

Why don't we interact with people around us?

Motivation

Research shows connecting socially makes people happier and more healthy. As HCI researchers, we want to know why people interact with strangers online more than offline.

We hypothesize that there is a desire for the value of more interactive communities offline.

Goals

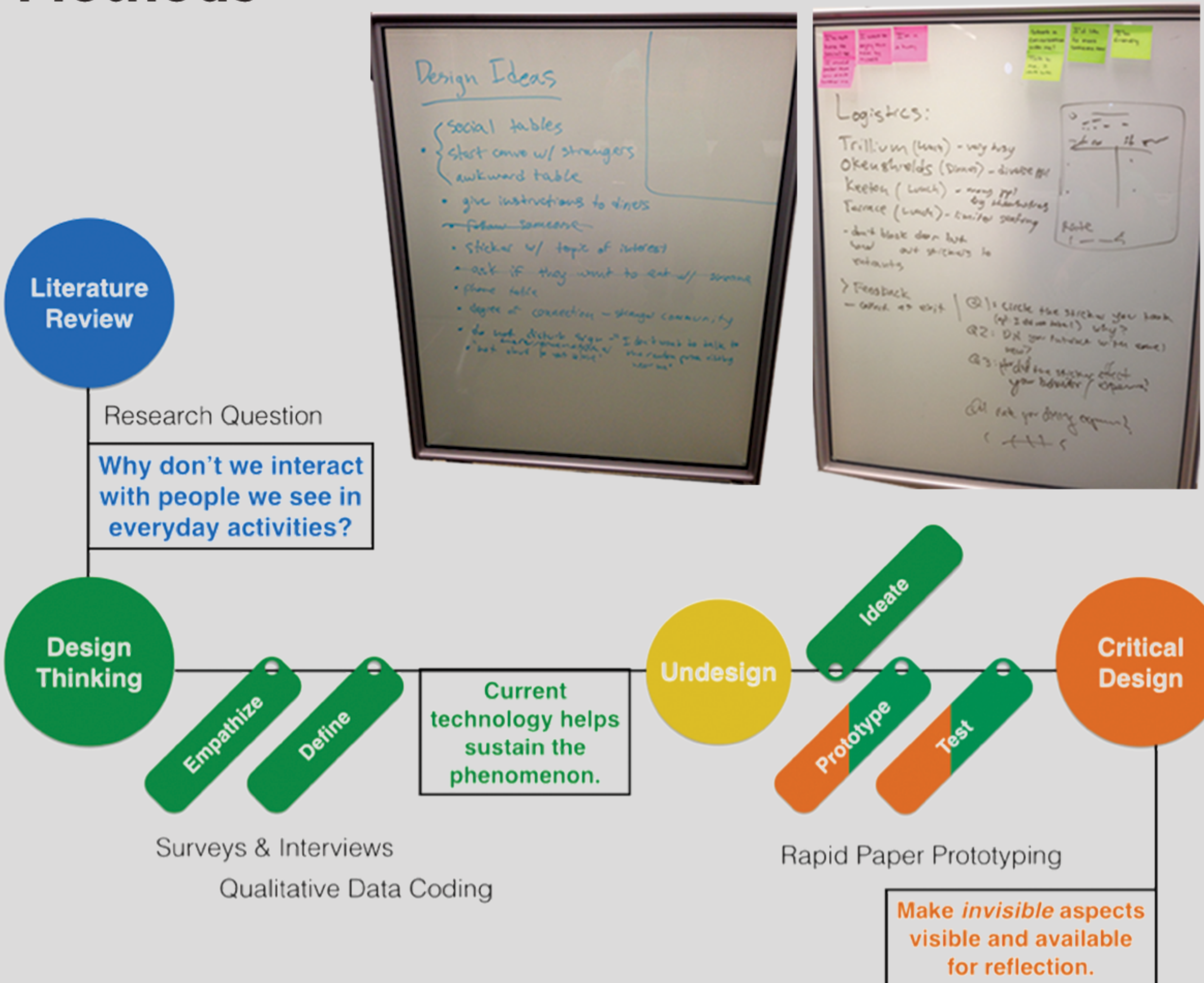
- Question behaviors and cultural norms.
- Call attention to the benefits of stranger interactions.
- Explore the boundaries of our design space.

Background

Cornellians are apart of a (**gellenschaft**) society focused on individual self-interest, but we also desire characteristics of a collective (**gemeinschaft**) community.

However, people typcaly think and act against this desire to pursue interpersonal communication due to their misperception of comfort. **Risk of the slightest feeling of discomfort prevents people from experiencing happiness from successful interactions.**

Methods



Critical Design

Participants choose from 4 phrases and wear it on their clothing as they eat in the dining hall:

2 red (Doesn't want to interact with someone they don't know)

"I'm not here to socialize."

