amisu

The Team
Aggie Tutia: Project Manager/Designer
Kellan Grant: Developer
Add Gritman: Developer
Yang Liu: Engineer/Designer

Problem and Solution Overview
As people progress in life, they will oftentimes have to part ways from their close friends. This distance between friends can easily cause a decline in frequency of communication. There are many social media websites that attempt to keep people connected, but they can easily become cluttered with entertainment, ads, and acquaintances. This clutter of current social media makes it difficult for people to stay connected with those who really matter in their lives.

Our team wanted to create a more intimate and intentional communication application to keep people connected to long-distance best friends. In order to make *amisu* more intimate, we decided to focus our app on video communication and memories. Through *amisu*, people can send videos to each other, live chat, and reflect on their relationship as they continue to grow in their lives. We hope that this solution will help keep friendships together, even when separated by thousands of miles.

Design Research Goals, Stakeholders, and Participants
We decided to use interviews to conduct our research because we believed that observing these close relationships would have been too invasive. Interviews also allowed us ask follow up questions, which helped us extract more useful information out of our interviewees.

Our participants were college students with long-distance friendships. We focused on this group because a strong majority of college students have separated from their close hometown friends. During our research, we interviewed eight students of varying backgrounds and ages from the University of Washington. Our interviewees included one male and one female of the following groups: underclassmen (freshmen/sophomore), upperclassmen (junior/senior), graduate students, and international students. We wanted a wide variety of college students in order to see the different ways that people communicate with friends.

Through these interviews, we wished to gain insights into how they communicated with long-distance friends. We also wanted to know what they liked/disliked about the forms of communication they were using. We asked each person about specific close friends they had. For each friend, we asked where they lived, how frequently they communicate, what they used to communicate, and a few other questions to see how each relationship worked. We then asked questions about the various forms of communication they used. Each of our participants rated each form based on intimacy and explained why they rated the way they did. They also explained what they liked about each communication tool and what they wished was available for them.

Design Research Results and Themes

From our research, we discovered common problems from our interviewees despite their different backgrounds. They are the following:

- A lack of face-to-face/in-person interactions
- Struggle to reach out and keep up to date with one another
- Challenge of coordinating schedules for one-on-one conversations due to different time zones and work/school schedules

We also noted three themes from our research:

Face-to-Face Interaction

While there are many social media and communicative tools out in the world to use, applications like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram had a very shallow form of connecting. However one of our interviewees mentioned that he appreciated Instagram and Snapchat Stories since they brought in a visual element which engaged him more than normal texting. It would be nice to see faces of people you are talking with. Compared to meeting in person, people's behaviors on social media such as posting something funny or eye-catching, are more socializing rather than what they expect from friendships. Moving forward, we would want encapsulate this intimate interaction into our design.

Communication That Relies On Trust And Intention

Many of our interviewees concurred that a "close friend" was someone who knew you completely and were always there for you. One of the girls said, "You can go a long time without seeing them, but still be just as close afterwards." These are tried and true, long-standing commitments of friendship that even when challenged by distance, they still go strong. Interviewees also trust in the fact that they will undoubtedly meet up without any concrete plans. For example, some expressed that they would "probably" be meeting up with their friend during Thanksgiving. This theme will influence how our design solution integrates into these types of relationships. Our solution should not replace or stress the relationship, but assist in a minimal and impactful way.

Scheduling Is Tedious

We noticed that when we asked our interviewees about their close friend's schedules that they often times had little to no information about them. This made it challenging for them to figure out when they could potentially talk with or hang out with their friends. We also saw that when bigger groups of friends want to try to hang out or have a group call that they have to plan months in advance because of how complex their schedules can be. This can be a daunting task and often leads to friends giving up or making plans so far into the future that they don't know if they will actually be able to follow through with the plans or not. Another problem is that schedules are often times very fluid. This makes it so the further a plan is scheduled, the more likely it is to fail. We also noticed that it is even more difficult for friends in different time-zone because this adds an additional constraint when it comes to scheduling. This suggest to us that we should look more into making scheduling easier and efficient.

Answers to Task Analysis Questions

1. Who is going to use the design?

   We will be focusing on college students (ages 18-25) with long-distance friendships. They are used to using smart phones, social media apps, phone calls, video chat, etc. to communicate with their friends. They know how to text and use apps on a day-to-day basis.

