PROJECT OVERVIEW
For our UX project, my team is interested in investigating the minimally investigated sphere of social TV. Many people tend to watch TV alone, and it would be very interesting if there was a way for people to add a social element to programs. As it is now, some people reach out over social media to discuss or share their thoughts and feelings after watching a particular show. However we think if there was a way for people watching the same program to interact simultaneously while watching a program, that it could change the way people enjoy viewing and could bring them together. We are hoping to investigate more about what has been tried and any research that supports ideas for social TV apps, programs, platforms, or practices that could help us to develop our own idea of something to improve this area.

SECOND SCREENS
The phrase "second screen" refers to devices such as smartphones or tablets that can be used in conjunction with television broadcasting that give users access to extra content, apps, or features related to what they're currently watching. An increasing number of people are tuning into television while tweeting, posting updates on Facebook, and texting friends about the programs they're watching, and the use of these devices is apparently affecting the traditional TV experience.

The traditional TV viewing experience is described as a person watching a TV show alone, with a maintained focus on the program rather than on interacting with others. The viewer is generally free from other distractions such as social media or phone use, while they concentrate on what they're viewing. After the program has finished, the traditional viewer often discusses the show with others, but doesn't have much interaction with others during the program.

Second screens that are popping up today include the Beamly (originally called Zeebox), which is an app with the intended creation to help users learn more about what others are watching, and to offer features that augment the TV experience. Having the ability to see what shows are trending, offering suggestions about what else to watch etc.

GROUP VIEWING SERVICES
TV screening for groups of people is an interesting frontier for social TV. Rather than focusing on providing additional content to viewers to supplement their TV program, group viewing allows for multiple people to share the experience of TV in a more direct way. Some second screen apps have functions that allow viewers to chat with their friends while watching a program; this is similar to viewers tweeting or posting to social media mid showing. Group viewing would in turn allow viewers to watch the same content simultaneously while talking about the movie or the plot over an audio service.

Netflix Party Mode
A few years ago, Netflix allowed Xbox360 users who had the Netflix app downloaded onto their consoles to utilize a feature called "Party Mode". The Party Mode feature allowed multiple users with the app to tune into a particular movie or TV show, and would allow them to chat using their gaming headsets while the content was playing. After a certain

update, the console no longer offered the service, and many previous users have called for the return of the feature, based on their enjoyment of a more social aspect to program watching.

Rabbit

Rabbit is a website that allows a user to share almost any video media with their friends. What's nice about the page is that a user isn't required to sign up for the service or enter any information, other than allowing the site to access their computer's microphone or cam. A person can create a chatroom, pick what video they want to stream, and then invite others to join in on the chat. Users are able to see who else is in the room, and can easily switch to a particular persons webcam to see them more clearly or to focus on what they're doing or saying (making it truly more social than merely just chat). What's valuable about this site is the ability to allow any media access. It seems that there may still be a few kinks in the playback, but otherwise the concept is very intriguing and seems in the direction we are interested in moving our project and research towards.

Snap Skype

Last year, Skype introduced a feature to their Snap calling service for the Xbox One, which now allows users to operate video chats while simultaneously operating another function on their console. This means that people can video chat with each other while playing a game together, or even have video chat while watching the same content. This is interesting because it opens up the social aspect of TV to gaming as well, which I hadn't considered before (due to the fact that gaming is already pretty social). With audio chat and whatnot while people play online games, it seems like a different area, but it could also be lumped in with our TV concept. Likewise, we could also look further into some of the existing social gaming apps and consoles to see what is working for them, and what could be extended to a TV app.

There also seems to be a multitude of other current websites and services that allows users to sync up videos to watch at the same time, and to chat while they do so. It would be worth looking into these a bit more to help us recognize some of the positive features we may want to investigate, or any features that seem unnecessary to our goal.

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