

Feedback on Exit Ticket 1

Before you do your observation, you should be able to answer:

1. **Who** is the stakeholder I'm focused on?
 2. What **system condition** am I trying to understand (policy/practice/resources/relationships/power/mental models)?
 3. Where will I go that I can **actually observe** that condition playing out?
 4. What will I **watch for** (behaviors/interactions/artifacts/breakdowns)?
 5. Why is it **ethical and appropriate** (public setting, no identifying info, no vulnerable/private contexts)?
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Field Observation for Problem Understanding

January 29, 2026



Learning Objectives for Today

1. Explain the purpose of field observation in problem understanding
 2. Distinguish between casual looking and structured observation
 3. Use SEE-THINK-WONDER to guide field notes.
 4. Use AI to surface blind spots, biases, and ethics.
 5. Create a realistic, ethical observation plan.
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Warm-Up: Where Will You Observe?

Where do you need to go to understand your problem?

Why that place and not another?

- » Think about these questions for 2 minutes (individually)
- » Pair-share to explain/refine your thinking



What Observation Is... And Is NOT

— Observation IS —

- » Focused, intentional watching
- » Attention to routines, breakdowns, interactions
- » Evidence you can record in the moment

— Observation is NOT —

- » Interviewing
 - » Googling
 - » Analyzing on the fly
 - » Looking only for confirmation
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SEE – THINK – WONDER Framework

- » **SEE:** Concrete actions, details, sensory data
- » **THINK:** Early interpretations (kept separate)
- » **WONDER:** Questions, gaps, surprises

See Think Wonder		
 <u>SEE</u> What do you see?	 <u>THINK</u> What do you think is going on?	 <u>WONDER</u> What does it make you wonder?

Adapted from Kuhlmann, 2017

ACTIVITY: Mini Observation Practice

- » Leave the room for **20 minutes** and take jottings (SEE only)



What to SEE?

- Who is doing what?
 - In what sequence?
 - Using what artifacts/tools/signs?
 - In what space?
 - With what language?
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Jottings vs. Field Notes

- » **Jottings (in the moment):** Fast fragments—key actions, snippets of dialogue, sensory details, timestamps
 - » **Example:** *“10:42—coffee line 9 ppl; 2 leave; barista repeats ‘hot or iced?’; menu board glanced at; pickup counter crowded; ‘Is this mine?’ x2.”*

 - » **Expanded notes (right after):** Turn jottings into a coherent “scene” while it’s still fresh
 - » **Example:** *“A line formed along the wall... customers paused at the menu... two people stepped out after reaching the register...”*
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ACTIVITY: Mini Observation Practice

- » Leave the room for **20 minutes** and take jottings (SEE only)
- » Return and expand notes (**10 minutes**):
 - » **SEE:** one paragraph of description
 - » **THINK:** 2-3 interpretations
 - » **WONDER:** 3 questions

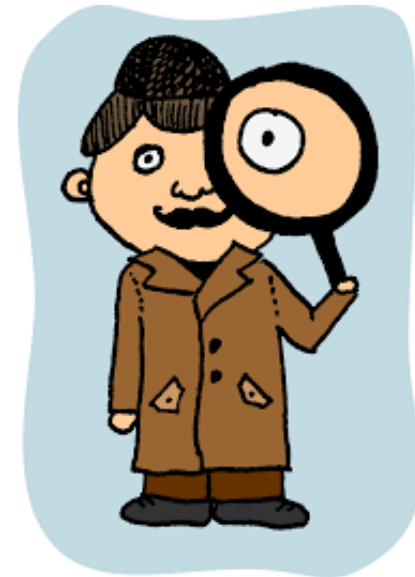


What to SEE?

- Who is doing what?
- In what sequence?
- Using what artifacts/tools/signs?
- In what space?
- With what language?

Debrief: What Did You Notice?

- » What was hardest to capture?
- » Where did you start interpreting?
- » What details did you miss?
- » How did this connect to system conditions?



ACTIVITY: Refine Your Observation Plan with AI

GOAL: Make your plan more complete and more ethical

AI Prompt

I am a student researcher preparing for a field observation. My problem statement is: *[Your Problem Statement]*. My proposed observation will take place at *[Location]* during *[Timing]*. I intend to look for *[What you will watch for]*.

Act as a critical social researcher and ethicist. Please provide feedback:

1. Brainstorm 3-5 additional things I might look for.
 2. Identify 1-2 potential biases I might bring.
 3. Suggest ethical considerations I might have overlooked.
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The Human Value-Add

Use the AI well

- » **Prioritize:** Which suggestions are most relevant?
- » **Integrate:** Adjust your plan based on the best ideas.
- » **Reflect:** What did the AI highlight that you missed?



