In this exercise, you will be examining the relationship between who your friends and acquaintances are and the places where you spend time regularly.

First, pick a physical space to focus on. You could choose your dormitory, apartment building, or building where you work. (I’ll use dormitory as an example.) Draw a rough floor plan of your dormitory floor. Include the location of all the dorm room doors, the stairs or elevator, the restroom, any common areas, and so on. Mark your room with a large X. (You can decide whether you need to draw just your floor or more of the building.)

Second, think about who your close friends are on the floor. Mark their dorm rooms with a number 1. Next think about who your friends are; mark their rooms with a 2. Finally, think about your acquaintances—people you say hello to or chat with briefly now and then. Mark their rooms with a number 3.

Now examine the pattern of friendships on your map. Are your friends clustered near your room in physical space? Are the dorm rooms with the numbers 1 and 2 among the closest to your room in physical space? Are they physically closer to your room than the ones with number 3? And what about the dorm rooms that didn’t get a number (meaning you don’t really know these people)—are these rooms the farthest from yours?

Finally, examine your propinquity map for the presence of functional distance as well. Do aspects of the architectural design of your dorm make you more likely to cross paths with some dorm members than with others? For example, the location of the restroom, kitchen, living room, stairs or elevator, and mailboxes can play an important role in propinquity and friendship formation. These are all places that you go to frequently; when walking to and from them, you pass some people’s dorm rooms and not others. Are the people who live along your path the ones you know the best? Has propinquity affected your other friendships (friends from previous years, high school, etc.)? How?