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"The Other Day" Project Final Report

Introduction

"The Other Day" is a sociotechnical system that encourages people to socialize and think critically about various questions and answers in a creative, competitive, and fun atmosphere. Modeled after similar platforms such as BeReal, JackBox Games, and Jacksfilms's YIAY, the platform is a question and answer platform, where users answer a question, vote on the previous day's question's answers, and receive the leaderboard for the day before yesterday, thus "The Other Day." With questions ranging from "What would be the best pickup line?" to "Where is the best place for Spring Break?", users will input their answers such as "Are you a 10, cause you are the only 10 I see" or "Cancun" respectively. The question/answer format has each user placed on a leaderboard based on the upvoting of one user's answers versus another user answer. Consequently, they will eventually create a leaderboard based on the best responses. The platform represents a sociotechnical system, as there is a technical infrastructure behind the platform, as well as social interactions, demonstrating the purpose behind the platform to strengthen strong ties and create a game-like experience.

To maintain a thriving community, "The Other Day" needs a sufficient atomic network. To maintain an atomic network, the intended audience needs to be a target demographic of 18-25 year old. This demographic is necessary to rely on established youth friends groups, to solve the

solution of the cold start problem. The 18-25 year old demographic is the key demographic, as the app and its descriptive norms are for a younger audience to use. With other platforms, such as TBH, having a similar voting platform, having a question and answer format based on Gen Z humor allows the platform to be easily accessible for the younger generation, and therefore, a gateway for popularity on other social media platforms. While there could be context collapse when older generations come in, the platform will have different groups tailored to allow the younger generation to post their answers to various questions. The app was not tailored towards an older generation because the humor and the accessibility of the platform may not appeal to this demographic. As other similar platforms have been made for a younger audience, adding this platform for the younger generation will come with easy understanding and a good foundation for allowing the younger generation to interact with others' answers in small group and global standings.

When people used the platform, the results were mixed. Some individuals decided to create answers focused primarily on pop culture references, such as one user describing their dream trip as "Hopping on the Plane to LAX" in reference to not only travel, but semantically, to pop music and the joy of being in line with pop culture. Therefore, some users tried to fit in to get upvoted. However, some users engaged in answers that they believe in beyond what users may have preference for in terms of upvoting. For example, some answers regarding where to travel for the SuperBowl may include "Disneyland" or a dream Spring Break trip to the "Maldives." These answers illustrate a sense of not necessarily being comical, but a want to express personal preference. Therefore, the actual results from the platform illustrates a community of selectively WEIRD students and users that expressed to be genuine on a platform

that extrinsically supports answers that can be upvoted. Though, if the platform were to move forward into a global audience or transcend to other group demographics, there may be changes regarding being genuine on the platform.

Design

The functional design of "The Other Day" is to be a platform with a simple and sleek design to be appealing to the younger generation. When first opening the platform, users first register for an account and agree to injunctive norms, please see the Appendix for Figure 1. Once registered, the users sign into the platform and are faced with two pages, the home page and the profile page. On the home page, the platform greets the user by saying "Welcome Back [User]!" to create a lighthearted atmosphere. The background is a clear design to appeal to young users familiar with simple interfaces such as Instagram or BeReal. The top of the home page contains Today's Question, such as "What would you do if you won the Super Bowl?" where users are able to then write in the specific answer box. The user experience is direct for the user to submit the answer to the question. To signal to the user that their answer has been submitted, there is a completion box where the user can no longer edit their answer by saying "You've already submitted today's answer." This cue signals to the user that they do not need to complete that particular section of the platform and that they receive extrinsic motivation that they completed the first part of the day's process. To keep the platform neat, the next box is Yesterday's Question, such as "What is your angry phrase?" where users then upvote the specific answers that they find appealing. The specific answering of these questions allows the platform to engage in creating and fostering strong and weak ties, as users select answers based on what they find appealing which may cross amongst different global cultures and attitudes toward comedy.

