

The University of Colorado Puebla Experience: A Study in Changing Attitudes and Teaching Strategies

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Students participated in a 2-week intensive program in the city of Puebla, Mexico. The experience included university course work, cultural field trips, and teaching and observing in Mexican elementary schools. It also included many opportunities to interact and participate in daily life in Puebla. The study examined changes in attitudes about Mexicans and Mexican Americans as well as changes in teachers' stated beliefs about effective teaching methods. While pre/postattitude surveys did not show a shift, there were significant changes in participant perceptions of teaching strategies for Mexican American students. The results suggest that intensive short-term programs such as this one may not demonstrate improved attitudes; however, they may impact classroom strategy use, and this in turn may have a positive impact on English language learners. This multifaceted experience resulted in rather complex outcomes.

INTRODUCTION: CHANGING TEACHER BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS: A COMPLEX ISSUE

U.S. schools have become increasingly diverse. By the middle of the century, it is estimated that the trends in urban school settings will result in no clear majority population (Woolfolk, 2007). In some urban areas this has already occurred. Recognition of this change in classroom demographics has been accompanied by an increasingly heavier focus on textbook topics relevant to diversity. For example, current educational psychology texts now devote much more space to minority students and how to effectively teach them (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). This study deals with the evaluation of a program, one of many, designed to provide teachers with an increased awareness of language and cultural issues to be considered in teaching Mexican American students.

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Such programs have as a primary focus the need to learn to be more effective teachers of Mexican-heritage students in the U.S.

Definition of Diversity

A critical issue in this area is the definition of diversity. *Diversity* has generally been defined as a perceived difference between self and some externally specified attribute (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). This difference, implying a lack of that attribute, is supposedly not only relevant to individual or group identification, but also to success in some task to which the external attribute allegedly contributes. Unfortunately such definitions may have an unintended demonizing effect, relegating the individual or group in question to a position of nonequality, possessing inherent weaknesses (Tannen, 2002). It may also position the majority group as the “norm,” thereby positioning others as outside of the norm and therefore not normal. Hence, the first concern may then be followed by additional questions about what other attributes may be missing. In an educational setting, teachers with the best of intentions may then plan their lessons assuming that their minority students are not really capable of regular classroom instruction.

Selection of Diversity Criteria

Returning to this definition of diversity, the first important question is who selected the critical attribute(s). All too often labeling is arbitrarily imposed by some source external to the individual or group. In many situations selection represents the easiest to label (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). As a consequence, diversity training in educational institutions has often focused on easily observed demographic attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, language, etc., which supposedly impact educational success. In the classroom, these attributes provide simple and easy explanations for instructional problems and academic underachievement. However, it is not always the case that the teacher knows if the attribute selected is relevant to an individual student, a group, or to the specific classroom situation.

A Side Effect: Stereotyping

What may be overlooked is that individual differences, reflected in personal and social behavior, may have a significant impact on the supposed effects of a missing attribute (Banks, 1993). Being placed in a group because of some commonly accepted attribute is a form of stereotyping, regardless of any desire to help. Stereotypes are generalizations, suggesting that individuals embedded within a particular group share certain modal traits (Judd, Ryan, & Park, 1991). This means that when a member of that particular group is encountered, certain expectations are generated. This could be serious in classroom settings. The teacher may initially resort to established beliefs on how to deal effectively with a labeled individual, even with little or no prior interaction. For example, a teacher noting that an incoming student has been labeled as “learning disabled,” may almost reflexively assume the student is reading significantly below grade level (Hallahan & Kaufman, 2006).

Stereotyping may exist even with the best of intentions. In the case of minority students, teachers may utilize programs based on a belief system holding to an implicit acceptance of the

cultural-deficit model (Woolfolk, 2007). It is not that the culture, *per se*, is deficient, but that the values of that culture are incompatible with the demands of the educational system. Moreover, by using stereotypes the teacher can avoid considering other factors. Since a stereotype is a generalization, this reduces the load on working memory (Kellog, 2007). The teacher may feel no need to consider any further evidence. If a problem arises, resorting to a stereotype may result in the teacher not referring to the evidence gathered, but resorting instead to presumed causes. For example, in the case of the Mexican American student, lack of proficiency in English almost automatically becomes a relevant issue. In contrast, in the case of an Asian student, this is not likely to be an initial concern. In the past, Asians have been stereotyped as highly motivated students, who have most likely mastered English, while Mexican-heritage students are stereotyped as being resistant to learning English.

