There are networks of satellites up in space that connect to one another in order to allow television owners to receive their channels. There are social networks that help keep people in communication around the world. There are even networks of roads, tracks, etc. to get you from point A to point B. Point of the matter is that there are networks everywhere. Albert Barabasi’s excerpt “The Random Universe”, was interesting to read because it informed the reader with information as to what graph theory (Networks) are, and in what manner they tend to function. Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler explained that the construction for a network consists of nodes and links and depending on how many of these links you have present within your network, will determine in what way your network functions. It is interesting to view the form in which networks are made. According to Paul Erdos and Alfred Renyi, networks that are constructed together at random create “a unique giant cluster..” This got me thinking about the study I read, “The familiar Stranger: Anxiety, Comfort, and Play in Public Space” by Eric Paulos and Elizabeth Goodman. In their paper, they covered the topic of familiar strangers and how having these types of people within your proximity, affects the way you feel in your environment, whether it be comfortable or feeling anxious and uneasy.

These two papers relate to each other in the sense that it is by random chance who becomes your familiar strangers. No one has a say in who their familiar stranger will be. You do not see people going out of their way and saying, “I want this person to be my familiar stranger”. No, it all depends on the things you do, the different routes that you take, etc. After completing these readings, it has brought to my attention, who my own familiar strangers are. It has made me more aware of these people’s presence and how often I actually come in contact with them. Before, I subconsciously knew that the “familiar stranger” existed although, I did not have a name for what it was called.

For this project, I have decided to map out a network through the use of an installation. One of my favorite quotes that came to mind after reading these papers, that came as inspiration for my project is, “A stranger is just a friend that you haven’t met yet-Anonymous”. I have lived with the same seven roommates for the past four years while here at the University of Santa Barbara and I think it would be interesting to map out every single new acquaintance that I have met through the seven of them. It relates the readings to my project because it deals with the randomness that was talked about in the first paper I read by Barabasi, as well as how comfort in an environment is altered by the people present within it, which was mentioned in the second reading. Meeting and becoming friends with new people contains a random element in it because you never know who you are going to meet. As for how these people affect my environment, I never go a day without running into at least one familiar face while walking to or from class on Campus. Knowing and seeing these familiar faces around campus makes my environment more pleasant and comfortable because it creates a feeling of belonging and not feeling disconnected from my surroundings.