Extrinsically, users hope to get upvoted to rise on the leaderboard and gain points. Finally, on the same home page, users see what answers were selected for the leaderboard and the global leaderboard, highlighting what other people find funny or interesting. Voting may create some social proof, as people may use answers as a template for upvoting, but the leaderboard provides a lighthearted form of competition. The leaderboard will function by creating a pair of answers where users select the answer that they like more. After a series of pairings, the best answers will arise after multiple side-by-side comparisons, similar to in-class voting for memes and questions. Please see Figure 2 for the whole home page.

The second page, or the profile page, has the user's top answers, so that people can see their history and the answers they provided for various questions. Moreover, users can click onto the global leaderboard to see where they are in the rankings based on the number of points gained by the side-by-side comparisons. Please see Figure 3 for the Global Leaderboard. Finally, there is a feature to log out if users wish to switch accounts. Please see Figure 4 for the profile page. The page illustrates a typical profile page and is an accessible format for users intrinsically to see past answers, and how they compare to their weak ties in the global ranking of all users.

Implementation

We decided to build our frontend using React Native with Expo and our backend using Flask. We used MongoDB as our main database to store user information, answers, rankings, etc. Finally, we hosted our backend using Vercel, and provided the frontend to users via Expo Go's tunneling feature by having users download Expo Go and scan the QR code generated after

running npx expo start ——tunnel. You can find our GitHub repo at https://github.com/CaryXiao1/the-other-day.

Our database stores 4 databases: users, answers, questions, and groups. The users table stores the username, hashed password, and group names the user is a part of. questions is a table manually populated by us that stores each question as a string alongside the day it corresponds to, while answers stores an answer as a string alongside the user that submitted it, the question it belongs to, as well as the number of appearances and votes that answer got during the voting stage. Finally, the groups table stores each group's name, password, and users.

To implement the backend, we created the following backend calls that are used by our frontend. To stay under the word limit, we only provide brief descriptions of what each endpoint does.

GET Endpoints:

1. /today/get-question/ - Gets today's question
2. /yesterday/get-question/ - Gets yesterday's question
3. /day-before-yesterday/get-question/ - Gets the question from two days ago
4. /user/<user_id> - Gets user details by user ID
5. /user/<user_id>/top-answers - Gets a given user's top 5 answers, sorted by votes
6. /user/<user_id>/ranking - Gets user's global ranking across all answers
7. /leaderboard - Gets the top 10 users based on total votes
8. /question/<question_id>/get_pair - Gets a random pair of answers for a question (used for voting)
9. /question/<question_id>/answer_leaderboard - Gets answer leaderboard for a specific question
10. /user/username/<username> - Gets user details by username
11. /groups/get-groups/<username> - Gets all groups a user is a part of
12. /groups/leaderboard/<group_name> - Gets the leaderboard information, filtered only to include the users of a specific group.
13. /groups/<group_name>/answer-leaderboard/<question_id> - Gets the top responses from the other day's question, filtered to the members of the given group.

POST Endpoints:

1. /user/register - Registers a new user
2. /user/login - Authenticates a user
3. /answer/<answer_id>/increment-appearance - Increments appearance count for an answer
4. /answer/<answer_id>/increment-vote - Increments vote count for an answer
5. /answer - Creates a new answer, linking it to the inputted user and question
6. /groups/create-group - Creates a new group with a given group name and hashed password, assuming
7. /groups/join-group - Allows the user to join a new group

Our frontend is implemented as a React Native app built with Expo Router and structured around a tab-based layout defined in `_layout.tsx`. It features three main screens, Home, Groups, and Profile, accessible via a bottom tab navigator. The Home screen (`index.tsx`) presents the daily question, allowing users to submit one answer per day via the `/answer` endpoint. After submitting, users are shown randomized pairs of responses from other users and can vote for the stronger one using the `/question/yesterday/increment_answer` endpoint. Voting pairs are fetched from `/question/yesterday/get_pair`, and voting is restricted to prevent duplicate votes. All API calls are handled using Axios, and user state is managed with React hooks and stored in AsyncStorage.

