## Graduate Student Spotlight

**Getting to Know: Paul Landry**

****Written by: Caitlin Byrne (Ph.D. student in Educational Research)

Paul L. Landry is a current UA graduate student, a  Ph.D. Candidate in Instructional Leadership (ELPTS) within the College of Education. Hailing originally from Minnesota, Paul came to UA with a B.A. from Macalester College, and a J.D. from Boston University which he completed at Georgetown University. He also holds an M.A. from UA, in secondary curriculum and instruction. Paul has completed the requirements for the Qualitative Research Certificate. His research interests include the intersection of language, race, and culture within education systems and social justice issues including disability in education.

**What made you come (back) to graduate school?**

A career transition led Paul back to graduate school after working in the legal field. Working with education law, teaching law school, and serving as an elected school district official sparked Paul’s interest in education, and inspired him to return to graduate school.

**What inspired you to enroll in the qualitative certificate program?**

For Paul, the qualitative certificate program was a natural outgrowth of his interest in connecting theory and practice. He explained, “Central questions of educational practice fall into the qualitative domain. It is important to understand how and why [educational policies and practices] work, beyond the fact that they simply occur.” Paul said that the qualitative certificate program provided him with an opportunity to learn about qualitative research practices so that he could better understand how to process qualitative literature, and how to approach research problems from a qualitative perspective.

**How has the qualitative certificate program enhanced your experience at UA?**

Paul indicated that the qualitative certificate program has enhanced his graduate studies. He stated, “I have a greater appreciation for the applicability of theory, and an appreciation for the limitations and additional questions that need to be asked about policies and practices.”

**Can you think of an experience that has resonated with you/been meaningful in relation to the qualitative certificate program?**

Paul explained that participating in the qualitative certificate program has afforded him the opportunity to conduct qualitative research that ultimately informed his teaching practices. While working as a graduate teaching assistant, Paul noticed that students in his foundations course were struggling with the notion of disability in an inclusive classroom. This led Paul to develop a qualitative study that examined perceptions of self-efficacy for pre-service teachers in relation to their capacity to teach in an inclusive classroom setting. According to Paul, the certificate program helped guide him through IRB, data collection and analysis.

**What advice would you give to qualitative researchers?**

Paul encourages qualitative researchers to get involved in the research process. He stated, “I hate to borrow from Nike, but, ‘Just Do it.’ You can talk about factors, influences, and theories but they make much more sense when you work through the process and appreciate the challenges and implications of what you’re doing.”

**What’s next for you?**

Paul says he plans to continue as a teacher educator, in curriculum and instruction, foundations, or research. Paul also says “I’m excited to get out there and do the research. I can’t wait to figure out what [people] have to say, what stories they tell.”

**Random fun question: Are you more of a “hunter” or a “gatherer”?**

Paul identifies as a ”gatherer” more than a “hunter,” explaining, “I am more interested in experiencing and trying to understand environments, experiences, and phenomena that I come into contact with. To me, that translates to gathering.  That’s not to say there is no urgency for change, but we must first seek to understand.”