Dealing with Apparent Exceptions: Some Possible Strategies

The following is a simplified example. Consider the teacher of an Advanced Placement Chemistry class who has a Mexican American student, whose English is still heavily accented, but who nonetheless is quite proficient in English, and is a very bright, hard-working student interested in a career in medicine. The use of modal traits may not be valid in this instance. How is the teacher supposed to deal with this particular student? Is he an unusual Mexican American or a very bright student or both? Ironically, the teacher may engage in strategies, which do not necessarily alter her belief systems or attitudes about Mexican Americans in general, but simply about this particular student.

The “both” represents a problem that has to be resolved. He is after all a Mexican American, even though he is perceived as not “typical.” One strategy, following Piaget’s concept of accommodation, is to deal with the dilemma by recognizing there are some exceptions to the teacher’s belief system regarding Mexican Americans. The original belief system has been challenged, but not severely modified (Piaget, 1970).

Festinger, in his theory of cognitive dissonance, would also see a need to reduce any conflict between beliefs, or beliefs and behavior (Festinger, 1957). The teacher has to reconcile her strategies for teaching bright students with those she commonly employs for Mexican Americans, which may be quite different.

One way the teacher can resolve the difficulties is to accept the belief that teaching a bright student outweighs all other concerns. Beliefs about Mexican Americans are given less prominence, at least for this student. On the other hand, the teacher may focus on a belief that regardless of current intentions, it is not likely that this student will go anywhere professionally. The net result may be less concern with level of achievement, but more with the problem of dealing with a Mexican American student who the teacher may perceive as not sharing the same value system as other students in the class, at least in terms of commitment to achieving professional goals. That is, the teacher may hold the belief that Mexican American students do not have the same values for achievement in school as other ethnolinguistic groups.

A third strategy, which could be used to handle the conflict and maintain stereotypical thinking, is the use of tacit inferences. These inferences are conclusions, not based on any original information (Baron & Byrne, 2000). In our example, to provide for an exception regarding a previously held stereotype, the teacher might perceive certain behaviors in this student, but not project these to the larger group, or she may simply conclude that this student is different because he comes

from a professional family, and, professional families stress educational goals. The teacher does not change her stereotype, however, because she also believes that not many Mexican American students come from professional families? Actually, the teacher may have no knowledge of the family circumstances. In any case, stereotypes remains unchallenged as the teacher concludes that this student is an exception because in her view few Mexican Americans come from families where a career in medicine is encouraged. This allows the teacher to deal with this student as an obvious exception. The next Mexican American with a similar set of academic credentials would not, at least initially, encounter a previously modified belief system.

One purpose of the Study in Mexico program discussed herein is to challenge teacher stereotypes about Mexican and Mexican American students and their families. Moreover, beyond challenging existing stereotypes, a bigger challenge is how to change actual behaviors.

Attitudes and Behavior

Even if a program such as the Study in Mexico challenges participant beliefs system and attitudes, can we automatically assume that as a consequence participants will now change their classroom approach? Unfortunately, the relation between attitude and behavior is very complex and not always predictable (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2008). For example, one may firmly believe that sexual orientation should not play a role in grading, but at the same time not have a gay or lesbian colleague over to dinner because they make you “feel uncomfortable.” We are not arguing that changing attitudes does not change behavior; what we will argue is that behavioral changes are not always predictable.

The challenge for programs such as the Study in Mexico program is that unless the program examines subsequent behavioral changes, there is no way of knowing if all that has been accomplished is to create further feelings of guilt, and/or provide a new set of stereotypes. It is not hard to assume that in the course of diversity training, especially within the relatively short experience in Mexico, every participant at least knows what is a socially acceptable profession of belief and what is not. But after the training, the participant might well revert to the aforementioned dinner-gay thinking.

Among the complex attitude-behavior causal links, we have selected a few that we believe are most relevant to the instructional issues we have discussed. But before proceeding to these variables, there is a very important caveat to be kept in mind. A teacher with the best of intentions and care may not immediately see any significant gains in student achievement. Minority students after a few years of schooling may come to a teacher’s class with a long and perhaps unhappy set of classroom experiences. In many instances they may have learned to cope and survive using tactics and strategies not necessarily commensurate with academic success. Teacher attempts to help these students may need to involve not only creating a positive ambience for academic success, but also simultaneously helping students to overcome what has gone on before (Anderson & Faust, 1973).

Early on, LaPiere (1934) demonstrated that attitudes and behavior were not simply correlated. He traveled around the United States with a young Chinese couple. This couple had excellent language skills and made a very good appearance. With very few exceptions they dined at or were given lodging at many places. After the tour was over, LaPiere subsequently wrote to these same places, and asked if they accepted Chinese customers; with few exceptions, they said no.