The Leaderboard is integrated throughout the app to track and rank performance. On the Profile screen (`profile.tsx`), users can view a global leaderboard that ranks all users based on their vote-to-appearance ratio, fetched from the `/question/yesterday/leaderboard` endpoint. This leaderboard includes usernames, point totals, and optional avatars. The Group Leaderboard (`group-leaderboard.tsx`) similarly ranks answers within a specific group, using data from

`/question/yesterday/get_group_leaderboard/<group_name>`. It shows each user's best-performing answer and contextualizes performance within the group.

The Groups screen (`groups.tsx`) lets users view, create, and join private groups using credentials passed to `/groups/create-group` and `/groups/join-group`. Group membership is associated with usernames and stored in the backend. Once inside a group, users can view group size and tap into the group-specific leaderboard, which mirrors the global leaderboard logic but filters by group membership. The UI includes loading states, error messages, and animated transitions, ensuring a consistent and polished experience across all features.

Viral Usage

While it was not required to have more than four people to test the platform, due to Zone 1 implementation, our group decided to recruit thirteen participants to join the platform to introduce more answers and side-by-side voting. During our pilot testing phase, the group included primarily Stanford students. These students demonstrated various expected and surprising patterns of usage, along the lines of constant engagement, healthy competition, voting aligned strongly with maintaining descriptive norms of mostly family-friendly content, and no exercise of bullying or harassment. Specifically, users answered the questions, voted for the best responses, and they consequently saw their place on the leaderboard alongside other users. There is a limitation where we asked kindly for participants to be engaged with the platform for the duration of a week, but with the ongoing constant support without necessarily ongoing and consistent push for using the platform, the perception of the users is that they were highly engaged with the platform to submit a response daily and vote multiple times in side-by-side

comparisons. While platforms of mandatory posting to reap the extrinsic benefits may subside, the questions and answers provided refreshing conversation and movement on the platform.

Moreover, there was healthy competition, as voting was close as users did not know exactly who the other users who submitted the questions were except for their perceived usernames that do not represent genuine identities. Although it is not completely anonymous, the use of pseudonyms provided enough space between the true identity and complete anonymity for users to engage in the platform and upvote particular answers. Users would therefore create answers that would try to maximize social appeal and performance, such as the answer "Everything Everywhere, All at Once" when describing a person's sex life.

Furthermore, voting aligned heavily with upholding descriptive norms, as users voted for answers that were appealing to the Gen Z audience without being inappropriate, even though some questions were suggestive. The top answers, for example, for one of the days were "I would kiss my boyfriend**,"** which highlights that the users selected answers that were not obscene or too inappropriate. Instead, the answers that were chosen were lighthearted answers centered on generating fun but not strenuous competition among friends and other users. Ultimately, while some people copied the format of some answers, the answers provided a competitive but not stress-inducing battle between responses.

Finally, the platform did not have any content that warranted immediate banning or further moderation. With the addition of injunctive norms and a greeting at the beginning, users understand the platform's rules about posting and voting. As answers started coming through, there were not essentially red flags that would ultimately discount or discourage users. While some answers were going closer to the edge, no answer explicitly engaged with the list of banned

content, view Figure 1. Therefore, in the end, it was refreshing to see that users did not engage in inappropriate behavior to rile up conversations or isolate users from joining the platform.

