

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS
Introduction to Clinical Psychology (PSYC 361)

Professor Borders
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INTRODUCTION

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 Introduction to Clinical Psychology course. Each assignment should be 1-2 pages long, double-spaced.

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 the feedback you receive each week. Doing so will help you to develop your ideas and arguments over the course of the semester and to learn more from your experiences. When your experience at your JEP site doesn’t allow you to adequately answer a Reflective Question, you may substitute one of the questions listed as Alternate Questions on the last page.

As you respond to the questions, you should **concentrate on answering the main question** (the highlighted one). The subsequent prompts are focusing questions to help you identify critical factors related to the main question. Please feel free to go beyond the prompts and write whatever seems important to you about your experiences—especially that which is related to the primary issue raised in the main question.

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.** And please try to balance your enthusiasm for testing out theories with your responsibility as a mentor and tutor for students.

PLEASE NOTE: Some of the information you may learn about your students may be personal and sensitive. Your professor will discuss with you how to handle this kind of information. In your JEP assignments, please be sensitive to confidentiality as well: do not use full names (either first names only or a made-up name) and treat all personal information with extreme respect.

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. How does it match up to your expectations? Include a detailed description of the responsibilities and activities involved in your particular assignment. What are your most vivid impressions of the site and the students with whom you are working? What were some of your expectations prior to beginning your assignment? How do your experiences during Week One compare to your expectations?

WEEK TWO - Getting to Know Your Student(s)

What have you learned about the student(s) you work with so far? What are their hobbies, goals, likes, dislikes, families, joys, fears, etc.? What are some of the challenges they face? **What noteworthy behavioral observations have you made? What strengths and weaknesses have you observed in them?**

WEEK THREE - Behavioral Assessment

Before meeting with your student this week, choose one behavior that is fairly typical of your student that you would like to understand better. Make sure the behavior you choose is concrete (e.g., fighting with peers, not paying attention in class) rather than vague (e.g., misbehavior, poor grades). **Your task is to complete a Functional Assessment of these behaviors. What are antecedents of this behavior? What are the consequences that reinforce the behavior?** You may want to prepare some questions about possible contingencies BEFORE you meet with your student. **Suggest**

what alternative behaviors might replace the problem behavior and how teachers or parents could effectively use reinforcement or punishment to influence behavior change. In addition, suggest ways that some of the identified antecedents could be addressed.

WEEK FOUR - Family and Cultural Context

Describe the family environments of the students you work with, as best you can. Consider features like family composition, the relationships between various family members, roles that have been assigned to each family member, and how your particular student fits into the functioning of the family. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of these families? What is your student's own experience of his or her family? Also, what cultural factors are important to your understanding of your students? What factors in their families or cultural context contribute to their difficulties in life?** **NOTE:** some of this information is very sensitive – please do not push your student to share overly personal information. Instead, think about what you have learned from the student and/or site staff.

WEEK FIVE - Interpersonal Functioning Think about the concepts of transference and countertransference and relate these concepts to your work with your student(s). **How does/do your student(s) relate to you? Equally important, what is YOUR relationship like with your students?** It can be informative to you to reflect on your reactions to your students (e.g., is it pleasant to interact with them, do you ever become annoyed or uncomfortable about specific behaviors, etc.). **In what ways does the relationship between you and your student(s) mirror and represent the relationships your student(s) have with other people in their lives? How successful are they with interpersonal relationships in their lives? Can you describe any interpersonal patterns they have across their relationships?**

WEEK SIX - Empathy, Reflection, and Active Listening

This week, **practice the skills of empathy, reflection, and active listening with your student(s). Give examples of what they said or did, and then explain how you responded with empathy, reflection, or active listening. Observe and describe how they responded to you.** How do students respond to open- versus closed-ended questions? How do they respond to reflections versus questions? Are they more or less responsive to reflections of emotions compared to reflections of content? How do they respond to minimal encouragers (e.g., nod of the head, “hmm”)? In considering their responses, observe whether they start talking more or get quiet, whether their body language changes, and whether their facial coloring and expressions change. It can also help to observe when in the conversation you are talking more, and when your student is talking more; what is going on during these times?

WEEK SEVEN - Motivations for Change and Self-Schemas

How motivated are your students in different areas of their lives (e.g., school, work, personal relationships, future success)? How motivated are they to make changes in their “problem” areas? Or, put another way, what stage of change are they in for their particular issues? What factors in their background and/or current environments (e.g., school or home environments) promote or discourage motivation? Finally, do they have beliefs about themselves (schemas) that hinder or help them?

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:

Apply one of the theories or concepts from the course you think is particularly apt or flawed for explaining the psychology of the child 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.)