Social scientists spend much of their time studying, interpreting and understanding human interactions in a variety of settings. These scientists often referred to as “empirical researchers,” collect data in order for us to better understand the inner-workings of our social world. Your role as a JEP student is to approach your site with the eyes of a volunteer and social scientist. Over the course of the semester, you will observe and participate in the daily activities of those you meet at your JEP site. In addition to your first-hand site volunteering, you are asked to write about and critically reflect upon your JEP experiences. Referred to as “Reflective Questions,” these prompts are designed to help you focus your observations and experiences in relation to your class readings, lectures, and discussions in your SOCI 169, Changing Family Forms course.

Please read through the entire set of Reflective Questions prior to beginning your JEP assignment. We encourage you to take Program Assistant’s feedback seriously. This will help you develop your ideas more clearly and will help you think critically about a variety of issues. In addition, please explore the websites listed throughout this set of questions. These sites contain a wealth of information about American families that you can use to supplement course material and your observations as you respond to the Reflective Questions.

Please note: Your JEP assignment will provide you with a valuable opportunity to apply what you are learning in class about families. In some cases, you may learn about the intimate details of individuals’ lives – the challenges, triumphs and tragedies people have experienced in their families. In other cases, you may find that people are hesitant to open up to you. In all cases, it is extremely important that you behave sensitively and responsibly in your role as a service-learning student.

Although this project is intended to teach you about family life in a variety of contexts, you must balance your enthusiasm for exploring ideas from class and answering these Reflective Questions with the need to respect people’s privacy. If you ever feel like your roles as a student-investigator and a service provider are in conflict, please give priority to the latter. Your primary duty is to provide support to the JEP site, always being respectful of the people with whom you are working and aware of the limits of your experience and knowledge. At the same time, we encourage you to view every encounter at your site as potentially educative. If you approach your work in the community with the attitude, “What can I learn about families, about social service organizations, about diversity, about myself?” we promise that you will learn something important from your experience.

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 the question with the Alternate Question listed at the end of this document.

WEEK ONE - First Impressions
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? How do your experiences during this first week compare to your expectations prior to beginning your assignment? (In your response, please indicate the site at which you are placed.).
WEEK TWO - Questions, Comments or Concerns: Issues to Discuss During 1 on 1 “Chats”

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 - Mission and Social Context of the Site

Describe the person and/or group of people with whom you are working at your JEP site. Try to be as specific as possible about the size of the group (i.e., number of people), as well as the age, sex, race, ethnicity, and role (e.g., staff or “client”) of all those involved in your assignment. Generally speaking, how does the site at which you are working serve children and families - that is, what is the agency/school/site’s mission in relation to serving families - and what kinds of “clients” does it mostly serve (e.g., children, students, foster families, homeless families, domestic abuse survivors, teen parents, poor families, immigrant families, etc.)? What is the site’s primary goal for the children and/or families it serves?

Additional resources: Most of the agencies and schools have websites that can give you additional information about their missions, initiatives, demographics, etc.:

- All People’s Community Center: http://www.allpeoplescc.org/
- A Place Called Home: http://www.apch.org/
- Children, Youth and Families Collaborative: http://www.cyfcla.org/
- Los Angeles Unified School District: http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/ (You can find Information about your specific LAUSD school site by clicking on the “Schools -- Find a School” tab at the top of the LAUSD home page. The demographic information for each school is available in the “School Profile” section. Note that some schools have their own websites which have additional information.
- Good Shepherd Shelter: http://www.goodshepherdshelter.org/
- 1736 Family Crisis Center: http://www.1736fcc.org/
- Salvation Army Center: http://www1.usw.salvationarmy.org/usw/www_usw_southla.nsf/
- School on Wheels: http://www.schoolonwheels.org/

WEEK FOUR - Families and Households in the Neighborhood

In order to understand the diversity and complexity of families in your JEP site’s neighborhood, first you will need to find and analyze data on their composition.

Go to the U.S. Census Bureau to gather information about the families living in the neighborhood surrounding your site:

1. Go to www.factfinder.census.gov/
2. Enter the street address for your JEP site in the “address search” box on the lower left side of the screen and click “Go.” (select for “a year and program” census 2000)
3. Highlight the “Census Tract” number in the box that appears and click OK. (NOTE: record the Census tract number someplace where you can find it. You’ll need it again for Week 6.)
4. Select tables DP-1, QT-H3 and QT-P11, along with any others that are of interest to you.
5. Print your results and attach them to your journal.

