

Summer Research Fellowship Proposal

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Summer Research Fellowship Proposal (no more than 4-pages double-spaced = 1,200 words in length).

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SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL

Introduction

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year. A leading cause of suicide is severe bullying. The American Psychological Association defines bullying as "a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort" (apa.org/topics/bullying/index.aspx). Bullying can consist of physical contact, words, or more subtle actions. My SURF project will examine how bullying is presented and addressed in the iconic, culturally powerful Cinderella story.

Rationale

One way that individuals learn how to behave is by modeling behaviors they see in popular culture. One especially powerful force in popular culture is children's literature, which was originally designed to serve as "a socializing tool" to transmit society's values from generation to generation (Gooden & Gooden 89). Within children's literature, the Cinderella story is widely seen as the best-known and best-loved of all fairy tales, and thus, it arguably serves as a highly effective role model for girls. The tale's basic narrative has been relatively unchanged since 1697 when Charles Perrault wrote his story to instruct young French noblewomen how to behave properly (Zipes 46). However, while Perrault's story was geared to young women in their teens, increasingly the target market for Cinderella picture books has become toddlers and early readers (Robinson & Wildermuth). Thus, the messages conveyed in this iconic story are increasingly affecting younger children who are more susceptible to cultural and media influences.

The National Education Association reports that student bullying is one of schools' most frequently reported discipline problems: 21% of elementary schools, 43% of middle schools, and 22% of high schools reported bullying problems in 2005-06 (Teaching Students to Prevent Bullying). In response, educators have been developing intervention curriculums designed to reduce bullying.

The U.S. Department of Education ("DOE") and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("DHHS") have published a set of "best practices" to guide schools when creating or implementing an anti-bullying curriculum. Two important components of such

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Reviewer 1: A citation supporting this would be helpful

Reviewer 2: Citation needed.

Reviewer 3: In just two sentences, the proposal establishes that the research question is important (related to a leading cause of death).

Reviewer 2: This is the only place where suicide is mentioned in the proposal. It is an interesting fact, but the proposal is about bullying, not about suicide. I would remove this sentence.

Reviewer 2: What kind of words?

Reviewer 1: Such as? A brief description would be helpful

Reviewer 3: Sometimes it is important to define terms in order to define the research project. The student will be looking for examples of bullying, so it is important to know what kinds of action would constitute bullying.

Reviewer 2: Describe these. Sentence is not well developed.

Reviewer 4: If the study's about the relationship between bullying and how women are presented in Cinderella, no need to begin with a statement about suicide.... rather, begin with data on frequency of bullying behavior as well as number of girls who read Cinderella, etc.

Reviewer 2: I like how the student notes what the project will look at, but a transition is missing here. The sentence comes out of nowhere.

Reviewer 2: Be specific....what age? I have not learned how to behave watching Jersey Shore!

Reviewer 2: I do not see any literature cited in bibliography..am I missing it? What type of citation is going on here? Does the 89 represent a page number? If so why is there no page number associated with the Robinson & Wildermuth reference below?

Reviewer 3: This establishes that children's literature plays an important role in child development, and that the Cinderella story is among the most significant pieces of children's literature. It can help to emphasize why a particular research project is worth undertaking (and worth funding!).

Reviewer 1: Explain how younger children are more susceptible to cultural and media influence. Is there a citation that supports this?

Reviewer 2: Citation necessary. Is this a hypothesis or has research proved that Cinderella is increasing affecting children and if so, how are children being affected?

Reviewer 1: It is good that you gave specifics and had a source to support this information

Reviewer 2: Is that the most recent data? It cannot be. It's a decade old and I would expect different numbers.

Reviewer 2: Is Teaching Students to Prevent Bullying an article? You say that the NEA was the reporting agency. Either way this is not properly cited.

anti-bullying curriculum are: (1) teaching students to recognize what actions constitute bullying; and (2) teaching students how to stand tall and act brave, sending a “don’t mess with me” message to the bully (stopbullying.gov).

Reviewer 2: In the previous sentence the author discusses how the DOE and DHHS have published a “best practices” guide to prevent bullying, but the concepts discussed in the next sentence come from stopbullying.gov. Must stay consistent in information presentation.

