Research Project #5: Adolescent development

Method: Observation at a Junior High or High School classroom ~or~ Interview of a teenage student

To provide a solid foundation for your project, be sure to read Chapters 14, 15 & 16 of the Berger text: *The Developing Person Through Childhood and Adolescence*. Place particular emphasis to the following pages: 431 to 449; 465 to 480; 487 to 491; and 495 to 521.

To complete this project you may select either of the two methodologies you have already used in previous projects: observation or interview. Regardless of which method you choose you will be expected to follow the guidelines presented earlier in the course for each of these, with an emphasis on objective, non-judgmental data collection.

If you opt for an observation, be sure to obtain permission ahead of time to observe a classroom in either a Junior High – 6th, 7th or 8th grade, or a High School. See below for specific instructions.

If you opt for an interview, you must first design a questionnair with open-ended, non-judgmental questions. You must obtain permission from both the adolescent and her/his parent(s), assuring them of confidentiality. See next page for specific instructions.

Guidelines for the observation

1. Request and obtain permission from school’s office. Explain that you are an ECE student wishing to observe and take notes for one hour in a classroom (any grade between 7th through 12th grade). You may show this page of instructions.

2. Prior to observing be sure to have read the assigned chapters and these instructions so you may best collect pertinent information.

3. Dedicate a minimum of one hour to your observation. Divide the time so that you spend time as follows:
   a. Focusing and taking notes on the learning environment.
   b. Focusing and taking notes on interactions between teacher and student(s).
   c. Focusing and taking notes of interactions among students.
   d. Remember to focus objectively on what you see and hear (what they do and say). Avoid judging or interpreting intentions.

4. Documentation: Later, on the same day of your observation, while all is still fresh in your mind, transcribe your notes into a narrative approximately two to three pages long.

5. Analysis: interpret what you observed from a developmental perspective (see list of topics on back of this page). Depending on the quality and quantity of data examples, choose two or three of the topics listed to interpret and analyze your results.

6. Self-evaluation: interpret your own experience. Reflect on your own learning during this project. Be specific. Discuss new knowledge and envision the practical applications it will have for you at a personal or professional level. Evaluate observation and analytical skills you’ve improved.
Guidelines for the interview

1. Request and obtain permission from the parent(s) of the adolescent. Reassure both the student and the parent(s) of confidentiality and privacy.

2. Prepare a questionnaire with no less than six open-ended, non-judgmental and neutral questions, that will allow you to collect data appropriate to the key topics studied (see list below). Your questionnaire should be clearly written, such that it serves you as an easy point of departure and as a reference throughout the interview. Improvise as needed and use follow-up questions.

3. Plan for approximately 45 minutes to make sure you collect enough data. Select a meeting place that is convenient for your interviewee. The location should offer a pleasant, quiet environment where you won’t be interrupted during the interview.

4. Your goal is to guide the interview in such a way that the interviewee feels always respected, never pressured nor judged. You want this person to think of you as a respectful listener.

5. Do allow your interviewee moments of silence or quiet reflection. Don’t rush him/her and give them time to express themselves fully. Avoid trying to write everything he/she says. Instead take quick notes of key words or phrases that will allow you to remember and expand upon them later.

6. Use your questionnaire as a point of reference throughout the interview. Do follow the thread of your interviewee’s story, using follow-up questions to go deeper if appropriate: “And then, what happened?”; “tell me more”; “please go on”. Your words and or facial expression should communicate that you are paying close attention to what the interviewee is saying and that you’re interested.

7. Documentation: Later, on the same day of your interview, while all is still fresh in your mind, transcribe your notes into a narrative approximately two to three pages long.

8. Analysis: interpret what your interviewee told you from a developmental perspective (see list of topics on back of this page). Depending on the quality and quantity of data examples, choose two or three of the topics listed to interpret and analyze your results.

9. Self-evaluation: interpret your own experience. Reflect on your own learning during this project. Be specific. Discuss new knowledge and envision the practical applications it will have for you at a personal or professional level. Evaluate how your interview skills and analytical skills have improved.
**Possible topics for research and analysis:**

1. Complexity and intensity of emotional experiences
2. Importance attributed to body image
3. Egocentrism during adolescence
4. Schooling, learning and motivation
5. Types of thinking and cognitive development
6. Identity formation - developing sense of self in various areas
7. Parent-teen relationships
8. Peer relationships
9. Risk factors
10. Sexuality and sexual behavior