

# Exploring the world of a **struggling** youth

*What does the world look like through the eyes of this youth?*

## **The Study**

This study endeavors to investigate and understand the influences that shape the lives of a “difficult” student. You will endeavor to gain an “inter-view” of the world through the eyes of one of a least understood, distant, failing, youth-one that few people truly understand. You will attempt to develop a “trust” as a way to open dialogue with a “at-risk” youth.

## **The Rational**

Conflicts often follow when teachers and students do not trust or know each other. In such an environment, both teachers and students become frustrated and angry at their inability to control or change the others attitude. Teachers often react out of frustration to inappropriate student behavior without understanding why a student acts the way he/she does. This disconnection between students, teachers, and learning is closely linked to conventional educational policies and practices of teaching to the test. As a result there is seen in a growing number of children an apprehension of being lost or forgotten, and a spreading numbness that comes from being disconnected from knowledge, reality, teachers, family, cohorts, and from themselves.

Interviewing is a way to get past a student’s strange or bad behaviors in an attempt to learn about their past and present significant relationships, or lack there-of. A critical element for teachers to be successful in conducting their interview is to develop a climate of “caring.” This critical element is often ignored for stricter rules and firmer management techniques. A “caring” climate is necessary to develop trust, which is critical in seeing a truer picture of what the world looks like from a student’s perspective.

## **The Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to better understand the influence of culture as it relates to the issues youth face and how they respond to these issues. We want to see how educational policies, practices and assumptions are lived out in the lives of students. The study will also provide youth with an opportunity to share their experiences with a caring listener. Part of our assignment for this class at the University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia is to interview a youth. The kinds of questions that will be asked relate to the students past and present experiences and future dreams. Here are some samples of the kind of question that could be asked: Describe some of your accomplishments/successes/interesting experiences. What is the most favorite thing you like to do? Describe your dreams/hopes/concerns and how do you see yourself in five or ten years? Describe some of the obstacles/difficulties to your success that you face. When are you most happy/fulfilled? How do you see school helping you succeed in your dreams of being a successful person? What do you like/dislike most about school? Describe a moment or event in your life that stands out as being very important.

1. Understand what the world looks like through the lives of a “problem” youth.
2. Establish a “caring” approach towards this youth.
3. Understand the disconnection that often exists between youth & society.
4. Offer a youth the opportunity to connect to you.
5. Discover the importance of developing a “caring” environment in all settings.

## **Contemplation Focus**

What does the world look like through the eyes of one of your “at-risk” youth?

Imagine yourself as an explorer/anthropologist. What is it like to be a 10 or 16 year old? Do you know what goes through their mind?

What are some of the more important relationships in their lives, i.e. school, friends, family, etc? What do they really think of learning, of teachers, and administrators?

Journal your interviews.

How would you describe your past and present encounters with this youth?

Categories of analysis – PAST/PRESENT relationships, fears, joys, and future dreams.

## **Introspection**

Who do you choose? Why are you drawn to interview to this youth? Why are you repulsed by the other?

What does choosing this youth tell you about yourself? What was your experience at this age?

## **Projection**

How do your projections affect your choice?

## **CASE STUDY/ETHNOGRAPHY – Questions to guide this study**

First, describe the purpose and nature of this study to the youth and how their responses may be used.

### **PAST**

Describe important relationships growing up.

Describe the nature of these relationships (I & it or I & Thou)

Describe important/significant event/events growing up.

### **PRESENT**

Describe their environment (home, after school activities, weekends)

Describe important relationships ie., person? thing? activity?

Describe successes/difficulties/failures

What do you like to do?

What would you change if you could have one free choice?

### **FUTURE**

Dreams/hopes - How do they see themselves in 5 years? 10 years?

Describe their obstacles

What would make you happy/fulfilled?

Will they reach their goal?

This is a pilot study and you may wish/need to modify the form to allow you more freedom to get the information.

**FOR THOUGHT:** Your struggle to form connections between anecdotes and educational policies, practices, and assumptions must be filtered through your own history. Your history will help to hear their voices clearly and at the same time your history will keep you from hearing them. So write down what you think they are saying along with your analysis.

Consider the following questions as guide when you are forming your questions:

What would you know if you had all the information?

What would you do with it?

What is your leading question? What question(s) is/are driving this research?

### **Template for your paper**

**Introduction:** Explain the circumstances in writing this paper including that it is for your Health and Wellness Class.

**Purpose of the study:** Describe the need for doing this or similar kinds of studies that examine the lives of children.

**Research question:** “What does the world look like through the life of this youth?”

**Biographical sketch of my student:** In your narrative, describe your youth’s biographical background both past and present, i.e., age, grade, gender, where he/she lives, family members, and any other pertinent information that will help the reader understand some of the physical circumstances that surround this youth.

**Data collection—Interviews:** Using narrative as your form, describe the dialogues that ensued. It might be more meaningful if you focused more on the connection/ relationship formed than specific, non-relevant biographical facts about the student (i.e. favorite foods, etc.). You should also include some of your student’s significant life events and relationships, i.e., their relationships with family members, friends, teachers and schooling. Student illustrations are also a great tool to help you understand the important relationships in their lives.

**Analysis and interpretation:**

“To the best of my ability, here is what I think the world is like through the eyes of this youth.”

Reflection: What have you learned from this assignment about students/your youth, forming relationships e.g., “I” and “Thou”, and your self-hood from this assignment. Have you seen any changes in your or your youth’s attitude to the others, learning, growth, or school-life?

**Final thoughts:**