**Take a look at the tables and describe the families who live in the neighborhood in which you are working.** (You need not answer every one of the Table-related questions below in your journal, but please take a look at the data in the tables. **Focus your response on the findings that interest you most and describe why they are of interest**).

- Looking at Table DP-1, what is the percentage of children in the population? What is the racial/ethnic makeup of the community? What percentage of households is occupied by “nuclear” families (married-couple families with own children)? What about single mothers? Individuals? What is the average family size?

- Looking at Table QT-H3, are married families more likely to rent or own their places of residence? What about single householders? The elderly?

- Looking at Table QT-P11, what percentage of households has grandparents living with grandchildren? How common are non-related households? Are elderly householders living alone more likely to be male or female?

**How do the data compare with the population actually served by your site (i.e., compare the census data with your observations of the site from Week Three)? How do they compare with what you’ve learned in class and from the readings about the changing structure and composition of contemporary families?**

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**WEEK FIVE - Family Experiences**

**What have you learned so far about the experiences of the families and individuals with whom you are working?** What brought them (and/or their families) to the programs offered by your JEP site and what are they hoping to gain from participating? What are their short- and long-term goals and what do they think is necessary to accomplish these goals? Are their goals and plans the same as the agency’s/site’s plans?

**NOTE:** Please be respectful of people’s privacy. If those with whom you are working have not offered personal information about their lives, do not probe for details. If you can’t answer the specific questions in this week’s assignment, focus your response on what you’ve learned in general about the children and families associated with your site. However you choose to respond, avoid revealing details and do not identify individuals (by name or otherwise) in your journal. Instead of actual names, please make up a name, or use initials in order to keep identities anonymous.

**Additional resources:** The websites for each of the agencies/school sites may have additional information to help you answer this question. (See list for Week Two). For students working with CYFC, the Department of Children and Family Services (i.e., the department in charge of the Los Angeles County foster care program), has a website with information about the reasons children enter foster care: [http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/](http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/)  Click the “About Us” tab at the top of the main page. Click the “DCFS Fact Sheets” link in the list of resources on the left side of the page and select the most current set of data.

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**WEEK SIX - Poverty, Work & Families**

Chapter 4 in Cherlin (Week 4) discusses the impact of economic development and socio-economic inequality on family structures.

**Go to the Census Bureau website to find out more about the occupations and income levels of the community residents with whom you are working.**
1. Go to http://factfinder.census.gov/
2. Run your cursor over the “Data Sets” tab on the left-hand side toolbar and select “Decennial Census”
3. Select the “2000 Summary File 3 (SF-3) Sample Data” option
4. Click “Quick Tables” in the blue highlighted portion that appears to the right after you selected “Summary File 3”
5. On the new screen Select Geographical type: “Census Tract” (8th option from top)
6. Next select the following to specific your exact site geographic location:
   ... for California
   ... for Los Angeles County
   ... for the Census tract in which your site is located. (Go back to your notes for Week Three. If necessary, go back to the American Factfinder main page and enter your site’s address, per the instructions for Week Three.)
7. “Add” the census tract number to the box and click “Next.”
8. Highlight the tables of interest to you (DP-2, 3, & 4 provide a nice overview of a variety of subjects), “Add” them to the box, and click “Show Result.”
9. Print or save your results.

How do your data findings support your class discussion and readings (Week 4) on the impact of socio-economics on family life in general, and the circumstances of the people with whom you are working specifically?

You can use the following questions to help guide your data interpretation and your journal discussion:

- What are the employment and unemployment rates for individuals (16+ years old) living in the community in which you are working?  (Look for the “unemployed” statistic, opposed to the “not in labor force” statistic, which excludes those actively seeking employment.)
- Are females 16 years+ more or less likely to be in the labor force than the general population?
- What percentage of families with young children (under 6) have all parents employed? - How many people in the neighborhood rely on public transportation or walking to get to work?
- What is the median family income and, to get a general estimate of what this income supports, look back at table DP-1 from Week Three -- what is the average family size?  - - What percentage of households receives public assistance and what is the average amount received?
- What is the rate of families living below the poverty level?  (Note that according to 2008 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty threshold for a single-parent family with 2 children was $17,346; and $22,570 for a two-parent family with two children http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/threshld/thresh08.html)
- How does the poverty rate vary based on family type (e.g., with related children under 18, female-headed households, etc.)?
- Which type of family has the highest rate of poverty?