Design Reflections

Based on the design of the platform, the designs that did work were keeping the leaderboard, question, and voting on the same page, creating a leaderboard showing people's scores per the number of votes that they have, having everyone introduce a username, and setting injunctive norms early. The processes that did not work were the side-by-side comparisons, the global leaderboard being on a separate page, and testing users that were primarily from the same group and being Stanford students. In terms of successes, having the leaderboard, question, and answer on the same page provided extrinsic motivation for the user, as the user has more motivation to continue answering, if they see their score rising on the leaderboard from the other day. Furthermore, it reminds the user to engage in side-by-side voting, as it is present on the first page to promote voting for other answers. Furthermore, creating a leaderboard both globally and locally allows users to see where they sit on the leaderboard in comparison to their friends and weak ties around the globe to induce competition and striving for popular approval. Additionally, having a username instead of a real name allows for users to post without their personal identification, to be more genuine online, yet not fully anonymous to feel as if they have free range. Finally, it was essential to introduce injunctive norms early to ensure that rules regarding inappropriate behavior and bullying were not allowed explicitly earlier on in the platform's history.

However, the design did not entirely succeed in terms of side-by-side comparisons. In the end, a feed ranking may be better, even though side-by-side comparisons are more neutral, a feed ranking may be better for global leaderboards with more users and side-by-side for in-group answering. Eventually, side-by-side would be almost impossible with thousands of users who would need to navigate through many votes to ensure fairness. The global leaderboard on the separate page may not have been the best design element as users have to selectively choose to move onto the profile page to view the global leaderboard instead of having it directly on the home page. Moreover, while usage was great from Stanford students, having a varied sample may have been better in testing whether the platform works from people from other youth contexts outside the university setting and how weak ties would work in conjunction with other people. Since most of the participants were from similar on-campus groups, knowing the preferences of other students may have been easier than from strangers from across the world.

Moving forward, while lurkers will not be an issue, given that the point of the platform is to engage by posting to reap benefits, there are ethical and societal issues. Ethically, having usernames instead of genuine names provides a shield of increased anonymity, but it might come at the expense of future answers engaging in inappropriate answers or answers that do not align with the target youth demographics. Therefore, whether community moderation through users or paid moderators are the best route, content moderation will be key to ensure that the answers provided are safe yet comical and interesting for users to vote on. Moreover, there are societal issues as there may be answers that arise that may be controversial based on politics. Since politics is not inherently removable, controversial answers may arise if there is potential for newcomers breaking norms. Instead of lighthearted responses, answers may range from talks

about current administrations or contentious global events, therefore, creating potential divisions. Consequently, there may be an inevitable divide amongst content moderators about what specific political events to include and ethically which questions to select. Even if questions were originally intended for lighthearted banter, if people can post on-topic questions based on controversial subjects, the platform may face dilemmas regarding free speech and public debate.

Theory

With social media platforms maintaining a medium number of code contributors being one, there are bustling ghost towns on major social media sites such as Facebook and 4chan (Schweik and English, 2012). For example, two thirds of Facebook members never post in their first two weeks on the platform and 40% of posts on 4chan get no replies (Burke, Marlow, and Lento, 2009; Bernstein et al., 2010). Based on the contribution pyramid, we wanted to create a platform that not only encourages a strong atomic network, but a platform that requires consistent user engagement to expand the top of th pyramid, instead of the typical 90-9-1 rule (Nielsen, 2006). With successes yet dormancy of previous platforms, such as BeReal, we sought to create a platform that mirrors BeReal or Worlde to get people to participate in a fun atmosphere to get intrinsic motivation to create creative and fun answers based on interests for various questions while create extrinsic motivations through the leaderboard for friends and the global leaderboard for the whole app community. We wanted the descriptive norms of the space through the interface to communicate a friendly and social atmosphere, as the blank background provides a space for people to think creatively without necessarily social proof to convince the user about what to place in the answer slot (Bernstein, *Norms*, 2025). Moreover, we wanted to

create a platform where there would be injunctive norms in place for content moderation, yet more open for users to post answers that might not be appropriate for other contexts, but for a younger audience based on cultural cues, it might be more appropriate.

