

TEAM FIDENTITY: PROJECT PROPOSAL

Alternative Identities



Do you ever feel like you are putting on a face, when you post to Facebook?

We are interested in finding out how social media affects how you present your identity to the world. Facebook claims that their users are 100% authentic.

We disagree

Team Members

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Theme

Social media allows us to connect in ways that would have been hard to imagine 20 years ago. However, our social media platforms tend to focus on only a limited set of people and experiences. Issues like limited gender options on Facebook, multiple accounts so that mom doesn't see what you were up to last weekend, or never knowing who is actually tweeting on a celebrity's account begs questions: Who does social media let us be? What kinds of people and experiences aren't supported on social media? And how might we design new forms of technology to enable more people to connect and to share a more diverse set of experiences?

Project Pitch:

It seems that many social media users, especially those aged 15-35, are currently trying to **define** their identities. However, users tend to create a facade instead when they're using social media because they know that everything they post will stick around.

We've created an app, Ephem ("e-fem"), which encourages people to be themselves in the moment and make mistakes without feeling judged. There are no long term commitments since your data comes and leaves with you.

Design Theme

Social media allows us to connect in ways that would have been hard to imagine 20 years ago. However, our social media platforms tend to focus on only a limited set of people and experiences. Issues like limited gender options on Facebook, multiple accounts so that mom

doesn't see what you were up to last weekend, or never knowing who is actually tweeting on a celebrity's account begs questions: Who does social media let us be? What kinds of people and experiences aren't supported on social media? And how might we design new forms of technology to enable more people to connect and to share a more diverse set of experiences?

Design Question

How can we encourage people to be more authentic on social media?

Research Questions

- ❖ Is there a certain social media platform that stresses you out the most?
- ❖ Are your experiences and activities influenced by your social media identity?
- ❖ For whom do you post for on social media sites?
- ❖ What information do you filter and for whom?
- ❖ Have you ever been harmed by social media?
- ❖ When you are submitting a post, what do you consider before you post it?
- ❖ (What makes a post valid enough to be uploaded onto social media?)

Stakeholders

- Social media users
 - People who are currently active on social media sites like, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tinder, Yik Yak, 4chan, Tumblr, Shout, and others.
- People unsatisfied with current social media platforms
 - Of those that are on social media there is a hidden group that is fed-up with or uninvolved with existing social media platforms and are significantly less active. They are interested in the social media experience but are waiting on a product that more closely fits their desires.
- Non-Social media users
 - People who aren't currently active on social media sites and do not have any active accounts.
- Parents
 - Parents of children who are active on social media and are concerned

with their well being, safety or what their children are actually up to. They want to let their children experience the wonderful world of the internet but are concerned with what is going on behind closed doors.

➤ People aged 13 - 35

- Young people who are in the most social stage of their lives, looking to connect with others in new and interesting ways. People who want to express themselves without having to compromise or censor their behaviors.

➤ University Campuses

- The young students who are active on social media and want to have a way to connect with each other and form/be a part of a group identity.

➤ Trolls/People who take screen shots

- Our intention is to make much of our data ephemeral and people who want to abuse or circumvent this can take screenshots and preserve this data. They may also abuse our platform and target people out of spite or intentional cyberbullying.

➤ People who are interested in their public appearance

- Many of those who use social media the most are obsessed with their appearance on social media and go out of their way to ensure that they are presenting themselves the way they want to be seen.

➤ Businesses/ Companies who are interested in their public appearance

- Business often use social media platforms to reach their customers for advertising purposes or collecting data, reviews, complaints, and customer communication,

➤ Researchers collecting data

- Information scientists and other researchers collect data from social media sites to analyze human behavior, semantic analysis of text, emotions, and interactions. Our site with a focus on ephemeral data would create interesting challenges for collection but also create interesting social dynamics for study.

➤ Existing social media platform

- Social media platforms that would be our direct competitors. There are so many different platforms available and they are all competing for our attention. Other social media sites offer a full range identity options from Facebook, real and permanent to 4chan anonymous and temporary.

Our Primary Stakeholders

Our primary stakeholders in this project are **social media users aged 15 – 35** who are trying to define their identities in the formative years of their life. This demographic was the first introduced to social media and is likely the most involved currently. Even though the mass majority of this generation has a presence on social media not all are satisfied with their experience. We want to provide a better alternative for **people unsatisfied with current social media platforms**. For this we are providing a new style of social media that opens up to more specifically students and **university campuses** that have local communities. This design does not have to be limited to just campuses, the design could work for any social community size, it just depends on the users.

