

Ed Studies Junior Research Plan

Name: Mabel Silva

Major(s) and Concentration: Psychology and Educational Studies (Race, Class, Gender Differences on Educational Outcomes)

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1) What is your proposed research question, and how is it significant to educational studies, broadly defined?

Early intervention programs have been cited frequently as mechanisms to regulate and lessen the achievement gap that already exists between students of color and White students at the very beginning of their educational careers. Therefore, early education programs have been historically supported by government funds due to the notion that these programs may help children make significant gains in their learning, specifically in language and literacy that will have significant ramifications in their later educational development. However, many have been critics to these specific early intervention programs as it is believed that these programs promote dominant, middle-class White culture while simultaneously, condemning and erasing other cultural linguistic patterns due to their core not being based on just the acquisition of linguistic skills, but of also a set of behavioral norms that is deemed more acceptable by the educational system.

Because of this, I am interested in researching this question:

To what extent does Jumpstart Hartford, an early literacy intervention program, utilize culturally responsive pedagogy? How does culturally responsive pedagogy manifest in the classroom?

2) What courses, experiences, and/or readings inspired you to choose this question?

I have been interested in this question since I began working for AmeriCorps' program, Jumpstart, which focuses on enriching students' of color exposure to language and literacy in prekindergarten in order to be prepared for kindergarten. When I first began working for the program, I focused solely on the academic programming that Jumpstart provided but I noticed that Jumpstart did not have only an academic agenda. It equally emphasized emotional, social skills. We were told to focus on the academic learning of the children while also taking note of the emotional and social development of the students due to the behaviors of the children being equally important for "school readiness". I then began to realize that the notion of school readiness, which I had once believed to be strictly associated with the academic preparedness of the child, to also encompass the behaviors, emotions, and socializations that have been approved by dominant, middle-class culture. While programs like Jumpstart have good intentions, the programs may be damaging to students as it socializes students early in their academic careers to conform to the social norms of dominant, middle class culture. In this way, the concept of "school readiness" has been socially constructed and has little true academic standing (Whittingham, Hoffman & Rumennapp). Additionally, the programming implemented similar to Jumpstart, emphasizes and promotes a certain linguistic and cultural competence while simultaneously repressing other forms of vernacular and cultural difference that is not appreciated and valued in dominant, middle class

understandings of schooling. Jumpstart, itself however, utilizes the linguistic and cultural capital of the students in the classroom through literature that is in the students' native language. This minor example of reading childhood stories in Spanish exemplifies encompassing a culturally responsive pedagogy, that is not typically of all early intervention programs. This form of teaching, with stories that celebrate the language and cultural diversities of the students in the classroom, makes the Jumpstart program different from other early intervention programs as it impresses upon the students both culturally responsive lessons and normative, militaristic norms necessary to be considered successful in the prekindergarten. This begs the question of to what extent must education, especially the education of younger children with little engagement with the world, impress upon children "uniformity" and "behavioral norms". Is it truly possible to have truly culturally responsive pedagogy, absent of White, dominant middle class culture permeating the norms of proper behavior and comportment?

Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other peoples children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-299.
doi:10.17763/haer.58.3.c43481778r528qw4

Whittingham, C. E., Hoffman, E. B., & Rumenapp, J. C. (2018). "It ain't 'nah' it's 'no'": Preparing preschoolers for the language of school. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 18(4), 465–489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798416674254>

3) What prior methods training do you have, and what primary sources and methods will you use to answer this question?

Based on my previous experience with an independent research study, I became familiar with STATA and feel comfortable doing both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. I believe that for my research question, I will have to utilize qualitative methods in order to form answers, specifically, I will be conducting interviews and doing fieldwork. I have previously conducted interviews for my Education and Anthropology course my sophomore fall, and I am comfortable utilizing this method in order to answer my research question. Additionally, I would be visiting the school and a specific classroom and making observations for my field notes. I believe that these field notes will supplement the interviews and add more information to my analysis that will not be easily transmitted through the interviews. In addition to the primary sources, I will be looking at the literature in order to contextualize my findings.

4) Will your research require Trinity IRB full application and approval?

My research will require IRB approval because I will be observing and interacting with human participants. In the interviews, I will be asking participants about their opinions about the Jumpstart program and curriculum but I will not be utilizing their real names or include their names in the research. I will answer yes to question number two in the IRB form and then complete the entire IRB form.

5) Does your research plan require access to a school or organization?

My research project does require access to a school. I currently work with the Women's League Child Development Center in Hartford where the Jumpstart curriculum is currently being implemented and I believe that I will still have access to this same school and teachers that I have been working with so I believe that I will conduct my research

project with this same people I have been working with for the past semester. I will have to contact my boss at my placement, Brandon Rothschild in order to finalize these plans, but I believe that this will be in place for the summer so I can begin working in the classroom and collecting data over the summer.

Approval of Senior Thesis:

Brandon Rothschild <Brandon.Rothschild@jstart.org>
Wed 7/17/2019 1:49 AM

- Silva, Mabel (2020)

Hi Mabel,

Sorry for the delay in response. I'm sure you know I have a new role so I've been on the road traveling these past few days with little access to emails. But in regards to your Senior Research Plan/Proposal. You have the green light to go ahead with the plan. Please let me know if you need anything else from me. Thank you and again sorry for the delay.

P.S. Are you available at 2:30 on Thursday? If not what does your schedule look like for either Monday, Tuesday or Thursday or next week? Let me know when you can. Thank you.

Be Great Today!

Brandon Rothschild, MSW | Strategy Manager-CT/RI

Jumpstart|CONNECTION inspires me.