

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Social Psychology (PSYC 355)
Spring 2008

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As a JEP student, your work in the community is similar to that of a social scientist who conducts “participant-observer” research. Throughout the course of the semester, you will observe and participate in the daily activities of those you meet at your JEP site, and you will write about your experiences on a weekly basis. These JEP Reflective Questions are designed to help you focus your observations and critically reflect on your experiences in relation to what you are learning about in your Social Psychology course.

Please read through all of the Reflective Questions prior to beginning your JEP assignment. The questions are related to and build upon one other. We encourage you to refer back to previous responses and to take seriously your PA’s feedback each week. Doing so will help you to learn more from your experiences. Please note that your experiences in the community will provide you with a valuable opportunity to apply the theories you are learning about in class. **Please be respectful of the community and the limits of your experience and knowledge.**

ALTERNATE QUESTION

If your experience at your JEP site doesn’t allow you to adequately answer a Reflective Question, you may choose another topic to write about. For example, choose a critical incident that might have occurred that week, and discuss the incident with help of a theory that may provide further insight in to why it happened. **Please use the Alternate Question at the end of the list as a guide. Please note: The assigned Reflective Questions for Weeks One and Eight are required.**

YOUR WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

The core parts of each Reflection Question (which you need to focus on) are highlighted in bold. Use the additional parts of the question to guide/supplement your answer.

WEEK ONE - First Impressions of your JEP Site

Describe your initial experience at your JEP assignment. Include a detailed description of the responsibilities and activities involved in your particular assignment. What are your most vivid impressions of the site? What were some of your expectations prior to beginning your assignment and what were these expectations based on (e.g., mass media images or personal encounters)? How do your experiences this week compare to your expectations?

WEEK TWO - The Social and Physical Context

Describe the social and physical context of your JEP site. Try to be as specific as possible about the number of people that are there, as well as the age, sex, race, ethnicity, and any other significant characteristics of all those involved in your JEP assignment. Walk or look around your site and take in the environment; specifically, provide details about the size, space, decor, noise level, etc. of the classroom (or meeting room), the building(s) making up the site, its grounds, the neighborhood (or whatever you could see of the neighborhood on your way to your site). How do the aesthetics and overall feel of the site and neighborhood compare with the USC campus and/or other places you have worked or attended school? What are some of the main difference and similarities? Do you think that these differences or similarities (e.g., of the physical context of the class room) have any impact on the learning experiences of students at the site?

WEEK THREE - Perception

Processes of sensation and perception are fundamental to how we perceive one another and the world around us. In other words, sensation and perception are at the base of most of what we know. **Keeping this in mind, please describe a meaningful event or series of events (positive or negative) in which you were involved at your site (or which you observed).** Discuss the various factors that may influence the ways in which you and other individuals perceive the same event differently. For instance, how does your racial/ethnic and gender identification, age, or social class influence your interpretation of the witnessed event as opposed to a fellow colleague? What does this suggest about the importance of perception to society?

WEEK FOUR - Close Relationships

Chapter 9 (in Brehm, Kassir & Fein) discusses the social psychology of attraction and close relationships. **Drawing from some of the main arguments in this chapter and your JEP observations, how do students interact at your JEP site outside and/or inside the class/meeting room?** Based on your observations and/or own experiences, what roles do age, race/ethnicity, gender, or social class play in the forming of friendships at school? Do you feel that students interact differently with you than with staff/faculty because of, e.g., your apparent age, race/ethnicity, social class or status as tutor/mentor/teaching assistant?

WEEK FIVE - Helping Others

Chapter 10 (in Brehm, Kassir & Fein) discusses the social psychology of giving and receiving help (you may want to read ahead, but this is not essential). A fundamental part of your role as a JEP mentor/tutor is to offer help to students who are in need of some form of educational or emotional assistance. **What are the main reasons behind your decision to volunteer your time as a JEP mentor/tutor?** What do you think are the immediate and long-term impact of your presence at the JEP site for the students but also staff/faculty? What do you expect to gain from your JEP experience?

WEEK SIX - Aggression

Chapter 11 (in Brehm, Kassir & Fein) discusses the social psychology of violence and particularly aggression (you may want to read ahead, but this is not essential). **Drawing from your JEP observations, have you witnessed any acts of aggression (or violence) at your JEP site (e.g., between students or students and staff/faculty)?** Briefly describe the context of the aggression, the events leading up to it, and the characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, age, etc.) of the individuals involved. What was the argument or fight about (keep in mind that aggression can be verbal, non-verbal, physical or non-physical)? Did it involve two or more students? Who intervened in the argument/fight and how was it dealt with (e.g., in terms of punishment or conflict resolution)? Would you have dealt with the conflict in a similar matter?

WEEK SEVEN - Critical Incidents

Describe a meaningful event or series of events in which you were involved at your site. What are your thoughts and feelings about the event(s)? What are the perceptions and reactions of the other persons involved? How has this event affected or changed your relationship, your perspective roles, and/or your perspective about your assignment?

WEEK EIGHT - Review

According to USC's mission statement, "The central mission of the University of Southern California is the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit. The principal means by which our mission is accomplished are teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice and selected forms of public service".

http://www.usc.edu/private/factbook/USCRole_and_Mission_Statement_1993.pdf

Consider this statement in light of your experiences in JEP. Do you think public service-and specifically your service-learning experiences in the community via JEP-have helped to "cultivate" or "enrich" your "mind" and "spirit" and/or those of the community members with whom you worked? If so, how? If not, why not? Please describe in detail what you have gained from your experiences through JEP from an intellectual, spiritual and/or ethical perspective. How have your experiences in JEP compared to what you expected to get out of the program?

ALTERNATE QUESTION

Theoretical Applications

Apply one of the theories or concepts from the course you think is particularly apt or flawed for explaining the psychology of the child(ren) with whom you are working? First, briefly summarize the theory or concept. Next, describe the particular experience or encounter at your site of relevance to the theory. Finally, how well does the theory explain your experience? (Note: if you wish to substitute this question for more than one week, you must apply a unique concept or theory each time).