

Civic Engagement in a Social Science Research Paradigm

General Studies 490

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My Philosophy

- We fulfill our civic responsibility through engagement with our community.
- Meaningful research in the social sciences must be situated in civic responsibility.
- The best research focuses on improving the lives of people, in particular, children.
- The most meaningful learning experiences take place outside the classroom
- Social science research is integrally linked to the livelihood of the community and sustainability of change within a social and political context

Student Recruitment

Students were selected by alignment of a personal statement reflecting their thoughts on research and community engagement and the course objectives.

Course Overview

This two-course sequence provides students with an introduction to research methods, accompanied by the practical field based skills and experience necessary to conduct a small-scale research project in a social science setting (psychology, education, counseling, etc.). Conceptual foundations are reviewed in the context of conducting real research. The course focuses on field based experiences in the areas of data collection, management, analysis, and reporting. Experiences are situated in the San Diego community working with at-risk children or families from diverse backgrounds.

Assignments and Activities

- Article Summary and Reflection
- Field Report
- Research Project Outline
- Project Part I: Research Experience Plan (group or individual)
- Project Part II (individual): Conduct your field based research, write a brief research report
- Project Part III (individual): Social Context Reflection

Highlights from Student Projects

Project 1: Small Group Math Instruction with Low Achieving Seventh Graders

Student Purpose: Gain experience in field based research methods

Research Question: Does a small group Direct Instruction intervention in fractions lead to improved knowledge of fractions for struggling Seventh Graders?

Research Method: Quasi-experimental pre-test post-test multi-group design.

Student Experiences: Four students were trained to administer direct instruction mathematics. Two students went to a middle school 3x per week for 25 min/session, provided instruction, and collected progress monitoring data. One student compiled and analyzed data. One student collected fidelity of implementation data.

Project 2: Critical Thinking in Fourth Grade

Student Purpose: Gain experience in field based research methods, teach reading to kids who need help

Research Question: To what degree can a W&M critical thinking unit create growth in critical thinking within a language arts curriculum?

Research Method: Pre-test post-test single group design

Student Experiences: One student organized measures, collected data, compiled and analyzed data. One student provided small group reading support within the intervention 2x per week.

Project 3: Sight Words in First Grade

Student Purpose: Gain experience in field based research methods, and work with very young children

Research Question: Can an intensive sight word intervention lead to mastery of common words without disruption to regular instruction?

Research Method: pre-test post-test single-case design, with progress monitoring.

Student Experiences: One student did the literature search, designed the intervention and materials, provided the instruction 2x per week, collected data, and will do the analysis.

Project 4: Small Group Math Instruction with Students with Emotional Disabilities in Middle School

Student Purpose: Gain experience in field based research methods, and work with youth with behavior disorders

Research Question: Does a small group Direct Instruction intervention in fractions lead to improved knowledge of fractions for middle school students with emotional/behavioral disorders?

Research Method: Quasi-experimental pre-test post-test multi-group design.

Student Experiences: Two students collected fidelity of implementation data.

Community Partners

Adams Academy is a P-8 dual language French / Spanish immersion school. 100% of families choose this school, and as such parent engagement tends to be high. Three teachers from this school supervise our students.

Baily Elementary is a K-5 school serving a college community. The school is both high achieving and highly diverse in terms of language and culture. Two teachers from this school supervise our students.

Chard Intermediate serves a high poverty community. All students are placed at this school due to behavioral challenges at their home schools. One teacher from this school supervises a student.

Scholarship

Three of the four projects highlighted have manuscripts under preparation. Most are aligned with my critical thinking / math research focus.

Cautions/Pitfalls

- Time to get started
- Time to organize students
- Time to communicate with community members
- Time to prepare class
- Time to start and finish projects ***

Reflections

- Once up and running only maintenance needed
- High quality education for students
- Closer student/professor relationship – friends?
- Meaningful change in the field – people benefit
- More meaningful relationship with community around research