2. What tasks do they now perform?
   a. Communication between only two friends (One-on-One)
      i. Texting/Messaging
      ii. Share images
      iii. Share videos
      iv. Share "story"
      v. Phone call/Voice call
      vi. Video chat
      vii. Email
   b. Communication between a group of friends (Group)
      i. Texting/Messaging
      ii. Video chat
      iii. Share images
      iv. Share videos
      v. Share "story"
      vi. Voice call
      vii. Video chat
   c. Communication shared to everyone (Public)
      i. Share "story"
      ii. Tweet/Post
      iii. Blog

3. What tasks are desired?
   a. To communicate more face-to-face interactions
   b. To know availability of friends
   c. To schedule proper conversations
   d. To have meaningful conversations

4. How are the tasks learned?
   a. Peer pressure
   b. The design of the applications
   c. Instruction/propagation materials

5. Where are the tasks performed?
   a. Surface conversations: Can be performed in most public spaces, ex: schools, parks, buses
   b. Deep conversations: Usually performed in private places, ex: homes and offices

6. What is the relationship between the person and data?

   Using data can be very beneficial for the user while trying to maintain his/her relationships, but this is also a very fine line and can have some negative consequences. Showing too much data about relationships could easily frustrate users and drive them away. We want to help friends cherish their

relationships in a natural and respectful way. The data that we use should not preach to the friends on how to live their life.

7. What other tools does the person have?
    a. Meeting up face-to-face
    b. Writing a letter
8. How do people communicate with each other?
    a. Public and Surface
        i. Facebook: Posts
        ii. Twitter: Posts
        iii. Instagram: Posts, Stories
        iv. Snapchat: Stories
    b. Public and Deep
        i. Blogging
        ii. Vlogging
        iii. Facebook: Posts (Rare)
        iv. Instagram: Posts (Rare)
        v. Twitter: Posts (Rare)
    c. Private and Surface
        i. Snapchat: Snaps
        ii. Instagram: Direct Messages
        iii. Facebook Messenger: Direct Message
        iv. House Party: Video Chat (up to 8 people)
        v. Text/iMessage: Direct Message
        vi. Whatsapp: Direct Message
        vii. WeChat: Posts
        viii. Marco Polo: Video Voicemail
    d. Private and Deep
        i. Google Hangouts: Video Chat
        ii. Text/iMessage: Direct Message (Rare)
        iii. WeChat: Voice Call, Video Chat
        iv. FaceTime: Video Chat
        v. Phone Calls
9. How often are the tasks performed?
    a. Surface conversations are more likely to be daily
    b. Deep conversations are highly dependable on the friends
        i. Could range from a few times a week/year
10. What are the time constraints on the tasks?
    a. Scheduling: Because people have many other responsibilities, making time to talk a struggle
    b. Time zones: Difficulty in matching times to talk
    c. Internet/Service connection: If there is no connection, people can't communicate
    d. Battery: If the devices are running out of battery, talking can be ended prematurely
11. What happens when things go wrong?

a. Lost connection: Abruptly losing a connection during a conversation can break the flow of a proper catch up, ruining a bonding experience
b. Miscommunication: Texting without context can bring confusion and misunderstanding
c. Too much silence: While close friends are able to be bonded for years without much communication, too much silence could cause a relationship to fade

Proposed Design Sketches - "3x4"

Present scanned images of your three initial designs in the context of their four tasks.

Include one paragraph for each design, discussing how it supports your tasks.

Include one paragraph discussing your choice of design and tasks to further pursue.
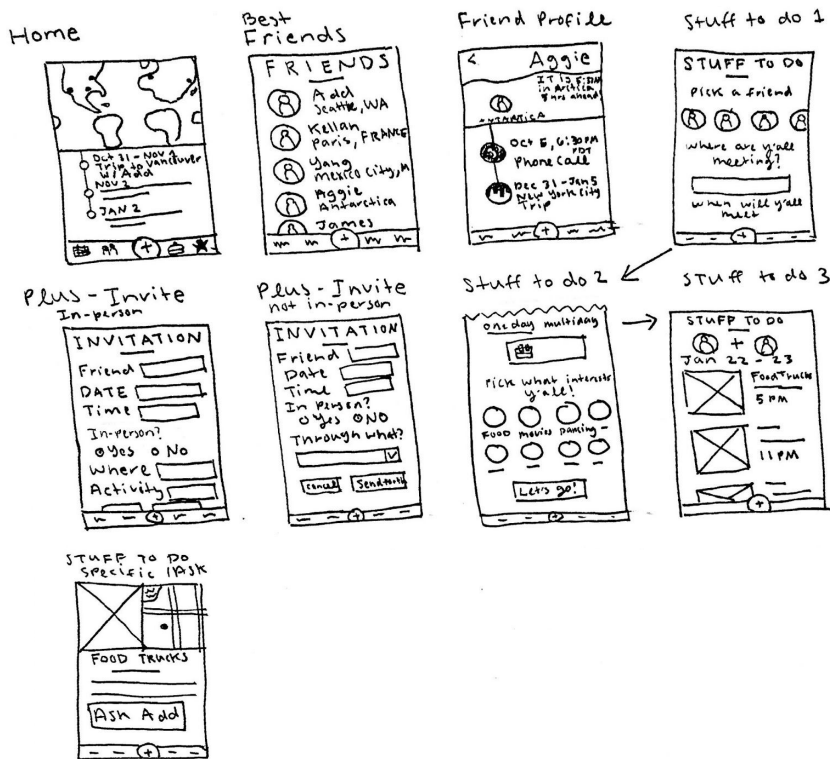
Design 1: Mobile Planning App

