Running Head: RESEARCH PROPOSAL-SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS

Culturally, Linguistically, and Ability Diverse Families'

Experience with the Special Education Process

Literature Review

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Educational research has long documented the over representation of culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse (CLAD) children in special education, yet few studies have investigated parent/family experiences and perceptions of the process. Any research or literature review of the special education process will require defining several key terms; special education, IDEA Laws, over-representation, minority, CLAD students, CLAD parents/families, social power, social capital, and culturally responsive practices. Clear, research based, theoretical definitions of these terms will serve as the foundation for my literature review of the proposed research questions. The purpose of providing definitions is two-fold; a way to communicate and establish a shared understanding of a complex social phenomena/institution, such as the special education process/experience. This fact becomes especially important when shifting the lens through which the issue is being viewed. I am looking to shift from the dominant cultural view that sees the individual as at fault, to how the system failed the individual (Spindler & Hammond, 2006). This shift requires one to move away from the United States educational systems "…long history of blaming the victim" (Spindler & Hammond, 2006, p. 14).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of CLAD families within the context of special education and investigate the impact of power dynamics and intercultural communication or miscommunication in the process. I see the 'working hypothesis' as revolving around: How power plays into the CLAD family experience within the United States special education system? How do they (the family) feel the special education experience has impacted their child's racial/ethnic identity? Plus, begin to examine what significance these factors have on the families' perceptions of the special education system and their child's cultural/racial

identity. The ultimate goal of this project is to shed light on how the dominate cultural norms and values influence the special education process when working with CLAD families.

Research Questions

The research questions for this project continue to investigate the power dynamic and cultural disconnect between the special education process and CLAD families. My main question is

- How does dominant culture (white/middle class/American) values and social norms get communicated to culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse families through the US special education process?

The main question is the over-arching theme of the research. The secondary investigation of this research involves CLAD student identity within the special education setting.

- In what ways, does the U.S. special education process influence, transmit, and communicate mainstream cultural values, social norms and stereotypes to CLAD students and families?

The central questions are

- What does it mean to be disabled and/ or have special need in the US particularly in schools?

- How do 'dominant'/ 'mainstream' values, norms, and stereotypes impact and influence the identity of CLAD children and their families?

The research questions served as the bases for the set of literature I will be reviewing. I know that, as I begin to read more research, some of the questions will change to demonstrate my more refined thinking about the topic. I am a bit concerned about the fact that this type of research might have already been done, but I am not completely sure of this. The other question I have is

how I could look at the voices of some of the advocacy groups that work with CLAD families trying to navigate the special education process. I see the addition of the advocacy voices as a key issue, since it helps address some of the social justice issues associated with this topic. I am also questioning what impact the special education team has especially their level of cultural competence. This insight into the special education team would provide a unique perspective. If the team has a culturally responsive attitude, how different does the special education process feel to the CLAD family? This is where I see conducting a literature review as a key element in seeing how and if these types of research questions are possible and relevant.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

The literature review will weave together all of the elements of this study and provide a clear and concise background to the issue. Due to the complex nature of the power dynamics between CLAD families and the special education process it will be important to search out previous research that has dealt with similar questions. Through an initial search I have found several key authors that require further investigation. Beth Harry has published numerous articles and books dealing with over representation of African American children in special education and attempts to define the issue of over representation through a socio-cultural perspective (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Klingner et al., 2005). The books that Harry has authored deal with the cultural of special education and the implications on the families involved in the system plus how race and ethnicity play into the special education process (Harry, Kalyanpur, & Day, 1999; Harry, & Klingner, 2005; Harry, Klingner, Cramer, & Sturges, 2007). Literature also shows that issues dealing with the disconnect and miscommunication with CLAD children and families becomes even greater having a significant impact on the child's educational experiences and perceived potential. In addition Herbert Grossman (2002) and

Angela Valenzuela (1999) discuss the impact of power and cultural disconnect with CLAD students and their learning opportunities. Rebecca Rogers (2003) in *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Family Literacy Practices* demonstrates how the dominate cultural views of literacy impact CLAD families, she investigates how literacy is defined and how the school definition does not match the reality of what the family can and does do to support their children. Compton-Lilly (2007) continues to discuss the disconnect that exists in how Puerto Rican families experience school cultural, especially the special education referral process. In addition she looked at how a lack of cultural understanding leads to miscommunication and a lack of understanding of family circumstance, which negatively impacted the child's educational opportunities (Compton-Lilly, 2003). Each of these books and articles will serve as my literature review for this project. I look forward to gaining a deeper understanding of how my research questions are different and do not represent duplication in research. The literature review will also serve to show what types of issues might complicate the research process.

Conclusion

Through the development of my research questions and refining them, I have gained a deeper understanding of what I am looking at. I continue to be slightly confused but by just writing this brief literature review, I see how some of my confusion will disappear as I do the literature review. It is important that I continue to refine and clarify my objective throughout this process since I do not want my readers to become 'Tangled Up in Mona'. I see how easy it is to fall pray to the complex web of social phenomena as Nespor did in *Tangled up in Schools*, I want to be conscious of this. In the coming weeks I will begin my qualitative interviews of a CLAD family, investigating their experience within the special education process. This experience will further serve to help with my understanding the direction I am trying to go in.

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Table 1

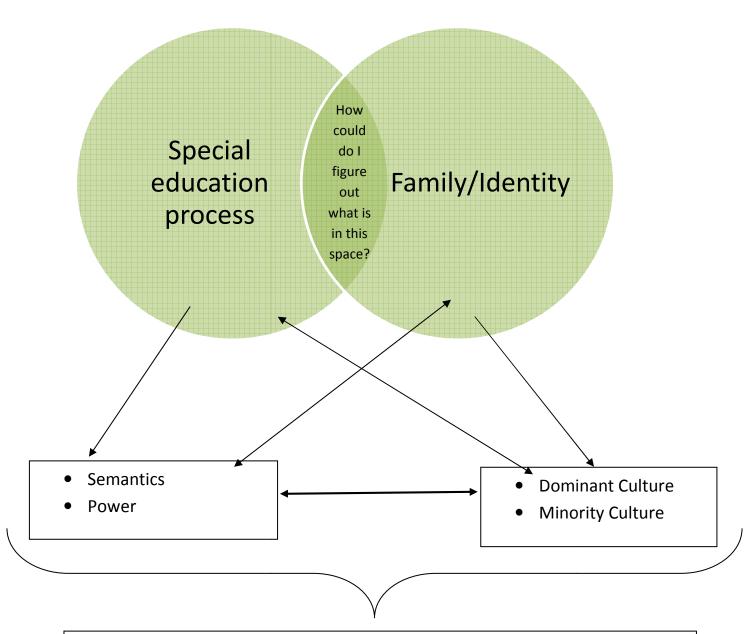| |
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| *Research Question 2 - RQ2* |
| How does dominant culture (white/middle class/American) values and social norms get communicated to culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse families through the US special education process? |
| *Topical Questions* |
| Describe your experiences in Individualized Education Plan meetings? |
| Where there points when you did not feel like the IEP team heard your concerns? How did you deal with this issue? |
| Have you had to seek support during the IEP meeting from outside the school? If so what was your experience with these people or group? |

Graphic 1

Special education process

How could do I figure out what is in this space?

Family/Identity

- Semantics
- Power

- Dominant Culture
- Minority Culture

How do these bottom issues influence the overlap space (dark green)?

Does the special education team's cultural competence (or perceived cultural competence) influence the family's interaction from the minority culture standpoint?

So when the two parties are able to meet in that middle (dark green) space how different does the special education experience look?