Therefore, the need that we tried to address in this system is the lack of platforms that copy the BeReal format in the social media marketplace while creating a platform that is long-lasting. Furthermore, while there are game platforms, mainly filled by the *New York Times* regarding Worlde, crossword puzzles, or other games, there lacks a gaming platform based on the simple question and answer format to create comical answers and social cohesion between friends. With the loss of TBH, a platform where people picked their friends based on given prompts, there lacks a clear platform that allows young people in a creative format to upvote their other friends' answers to various question besides playing 20 questions in person or texting in a groupchat. However, through a platform that situates an asynchronous relationship between question and answer responses, there is a platform like BeReal and its a gaming platform that allows for easy extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for answering and upvoting specific responses (Hollan and Stornetta, 1992). Moreover, the bonus of having inside jokes or inner group connections regarding the platforms creates a fun atmosphere missing in most social media platforms.

The design of "The Other Day" would succeed because it provided an easy and carefully tailored architecture for the platform to reach to young people and be successful. By essentially crowdsourcing for answers, the platform allows people to upvote different answers independently, creating a leaderboard next day, essentially eliminating bias and allowing the best answers to succeed (Berstein, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, 2025). The platform has a global

leaderboard and a separate leaderboard for friends, allowing the platform to have both a global audience and connections of answers across various cultures, while additionally, creating small units for friends to upvote each others' answers. Therefore, the platform creates weak ties through upvoting strangers' answers while fostering strong ties between friends. The platform's home page design, with the leaderboard on the same page as the upvoting of the previous question and answering the question of the day allows users to create extrinsic motivation to see where they are when using the platform. Ultimately, the vision of the platform was bound to be a success as it seems like an old concept of question and answer that transitioned for the contemporary age to inspire both strong and weak ties to assist and foster relationships based on funny responses (Berstein, *Strong and Weak*, 2025). A simple yet effective mechanism to inspire social interaction between various people.

After the platform was used, the platform saw large engagement with various course concepts. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were explicitly prevalent, as users engaged in providing both authentic and competitive answers to inspire personal enjoyment in creating answers that reflect user's personalities while additionally creating answers to score higher on the leaderboard. However, social proof may have played a factor regarding side-by-side comparisons, as the use of usernames, while hiding genuine real names of users, may engage in bias, as participants may form a relationship with a weak tie and deepen that relationship by voting for that specific user's answer and continue voting over time.

Moreover, descriptive and injunctive norms were crucial to create an enjoyable user experience (Bernstein, *Norms*, 2025). The descriptive norms of how the platform looked and functioned allowed users to be carefree and exhibit youthful tendencies in appeals for pop culture

references that do not cross a mature line. Furthermore, it seem as if the injunctive norms were effective, as rule following allowed for good governance and a lack of engagement regarding inappropriate content such as bullying or obscenity.

Furthermore, it was great to see that all users were engaging with the platform. While the users were not crowdsourced independently, but were instead people that we knew, these users represented a part of a larger friend group, therefore, solving the cold start problem as these people have a shared youth identity, Stanford University culture, and they understand their own intragroup dynamics. Therefore, the users and their engagement allowed for the cold start problem to be resolved by a dedicated base of consistent users.

Finally, while the users in the system engaged in youthful dialogue and participation through their authentic selves, if the platform were to scale, there would be growing pains regarding context collapse. While the addition of subcommunities and small youth groups were added to keep the young atomic network thriving with constant posts, the global leaderboard may shift depending on what other older generations may prefer, as people may no longer act genuine or post content that may be seen as inappropriate for older generations even if it is culturally accessible by today's youth.