This app helps you plan events and calls with your closest friends. You have a private friends list and a news feed showing you all past/current/future events you have with your friends. You can create events and invite a single friend to join you at the event (examples of events could be going bowling or going on a trip to New York). This app is mainly focused on 1-on-1 relationships, so you can only invite one friend to an event. The app can also suggest events to go to based on location and time. Also, the app shows you where your friends are in the world, what time it is for them (converted to your local time zone), and how many hours ahead/behind they are from you.

Design 2: Alexa Integration

We chose to include Alexa as our second design. Specifically this would work with the Echo Show that includes a small screen with Alexa as well. We felt that this would be a very personal user-friendly way of keeping up with friends. It would allow users to simply ask Alexa to help keep updated with friends and she would communicate back and also show things on the screen that were applicable. Another function of this design would be to buy gifts for friends, and having our application connected to Amazon services would help with the feasibility of that function. We also might include another mobile app that is synced with the Echo Show that would help personalize the way Alexa interacts with our users and their relationships.
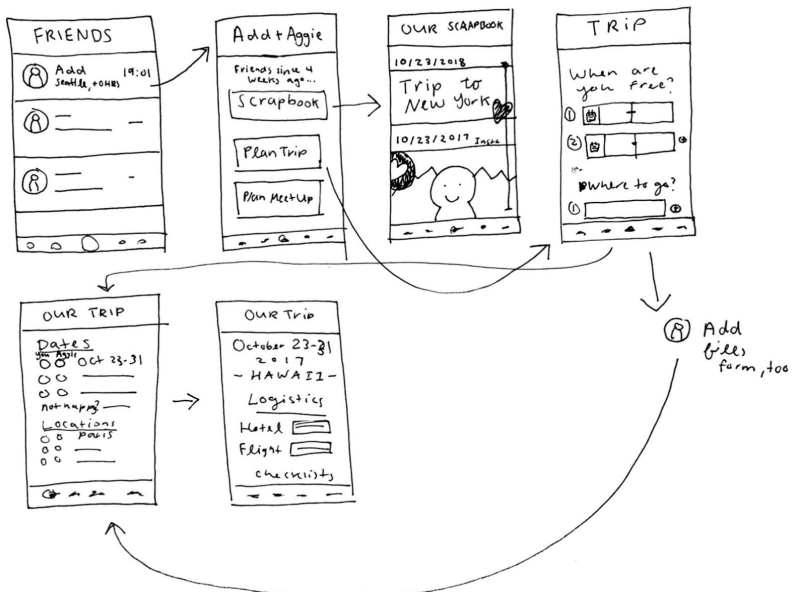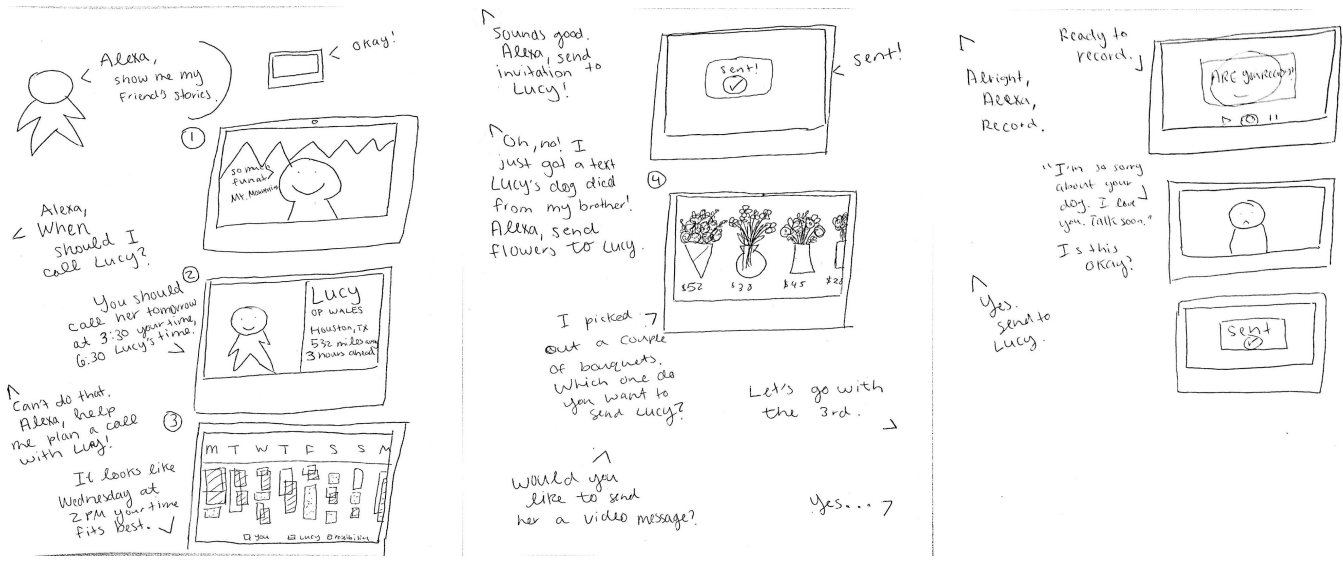
Design 3: Scrapbook/Trip Planner App

