Talks about Abortion and Reproductive Justice in the USA* (Figure 9), an immigrant student describes how she deleted her social media accounts and other forms of electronic communication related to politics, religion, and reproductive health information while on the airplane to come to the U.S. This process illustrates how privacy related to reproductive decisions has been placed at risk by the introduction of surveillance and state control of individual



(a) (b)

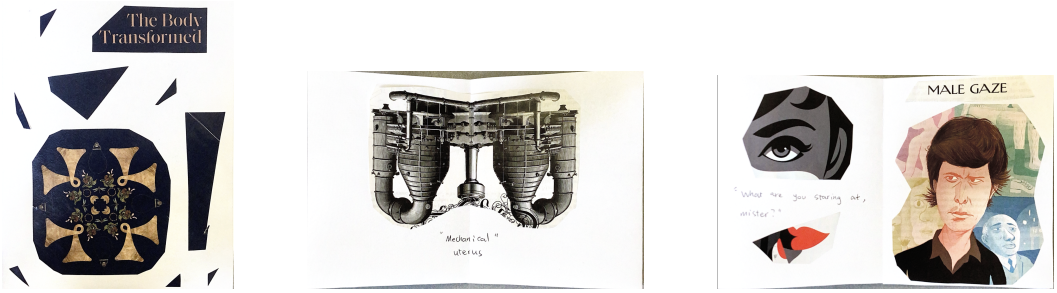
Fig. 9. *An International Student Talks about Abortion and Reproductive Justice in the USA*

citizens through the deletion of this material. Within this context, the zine connects the various sites of vulnerability that immigrant women encounter in the U.S. (e.g., at the hands of ICE agents, maternal mortality rates among racialized women, gun violence, financial barriers to healthcare) and reflects upon the 4B feminist movement in South Korea and its four tenets (no dating men, no sex with men, no marriage with men, and no childbirth [63]) as a way to minimize personal risk.

The zine notes both the efficacy and limitations of these strategies in protecting women from gendered violence. Although these references are directed outward, they are firmly grounded within the author's own experiences as a non-citizen, subject to U.S. legal and political restrictions, and ultimately demonstrate that an immigrant woman's reproductive privacy risk is informed by the convergence of her own positionality with legal precarity and transnational feminist awareness. Ultimately, the zine ends with a call for civic participation by encouraging readers to "vote" and emphasizing how her exclusion from formal political agency reflects her own lack of reproductive privacy.

The zine depicts a figure alongside the American flag (Figure 9a) and a portrayal of the current president stating "your health information is my business!" (Figure 9b), framing the U.S. as a site of digital entrapment for foreign nationals, even those who appear outwardly aligned with national symbols.

In *The Body Transformed* (Figure 10), the daughter of immigrants takes on a deconstructed aesthetic (a) and centers a striking visual of a uterus rendered as a mechanical, yonic device—labeled "mechanical uterus" (b) —to convey how reproduction is externalized, monitored, and controlled. The zine frames the male gaze as a form of surveillance that both observes and confines (c), positioning women's bodies as sites of ongoing regulation. The zine operates through symbolic imagery, but also hints at a deeply situated account, first emerging in the spiral, difficult-to-read text as a kind of love note to the author's mother. During discussion, we learned that this unfinished zine was connected to her mother's experience of forced miscarriage under restrictive reproductive laws in China. This inter-generational history anchors the zine's critique, connecting past state control to present conditions. Rather than treating legal change as resolution, the zine suggests continuity—arguing that even when laws shift, women remain subject to surveillance and constrained reproductive autonomy. Here, reproductive privacy risk is articulated through inherited experience, where personal and familial histories of control shape how contemporary systems are understood and anticipated.



(a) (b) (c)