"I don't want to talk to you."

2 blue (Wants to interact with someone they don't know)

"I'm open to conversation."

"I would like to meet someone new."

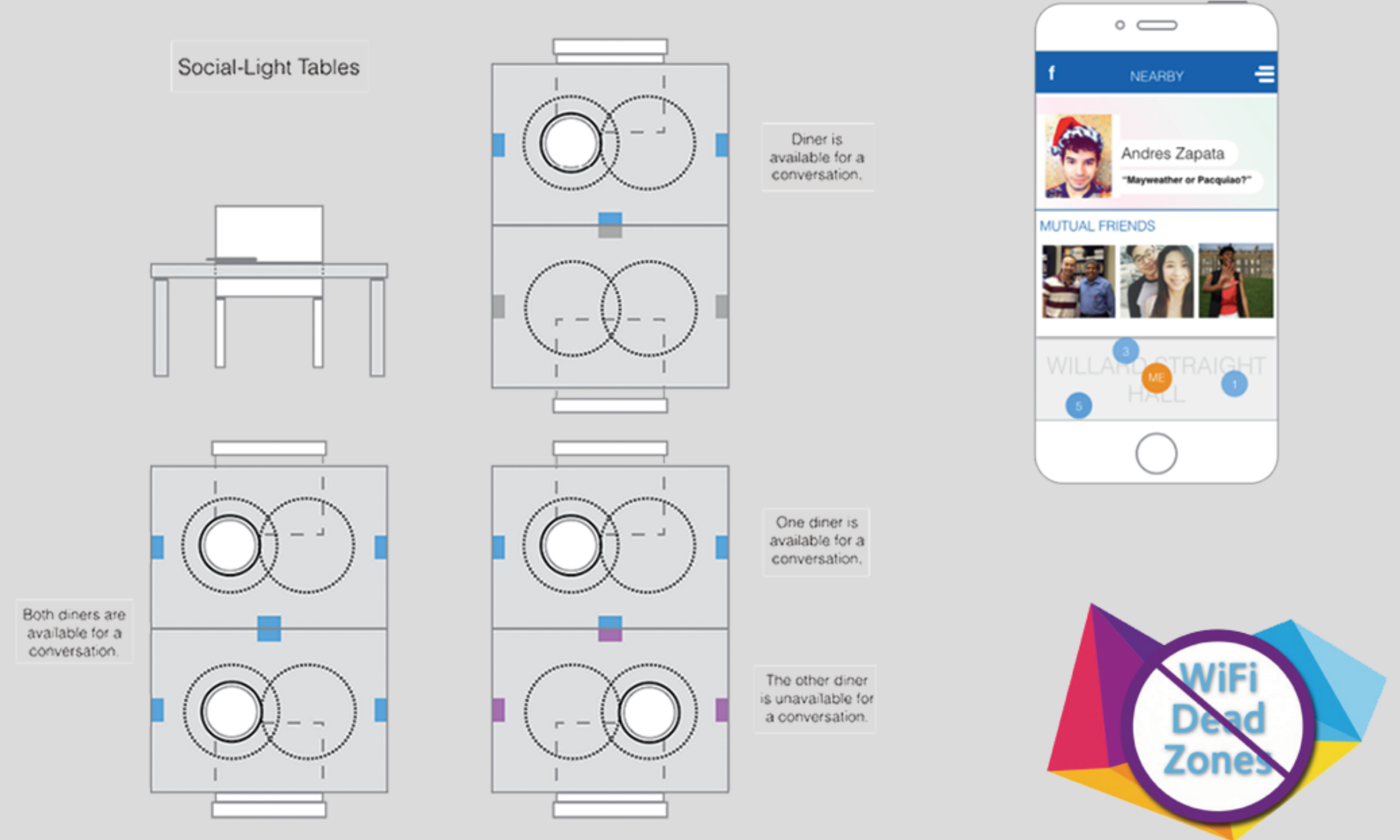
As they exit the dining hall, those who took a sticker are asked to take a 4 question survey.

Implications

Critical design identifies when, where, and why experience occurs, providing a platform for innovation.

Examples Concepts (shown on right)

1. *Social-Light Tables* that indicate whether the person seated is available for a conversation.
2. App that tells you who your mutual friends are with the people near you.
3. "Lets Talk" spaces - no wifi/cell service.



Conclusions

Original aim: use technology to increase interpersonal interactions between strangers. This meant design for devices, in order to get people off of their devices--**undesign**.

We had a "wicked problem" and used critical design as a key component of a conservative design approach.

We believe following this formula in other topics will allow designers an accessible way to be both innovative and empathetic to their users in order to reach grounded innovation.