User Research Study/ Study Design

Social Network Mapping

- The social network mapping system has allowed us to observe the relationship between not only people and their social media, but people interacting with other people. These changing interactions with people are different, and that can show us how one would interact with a boss versus with a friend.
- We collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data by using
 - Surveys
 - Gave us a broad exploration with many people
 - Reached out to users through, Facebook, Reddit, Slack and other minor apps
 - Interviews
 - Got a deeper understanding of motivations
 - We analyzed and interpreted the data by looking for patterns in our survey results

Our Results:

The social network mapping system allowed us to observe the relationship between not only people and their social media, but people interacting with other people. This data was collected primarily through our survey. With interviews supplying the personal data that was harder to quantify. In our questions we wanted to know how people felt about their social media presence and how they are affected by it. We did this by asking a large number of questions with a 1-5 agree to disagree to a given statement about their social media experience. This enabled us to quantify and analyze responses in the context of answers they provided about their actual social media behavior(given earlier in the survey). This is by far our most informative research method and will be supplemented by all of our other data collection methods as well.

The research questions we attempted to answer:

- For whom do you post for on social media sites?
- What motivations people have for their social media presence?
- When you are submitting a post, what do you consider before you post it?
- Is there a certain social media platform that stresses you out the most?
- Have you ever been harmed by social media?

Our Survey participants:

Survey participants all took our survey by choice with no outside motivation or requirements. This provides us with a non-biased view from many people. The survey gave us a way to understand multiple people (of multiple ages) and their perspectives of social media and their experiences in a broader sense.

Our survey findings:

150 Responses to the survey.

- 88.7% of those surveyed have Facebook accounts
- 78.7% of those surveyed are 16-24
- The top 5 used social media platforms by our users:
 - Facebook (87.7%)
 - Youtube (82%)
 - Snapchat (71.3%)
 - Instagram (68%)
 - Reddit (48.7%)
- Of those platforms, Snapchat was the platform they used most (26%)
- Of those platforms that users had active accounts Twitter was least used (21.3%)
- Our users were divided almost equally on "Social media is stressful." as well as "Anonymity is important to me."
- Users mostly, "only post about the good times."
- Users agreed that, "Social media breeds drama."

Our findings in the survey indicate the following about social media users: People mostly use Facebook "to just to keep up with my friends and family". It appears that most people use social media to keep up with acquaintances made in the real world. This is supported because users do not agree with the following statements: "Social media makes me a more social person." & "I meet new people through social media." We also discovered interesting behavioral trends on social media, by a wide margin users agreed that they, "second guess my posts if I think a particular person will see it." This leads us to believe that the primary censorship on social media is self imposed. However, interestingly our users still agreed mostly that, "My posts to Facebook represent the real me." This is very curious because their responses were then split nearly equally when asked, "I post my honest thoughts/opinions on social media under my own name." This demonstrates a dissonance between how authentic users are actually behaving and how authentic they believe themselves to be. We want to continue looking into this data in an attempt to determine if that is caused by other factors such

as what platforms they use most, or how important anonymity is to them.

Competitive Product Survey

- The competitive product survey method helped us learn what functions people want in their social media platforms. We wanted to understand where different personalities lie within each person (i.e., where a business side lies compared to their social side) on their different social media platforms and learn how to combine the best parts of the different platforms to make users want to be more authentic.
- How we collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data
 - We did thorough research of all major social media platforms in the field
 - Created a list of all major features offered by all platforms]
 - Linked that with the survey to determine the most appreciated features

Our Results:

The competitive product survey method was done with our Social Media Analysis. We determined what features are offered on all of the social media platforms available now. This was an attempt to determine what platforms offered to their users and how that affected their involvement. The features offered were then analyzed against the results of our interviews and surveys. We did this to understand where different personalities/affinities lie within each person (i.e., where a business side lies compared to their social side). Their different social media platforms and how they used them helped us learn how to combine the best parts of the different platforms to make users want to be more authentic in a way that works for them. We supplemented this with our data and with the interview with Blake Hallinan. Her insight into particular behaviors on platforms such as Yik-Yak were very helpful in determining the appeal of these social media platforms.