Fig. 10. *The Body Transformed*

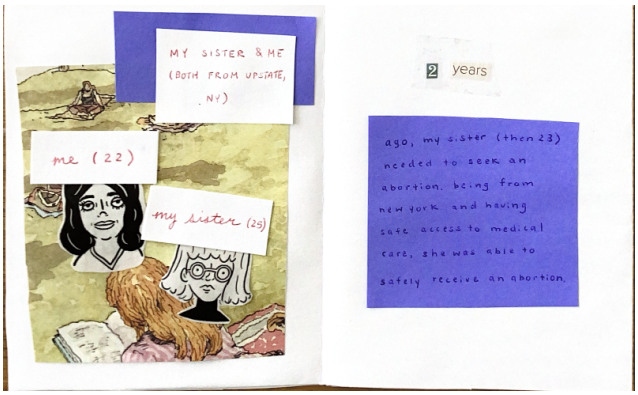


Fig. 11. *Abortion in New York*

Abortion in New York (Figure 11) depicts an interpersonal absence. The writer recounts how she did not get the chance to talk about her sister's abortion with her. In fact, rather than providing details about the event, she focuses on the absence of dialogue around it, highlighting how the experience of reproduction is characterized by withholding even from the closest people. The zine includes questions the author wishes they asked their sister about her experience with getting an abortion. What we have here is reproductive privacy defined not through state surveillance or risks, but through interpersonal barriers. Stigma, protective instincts, and uncertainties determine the limits of information, support, and understanding within the intimate circles. What matters here is the risk of remaining in the dark, being unable to get information or offer any help.

Reclaiming a Post-Roe History (Figure 12) traces the story of a participant's grandmother who obtained an abortion prior to Roe. Despite being a private person, the grandmother takes pride in this visibility, highlighting a tension between privacy and recognition—the way we celebrate reproductive rights in our online culture contrasts with the starker present day reality. The zine uses redacted text to suggest both inclusion in the historical record and an unease with that visibility now that history has, in some ways, turned back.

The aesthetic reinforces this tension. Cut-out magazine text reading "part of history" (the cut-out white and isolated like something has been erased) is juxtaposed with handwritten elements, some visibly redacted through scribbles. The effect is of both archival preservation and erasure, suggesting

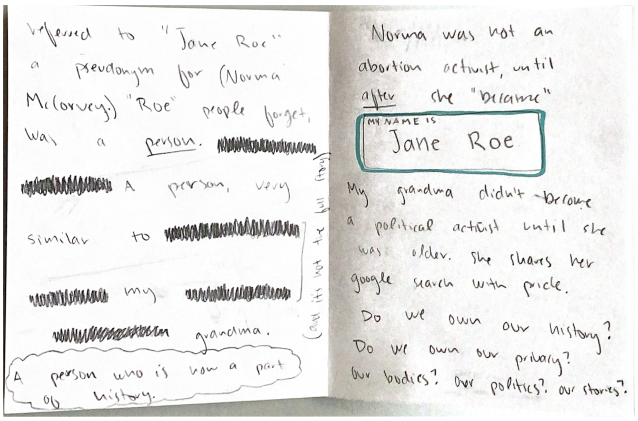


Fig. 12. *Reclaiming a Post-Roe History*

an unease with how stories (in a way about privacy) that were once sources of pride or activism may now carry renewed risk post-Roe.

Google also plays a prominent narrative and visual role, positioning internet search itself as a kind of narrative device that connects past and present forms of exposure. At the time, her abortion had to remain private. Now, Google findability is a point of pride, but it is also part of the same digital infrastructure that can enable legal exposure.

These zines ground privacy and systemic critique in personal narrative, drawing on participants' lived experiences to tell a threat modeling story that are both deeply personal while also reflecting broader privacy inequities and lack of access. They also convey that authors' retrospective knowledge, guiding readers towards autonomy and privacy.

4.3 Proximity to risk and the role of moderation in shaping narrative specificity

We now reflect on *why* this spectrum of narrativity emerged across the zines, suggesting that participants' proximity to reproductive risk may have shaped the forms of reproductive privacy communication they created. In particular, participants with greater personal or interpersonal proximity to reproductive issues tended to produce situated narratives grounded in lived experience, closely resembling the characteristics of narrative threat modeling described by Sula et al. [71].

Participants demonstrated strong awareness of the structural and political dimensions of reproductive risk, including surveillance, misinformation, and shifting legal conditions. However, this awareness did not consistently translate into detailed depictions of how risk unfolds in practice. Instead, zines varied in the extent to which they articulated specific risk through concrete, situated narratives versus more abstract or generalized forms.

When participants produced more narrative forms (i.e., representational or situated narratives), they drew on personal experiences, family accounts, or specific historical and geopolitical contexts. These zines depicted how risk emerges through particular relationships, decisions, and moments of exposure. In contrast, more abstract zines, while still rich in political critique and informational content, were less likely to depict how risk unfolds through specific interactions or events. These zines were oriented toward a generalized audience, positioning risk as distant rather than immediate.

Narrative specificity appeared to correspond with participants' perceived proximity to reproductive risk. Participants who described themselves as relatively protected—often due to residing in states where abortion access remains secure—mostly produced abstract, politically oriented zines

emphasizing awareness, solidarity, and resource-sharing. By contrast, participants drawing on lived or inherited experiences in more restrictive contexts produced situated narratives that conveyed the immediacy and consequences of reproductive risk.

