

Week 3 Assignment - Everyday Snakes and Ladders

We have practiced observing both the visible and the invisible. Now, let's practice interviewing someone, considering their needs, and seeing what we can change about their situation.

Snakes and ladders, known originally as Moksha Patam, is an ancient Indian board game for two or more players regarded today as a worldwide classic.

Challenge: Find a partner in your team. Your challenge is to discover a Snake (something that makes life worse, often unexpectedly) or Ladder (something that makes life better) in your partner's life or habits.

Part 1. Research Plan

Your ultimate goal is to do an observation of a "day in the life" of your research partner, in their home. This requires you to get creative. As a researcher, will you:

- Communicate by text?
- Hop on a phone call at the beginning of the day?
- Share screens as you work?
- Mutually design a live study that works for both of you?

*Note: Because everyone has varying comfort levels around being studied, please begin this exercise by defining the scope of "home" for your project group. If you are uncomfortable being researched throughout the day, you may define "home" as the comfy chair where you watch Youtube after class, or another strip of behavior that you feel comfortable sharing.

Deliverable #1: Share a brief 1-2 paragraph "research plan" you created with your partner about what research tools you are going to use to make this virtual observation work. Why choose these tools, and what the potential advantages or drawbacks might be?

Part 2. - The Observation

[We recommend you complete this part THIS week.]

As you observe your partner, take notes on what seems to matter to them?

What do they seem to be optimizing for? Feel free to share your thoughts aloud and have frequent conversations with your partner. Ask questions while observing; what people say and what they do are often different! You could learn this by paying attention to:

- What do they seem happiest doing? (Ladder)
- What frustrates them? What do they dread? (Snake)
- What do they spend lots of (physical or cognitive) effort on? (Snake or Ladder)

Doing this well requires Empathy, to truly understand what your partner is trying to accomplish or experience from their perspective.

The ideal Snake and Ladder solution to this exercise is to find a subtle, meaning-based shift that will better align your partner with their ideal experience of home.

Deliverable #2: Share a 1-page summary of your observations from this shadowing exercise. Identify at least one ladder and one snake you seem to have noticed. Doodles, rough notes, all encouraged!

Part 3. The Interview

Now that you have some data, interview your partner for 1 hour. You should build a field guide for yourself for this interview. Please record the interview (use zoom or another recording tool!).

The goal of this interview should be to find what makes a place a home for your partner: is it a particular person? A set of processes or routines? A certain color or style of décor? The goal is not to judge or evaluate their home-making processes but rather to learn about them and empathize. Remember, “people make sense.”

Deliverable #3: Submit your field guide for this interview.

Deliverable #4: Share a 5-10 minute portion of the interview that you thought was particularly important to understanding your partner's water. The teaching team will provide feedback on your interview. Additionally, write a reflection on the interview answering the following questions:

- Why did you select this portion of your interview? What made it particularly compelling?
- What did you learn about your partner that surprised you? How would you describe their water?
- How did it feel to conduct a full-length interview? Were there any challenges that surprised you? What would you like to improve upon?

Part 4. The Change

Now, based on what Snakes and Ladders you discover, try to make your partner's life better by asking they change one thing about their home or home routines.

The best interventions here are subtle and Meaning-based: for example, taking down a poster that reminds them of a bad friend. Look to either get rid of a Snake, add or strengthen a Ladder, or transform a Snake into a Ladder.

What is one thing I can ask my partner to do, that will make their home more of a home – by *their* standards?

Make sure this change is reversible and attainable – because you will be evaluated by your partner on not just its results, but how doable it was!

Deliverable #5: One-page Writeup/Sketch notes

Write about the change you had your partner do. Why did you pick this, and what did you hope it would accomplish in their life?

Part 5. Final Interview Reflection

Spend 30 min – 1 hour doing another interview with your partner: this time, asking about the outcome of the change.

What happened? How did it make them feel? Was it easy or difficult to execute?

Hold space for your partner to share the details of the change – particularly if it went very differently from what you expected or desired.

Deliverable #6: Final Reflection:

In one page, tell us what happened. What did you learn? Did the outcome of your change surprise you? If so, how so?

What steps would you take next to learn and help your partner?

How might you apply this to Needfinding in the future?

DELIVERABLE SUMMARY:

1. Research Plan
2. Observation Notes
3. Interview Field Guide
4. Interview Clip
5. Interview Reflection
6. Change Writeup
7. Final Reflection