However, I believe the messages in the Cinderella story about how to respond to bullying directly contradict the best practices proposed in anti-bullying curriculums. Additionally, I wonder if these curriculums can effectively override these contradictory

Reviewer 3: This sentence serves as the hypothesis, i.e., an idea that needs to be tested using solid evidence. This is a good location for the hypothesis, after the problem has been defined and the need for a solution has been emphasized.

Cinderella messages girls receive from infancy. Cinderella is very meek, and she never protests her family members’ treatment of her.

Reviewer 1: Earlier you said toddlers and early readers. Do you think infants are getting the message Cinderella puts forth?

She models the “good girl” who is rewarded for being sweet, meek, and good-natured in the face of mistreatment. Thus, I believe girls are receiving contradictory messages. In anti-bullying curriculums, experts say children need to “stand up for themselves, speak up, and fight back against bullying.” This iconic story, however, says that “to be a good girl worthy of love, you must be meek, mild, and

passive when treated badly by others.” As a psychology major, I want to explore this contradiction. Thus, my SURF project will answer two research questions:

Reviewer 1: Good point

Reviewer 3: Statements about the student researcher can be helpful, if they point out why the student is equipped to take on a project or mention how the student would benefit from the project.

R1: How are Cinderella’s stepsisters depicted in picture books through their behavior, their dialogue, and their illustrations? Do those depictions match the DOE and DHHS definition of bullying?

R2: How are Cinderella’s reactions to her stepsisters’ behavior depicted in picture books through her behavior, her dialogue, and her illustrations? Do her reactions match the best practices of how to respond to bullies provided in the DOE and the DHHS anti-bullying curriculum?

Reviewer 4: Very much like the presentation of two specific questions which will be the focus of the study..... Seems to be at least two more questions strongly suggested on the second page of the proposal....one about depiction of aggression, the other about changes, if any, in the depiction of Cinderella over time.

Methodology

During the 2014-15 school year, I have participated in the Research Apprenticeship Program, learning how to perform quantitative research by helping Drs. X and Y in their ongoing analysis of the visual communication occurring in Cinderella picture books over time.

Reviewer 4: While this background material on what the student has done and reports on previous work with Drs. X and Y, etc., it should be placed elsewhere – NOT below a Methodology heading. Then, the Methodology section might be clearer if presented in small, specific sections, items to be analyzed, variables and their measurement, data analysis, etc. Seems a bit too general for a quantitative content analysis....

Drs. X and Y have been engaged in this work for almost three years, producing multiple publications and conference papers. They have also mentored student researchers P (Research Scholars Program) and Q, Communication Department graduate assistant, who have assisted in this project.

Reviewer 3: This is important for establishing that the student is prepared to take on the project.

Although a separate project, my SURF project will be related to the work of Drs. X and Y, who will continue as my mentors and provide me access to the subject of my analysis: their dataset of 500 English-language Cinderella picture books published between 1800 and 2015. In these books, I will be looking at the text and illustrations relating the “getting ready for the ball” scene with Cinderella and her stepsisters. To gather my data, I will create a coding scheme that will identify visual variables in illustrations of the stepsisters that indicate aggression, harassment, and/or humiliation. For example, I will code for facial expressions such as haughty looks and for gestures such as clenched fists. I will also create a coding scheme to identify in illustrations of Cinderella visual cues of her response to the stepsisters’ actions, such as downcast eyes or a bowed head.

Reviewer 3: It also helps to point out how the project is unique and different from what has been done before.

Reviewer 1: You might want to explain why you chose this particular scene in the book. Are there more opportunities to see bullying behavior in this scene?

Reviewer 3: It is important to have an unbiased approach, and the student does this by deciding what they will look for before beginning the project. It also helps to have something like a “coding scheme”, which produces numeric data that can be analyzed.

Reviewer 2: It would be interesting to look at illustrations over time and examine whether aggression, harassment, and or humiliation increase over time.

I will also examine the books' text from the "getting ready for the ball" scene and conduct a textual analysis identifying dialogue and descriptions of behavior that indicate aggression. For example, I will identify instances of the stepsisters' telling Cinderella she is too ugly to attend the ball or descriptions of their cruel behavior, such as laughing at her. I will also code for textual cues indicating how Cinderella responds to her stepsisters, such as Cinderella's responding "yes, miss" or descriptions of Cinderella's patiently enduring their abuse.

Finally, if time allows, I will compare depictions of Cinderella and her stepsisters in this scene across time. In my dataset, I am most interested in books published from 2010 to 2014, as I want to examine what the story is currently telling girls in school or soon to start school. However, I would like to determine if Cinderella has become more assertive in newer books or if the stepsisters have perhaps become less nasty but more ridiculous or silly.