Participants themselves reflected on differences between their own circumstances and those of people facing more immediate reproductive restrictions. Several contrasted their own contexts with those of others in more restrictive environments, highlighting how distance from risk can make its consequences less visible while still motivating efforts to communicate it through storytelling:

> *Before I go back home a lot of my cousins will ask me to bring birth control from here because I tell them I get it for free at college ... But then I live here and I see the difficulties that people go through to still be able to get access ... I've still met people who are like, I don't want my parents to find out and if I go to the ER they're going to put it in my medical records and then my parents will see it so I can't go get one. So thinking also about like … the scale of the variations of privacy and how the conditions of where you live really impact what is a good sense of privacy. Because I'm sure to my friends back home this is like a dream, this is what a lot of people are fighting for. But here we feel like we've gone so many steps back.*

Others emphasized how the absence of immediate constraints shaped the need to construct risk narratively:

> *…it's easy to get lost especially in places like New York because there's no immediate impact to everyday life. Not like we are in Texas where people may have to physically leave the state to get an abortion… But I do think it's still important to tell stories that are cautionary tales or paint you a picture of where we stand to go.*

Moderation may have also played a key role in shaping narrative specificity. Our prompts encouraged participants to anchor their zines in specific people, situations, or moments of concern with the aim of producing more detailed and situated narrative accounts. At the same time, we intentionally avoided pressuring participants to disclose deeply personal experiences or produce solely autobiographical narratives—both for their own comfort and privacy in a group setting, and because such pressure might have generated accounts that felt performative or emotionally inauthentic. Instead, facilitation focused on allowing participants to decide for themselves how closely they wished to position their work in relation to lived experience.

4.4 Reflection: Zines as tools for awareness, solidarity, and interpretive engagement

Participants consistently framed zines not as vehicles for prescriptive privacy guidance, but as tools for awareness-building, reflection, and solidarity. Participants understood zines as a way to surface the conditions under which privacy is at risk and to prompt more critical engagement with everyday technologies. This orientation was also reflected in participants' belief that zines offered a way to deliberately avoid the very infrastructures they sought to critique:

> *It's to bring awareness but it is hard to secure all this information using your phone when it's about your phone.*

One participant pointed out that even in states where abortion is legal, reproductive information may still feel unsafe, particularly on college campuses where there is already political protest surveillance.

> *We need more informal, unsupervised, and unsurveilled ways of speaking to each other...especially at this school with the current political climate—it is not really conducive to having large-scale discussions with people without a general air of surveillance.*

Beyond awareness, participants emphasized the role of zines in fostering solidarity, particularly by connecting readers to contexts in which reproductive risk is more immediate. Through storytelling, zines were seen as a way to bridge geographic and experiential distance:

> *[Zines] encourage people to keep fighting although there are a lot of things happening in the world now.*

> *Zines are used to tell a story, encourage people to care outside of New York as we're not immediately impacted.*

One participant noted that as a "person-to-person" medium, zines promote a sense of connecting one's story to a single individual—someone they can imagine is reading it.

> *[Zine-making] is comparatively a very person-to-person medium... it's easier to imagine there is one person out there in the world who is reading this.*

Participants also highlighted the capacity of narrative to reduce stigma by making reproductive experiences more visible and shareable:

> *... sharing these stories more broadly is what encourages people to view abortion through a less stigmatized lens.*

Finally, participants framed zines as materially important, saying that because they were physical publications, they conferred some amount of privacy not available in our digital environment.

> *Ever since Roe v. Wade was repealed, everyone complains about the over-policing of women's bodies, especially like all the info that's been collected and is readily available online ... Physical zines maintain methods of spreading info that isn't reliable online because that won't be a complete safe space to do anything because it's always accessible to anyone.*

The value of zines lies in their capacity to reframe how people perceive, relate to, and make sense of reproductive privacy risks, and in the privacy they confer. Zines operate as interpretive tools that render real stories of risk through metaphor and design in ways that are emotionally resonant.

5 Discussion

Our findings suggest that narrative threat zine-ing elicited forms of privacy communication that emphasized relationships, lived experience, and collective interpretation over technical instruction. While some participants produced abstract critiques of surveillance and reproductive governance, others developed situated narratives that grounded privacy within specific people, relationships, and legal contexts.

While many zines remained at the level of abstract concerns focused on surveillance, misinformation, or political constraint, others developed more situated accounts of risk that connected personal experiences to broader histories of reproductive governance and state control. These narratives suggest that participants understood communicating reproductive privacy as more than an act of self-expression. Instead, storytelling became a way of helping others interpret diffuse and shifting forms of sociotechnical power, connecting personal experience to broader histories of reproductive governance and state control.