Tarot Analysis

In the project proposal, the tarot cards that were applicable to our platform at the beginning were "The Scandal", "The Big Bad Wolf", and "The Catalyst." Initially, the "Scandal" would be applicable as we were afraid that the top-rated answers would violate community standards. Through community responses, there may be an upvoting of specific comments that

might violate typical community norms that are applicable in other platforms, such as obscenity or bullying. Therefore, our initial answer was to utilize injunctive norms and to try to moderate responses to not limit necessarily risky answers but to remove certain posts that clearly defy bullying norms and may appeal to the prurient interest. After initial testing and analysis, the card still has relevance, as users in the long run may engage in answers that do not comply with community norms and standards. For example, one of the questions centered on describing one's sex lives in movies which generated answers which may not be considered friendly for all users, but the content moderation team debated about whether the content should be removed or not. Through careful moderation, the platform is monitored and adjudicated through just norms and rules to ensure that a big scandal of answers that may alienate users does not get upvoted to the top and ruin the experience. Additionally, the "Big Bad Wolf" may have malicious actors coming into the platform to upvote specific responses. However, without necessarily knowing who created the specific answer for side-to-side voting, this card does not apply as much because answers are different and people do not know exactly who posted which answers. Instead, a card to replace the "Big Bad Wolf" is the "Superfan" as users that like the platform can only engage with it once per day, which may dwindle the use of the atomic network who have other platforms that they can use more often, thus the downfall of BeReal as Instagram and Snapchat have constant content. Thus, expanding the platform through question and answer of previous questions indefinitely allows users to continue using the platform beyond the initial use of the day. Moreover, these superfans who want to use the platform and excel in the leaderboard may be more inclined to not type in genuine answers, but they may change their answers to increase their chances of being upvoted to excel in the rankings. Therefore, there is an authenticity

challenge regarding the platform. Finally, the "Catalyst" is still an essential card as cultural habits still can change how the product is used. Based on shifting cultural attitudes and what is semantically and linguistically popular at the time, answers may reflect these changing attitudes. Therefore, what may be comical earlier on in the platform's history may be seen as old and insignificant. Thus, with new language coming in, it may alienate some users who are not attune to differences in popular language and what might be seen as acceptable language later on may not be judged the same today and vice versa, creating challenges for moderation. Therefore, the "Scandal", the "Superfan", and the "Catalyst" are the most applicable cards for "The Other Day."

Conclusion

Ultimately, "The Other Day" presents a sociotechnical system that improves social interactions through a daily contribution method. Through user interaction, comical answers and a competitive spirit, the platform induces a sense of community amongst both strong and weak ties to answer playful questions and upvote based on youthful popular culture references. When users interacted with the platform, they broke with typical patterns of unauthentic responses by providing competitive yet genuine answers to various questions. The design created a sociotechnical system with many users that engaged with the platform to answer questions, vote on answers, and view the leaderboard. By creating a concrete atomic network, the platform provided a space for young people to engage with responses in a fun and friendly atmosphere. Although there are ethical implications about content moderation and the threat of superfans leaving without more content available per day, the platform has potential to expand to create more subcommunities and expand the question base for more active users. "The Other Day" has

been an excellent platform in creating community and intrinsic motivation for genuine and youthful responses while creating extrinsic motivation for advancing on the leaderboard.