In sum, while the Cinderella narrative has been the subject of much scholarly analysis, the potential connection between it – an iconic force telling girls that "feminine" means being meek in the face of mistreatment – and the goal of reducing childhood bullying has not been examined before. Thus, this project could aid our understanding of the role Cinderella plays in the socialization of girls.

As an aspiring occupational therapist, I will reap many benefits from this research project, which will require me to perceive and interpret details, and draw logical conclusions from this evidence. The skills needed to reach conclusions in this research are similar to those occupational therapists use every day. An occupational therapist must analyze patients' conditions and reach appropriate findings to prepare individual plans and treatments. This research project is also relevant to my major in psychology because it will allow me to better understand the major psychological and societal issue of bullying and the relationship between bullying and an important piece of popular culture. I am extremely interested in this topic and eager to learn what this project can tell us about it. I am equally eager to develop the skills this project will teach me, which will help me succeed in my profession.

Literature Citations - ONLY Bibliographies

assets/survey-uploads/3807/2893777-b8kSiGNosx/SURFReferences.docx

This section is ONLY if you have Graphic Material

Applicants may upload one additional file containing an image, graphic, and/or diagram germane to the proposal. Applicants are encouraged to label their image, graphic, and/or diagram in the file upload as well as the narrative text in order to facilitate review. This is an optional attachment and not required for proposal submission.

Applicants may not upload any other file nor may applicants use this upload feature for additional text/information related to the proposal narrative. Files uploaded that include additional text as part of the narrative will not be forwarded to the reviewers.

Reviewer 2: What scene?

Reviewer 1: You might want to be consistent with the age groups you addressed earlier. How could you determine what age groups of children are reading (or having the story read to them)? But, this seems to be more of analysis of the book and not those who read (or have it read to them).

Reviewer 2: Excellent you answered your comment above. How will you do this? It sounds like you could organize your data quantitatively and statistically analyze. There needs to be a stronger analysis component in your methodology.

Reviewer 4: Like the discussion of how the study can increase knowledge and benefit the student in specific ways...not certain the relationship to occupational therapy is as clear as it might be

Reviewer 2: This should be a conclusion section, this last paragraph is NOT part of the methods.

Reviewer 2: You stated that Drs. X and Y have published papers and presented at conferences on this topic. In fact, a simple google search shows that a bunch of research has been done on Cinderella and bullying. It would be better to say that your research will contribute to the understanding of how Cinderella has influenced bullying over time...assuming that is what you are doing.

Reviewer 3: This sentence points out that the project potentially could have major implications for how children's books are written in the future, or which book characters serve as good role models. It helps to mention the broader significance of a project beyond what will help the student or the mentor.

Reviewer 3: It's not insignificant to point out how the research project will benefit the student.

Reviewer 2: While I believe this project has merit, I believe that social media drives bullying much more than Cinderella picture books.

Reviewer 4: Quite well-written. Like to see more details regarding methodology to be employed. Would prefer to see far less use of first-person writing in the concluding paragraphs.

Reviewer 2: This section describes the goals of the student and the skills necessary to conduct the research. I would like to see a list of classes the student has taken that will help with this research project. How can the student use this experience to strengthen critical thinking, analysis, and interpretation skills?

GRAPHIC MATERIAL ONLY!

Please follow above instructions of this section.

TIMETABLE

WEEKS 1-2

Cinderella images

- Prepare content analysis coding scheme
- Produce intercoder reliability sample
- Review intercoder reliability sample with Drs. [REDACTED] & [REDACTED] and make any necessary adjustments
- Code remainder of images into content analysis coding scheme

WEEKS 2-4

Cinderella text

- Receive training in textual coding and analysis
- Prepare content analysis coding scheme
- Produce intercoder reliability sample
- Review intercoder reliability sample with Drs. [REDACTED] & [REDACTED] and make any necessary adjustments
- Code remainder of text

WEEKS 5-7

- Manipulate data base content to isolate variables
- Retrieve and calculate results over time (1800-2015)
- Begin literature review

WEEKS 8-10

- Finish literature review
- Write up query and results
- Submit presentation proposal to regional academic conference
- Prepare presentation

Reviewer 2: Your literature should be one of the first things done. Not started in weeks 5-10.