The research questions we attempted to answer

- When you are submitting a post, what do you consider before you post it?
- Is there a certain social media platform that stresses you out the most?
- Are your experiences and activities influenced by your social media identity?

Our findings thus far are very limited. We looked at 23 different platforms and 22 individual features that are common on social media. We then went through determining which features each platform supported and which they did not. This served us mostly as a way to research platforms that we were unfamiliar with. It also gave us a much better idea of what features were important and how each platform utilized them.

Five “Whys?”

- Using the five whys method we were able to identify the underlying

reasons for particular behaviors. We wanted to determine what attitude people have towards their social media sites. By asking the “why” questions after interview responses gives deeper analysis to their original responses than a survey would have. This was useful in determining the main love and hate sentiments of social media users.

- How we collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data
 - Interviews (recruited by friends)
 - Provided with in-depth exploration with several people
 - The data was analyzed through our coding of the interviews
- How the analysis and interpretation will help you answer your team's design question
 - The Five “Whys” will help us answer our design question by addressing user concerns with online anonymity/authenticity.
 - The Five “Whys” will help us understand the concerns on a deeper level in order to determine every “why” which will ultimately help us get more in depth answers.
 - We want to ask questions that the average social media user can definitely answer but has never thought about past a surface level.

Our Results:

The research questions we attempted to answer:

- Is there a certain social media platform that stresses you out the most?
- Are your experiences and activities influenced by your social media identity?
- Have you ever been harmed by social media?

Our interviewees were all college aged students, who are appropriate to our research as many of them are connected through social media in some way. For many of these students, they grew up in an age when technology was still developing, hence giving them the opportunity form their identities on and offline. They are crucial to our research because they provide us with personal stories involving their social media experiences.

Interview summary

Our interviews showed us that users of social media often “lie” or “stretch the truth” to make their lives more interesting or exciting then they actually are. Everyone's life is exciting! The goal of our new product is to authenticate social media profiles so that this embellishing doesn't happen. The interviews also told us that people don't always feel comfortable to be themselves on their mainstream social medias so they revert to anonymous sites or using other handles to truly express themselves. A common theme was instagrams, where people have “rinstas” or “real instagram accounts” and “finstas” or “fake instagram accounts”. The irony in these names are

that “finstas” actually express people's real lives while “rinstas” are more or less fake when it comes to expressing how people actually look, act and live. With these main points we took away that people are not comfortable to share their true lives with a collection of individuals that they do not necessarily have a lot in common with. Our new product aims to encourage authenticity that is captured in the “finsta” community.

