

Education Student
GRAD 496A
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My parents came to the United States as undocumented immigrants and both began working as seasonal farmworkers in 2001. My parent's limited opportunities however did not cause them to lose faith in the value of education. From a young age, my parents instilled in me the idea of earning my education as a means of furthering my life beyond seasonal work. School became one of my favorite places. The teachers that I had throughout my public schooling were amazingly wise and thoughtful, but also held extremely high expectations for their students. They quickly became my role models and even though they were excellent teachers, not one of them represented my cultural background or that of my classmates. Since I lived along the U.S.-Mexico border, most of my peers were Latinx and spoke Spanish. It was not until high school that I was taught by my first Latinx, Spanish-speaking teacher, and that is when I decided to become an educator. When I began taking my teacher preparation courses in college, I became even more aware of this lack of representation within the public education system, which is why I now plan to pursue a Ph.D. in education with an emphasis on language and culture.

I have had plenty of field experience as a volunteer and aid in a variety of public schools within southern Arizona; however, my first research experience in the field of education came when I applied to the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Consortium (UROC)-PREP program. When I applied to UROC-PREP, I was accepted into the Access, Wellness, and Relational Determinants of School Success (AWARDSS) training program, which is centered on research in education. This year-

long program is geared towards helping underrepresented students gain research experience and help prepare them for graduate school. It was through UROC-PREP/AWARDSS that I was able to collaborate with Dr. Carol Brochin in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Sociocultural Studies at the University of Arizona. During my time working with Dr. Brochin, I was able to conduct my preliminary study on investigating the impacts of English-only instruction on border town students. My pilot study revolved around the concepts of funds of knowledge and sense of school belonging in border town students and it spanned a 10-week period in the summer. In conducting my pilot study, I went through the process of constructing my research question, choosing the measures, completing an IRB to work with human subjects, recruiting participants, interviewing participants, and analyzing data. My study took place in Nogales, Arizona where I would interview the parents of bilingual students concerning their bilingual language development in public schools. Due to the time constraints of the study, I had a total of 10 participants. However, the preliminary data did reveal parents' concerns with the lack of bilingual development due to school curriculum. At the conclusion of the 10 weeks, I was able to present my study and preliminary findings at the UROC-PREP Summer Colloquium and exhibit a poster at the 12th Annual UROC Summer Research Conference. Working with Dr. Brochin strengthened my desire to continue conducting research within the public-education system.

Specifically, I would like to conduct research revolving around inequities in public education, specifically those involving language and culture. An interest group of mine is Latinx youth in public schools K-12 who are of Spanish speaking backgrounds. Such

students are often looked at from a deficit perspective for being Spanish speaking, rather than seeing this attribute as an asset. Spanish-speaking students are underserved in the public education system as most are not allowed to the opportunities to develop their biliteracy. Therefore, my goal is to bring light to the inequities in public schools, as well as help reform in the current public-school curriculum.

The University of Michigan School of Education's Ph.D. program in Education Studies, with a Literacy, Language and Culture emphasis matches my areas of interest and professional goals. Two faculty members whose interests align with mine are Dr. Debi Khasnabis and Dr. Mary J. Schlepppegrell. Dr. Khasnabis' studies in the design and enactment of culturally responsive ESL literacy curriculum is consistent with my interest in investigating the impact of different school curricula. I would like to further explore the academic outcomes of students who were taught using a culturally responsive curriculum as opposed to those who were taught using a more mainstream curriculum. In this case, I would expect to find that students who were taught using a culturally responsive curriculum were given more opportunities to use their funds of knowledge in the academic setting. Dr. Schlepppegrell's current research project with Chauncey Monte-Sano on investigating learning and teaching in middle school classrooms aligns with my interest in continuing to work in the field with teachers and students. As an ELL student myself, my past experiences can contribute to the study of how students develop language proficiency as they engage in disciplinary discourses. As a graduate student at the University of Michigan School of Education, I hope to gain the necessary research tools and trainings that I will eventually incorporate into my own research studies.

Upon completion of my Ph.D. in Educational studies, I would like to continue in academia and obtain a position as a tenured track professor at a Research I Institute. Through my research I hope to minimize the inequities for multicultural and multiliterate students in public education and contribute to implementing more culturally relevant and responsive curricula. As a professor, I also hope to help students of a similar background to mine develop the interdisciplinary skills to pursue their own educational goals.