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Impacts Of An Artist Residency Program Informed By Social Action Art Therapy



A scenic view of Trinity River in the Hoopa Valley Native American Reservation (California)

Overview

As a MA Candidate in Art Therapy and MFT Trainee at the **Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, CA)**, **Jessica Bui Lo** had the opportunity to fully experience the implementation of an **art therapy social action program** – a three-day Artist Residency at a K-8th public school on a Native American Reservation – as well as engage in research regarding its impact.

Research topics and results

The research explores the impact of a three-day Artist Residency program at a K-8th public school on a Native American Reservation. The program is evaluated through the lens of Social Action Art Therapy and aims to uncover how the program impacted a community – including teachers, students, parents and facilitators. The resulting themes include 1) art illuminated the students' Native American Hoopa identity and culture, 2) art increased student participation, facilitated storytelling, and conversations about the students' feelings and art provided a sense of agency, 3) art created and strengthened bonds among the students, teachers, parent and facilitators and facilitators were seen as role models for the students, and 4) the facilitators' desire to be involved in similar art therapy social action projects increased as they were personally and professionally impacted by the Artist Residency program. Three minor themes include: a) some teachers found new ways to integrate art in their classroom, b) the foreign art medium choice increased risk taking, engagement, creativity as well as provided students with new skills, c) some changes noted, more time needed to see larger change.

Motivation for research

As a research paper presented in conclusion of the MA in Art Therapy to the Faculty of the Department of Marital and Family Therapy at the Loyola Marymount University, *Impacts of an Artist Residency Program* was an opportunity to fully experience the implementation of an art therapy social action program as well as engage in research regarding its impact.

Contribution to the field

The theoretical framework of this research paper refers to literature which describes a connection in art and social action, mostly discussing the various community art projects throughout history that empowered the participants. Its main contribution to the field of art residencies is that it strengthens the evidence that such programs can be used by therapists and activists that are interested in art as a tool for therapeutic community work and social action.

Key learnings

The findings of the research illuminated impacts the Artist Residency Program had on the students, teachers, and parents, as well as on its facilitators. To begin, art illuminated students' strengths in their connection to their Native American culture, family and Hoopa community. Art also allowed students to be heard as they engaged in conversations about fears and lived experiences. As they shared their lived experiences with others, they bonded and connected with other students, teachers, and with facilitators. Facilitators were seen as role models for the students by the teachers. Art also increased students engagement in the classroom, increased parents engagement in the school and moreover increased parents engagement in the school and moreover increased a teachers engagement in an art program so that he could further integrate art in his classroom. Moreover, students felt their sense of agency, they could act in the classroom in new ways and experienced their ability to create change as they has within their art. Students continued to utilize the art techniques post program.

Download full research paper [here](#)