Design Requirements

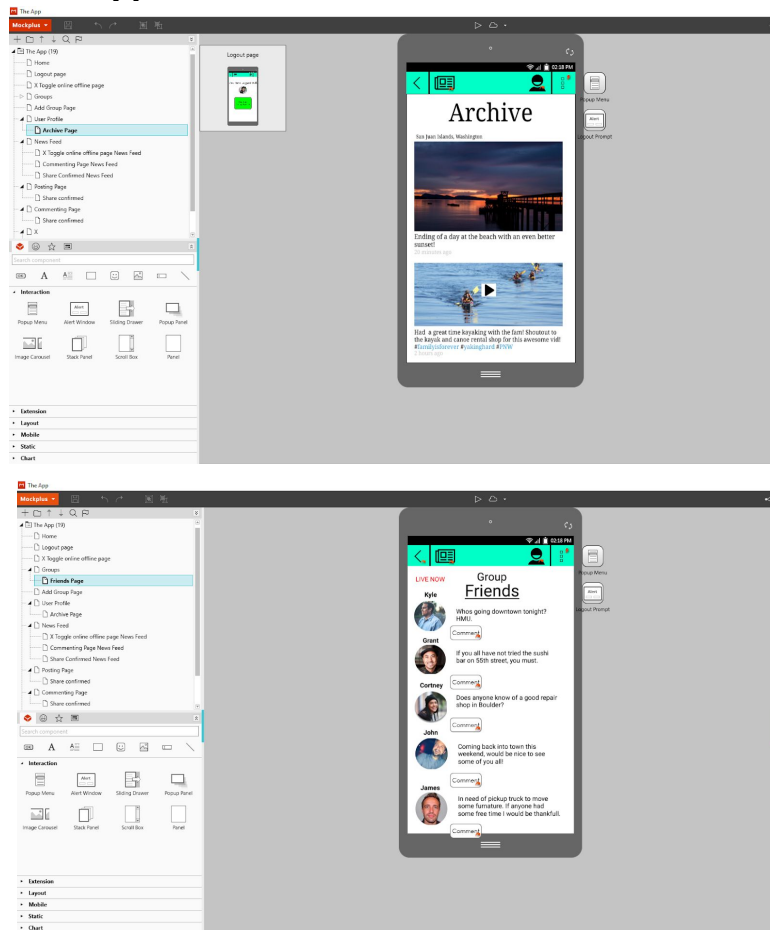
- **Instant live when sign on**
 - This feature will restrict viewing or posting information unless signed into the platform. Once signed into the platform others will know whos live.
- **Proximity Limiter**
 - Specified range determining who can connect or view posted content. This will assure users feel safe while interacting in the platform.
- **Interest Communities**
 - People with similar interests as defined by their profiles and mannerisms on the platform will be “assigned” different communities to fit their interests and hopefully make them feel more comfortable.
- **Dual Handle ability**
 - An anonymous and “authentic” that the user can switch back and forth on so that the user is able to find the balance between anonymity and attaching their name to their online profile.
- **Cross compatibility**
 - Ensures a diverse set of members are efficiently active on either a cellular or personal computer. Having both an app and website available for members allows them to access the community at home or on the go.
- **Limited post duration**
 - Information will not be stored on the app for others to see for an extended period of time unless specifically requested by the user.
- **World Wide Integration**
 - Ability to share information or opinions throughout the entire world. Sharing restrictions can only be controlled and limited by users.
- **Constant Information**
 - Never stumble across the same recurring posts. New information will continuously be published on the platform. The displayed post will remain fresh and make sure users don't feel like they are reintroduced to the recurring content.

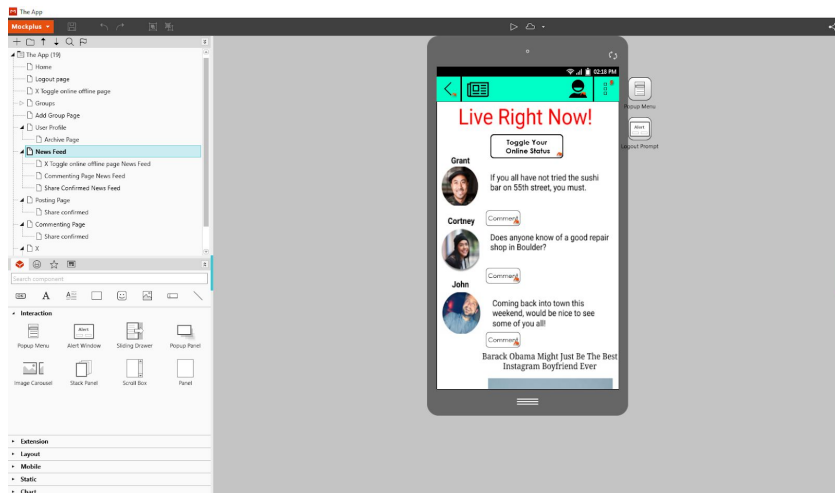
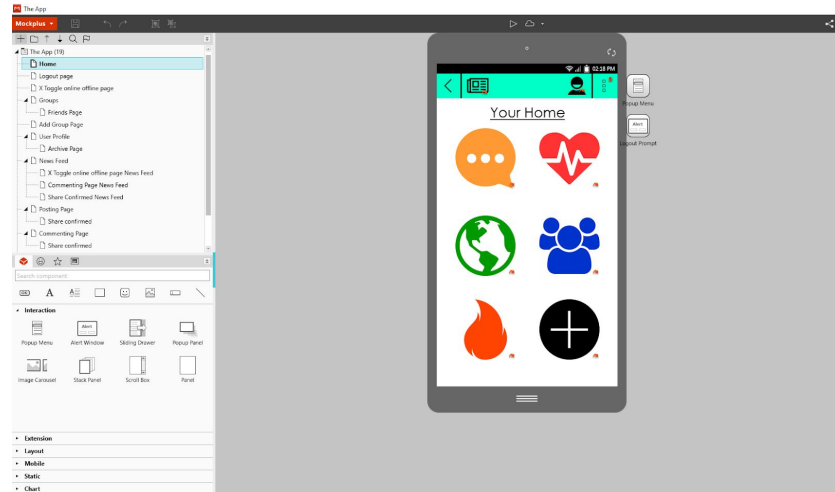
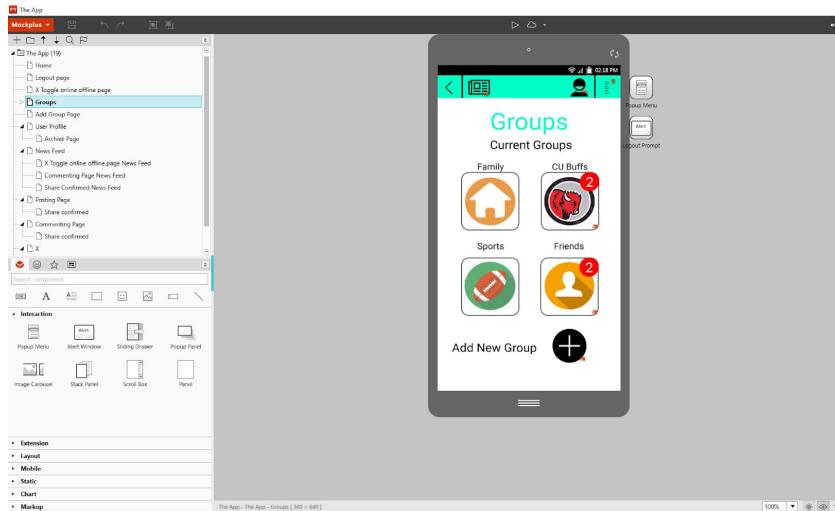
Brainstorm and Ideation:

