

EXHIBIT 9

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
et al.,
Plaintiffs,

v.

META PLATFORMS, INC, Instagram, LLC,
Meta Payments, Inc., Meta Platforms
Technologies, LLC., et al.,
Defendants

IN RE: SOCIAL MEDIA ADOLESCENT
ADDICTION/PERSONAL INJURY
PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO:
4:23-cv-05448

MDL No. 3047

Case No. 4:23-cv-05448-YGR

Judge: Hon. Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers

Magistrate Judge: Hon. Peter H. Kang

**TRIAL REPORT OF
Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D.**

May 16, 2025

V. Social media platform features promote harmful social comparison processes for youth that are linked to psychological symptoms

- (60) The quantitative nature of social media, promoting metrics such as likes and follower counts, combined with the focus on videos and pictures rather than text, creates a fertile ground for social comparisons. In adolescence, a period defined by psychologists as a process of identity development via reflected appraisal processes (i.e., evaluating oneself based on feedback from peers),¹¹⁴ youth are especially likely to engage with social media in ways that allow them to compare their appearance, friends, and social activities with others with what they see online, especially when those in their own social network are commenting and liking these same posts.¹¹⁵ The opportunity for constant feedback, commentary, quantitative metrics of approval, and 24-hour social engagement is unprecedented among our species. Research suggests that these social comparison processes, and youths' tendency to seek positive feedback or status (i.e., more likes, followers, online praise) is associated with a risk for depressive symptoms.¹¹⁶
- (61) In addition, psychological science demonstrates that exposure to the environments created by platforms like Instagram is associated with lower self-image and distorted body perceptions among young people.¹¹⁷ This exposure creates strong risk factors for eating disorders, unhealthy weight-management behaviors, and depression.¹¹⁸ As with other impacts of online platforms, evidence

¹¹⁴ Susan Harter, *The construction of the self: Developmental and sociocultural foundations*, Guilford Publications, 2015.

¹¹⁵ Jacqueline Nesi, Sophia Choukas-Bradley, and Mitchell J. Prinstein, "Transformation of adolescent peer relations in the social media context: Part 1—A theoretical framework and application to dyadic peer relationships," *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 21 (2018): 267–294.

¹¹⁶ Sophia Choukas-Bradley, Jacqueline Nesi, Laura Widman, and Brian M. Galla, "The appearance-related social media consciousness scale: Development and validation with adolescents," *Body Image* 33 (2020): 164–174. Tanya Hawes, Melanie J. Zimmer-Gembeck, and Shawna M. Campbell, "Unique associations of social media use and online appearance preoccupation with depression, anxiety, and appearance rejection sensitivity," *Body Image* 33 (2020): 66–76. Jacqueline Nesi and Mitchell J. Prinstein, "Using social media for social comparison and feedback-seeking: Gender and popularity moderate associations with depressive symptoms," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 43 (2015): 1427–1438.

¹¹⁷ Similarly, Instagram internal research on "Teen Mental Health Deep Dive" states: "Social pressure leads to teens setting unrealistic standards for themselves. Teens vocalized the pressure to look or act a certain way as directly leading to hyper-scrutiny of their own actions; The more they worry about living up to that standard, the more they fear being honest with who they are; Teens therefore bottle their emotions and put up a facade to protect themselves; This leads to obsessive control of what goes on social media and often to attention seeking (often in negative ways) to get validation." META3047MDL-003-00109173 at -9205. A 2019 internal Instagram document on "Instagram Teen Well-being Study" states: "Teens that feel pressure to look perfect, spending too much time, and fear of missing out often on IG are less likely to be satisfied with various dimensions of their well-being. These issues are also most prevalent on IG than any other social app. Specifically, the pressure to look perfect is significantly more common on Instagram than all other apps." META3047MDL-014-00255333, slide 32. A 2020 internal Instagram document on "Mental Health & Well-being" indicates that metrics such as likes, views, and follower counts are common triggers that make teen users on Instagram feel bad about themselves after comparing themselves to others. This is closely related to the pressure to be perfect. META3047MDL-003-00156738 at -6753.

¹¹⁸ Elise R. Carrotte, Alyce M. Vella, and Megan SC Lim, "Predictors of "liking" three types of health and fitness-related content on social media: a cross-sectional study," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 17, no. 8 (2015): e205.

indicates that these body image issues are particularly prevalent in LGBTQ+ youth, leaving these youth more predisposed to eating disorders, depression, bullying, substance abuse and other mental health harms.¹¹⁹

- (62) Internal Instagram research from October 2019 that surveyed 22,410 users across the US, Japan, Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey, and India found that teens experienced social comparison at higher rates than did adults—58% of teens reporting experiencing social comparison in the past 30 days, compared to 43% of adults. Of teen girls, 1 in 5 (20%) survey respondents reported that Instagram made these social comparison issues worse. As it concerned body image issues, this research found that 56% of teens had experienced body image issues in the last 30 days, compared to 53% of adults. Notably, 1 in 3 (32%) of teen girls reported that Instagram made these body image issues worse, compared to 19% of users generally.¹²⁰
- (63) A 2018 Instagram-internal survey of 5,793 Instagram users in the U.S., Canada, U.K., France, Japan, Mexico and Brazil similarly concluded that 67% of girls between ages 13 and 17 engage in negative comparison on Instagram and that 53% of female 18- to 24-year-olds do, compared to 40% of women generally and 36% of all Instagram users generally. Boys aged 13 to 17 experienced negative social comparison on Instagram at a rate of 40%, and males aged 18 to 24 experienced negative comparison at a rate of 35%.¹²¹
- (64) Other Instagram research from March 2021 surveyed 50,590 people across 10 countries (including the US) regarding appearance comparison and paired that survey data with the content respondents viewed in the 14 days prior to the survey. Those researchers found, “The topics that elicit appearance comparison comprise 1/4 of content people see on Instagram, and 1/3 for teen girls.”¹²²

¹¹⁹ Zachary McClain and Rebecka Peebles, “Body image and eating disorders among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth,” *Pediatric Clinics* 63, no. 6 (2016): 1079–1090. “LGBTQ Youth and Body Dissatisfaction,” The Trevor Project, January 30, 2023, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/lgbtq-youth-and-body-dissatisfaction-jan-2023/>.

¹²⁰ META3047MDL-019-00102527, slides 9 and 15.

¹²¹ META3047MDL-003-00101724 at -1730 and -1746. The study also concludes, “Although negative social comparison is slightly more prevalent than positive ones both on IG [Instagram] and in everyday life, the difference is small.” (META3047MDL-003-00101724 at -1741)

¹²² META3047MDL-004-00003706 at -3707, -3720, -3722, and -3724.

Trial Report of Mitch Prinstein, PhD

The undersigned hereby certifies their understanding that they owe a primary and overriding duty of candor and professional integrity to help the Court on matters within their expertise and in all submissions to, or testimony before, the Court. The undersigned further certifies that their report and opinions are not being presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation.



Mitch Prinstein, PhD

May 16, 2025

Date