These cross-border narratives are increasingly significant as reproductive governance in the U.S. becomes more unstable, including proposals for national abortion restrictions that may broaden the legal, interpersonal, and sociotechnical conditions under which reproductive privacy risks emerge. This resonates with CSCW work on collective privacy sensemaking, which shows how people collaboratively interpret and respond to shifting reproductive surveillance risks in the post-Roe landscape [68].

Rather than conceptualizing reproductive privacy as a problem of individual data protection, participants repeatedly situated privacy within relationships, institutions, and histories that shifted across cultural and legal contexts.

5.1 Narrative threat zine-ing as a qualitative elicitation practice

Our findings on variation in narrative specificity and participants' reflections on proximity to reproductive risk (Sections 4.2 and 4.3) point to a central methodological contribution of this work: narrative threat zine-ing can function as a qualitative elicitation practice. This extends participatory approaches to threat modeling that seek to surface threats from the perspectives of people whose experiences may be poorly represented in conventional security models [66].

While participants demonstrated strong awareness of structural and political dimensions of reproductive risk, they communicated this awareness in a range of narrative forms, from broad structural critique to detailed, situated accounts grounded in lived experience. Prompts that encouraged participants to anchor their narratives in specific people, situations, and moments of vulnerability elicited concrete, situated accounts. Narrative threat zine-ing therefore operated not simply as a communication exercise, but as a structured process through which participants articulated and refined their understandings of reproductive privacy.

This also highlights the role of facilitation—and the availability of materials—in shaping the forms of narrative communication that emerged during the workshops. The narratives participants produced reflected not only their knowledge and experiences, but also the conditions under which they were invited to express them. In this sense, narrative threat zine-ing is a qualitative elicitation practice: structured opportunities to connect broader reproductive concerns with lived experience enabled participants to articulate situated understandings of reproductive privacy.

Zine-making operates as a key mechanism through which this scaffolded process unfolds. The value of narrative threat zine-ing lies as much in the process as in the artifacts it produces. Creating and discussing zines prompted participants to reconsider everyday practices—such as information-seeking, app use, and data sharing—while also opening broader reflection on privacy, autonomy, and surveillance. Rather than treating safety as a stable condition, the process foregrounded contingencies around how the boundary between "safe" and "unsafe" can shift across geography, time, political context, and legal change. More than helping zine-making participants articulate specific privacy concerns, it reminded them of the fragility of the conditions that make certain practices feel harmless or protected. Perhaps most importantly, the workshops elicited situated narratives that demonstrated how participants translated lived experiences, relationships, and uncertainty into forms of reproductive privacy communication.

Feminist making practices have emphasized that the process of creating artifacts can itself become a site of reflection and knowledge production [10]. Our findings extend this perspective by showing that narrative threat zine-ing can also function as a qualitative elicitation method through which participants articulate, negotiate, and communicate situated understandings of reproductive privacy.

5.2 Zines as relational, interpretive, and affective privacy communication

The situated accounts in Section 4.1 and participants' reflections on zines as tools for awareness and solidarity in Section 4.4 illustrate a second contribution: narrative privacy communication can help make relational, unstable, and context-dependent forms of reproductive risk interpretable to others.

Across workshops, zines reflected that reproductive privacy is not a stable condition, but one that shifts across time, culture, and social context. When zines traced personal, inter-generational or cross-border experiences, they illustrated how privacy is negotiated through relationships,

institutions, and evolving legal conditions rather than governed by fixed rules. These narrative moves extended beyond generalized warnings to show how reproductive privacy is lived and managed across contexts.

Although participants resided in a state with legal abortion, many drew on experiences from other countries, regions within the U.S., and family cultural contexts to articulate concerns about surveillance and to inform the guidance represented in their zines. Personal and inter-generational histories of reproductive control were prevalent, alongside broader awareness of legal systems in participants' home countries where abortion is restricted, prohibited, or, in some cases, mandated. Notably, when forced abortion arose in discussion, participants treated abortion bans and forced abortion as morally equivalent, framing both as violations of women's autonomy and reproductive rights. In these narratives, institutions—and at times family members—were positioned as potential adversaries.

When participants did articulate strategies—such as deleting apps—these responses were generally framed around highly visible interfaces of risk popularized in media discourse (e.g., deleting period trackers [71]). Similarly, the more conceptual zines typically offered explicit privacy or security advice; however, this guidance remained generalized and did not consistently align with the ways risk is enacted in practice—e.g., deleting period trackers, be wary of social media location tracking, rather than considering the relational pathways through which privacy incursions occur.