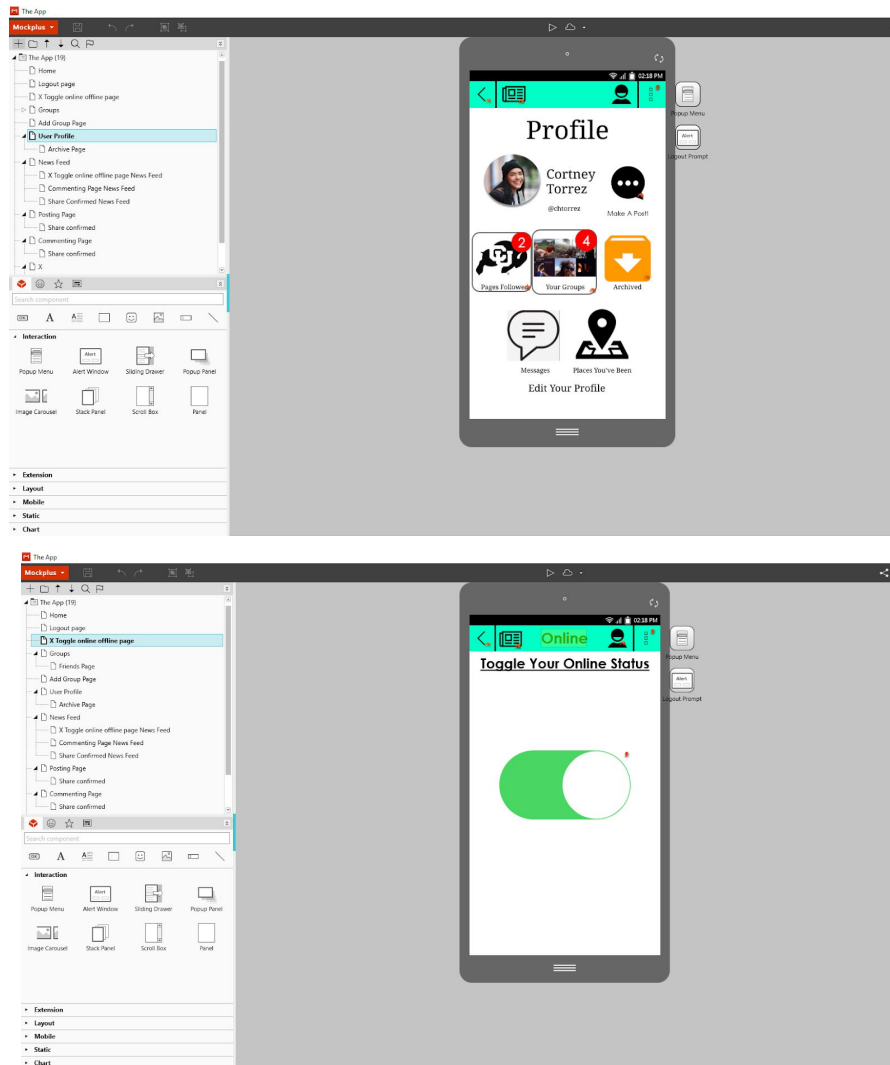
media platform with businesses and trending news stories. However, we quickly learned that that was too ambitious, and scaled back the number of features that we offered.