What do you know about the employment status – either actual or prospective – of the individuals or families with whom you are working? 
What are some of the barriers to employment and/or escaping poverty faced by the families in the community? (You may need to talk to agency/site staff in order to compare and contrast the data with families’ experiences.)

WEEK SEVEN – Race, Ethnicity and Families
Cherlin Chapter 5 (Week 5) focuses specifically on race and ethnicity in family forms. From your interactions with individuals from various ethnic/racial backgrounds, do you get the impression that family forms differ by race/ethnicity? Drawing from Chapter 5 (both text and reader) and your observations at your JEP site, other than cultural differences, what factors could explain differences in family forms between
African Americans, European Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans? Do you think that culture is the main reason behind differences in family forms? Be sure to use specific examples from the readings and your JEP experiences.

WEEK EIGHT - Reflections on Changing Family Forms
How have your experiences in the community over the last eight weeks helped you learn about changing family forms? What have you come to realize about yourself and your own family? What kinds of stereotypes about families were challenged for you, if any? What stands out as your most significant learning experience at the site? How do you think that your presence at the JEP site benefits student-learning?

ALTERNATE QUESTION

Theoretical Applications
Apply one of the theories or concepts from the course you think is particularly apt or flawed for explaining why the family has changed in form and function over time. 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).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

U.S. population data and for timely and objective data on world population trends

Annie E. Casey Foundation – Kids Count http://www.aecf.org/kidscoun
For state and national indicators of the health, economic status, and educational level of children and families, http://www.aecf.org/kidscoun/rightstart/index.htm provides text and data on childbirth and maternal/child health for cities and the nation as a whole.

Employment and unemployment rates, wage information, labor force demographics

California Budget Project http://www.cbop.org/
Reports and data on the working poor, cost of living in California

California Employment Development Department www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/ Unemployment rates and projections, wage information for California and Los Angeles County

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) http://www.clasp.org/
Reports on welfare and other forms of economic support for families, child care, reproductive health and teen parenthood, marriage and family policy, employment policies

Child Trends http://www.childtrends.org
General data on children and family structure in the US, plus more specific data on teen sexuality, single parenthood, child abuse, poverty, employment

Education Commission of the States http://www.ecs.org/
Provides news and policy information about a wide range of education topics

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The Alan Guttmacher Institute http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/index.html
Research and analysis on all 50 states, covering abortion, pregnancy, parenthood, child abuse, poverty, and employment.

Kaiser Family Foundation www.statehealthfacts.org
This resource contains the latest state-level data on demographics, health, and health policy, including health coverage, access, financing, and state legislation

Research on welfare, labor, foster children, domestic violence, health care for children and families

National Center for Children in Poverty (Columbia University) http://www.nccp.org/
Fact sheets, research briefs, and an interactive database with information about family structure, income and employment, education

National Center for Health Statistics http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/
Data on a wide range of health issues, including data on birth and death rates, marriage and divorce

Insight Center for Community Economic Development http://www.insightcced.org/
Information and resources on children, youth and families, especially child care and family support

National Low Income Housing Coalition http://www.nlihc.org/
Activist organization with information about housing, homelessness, etc.

Public Health Institute http://www.phi.org/
“Resource Library” with reports on teen parenthood, welfare, etc.

Urban Institute http://www.urban.org/
Reports on welfare, immigration, at-risk teens, gay and lesbian families, social policies for the elderly (e.g., social security, Medicare)

United States Census Bureau http://www.census.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services http://www.hhs.gov/
Links to resources on many topics related to children and families, including adoption, child abuse, domestic violence, infant health, teenagers, economic support for families, pregnancy

The Office on Violence Against Women works with U.S. attorneys to ensure enforcement of federal criminal statutes. The site offers public information on the current activities of the office, model practices for state and local agencies, and links to related research and organizations at the DOJ.

United Way of Greater Los Angeles http://www.unitedwayla.org/getinformed/rr/research/Pages/default.aspx
Data and research (much of it Los Angeles-specific) on homelessness, poverty, and hunger, plus links to many other resources on these and related topics