Ethics Reminder



- » Public and safe locations only
 - » Avoid vulnerable settings without consent
 - » Do not collect identifiable private information
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Exit Ticket

By 11:59PM tonight...

Instructions in Canvas!

Exit Ticket

By 11:59PM tonight (1/29) please submit your ["Exit Ticket" for this class session](#). Exit ticket submissions are a significant part of your Process & Engagement (Process Deliverables) grade.

Overview

This assignment is designed to help you finalize your field observation plan following our in-class AI-enhanced refinement activity.

Submission Requirements

For this exit ticket, please submit a short outline or paragraph that includes the following components:

1. **Your Updated Problem Statement:** Provide your current "How Might We..." (HMW) problem statement. This should be the version you refined during the class discussions.
2. **Observation Location:** State the specific, physical location where you plan to conduct your observation.
3. **Timing:** Specify the planned date and time (or time window) for your observation.
4. **What You Intend to Observe:** Clearly describe the specific behaviors, interactions, or artifacts you will be looking for. Be as concrete as possible.
5. **Refined Ethical Considerations:** Briefly outline any ethical considerations you have identified for your observation, especially those refined during our AI activity (e.g., how to handle sensitive information, participant vulnerability, maintaining anonymity, etc.).


Submission

[Please submit your refined observation plan as a text entry or by uploading a single PDF file or Word document.](#)

Jan 29 - Refined Observation Plan

Assignment Reminder

The Researcher's Journal

- » Due February 5 at 1PM
 - » Uses your system observation
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- » Complete your observation before our next class (Feb. 3)

Assignment

Your first "major" social venture assignment is due before class (i.e., by 1PM) on February 5. The instructions are provided below, as well as on the [Assignment page where you will upload your submission.](#)

Assignment 1: The Researcher's Journal

Objective:

This assignment is designed to train you as a social entrepreneur: to see the world around you, connect personal observations to broader systemic issues, and ground your analysis in both evidence and empathy. Your goal is to move from a personal experience to a well-defined social problem, preparing you for the semester-long venture project. An AI can be a useful tool for brainstorming or editing, but it cannot complete this assignment for you, as it requires your unique observations, experiences, and reflections.

Tasks:

Part 1: The Origin Story (Your "Why")

- **Task:** Tell a brief but detailed story (1-2 paragraphs) about a specific moment or personal observation that made you aware of a larger social problem. This could be something you saw in your community, a story from a friend or family member, an experience from a job, or a frustration from your own life. Describe the event with specific details.
- **Connection:** After telling the story, explicitly state the broader "wicked problem" this personal moment connects to (e.g., educational inequity, lack of accessible mental healthcare, etc.).

Part 2: The Observable Problem (Your "Where" and "Who")

- **Task:** Identify a specific physical location you can visit (e.g., a specific park, a campus building, a local intersection, a coffee shop) or a niche online community you can observe where an instance of your problem occurs.
- **First-Person Observation:** Your primary evidence for this problem must be a direct, first-person observation from visiting this place (physically or digitally). What did you see, hear, or feel that demonstrated the problem?
- **Problem Statement:** Based on your observation, write a single, clear sentence that defines the observable problem. (e.g., "During peak hours, students in wheelchairs have difficulty navigating the crowded main entrance of the campus library due to the lack of a clear, protected access lane.")

Part 3: The System Map & Conceptual Connection

- **Task 1 (System Map):** Briefly map the system around your observable problem. Identify the key Actors (people/organizations), Rules (laws, policies, social norms), and Resources (money, technology, community trust).
- **Task 2 (Conceptual Connection):** Review the "Leverage Points" reading by Donella Meadows. In a dedicated paragraph, answer the following: Which of Meadows' leverage points seems most relevant to the system you've just mapped? You must quote at least one specific phrase from the text and explain how it connects to a specific detail from your own system map.

Part 4: Stakeholder Perspective-Taking (Empathy)

- **Task:** From your system map, choose the two most critical stakeholders (they do not have to be the most powerful). For each stakeholder, write a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) from their first-person perspective ("I am..."). Describe how they experience the problem, what they are worried about, and what they want. Try to use language you think they would actually use.
- **Conflict/Tension:** After writing the two perspectives, add a final paragraph that explains where and why the needs or desires of these two stakeholders might conflict.

Format:

A professional 2-3 page memo [submitted as a Word document or PDF to Canvas.](#)

Next Class...

Building and Testing Initial Ideas (Human-Centered Design)