Participants also surfaced a recurring tension in privacy guidance: the act of seeking information about abortion can itself generate risk—indeed, one of our core motivations for turning to zines for this research. The tools used to learn how to protect oneself—search engines, apps, and platforms—were understood as sites of potential exposure. This circularity challenges a core assumption of traditional privacy advice: that individuals can safely access and act on information in the first place. In this sense, participants' zines reflect a broader misalignment between dominant forms of privacy guidance and the environments in which that guidance must be enacted.

One of the most striking observations was that participants repeatedly resisted treating zines as vehicles for transmitting definitive privacy advice. Instead, they emphasized helping others recognize situations, feel less isolated, and understand that reproductive privacy risks are socially and structurally produced. This orientation resembles feminist traditions of consciousness raising, in which sharing lived experience becomes a means of collectively interpreting structural conditions rather than merely exchanging information or instruction [20]. The value of the zines therefore did not lie primarily in whether they provided comprehensive operational guidance, but in how they fostered awareness, solidarity, and shared interpretation.

At the same time, zines function as communicative and interpretive artifacts. Participants' reflections further suggest that this interpretive work was also affective. As described in Section 4.4, they valued zines as "person-to-person" media capable of communicating care, solidarity, and reduced stigma.

The most situated examples were those grounded in personal and inter-generational narratives that drew connections across multiple structures of power. By situating reproductive privacy within lived experience, these zines articulated how surveillance operates not only through institutions and governments but also through interpersonal relationships. This grounding made pathways of risk more legible, rendering abstract concerns concrete through specific, believable scenarios. Rather than prescribing actions to be directly replicated, these narratives functioned as interpretive resources, modeling ways of recognizing and reasoning about risk—or the possibility that things could change based on experience with other cultures and recognition of the variegated and precious legal scenario in the U.S.

Importantly, even as zines varied in their degree of narrative specificity, they consistently conveyed a sense of care, concern, and solidarity toward an imagined reader. Zines were not only

informational artifacts but affective ones—expressions of worry, support, and shared vulnerability that, as one participant succinctly put it, were meant to be "person-to-person." In contrast to social media environments, where reproductive health advice may circulate through influencers or unreliable sources, zines offered a form of communication grounded in personal and reflective accounts. Participants positioned their zines as a way to help others feel less alone and better prepared while navigating uncertainty and risk.

Our findings should not be interpreted as suggesting that narrative communication replaces technical or procedural privacy guidance. Rather, the two serve different functions. Narrative approaches may help individuals recognize situations, interpret uncertainty, and connect personal experiences to broader structural conditions, while more traditional guidance remains important when individuals require concrete recommendations for specific privacy threats or legal circumstances. The tension observed in our findings therefore reflects complementary rather than competing forms of privacy communication: narratives foster awareness, solidarity, and situated interpretation, whereas technical guidance can support operational decision-making when concrete actions are needed.

While prior feminist making scholarship has emphasized collective making as knowledge production, our findings demonstrate that narrative threat zine-ing can also function as a qualitative elicitation method for studying situated privacy communication.

5.3 Implications for healthcare privacy communication

One motivation of this work is to provide support for alternative forms of privacy communication, particularly given prior work suggesting that healthcare providers often feel underprepared to discuss privacy risks that extend beyond clinical settings [46]. Although the present study did not examine provider-patient interactions directly, our findings raise questions for future work about how narrative threat zine-ing might inform reproductive healthcare privacy communication.

Prior work nevertheless points to healthcare providers as potentially important facilitators of such communication. Although providers may not routinely offer reproductive privacy guidance beyond clinical settings, prior work suggests that they are highly attuned to the situational, relational, and structural vulnerabilities their patients face [46]. At the same time, patients frequently identify healthcare providers as trusted sources of reproductive privacy information [42]. Together, these findings suggest that providers may have an important role in facilitating conversations about reproductive privacy, even if the specific forms that such communication should take remain an open question.

Future work could therefore examine whether narrative threat zine-ing might function as a facilitated practice through which patients articulate situated risks through reflection, dialogue, and storytelling, rather than positioning providers as authoritative sources of prescriptive privacy advice. The workshop format in our study created space to think through risk, surface uncertainties, and articulate concerns that can be difficult to formalize. Whether similar practices could help bridge clinical knowledge and lived experience and support more responsive, situated forms of reproductive privacy communication remains an open question for future research.

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