

Final Report

Project Title: [570189-1] Summer Collaborative Intergenerational Puppet-Making and Script Writing Workshop

Principal Investigator: Susan Whiteland, PhD

Research Plan

On March 18, 2014 a Faculty Research and Creativity Award grant of \$3,148.00 was awarded to Susan Whiteland, as funding to conduct research regarding attitudinal change in young people related to aging and visual art engagement. The original plan for the research project was for it to take place during a four-day summer workshop June 23-June 27, 2014 as part of the Continuing Education and Community Outreach (CECO) Summer Camp Academy program. Repha Buckman agreed to act as artist in residence for the summer workshop. She was to be supported with a matching grant from the Arts in Education Mini Grant of the Arkansas Arts Council. Participating in the workshop would be volunteering older adults from the Jonesboro, community age 55 years and older. Recruitment of the older adults would be through word-of-mouth and public service announcements. Ten older adults and 10 children were required for the convenience sample that would serve as the case study. The research question to be investigated was, "Is there a positive correlation in children's attitudes toward older adults and aging after interacting together in an engaging intergenerational art activity." The outcome goal of the project was to better understand aging attitudes of children who have interacted with older adults in an engaging art activity. It was anticipated that results from the project would be meaningful to art educators and others interested in aging as they could better understand how intergenerational art activities may promote positive attitudes of young people toward aging and older adults. Transference for similar contexts was expected. Unfortunately, the summer class did not make and was cancelled due to low enrollment.

The project was redesigned and adapted to an alternative venue that took place from 8:15-9:00 on Tuesday mornings from January 20, 2014-February 27, 2014. On the final day of the workshop a field trip was scheduled to visit the Heritage Site of Hemingway Pfeiffer Museum in Piggott, Arkansas. Notice of the change was sent to the Office of Research and Technology Transfer Department (ORTT). Rebekah Craig, Director of Research Development, provided approval to proceed. The workshop was offered through the Gifted and Talented sixth grade class at Health Wellness and Environmental Science (HWES) Magnet Elementary School in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and Pre and Post Surveys were administered to 15 sixth grade participants. Participant reflections and documentary videos also gave evidence of what took place. The students worked with 10 volunteering older adults from the community for five weeks creating hand puppets and writing scripts dealing with communication.

Outcomes

Statistical analysis using t-tests did not show any significant changes in the children's attitudes on the Children's View of Aging Identification Pairs instrument. A second survey, Facts on Aging Quiz, showed only significant change after the posttest was given in the strength of disagreement with the statement, "most older people are

poor”. Although the number of students involved in the case study was small the descriptive characteristics ascribed by the children to older adults were highly positive in both the pre and post-tests. Generally speaking, students believed that older adults are healthy, wealthy and wise. In the third survey, Children’s View of Aging Questionnaire” most students saw aging as neither good nor bad. They indicated that their attitudes toward growing older were influenced by a grandmother.

Literature supports significant positive change in students’ attitudes toward older adults after enriching intergenerational programming. This case study did not support significant positive change. Three factors that may have contributed to the lack of significant change include the small number of participants, the limited number of face-to-face contact hours for the participants, and the high number of students who interacted with a grandparent on a regular basis due to living in close proximity possibly creating a positive bias prior to the study. While there was no statistical significance that can be attributed to improving children’s attitudes toward aging based on the present study, there is evidence that children constructed new meaning toward their understanding of aging and older adults.

Plans to Further the Activities

The pilot attitudinal study, *Aging, Attitudes and Animation*, that was conducted for the present study, *Summer Collaborative Intergenerational Puppet-Making and Script Writing Workshop* will be presented during a poster session in July, 2014 at the Intergenerational Action on a Global Scale conference in Honolulu, HI. Information from the present study will be shared as a follow up to the pilot study during the poster session.

Currently in process a manuscript is also being written regarding the intergenerational study. Plans are to submit it for publication review to *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, volume 36 with the theme Navigating Divides.

The field of intergenerational programming is growing. As aging continues to become a topic of discussion more and more interest will be directed to effective strategies that may be employed to foster understanding between generations devoid of stereotypes and ageist prejudices. Research shows that the visual arts can play an integral role in relationship building by opening opportunities for collaboration, meaningful exchanges and achieving common goals. It is the desire of this educator to be a contributing facilitator in undertaking more research projects that bring visual art to those who have much to gain from its promise and investigate the process and results of doing so.