This design aims to help users check their close friends' posts/stories and plan for future trips/meetups. People don't want to miss their close friends' posts and would like express their feelings towards the posts in private. When friends want to see each other, they would plan trips that last for days or a couple hours meetups. Considering different time zones and the many details they need to discuss about, this design provides templates for planning and helps decision-making process more efficiently.

Selected Design & Tasks

For our final design we decided to focus on two tasks: (1) setting up a time and date for a one-on-one video chat and (2) reflecting and cherishing the friendship and memories. For the first task, we wanted to provide an easier way for friends to communicate more frequently through video chat. By helping people schedule video calls, we hope that we can bring people closer together through a more intimate form of communication. Our second task will help remind our users of the various memories that make their friendship so special. We hope that reflecting on memories will bring joy to our users while also providing an implicit reminder to communicate with those close friends. Together, these tasks will help our users focus on the past, present and future of their friendships, allowing them to remember the things that make their relationship so strong while also actively planning to make them even stronger.

Written Scenarios - "1x2"

Task 1: Setting up a time and date for a one-on-one video chat

Anmol is in graduate school at the University of Washington studying for an upcoming exam. She's been feeling depressed lately now that school has really kicked in. This is her second month of living in the United States away from her home in India, a 12 ½ hour difference. Frustrated with missed calls and lack of communication, Anmol vents to her friends in her program. One of them mentions how they've been using *amisu* to coordinate one-on-ones with her friend in Switzerland. Anmol and her best friend in India, Priya, both download the app, and Anmol sends a request for a one-on-one video chat. While selecting a time, Anmol could see not only her time, but Priya's time zone helping her to consider a mindful option for the two friends to talk. The request arrives to Priya, but she is not available at that time so she returns the request with an alternative time, again taking into consideration their time difference. Anmol accepts for next Friday at 8:00 AM, and Priya accepts for 8:30 PM.