After our first in class prototype presentation, a lot has changed to the design of our app. We removed the trending features, and changed our online offline switch to a do not disturb function. With these things changed we developed our features to actually show a narrative over time as the user interacted with particular features that we were showcasing. This lead to our app growing to 68 total pages with distinctive narratives. We had a happy path that would result from commenting on a user's profile and having them log off after posing your comment. This demonstrated the ephemerality from the side of a user watching another user log off. We then had a narrative for posting and/or resharing a post from your archive. Our task flow then directed the user to log off and check their profile. This showed the ephemerality from your own perspective. Then we had a narrative that would show the app when the do not disturb feature was active. Overall we are very pleased with the progress of our application prototype. By the time of showcase, it was ready for a full hands on demonstration.

High-Fidelity Prototype Gen 1







High-Fidelity Prototype Gen 2

The overall design of our app stayed the same, however our features were expanded upon and improved to further show the ephemerality. The prototype is attached in the following folder: P7 under our Team Folder: Fidentities.

Feedback:

Our feedback from our in-class demo was incredibly helpful. One student asked if we wanted this as a mobile app only or if there would be another version. Other students brought up the idea of inverse archiving, essentially questioning if they would be able to save an article from a trending news post or not. Many students didn't like being able to be online/ offline because it felt too much like ghosting. They felt it caused people to be more inauthentic because they wouldn't know who was seeing their post. They also saw this feature as something that people would abuse quite quickly, and suggested a "do not disturb" button instead if a user didn't want to be interrupted while online. We didn't identify our primary stakeholders very well, so that

question was asked, too. We were asked if there was a way to limit the amount of posts people could make, since some people would be likely to spam your newsfeed with their pictures/videos/ etc. After much discussion, we realized this is something that is going to happen regardless of what social media platform is being used. There wasn't much we were able to do about that, but ensure that once the annoying user was offline, so was all of their data, leaving you with a clearer newsfeed. Metaphorically, our app is like a house party. You won't be able to decide who is there, but you *will* be able to choose who you want to see. Another student felt like they all of their effort went away once their posts disappeared, which allowed us to bring up our archive feature, however this prototype didn't show the ephemerality we wanted it to. While it showed the basic features, we didn't show how the newsfeed/ chats went blank after a user logged off. It was recommended that we show the happy path and practice pivoting. By redefining our stakeholder and keeping them in mind as we designed, we'd be able to (hopefully) avoid questions about why our app wasn't easy to use for other groups. We didn't put in a way to search for friends, nor did we define whether they only showed up when they were online or if they showed up when they were online, as well. Our group decided that we needed to remake a loose script, but also "murder our darlings" (as was suggested) and refocus on our original idea.

Feedback from showcase:

Aside having confusion about the phrasing of our do not disturb feature, we didn't get much negative feedback. Our task evaluations were able to cover the basics, including the idea of a user's post disappearing once they clicked "log out." Users seemed to understand the concept after hearing about it and then seeing it actually work in front of them. The one major criticism we had was that our prototype was too focused in on the features and functions of our app. We should have instead made the narrative more obvious and pronounced since our users more or less had to go looking for it.

