The Longevity Dividend, the Humanities, and Collaborations and Network in Aging Studies

Leni Marshall, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin – Stout
Humanities-Based Interventions

Penelope Project

Music for Memory

NCCA

Kairos Dance Theatre

Gene Cohen
Networking

- North American Network in Aging Studies (NANAS)
- European Network in Aging Studies (ENAS) and Europe’s Cultural Gerontology group
- Gerontological Society of America’s Arts and Humanities (GSA)
- Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)
- Modern Language Association’s Age Studies Discussion Group (MLA)
- National Women’s Studies Association’s Aging and Ageism Caucus (NWSA)
To facilitate sustainable interdisciplinary collaborations and methodologies that bridge the medical and social sciences and the humanities, supporting research that increases understandings of the cultural meanings of the aging processes across the lifespan in order to challenge stereotypes and provide creative approaches that improve the health, care, and quality of life for people aging into old age.
Create an intervention that may...

- Expand gerontological literacy
- Help alleviate the shortage of care workers
- Extend healthy life span...
  via cross-disciplinary collaboration
The Longevity Dividend
Option A: Healthy Living

- Exercise regularly
- Eat healthily
- Don’t smoke

“I’m going to order a broiled skinless chicken breast, but I want you to bring me lasagna and garlic bread by mistake.”
Option B: Be Less Ageist
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Stages</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newborn</strong></td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crying, Sleeping, Pooping, diapers, Eat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toddler</strong></td>
<td>2–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrible 2s, lots of energy, durable, Picky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Child</strong></td>
<td>5–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of energy, Thirst for knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tween</strong></td>
<td>11–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick to the hip, wannabe teenagers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teenager</strong></td>
<td>14–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward, sassy, mood changes, trying to find themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Adult</strong></td>
<td>18–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual, Finding own path, independence, starting to find own career path</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult</strong></td>
<td>30–40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family's, career established, mid–life crisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Age</strong></td>
<td>41–59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement soon, Their kids are old (empty–nest), Grandkids, settled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Older Adults</strong></td>
<td>60–69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired, bad joints, bingo, complain about kids not visiting, card games, less energy, medicine cabinet expansion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elderly</strong></td>
<td>70+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely retired, kicking the bucket, health problems, wrinkly, scooters, no energy, can’t throw things away</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Value of Gerontological Literacy

healthy

+10% years of life (~7.5 more)
- You
- Your family
- Your students

Negative Physical Impact of Ageism

- Memory performance
- Balance and gait speed
- Risk of cardiovascular event
- Cardiovascular event recovery time
- Handwriting
- Hearing
- Self-care
- Will to live


Cardiovascular Events: Risk and Recovery

Figure 2. Physical performance over time by age-stereotype groups.
Negative Physical Impact of Ageism

- Memory performance
- Balance and gait speed
- Risk of cardiovascular event
- Cardiovascular event recovery time
- Handwriting
- Hearing
- Self-care
- Will to live


Positive Ideations about Aging Extend Life More than Exercise and Not Smoking

Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Retirement
- N=660
- Age 50 or older at baseline
- 23–year study
- Age, gender, socioeconomic status, loneliness, and functional health were included as covariates

Increasing Positive Ideations

- Extended personal contact within the workplace (Allan & Johnson 2009)
- Policy reform
- Understanding aging as part of a lifespan (Cottle & Glover 2007)
- Increased information followed by discussion about ageism (Ragan & Bowen 2001)
Ragan and Bowen: Effects of Accurate Information

- N=112
- “Myths & Realities of Aging” 30 min. PBS video
  1. Information only
  2. Information and discussion about campus life (controls for facilitator attention)
  3. Information and discussion about video data
- Both discussions: verbal reinforcement for appropriate remarks; off-task comments ignored
- Group 3: Encouraged to discuss info from video that challenged currently held beliefs.
- 25-minute discussion right after the video; 25-minute discussion again one week later.
# Results

Table 1. Scores Across the Three ASD Administrations by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest ASD Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Post-test ASD Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Follow-up ASD Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information only</td>
<td>96.55 (19.62)</td>
<td>172.64 (7.25)</td>
<td>116.27 (22.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Information–campus life</td>
<td>101.15 (20.87)</td>
<td>170.32 (6.58)</td>
<td>120.42 (18.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information–reinforcement</td>
<td>100.73 (22.63)</td>
<td>167.37 (4.98)</td>
<td>171.52 (19.91)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ASD = Aging Semantic Differential.*
What’s next?

- Can short stories be as effective as movies?
- How much of an added effect do the post-tests have? How frequently are they needed?
- Relative efficacy of active lowering vs environmentally-created lower levels of ageist beliefs?
- Would greater gerontological literacy have health benefits if used with younger minds?
- Longitudinal: 25 – 50
Collaboration & the Longevity Dividend

funny - you don't look that old

funny, you don't look that insensitive...

Leni Marshall
leni@agingstudies.org
Works Cited - Part 1
Works Cited - Part 2


“A Meta–Analysis of Positive and Negative Age Stereotype Priming Effects on Behavior Among Older Adults,” by Brad A. Meisner (2011)