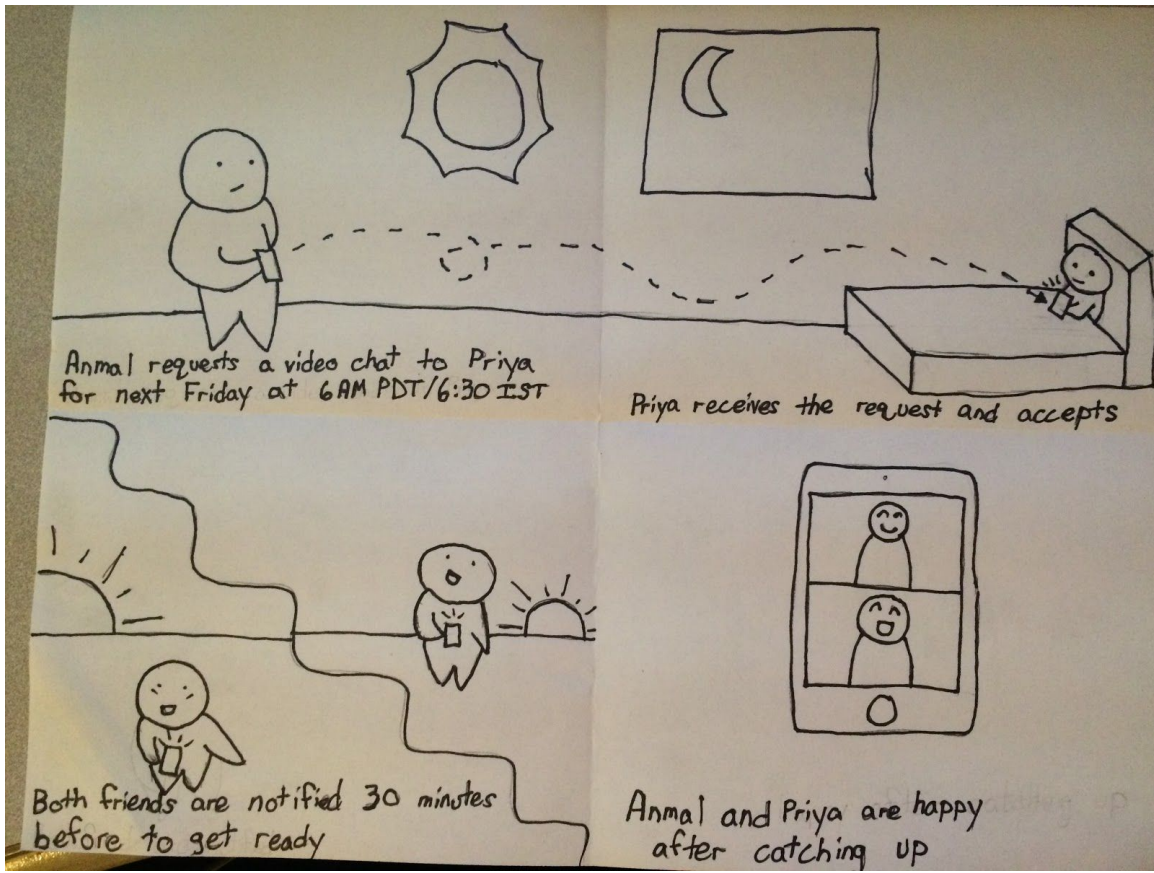
At 7:30 AM in Seattle and 8:00 PM in Mumbai, both Anmol and Priya are notified that they have their upcoming video call in thirty minutes. Another notification arrives at the time of call, and Anmol swipes the notification and automatically enters a chat room and Priya soon joins her. The two talk about their day, exciting new events, their struggles, and what they plan to do when they're reunited. After a good and deep conversation with her best friend, Anmol heads to class in higher spirits than before.

Task 2: Reflecting and cherishing the friendship and memories

While studying in Rome for his study abroad, Marty finds himself extremely homesick and missing his best friend Tony. The last time him and Tony were together, they embarked on a road trip from Seattle to Miami last summer. He doesn't exactly remember of those moments, but knows it's one of his favorite memories with him. Wondering what he's up to, Marty pulls up *amisu* on his phone and taps on Tony's profile. He can see Tony's location, what time it is in Seattle, and their life events. Knowing that he cannot call him (since Tony is asleep), he checks out their friendship feed and notices a curated album of that same Miami road trip he was just thinking about. Scrolling through the album, Marty reflects on what a good trip that was and what a good friend Tony is to him. He leaves Tony a video message giving him an update on his time in Rome, and that they need to plan another guy's trip for when he gets back. Sending the video, Marty heads to class nostalgic, but aware of the value of his friendship.

Storyboards of the Selected Design

Storyboard for Task 1

Anmal requests a video chat to Priya for next Friday at 6AM PDT/6:30 IST

Priya receives the request and accepts

Both friends are notified 30 minutes before to get ready

Anmal and Priya are happy after catching up

Storyboard for Task 2

Marty wants to talk to Tony, but Tony is asleep

Marty looks at a memory of his road trip with Tony

Marty is now happy and films a video message for Tony

Marty reviews the message and decides to send it to Tony