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 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 your PA’s feedback seriously 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.

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. If your experience at your JEP site doesn’t allow you to adequately answer a Reflective Question, you may substitute with an Alternate Question listed at the end of this document.

WEEK ONE – First Impressions of your JEP Site
Describe your initial experience at your JEP assignment. Include a detailed description of your classroom, and 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 – One-on-one chat with JEP Program Assistant
This week you will be meeting one-on-one with your Program Assistant to talk about your experiences in JEP. In place of a full-length journal assignment this week, we ask that you take a few minutes to write down any questions, comments or concerns that you have about your JEP assignment so far. For example, what are your tasks at the site and how are you adjusting to your new role? How are you relating to the people at your site? Are you having any problems with any of the logistical aspects of your assignment (e.g., schedule, transportation, Blackboard access, etc.)? Please submit your comments (approximately a paragraph) the same way you
would submit any other journal through Blackboard. Rather than providing written comments, your PA will discuss the issues with you during your chat.

WEEK THREE - 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 differences and similarities? How might these differences or similarities (e.g., of the physical context of the classroom) impact the learning experiences of students at the site?

WEEK FOUR - Personality
Over the past month you have had 3 or 4 chances to interact with your student/community member. What aspects of his/her personality have become most salient to you? Are these behaviors and attitudes traits or states? Be sure to include specific examples with your response. As your textbook describes, a trait is a relatively stable predisposition to behave in a certain way, while a state is a behavior or mood that is more temporary.

Some personality theorists use a metaphor of “talents” to describe personality traits. That is, a talent means someone has the potential or capacity for behaving a certain way. And if someone has a particular talent, s/he will be more likely to learn a behavior quickly, eventually execute the behavior gracefully and skillfully, and receive pleasure from engaging in the behavior. What talents have you seen in your student/community member that you could imagine developing into a trait, or part of your student’s personality?

WEEK FIVE - Reasoning and Intelligence
In Chapter 10 of your textbook, Gray states that the ways in which we use our memories to deal adaptively with the present and future is a process called reasoning. He further states that our general capacity to reason is referred to as “intelligence”. Intelligence is defined in many ways and researchers and educators debate over the best way to define and measure intelligence. According to Chapter 10, what type(s) of intelligence do IQ tests tend to focus on? Do the students with whom you are working display any special talents in one or more types of intelligences? Provide some examples of students’ comments or behaviors that display a particular type of intelligence. Does the school teach and/or encourage students to develop abilities in each of these areas? Which forms of intelligence seem to be more valued than others in your placement site?

WEEK SIX – Sex and Gender Differences
While sex and gender are words that are often used interchangeably, sex and gender are different concepts. Sex is biologically determined (e.g., male/female); gender is learned behavior, or socially constructed (e.g., masculine/feminine). That means that girls and boys are taught—socialized—how to behave ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’ At your site, pay attention to the conversations between and the behaviors of girls/women and boys/men. Do you see any gender differences in the way they talk or behave? Can you identify any behaviors of boys and girls that appear to be sex-typed? Is there any evidence of gender socialization in the classroom/JEP site (e.g., ways in which boys and girls are encouraged to display “gender-appropriate” behavior?) Are there any differences between the social expectations and the actual behaviors of those with whom you are working?

WEEK SEVEN – Psychodynamic and Behavioral Theories of Understanding
Psychodynamic theories and behaviorism are two of the most well known theories in psychology. A major component of psychodynamic theory is that people are often unaware of their motives or reasons for their actions. Behaviorism explains peoples’ actions as a series of events that result from operant conditioning or classical conditioning. Describe a recent interaction you had with your student/community member during which you felt frustrated or confused. Looking back, explain your behavior in two ways; first with psychodynamic theory and second with behaviorism. Which theory do you think best explains your actions?

WEEK EIGHT - Reflections on Introduction to Psychology and JEP
How have your experiences in the community helped you learn about psychology? What theories or concepts “came to life” most dramatically for you in your work with children? How have your perceptions of psychology changed, if at all? (Be sure to provide specific examples). How do you think that your presence at the JEP site benefits student-learning?

ALTERNATE QUESTIONS

1. What have you learned about yourself? What kinds of stereotypes about children in this community were challenged for you, if any? Reflect on your role as service provide at the site. List one or two things that you have done that might benefit the person(s) with whom you are working, either immediately or in the long run. Finally, describe something you could have done to benefit the individual but did not, and why you did not or could not do it?

2. Apply one of the theories or concepts from the course you think is particularly apt or flawed for explaining the psychology of the students 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?