Project Schedule

2.3.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P1 Due
2.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Pitch presentation
2.16.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P2L Project Proposal Due
2.23.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have P2 updated and resubmitted • Write up all interview and survey questions
2.24.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start scheduling and conducting interviews (2 each)
2.28.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish survey • Send survey out → collect a minimum of 30 responses

3.2.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have interviews completed and transcribed • Begin analyzing and coding interviews • Begin survey questions
3.6.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have interview analysis finished
3.7.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User Research Update in class (P3)- make a PPT
3.9.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User Research and Models due- upload to D2L
3.14.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close survey • Begin analysis of answers
3.21.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming and Ideation due (P4)
3.22.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on P5
3.26.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Proposal and Requirements Document Due (P5) to D2L
3.27-4.1.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPRING BREAK- Relax
4.4.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on Prototyping
4.11.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class Update: User feedback - make a PPT
4.11-18.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish Prototyping
4.20.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P6 Due
4.20-5.2.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up on life and everything else
5.2.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin prepping for the showcase • P7 due aka the Final Showcase

Evaluation Plan:

Our evaluation plan for our app, if we were to release it to the general public, would be based on five main values:

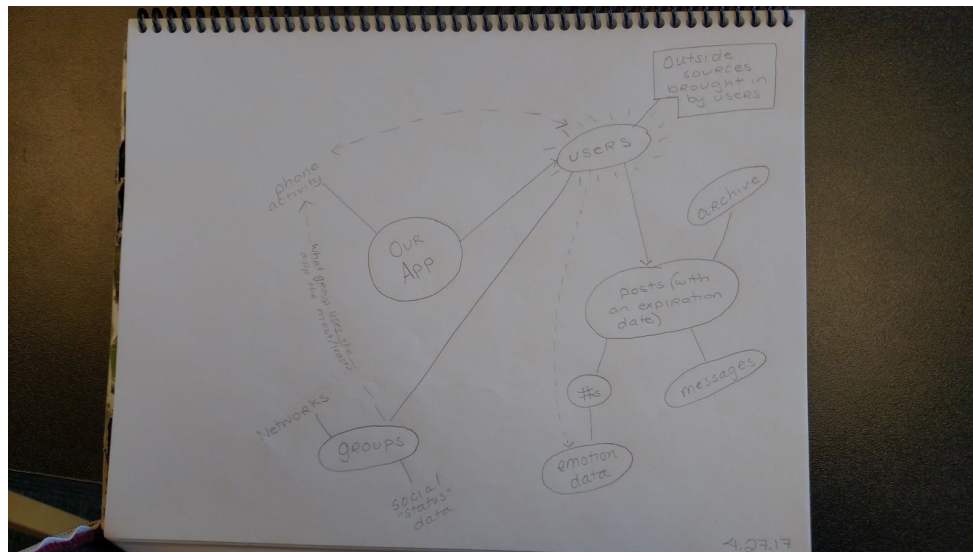
- Number of active daily users
- Average length of activity
- Number of friends of an average user
- Average number of posts per day
- User retention after the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd time etc. using the app.

The number of active daily users is decently straightforward. We would take a count of all users that had come online that day regardless of if they made a post or not. Average length of activity, would be a value that calculates how long per session each user is actively online in our app. We could then match

that with our number of daily users to determine the browsing time per day for all users. This could be used as an indication of how relevant and engaging users found our app to be at a given time. The number of friends would be an excellent indication of how successful our app is as a social media application. From this we could also formulate a web of connections, and analyse which users are the most connected and what leads to them being this way. The average number of posts per day would be an indication of how much our users enjoy using the app. If a user has a high number of average posts per day, that would indicate to us that they are investing a large amount of time communicating with their friends and sharing posts. The user retention after the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd time using the app could show us our bounce rates for users first interactions with the app. Based on when they stop using the app we can determine that certain features did not appeal to them immediately or after coming back to it at a later point.

Through these evaluation methods we could have an accurate representation of our average user. With this knowledge we could make changes or even add features and watch our core user group react to them.

Data Ecosystem:



The ecosystem we drew was a little different than most because our design was based on ephemerality. Our data relies on user data, user data linked from outside sources (such as a trending hashtag), as well as phone activity. Our design produces quite a few different types of data. We have user data that's collected when a user is on do not disturb mode and when they're online. It also produces location data and user network data via the groups that each user is able to make. The final type of data our app produces is emotion data that can be found through the hashtags. (Our goal is to make this data more authentic because it's ephemeral based). This data comes

from users, outside links, such as media sources, news, image hosting, and other social media apps. All of this is produced by our users- it's difficult to say if there's anything else that produces this type of data. Very similar to any social media app, the app isn't the app without its users, and our users are also the entities that provide it. Our data could be used to show how people organize their social groups and determine what posts stay on the longest/shortest - in other words, determine expiration date data. Data scientists, marketing companies, internet providers, and anyone with social media would value this data. A lawyer may also value the archive section if there were legal issues that ever came up.

