



SEPTEMBER 26TH, 2016
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS COMMITTEE

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to report on the progress of the work being conducted under my APA Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant awarded for the project "Promoting Philosophy for Children at the Mexico-U.S. Border".

Prior to outlining the activities completed thus far under the grant, I wish to thank the Diversity and Inclusiveness Committee for generously awarding these funds to the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program at the University of Texas at El Paso. As I will discuss in this report, this grant has enabled us to reach every single one of the goals outlined in the grant proposal. In broad strokes, the goal of this project was create innovative, bilingual, and publicly accessible opportunities for philosophical engagement for children, youth and families in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, México. I am immensely grateful to the APA for recognizing the importance of this initiative.

In our grant application we proposed the following: "to celebrate and represent, in a publicly accessible way, the unique philosophical perspectives of children and families of this region. To these ends, we will create a bilingual, interactive Philosophy for Children exhibit at the Museo Urbano: a local museum in El Paso that showcases the history of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. This interactive exhibit will be expertly designed to inspire philosophical dialogue on the part of local children and families. We will also create an educational, bilingual documentary about the exhibit itself as well as the UTEP Philosophy for Children program. The documentary will be made widely accessible at the Mexico-U.S. border and in academic philosophy."

In this report I shall provide a description of the following projects that we have implemented thanks to our Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant: (1) the museum exhibit; (2) the documentary; and (3) "other activities". Over the course of these descriptions, I will also provide an overview of some of the media coverage of these events, as a key goal of this project is to make these philosophical activities accessible to the broader public of the El Paso-Juárez region. In addition, I will also share some participant responses to survey questions about these activities; please see my grant application for further details about these surveys.

1. Museum Exhibit: “Lo Que Tú Quieras/Whatever You Want”

I. Overview

We successfully created and installed an interactive, bilingual (Spanish-English) Philosophy for Children exhibit in the museum space of the Mujer Obrera in El Paso, Texas. This project was conducted in cooperation with the Museo Urbano—a public history initiative that is coordinated through the University of Texas at El Paso.

Called “Lo Que Tu Quieras/Whatever You Want,” the exhibit featured philosophically suggestive images that compelled children, youth and adults to ponder questions about the nature of freedom and free will. Beneath each philosophically suggestive image, we included philosophical questions (in English and Spanish) that parents could ask their children as they moved through the museum. In addition to this series of images, children also climbed through cardboard “houses” and were encouraged to write on the walls of the houses any “rules” that they would establish (or not establish) in their ideal home. In addition, positioned in the center of the exhibit was a megaphone that children and youth could use to publicly say whatever they wanted. (Of course, the children were then asked *why* they chose to say what they said when it was their turn to use the megaphone.)

Thanks to our Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant, we were able to hire Daniela Martagón, the illustrator for the “visual children’s philosophy” company WonderPonder, to design the exhibit. In our grant proposal, we had budgeted to bring Daniela Martagón to El Paso to put up the exhibit; however, her visa was denied (Daniela currently resides in Madrid, Spain). Fortunately, we were able to use our grant funds to hire a UTEP undergraduate art major, Dina Edens, to work with Daniela via Skype to put up the exhibit in time for the May 4th opening.

Our May 4th opening featured two special events. First, we held a “closed opening” in the morning for some of the children and youth of the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program. Approximately 20 children were “guided” through the exhibit by approximately 27 students who were enrolled in the Philosophy for Children class at the University of Texas at El Paso. By “guided,” I mean that each child was accompanied by at least one UTEP undergraduate student who engaged with the children in philosophical dialogue through the exhibit. In the evening, we held a second opening for approximately 100 parents, community partners, UTEP faculty, and children who are involved in Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands in different ways. Participants first toured the exhibit, and then they attended a dinner during which they learned more about Philosophy for Children methodology over the course of several presentations. In addition, several UTEP Philosophy undergraduate and graduate students led the participants in Philosophy for Children “workshops” at their dinner tables.

Footage of the museum exhibit and these events can be found in our documentary, which will be discussed in a subsequent section. Pictures of the exhibit can be provided upon request.

II. Impact

Following these organized events, the exhibit was featured in the Mujer Obrera museum space for approximately three months. While it was nearly impossible to get a precise tally of how many El Paso-Juarez community members and families attended the exhibit (for the museum space in question is free and can be accessed by the public with minimal supervision throughout the week), Lorena Andrade, the director of La Mujer Obrera, reported that the exhibit was extremely popular. Many families and community members, she reported, toured the exhibit and found it philosophically stimulating.

During a screening of the documentary at La Mujer Obrera for parents and children in the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program (which will be discussed in a later section), participants were given a survey in which they were asked, among other things, what they thought of the museum exhibit. Here are some of the replies (translated from Spanish):

- “I believe that the exhibit reflected the methodology of the [Philosophy for Children] program. I liked all of the questions, and how they got children to express themselves philosophically.”
- “I liked the megaphone which allowed kids to express themselves.”
- “I liked the written comments. The only issue was that they were positioned higher than the heights of many of the children.”
- “I liked to see the adults assuming that the questions may be too difficult, but the children answering without difficulty and with their own perspective.”
- “I really enjoyed it, and what I liked the most was the design and the methodology. I had never before attended a museum exhibit that was so inclusive of the public.”

