CS 352
Introduction to Usability Engineering

Observations

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Observational Research

- PRICPE: As with other research you start with a goal (from "P") aiming to deliver insights ("I")

- Same 4 issues from interviews
  - Goals
  - Relationships
  - Triangulate
  - Pilot

What to Observe Users Doing

- An existing system (to improve it)

    OR

- A process or activity that proposed system would support

    OR

- Your prototypes

How Often/Many to Observe?

- Steve Krug recommends spending 1 morning/month

- And to observe 3 users each morning

- It depends ☺

- Frequency and number may depend upon situation
  - May vary at different points in the process
  - Focus may change as process/program matures

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What to Observe?

Space	Objects (technological and non-technological)
Description Meaning Appropriateness	Description Meaning Appropriateness
People/activities Description Meaning/Role Success/Failture	

Space

Diagrams are worth a 1000 words!
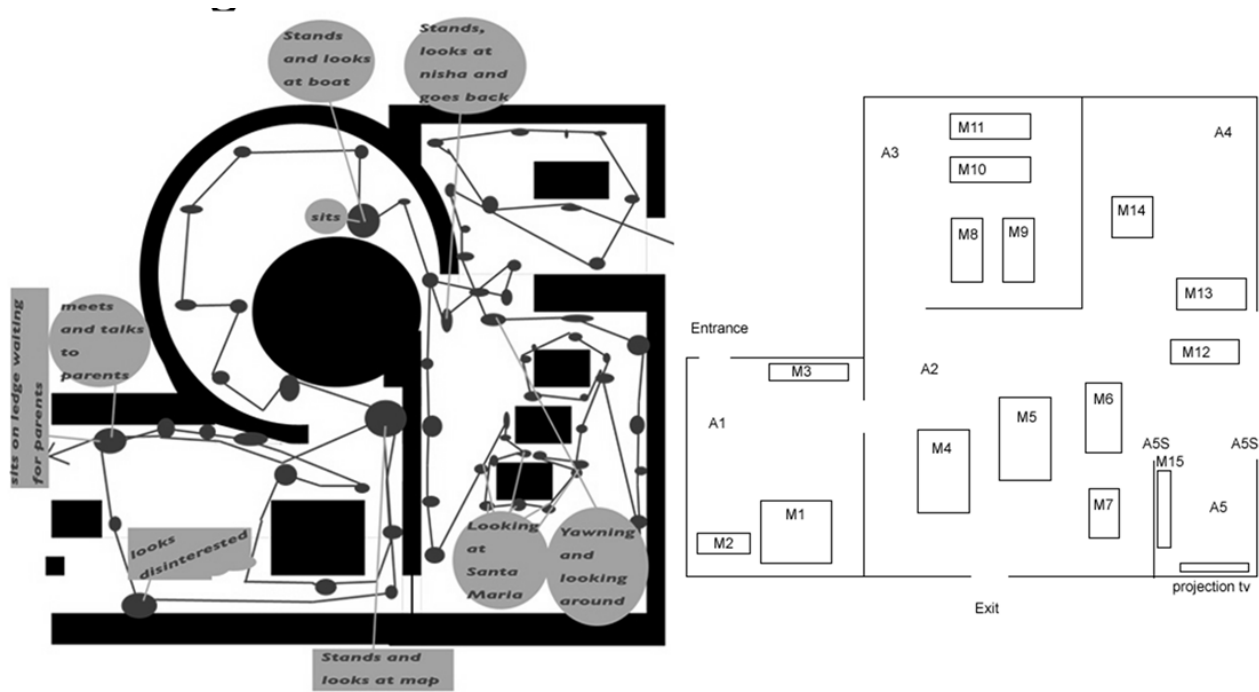
You and the Observation

- You:
  - Have your stuff ready
  - Dress like them
    - Explain it is NOT an evaluation
    - You really need to see how they do their job
  - Don't talk to your partner
    - They shouldn't know you're there
  - Fill in notes immediately after

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You and the Observation (cont)

- Collect other data for triangulation
  - Official descriptions and sketches
    - e.g. room diagram, location of people
    - Do they move between locations
  - Artifacts subjects created
    - e.g. their doodles on their scratchpad

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Remember

- You are there to watch them do a job

- Keep your mouth shut

- Record what and how they do things

- Save questions for some other time

- Requires concentration
  - Some minor, easy to miss, action may prove to be critical

- Your presence may change things!