Factors Underlying Complexity

Two variables that contribute to the complexity of the linkage between behavior and the related attitudinal support are the strength of the attitude and the situation. Attitude strength appears to be a function of intensity, importance, knowledge, and accessibility (Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993). In addition to these commonly cited factors, what is sometimes overlooked is that strength is also a function of how an attitude is acquired. An attitude may develop through a careful and reasoned process. On the other hand it may be acquired through the simple expedient of believing it sounded good. This breaks down as to whether persuasion in training reflects careful attention to content, or the participant simply accepts at face value what is being transmitted by the source (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

The situation variable obviously contributes to the saliency of the attitude. One might assume, therefore, that a classroom without minority students is not likely to evoke relevant attitudes. However, especially in urban settings, the opposite is likely to be true. This raises the question of when and how we expect attitudes to influence behavior. The basic premise is that attitudes can most directly relate to behavior when intentions and willingness are both operative (Gibbons, Gerrard, Blanton, & Russell, 1998).

Some Caveats Regarding Change

As noted earlier, adding to the problems of the well-intentioned instructor is the common phenomenon that even after revising classroom practices, the strategies may not yield the immediate, sought-for results. Students do not leave behind the psychological baggage acquired in previous school experiences. So while classroom changes may be quickly initiated, sustaining those changes over time may be difficult, especially if the teacher does not see those immediate results (Millenson, 1967). That is, there may not be an immediate payoff for a well-intentioned change in classroom strategy. The problems are exacerbated by the fact that very often the rush to implement a program may be driven by political rather than educational considerations (Schimmel & Langer, 2001).

In a similar manner, Homans (1961) pointed out that persistence in any given task is a function of weighing the results obtained against the effort required. When effort exceeds results, persistence tends to diminish, if not cease. One might well wonder how many programs emphasize to the teacher that any changes may be a long time in coming. In fact, the absence of immediate results may lead to the return to previously held negative stereotypes. Again, it is important that a program must convey to the participant that change contains elements of a shaping process.

Research Questions

The study addressed two basic research questions. They were:

1. Was there a change in teacher attitudes toward Mexicans and Mexican Americans as a result of the Study in Mexico program?
2. Did teachers learn and plan to use different teaching strategies as a result of the Study in Mexico program?

THE PUEBLA EXPERIENCE

The diversity program reported in this study consists of 2 weeks of cultural immersion in Puebla, Mexico, a city of approximately 1,500,000. The program itself is a rather intensive experience. It is sponsored by the Bueno Center, located in the School of Education, at the University of Colorado in Boulder. This was the 18th summer (2007) in which the program has been offered. Program expenses are paid by participants while tuition for the Study in Mexico program is paid for by the program.

Students and Structure

Enrollment in the program is voluntary. In 2007 there were 80 participants, of whom 52 were currently employed as teachers. The participants are master's degree students seeking certification in cultural diversity. Besides teaching in an elementary school in Puebla, participants enrolled in two School of Education courses: Materials and Methods in Bilingual/ESL, and either Curriculum for Multicultural Education or Practicum in Bilingual/ESL. In addition to these more formally directed experiences there were field trips and other activities designed to acquaint participants with the culture. From the outset participants were told that this program was intense and would require them to challenge themselves intellectually and emotionally.

Program Objectives

The stated formal objectives of the program are as follows: (a) to provide observation and actual teaching experience in a Mexican elementary school, (b) to provide students with opportunities to reflect on teaching experiences, (c) to experience daily life in Mexico and become familiar with Mexican culture, and (d) to develop some insights into the best teaching strategies for Mexican American students. Although advantageous, there is no requirement that participants speak Spanish. Their daily 1.5 hours in the Mexican classroom were devoted to teaching ESL (between 30 and 45 minutes) and observing literacy and language arts instruction in Spanish.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

We sought to examine the impact of the program on participants toward Mexican Americans in terms of their attitudes and the acquisition of new and/or modified teaching strategies. Both attitudes and teaching strategies were assessed. While statements of causality cannot be properly employed in this study, nevertheless differences in values assigned to the attitude items before and after the program can be used as the basis for some speculations regarding the impact of program elements.

The Survey Instruments

The assessment instruments were given before the students arrived and again on their last day in Puebla. The analysis looked for changes in attitude values, as well as changes in teaching strategies. For the purposes of this study, they were considered the two most salient outcomes. Undoubtedly there were other changes.

Attitudes

The items selected for evaluation reflected both beliefs dealing directly with classroom instruction, as well as general expectations. The assumption was that both could contribute to teacher expectations regarding Mexican American students. Two Mexican American scholars, whose suggested revisions were incorporated, reviewed each of these items. The problem in this study is that students in any diversity training or similar experience may have already learned or quickly learn socially desired responses. Rejecting any generalization such as “Mexican American students are lazy” is an obvious response. But if the same attitude could be presented using a more neutral tone, such as “Mexican workers need closer supervision,” it was hoped that a socially desired response might not be initially evoked. We recognize that the survey instrument is still in its formative stage.