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Appendix

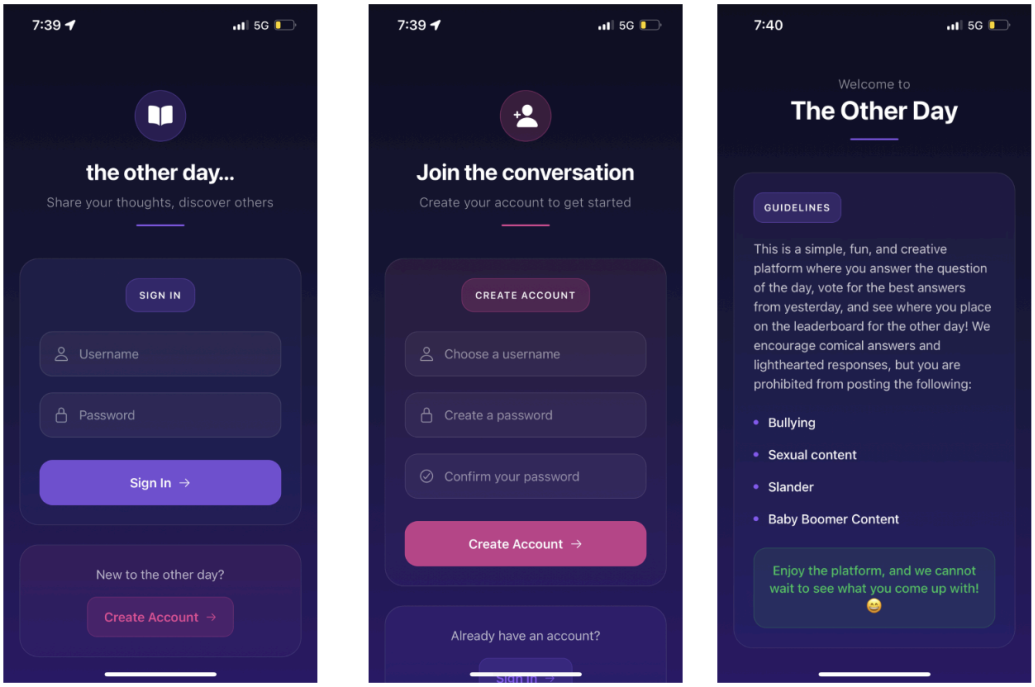

Figure 1. Account, Registration, and Community Guidelines and Injunctive Norms.

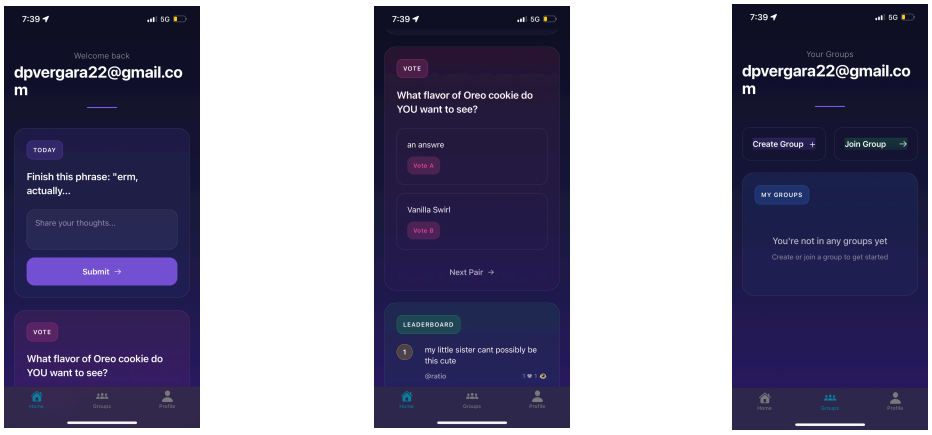

Figure 2. Home Page and Groups

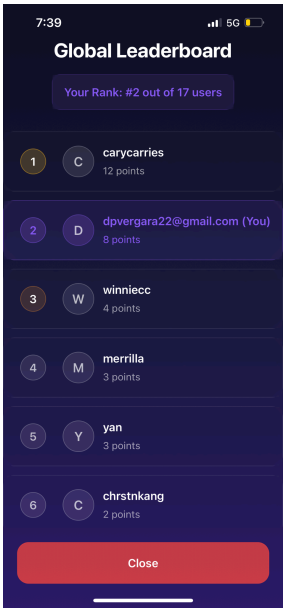

Figure 3. Global Leaderboard.

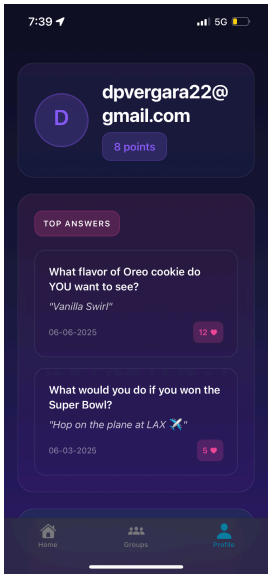

Figure 4. Profile Page.