Several news/several blog articles were produced regarding the exhibit, such as:

- An article written by Luis Hernández of *El Diario de El Paso* (not available online).
- An online article (in Spanish) by *La Primera Piedra*:
<http://www.laprimera piedra.com.ar/2016/07/entrevista-daniela-martagon-ilustradora-wonder-ponder-objetivo-involucrar-lectores-desde-la-curiosidad-asombro/>
- The following article (in English) in the WonderPonder Philosophy for Children Blog:
<http://www.wonderponderonline.com/bloginenglish/2016/1/16/wonder-ponder-illustrator-daniela-martagn>

Finally, I should note that we have preserved the materials from the exhibit, and we plan to re-install them at another community center in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez region. This will increase the impact of this funded activity.

Documentary

I. Overview

We successfully created a 19-minute, bilingual documentary about the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program. The documentary was filmed in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, and it is freely available online via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnt-XFg90Jk> As part of this project, a one-minute, 21-second trailer was also created for the documentary. It is accessible via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcC-hCJipf4>

I will refrain from providing a description of the documentary here, as the contents of the film are easily viewable and thus “speak for themselves”. However, I would like to note that we were able to keep the documentary entirely within budget as described in the original grant proposal. Funds were used to bring documentarian Julia Reihls to El Paso-Juárez for five days to film the documentary. She also edited the film. I was involved in production and translation, and I was able to use grant funds to hire undergraduate UTEP philosophy major Julisa Fernández to serve as a production assistant for the film.

II. Impact

As of today (September 26, 2016), the documentary has had 2,455 views on YouTube. It was also the subject of news and blog coverage, such as:

- MSV News (Spanish-language radio El Paso-Juárez), not available online
- The El Paso Herald-Post: <http://elpasoheraldpost.com/philosophy-professor-utep-releases-bilingual-childrens-documentary-online/>
- Diario Digital Juárez: http://diario.mx/El_Paso/2016-06-26_c936db75/documental-explora-la-vision-filosofica-de-ninos-fronterizos/
- The Chicana website pocho.com: <http://www.pocho.com/philosophy-for-kids-english-y-espanol-in-el-paso-juarez-video/>
- Daily Nous: <http://dailynous.com/2016/06/21/philosophy-for-children-on-the-usmexico-border/>
- Borderlands History: <https://borderlandshistory.org/2016/06/22/philosophy-for-children-in-the-borderlands/>

As mentioned previously, a screening of the documentary was held for community members at La Mujer Obrera museum space in El Paso. There, participants were given a survey that prompted them to answer questions about their perspectives on the documentary. Here were some of their replies (mostly translated from Spanish):

- “I really liked the documentary, and in particular the time that was given to the kids to explain the program in their own words.”
- “Given that the subject is not very well-known, the documentary explains it very well. It should be promoted along all borders!”

- “I believe that the documentary is a very important resource. However, it would have been helpful to include a bit more context about Ciudad Juárez.”
- “I liked that we learned about the families, the location, and learned from the children.”
- “I loved it. I think that we should promote it even more to arrive at a common [philosophical] thought process in the region.”
- “Liked: the integration of both communities.”
- “Liked voices of people, including children (especially children), parents, teachers, to describe and show what philosophy for children is about. Do children engage with children directly or always with an adult (facilitator)?”

In addition, at a recent training session for new UTEP student volunteers for the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program, participants (all of whom were new volunteers) were shown the documentary and surveyed about their opinions. Here are some of the comments:

- “I understood [from the documentary] that the goal is to allow children and youth to ask questions and question norms. Children have the capacity to philosophize and want to dialogue.”
- “I felt that the documentary had a large focus on El Paso culture and how that affects children’s philosophical views. I certainly understood the goals of getting children to think critically.”
- “The documentary perfectly depicted the binational and bi-cultural presence in El Paso and Juarez. I liked the interviews from the moms who had children in the program. It gave me an idea of the far-reaching impact this program has on the borderlands!”
- “...the documentary elucidated the aim of the program. In addition, “grass-roots” type issues were also touched upon which is technically beyond the realm of “pure philosophy”. I took away a palpable sense of community service.”

Finally, I should also note that the documentary will soon be shown at the Cineteca Nacional in Ciudad Juárez.

Other Activities

In addition to the aforementioned projects, funds from the APA Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant were employed on behalf of several other activities designed to promote Philosophy for Children at the Mexico-U.S. border. These activities include:

- The creation of a poster for the program, designed by UTEP undergraduate art major Dina Edens (an image of the poster will be included with this report)
- The hiring of two undergraduate students as “RA’s”—Julisa Fernández and Lauren Viramontes—who will, among other things, promote the program in the El Paso community using the documentary and museum exhibit materials
- Refreshments for an all-day training for new student volunteers (many of whom became interested in the program after viewing the documentary)
- Expanding upon our bilingual Philosophy for Children lending library (still in progress)

To conclude, I wish to once again thank the APA Diversity and Inclusiveness Committee for providing our program with these funds. As a result of being awarded this grant, we have been able to implement every project that was proposed in our original grant proposal. As part of this process, we have been able to promote the work of the program in Spanish and English to hundreds of children, youth and family of the El Paso-Juárez region. All (that is, 100%) of the surveyed participants said that they were “extremely likely” to recommend Philosophy for Children to a friend or relative after participating in the aforementioned activities. We have also been able to generate new, publicly-available bilingual resources for Philosophy for Children classes, thus expanding upon the accessibility of Philosophy for Children classes on a broad scale. Finally, thanks to the social media component of this project, we have been able to share some of the unique philosophical perspectives of children and youth of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands with thousands of people across the globe.

This has been an extraordinary experience that would not have been possible without the support of the American Philosophical Association.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ARS', written in a cursive style.

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