Our app, ephem, could be used positively and negatively. It can show the vast amount of networks people have, similar to the "Kevin bacon links," and show what a small world we live in. Those networks can go further to show users other people who are in similar community groups, making it an extremely easy way to meet other people who possess similar hobbies. A future prototype of our product that would use hashtags more frequently (when the user database expands) could take the hashtag data and suggest those users to others who are using similar hashtags. It could even go so far to make it possible for everyone using a similar hashtag, say #pizzaparty, to have a video chat. Ultimately, ephem could study how people use ephemeral data when that data has more mediums than just pictures. However, it can also be controlling in a sense, almost to say "we know you better than yourself." Our app could be used to show who is left out of groups if we made the group's button open to the public. By doing that, it shows how left out one person might be, hence making a hierarchy of comrades. That prioritization of friend groups could cause a lack of ephemerality hence making the app counter-intuitive. If we gave users the power to screenshot, it would create a negative space- especially if the primary user/ uploader of the said medium was able to see what was screenshotted. Similar to how Snapchat used to show who other user's best friends were, ephem could also show similar updates, again enforcing an unwanted hierarchy. We designed ephem with the archive being completely private, but if we only allowed specific people into the archive, our app would become a blackmail site in no time. This archived data could then be sold to other people, and eventually the app could potentially lose all of its users. A final evil use of our app is if a user wanted to track a specific group. Whether it's the user tracking a group they made, or being able to enter into another user's group page, the user would be able to pin each person's location and potentially stalk them.

Our app's ecosystem becomes a (negative) feedback loop between the actual app and its users. Without the users, the app isn't the app. Because all of our user's data comes and goes with them, it can be difficult for the app itself to create and track data off of it.

Reflection:

Before our group reached the final idea to base our app on ephemerality we deliberated on many ways to encourage individuals to be more "authentic". First, we had to define what we thought it meant to be authentic as well as what our interviewees and survey takers thought. Authentic, in regards to one's presence on social media, was consistently thought of as "being yourself" or acting the same as you would when you were alone or with your closest of friends. Looking back on the process, we came up with the basic idea of our app very early on. It was hard for us as a group to step back from our hastily developed ideas and evaluate the design as we made it. The app went through constant development from a version of yik yak and no profiles to a platform that more resemble facebook. In our project proposal we laid out an idea that would essentially give every user an anonymous account and a "real" account. Of course, the irony in this situation is that most often social medias that are regarded as "real" are often the most edited and the most fake. In our first brainstorm we developed an app that would allow you to live alternate lives, one that was attached to your identity and one that was not. The information life cycle continued to roll on and after more user feedback we realized the pitfalls of our original design. We decided that ephemerality, a constantly fluid and non-permanent aspect, would be the main idea of our app. We thought the most effective way to make people act authentic was to make nothing permanent and give people control of their data. A question a lot of people wonder about is what happens to their social media data once it is posted, who has the rights to that information? For example, Facebook controls everything posted on their website/app. Even when you deactivate an account any comments or likes previously posted on other pages are still visible. With our app, EPHEM, we allowed users to be completely in control of their data. Any post you make on EPHEM immediately disappears when you exit the application. Old posts enter an archive that only the poster has access to have access to. Looking back on the process it is easy to see that we latched onto one idea we thought would be unique as well as effective. Our app also involved grouping features and trending features but overall what makes it special is the ephemerality. There are certainly questions that need answering like who owns comments, the commenter or the original person who made the post but the main idea is very concrete.

From the project proposal to now the application slowly morphed into a functioning app that could be pitched to an audience with a purpose. We got a lot of positive feedback during the showcase, people really like the basic aspects of the app. Obviously many people tried to tell us what little aspects could be added or subtracted but the general feedback was positive and impressed with the ephemerality the application offered. Overall, through user feedback and hashing out every idea that came to mind during group brainstorms we developed an app that was well rounded and could solve our research question: How can we encourage our users to be more authentic on our social media app?