The participants responded to 14 attitudinal items, which supposedly impacted teaching strategies. This made the responses situation specific (i.e., the classroom). The scale used was as follows: 5—very significant, 4—significant, 3—uncertain, 2—insignificant, and 1—very insignificant.

The specific attitude items were as follows:

1. The high dropout rate suggests that schooling may not be a high priority matter in Mexican families.
2. Mexican students tend to use their native language as much as possible, especially when socializing with each other.
3. Facing discrimination, outcries regarding illegal immigration, and other events, Latinos, especially Mexicans, wonder about their level of acceptance in the U.S.
4. Mexicans come to the U.S. mainly for economic reasons.
5. Mexicans who live in the U.S. are trying to improve their lives.
6. Even with added educational opportunities and incentives, students from Mexico generally do not pursue higher education or professional careers.
7. Arranging times for parent–teacher conferences can be difficult.
8. Mexican workers often need closer supervision.
9. The traditional Mexican family patterns of childrearing do not necessarily mesh with school values.
10. Strong religious commitments often make it difficult for Mexicans to appreciate the U.S. cultural value system.
11. Accepting low-paying jobs no one else wants means employers will choose Mexicans over others.
12. Mexican female students find it difficult to compete against males in school.
13. Mexican students fail in U.S. schools because they were provided substandard education in their country.
14. Mexican immigrants are slower to assimilate into the U.S. culture than previous non-Mexican immigrants.

Teaching Strategies

Respondents were also asked to designate what they believed to be the most- and least-effective teaching strategies before and after the Puebla program. They were also asked to give an explanation for each choice of strategy. In addition to cataloging the strategies, their reasoning was

analyzed primarily to see what references were made to their stay in Puebla. Obviously, prior to their visit, little reference to the program was likely, but we believed that comparing explanations before and after might provide a good measure of the saliency of specific Puebla experiences.

DATA ANALYSES

Since the Puebla program is quite multifaceted, it would be difficult to test the individual responses as one might in an experiment with one or more clearly defined treatments. Instead we combined the data within both the pre- and postprogram evaluations. While this may allow us to discuss the findings within each set of data, clearly inferential statements between the data sets are not possible. However, it is still possible to describe changes without ascribing causation. In this study 44 of the participants took the preprogram attitude-strategy instrument, while 32 took the postprogram evaluation.

Attitude Changes

We grouped the attitude items into two subsets, arbitrarily selecting the four items scoring highest and lowest in significance within the pre- and postprogram data. By grouping the four highest- and lowest-scoring items, we could estimate the saliency of specific attitudes toward teaching Mexican American students. This also enabled us to see if the Puebla experience produced attitudinal changes, as distinct from changes in teaching strategies. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the attitude items for the pre- and post-phases.

Prior to entering the Puebla program, the four items considered most salient were: 2 (3.68), 3 (4.28), 4 (3.89), and 5 (4.41). These dealt respectively with concerns over language, discrimination, and economic issues. While item 2 deals most directly with classroom instruction, it is clear that the participants believed that more external issues (immigration and living standards) might also influence their choices of teaching strategies. The four items regarded as least salient were: 1 (1.93), 8 (1.43), 10 (1.89), and 13 (1.89). Respectively, these items dealt with dropout rates, task supervision, religion, and prior Mexican schooling.

In the post-Puebla evaluation, the four highest item values were again: 2 (3.47), 3 (4.38), 4 (4.00), and 5 (4.34). There was no change in the saliency of these items. The four least salient items were: 8 (1.56), 10 (1.69), 13 (1.73), and 14 (1.96). The one change was the inclusion of assimilation, rather than the dropout rate. The results suggest that the participants entered the program with pretty firm convictions, and insofar as attitudes were concerned, their experiences had relatively little impact. Given that the program is voluntary in nature and participants must pay to attend, it may be that participants are more likely to have positive attitudes.

Teaching Strategy Changes

In our analysis of teaching strategies, we faced an initial dilemma. One possibility was to create a checklist, but this not only restricted choices, but also raised the possibility that the participants might have difficulty matching their strategy to what was listed. Although this made categorization much more difficult, we allowed participants to individually describe their strategies. These were categorized by the independent evaluations of two reviewers. Actually, the strategies themselves

TABLE 1
Attitude Values: Pre- and Post-Puebla

<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Attitude Items</i>	<i>Pretest Values Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Posttest Values Mean (SD)</i>
1	The high school dropout rate among Mexican students suggests that schooling may not be a high priority in Mexican families.	1.93 (0.87)	2.06 (1.27)
2	Mexican students tend to use their native language as much as possible, especially when socializing with each other.	3.68 (0.96)	3.47 (1.16)
3	Facing discrimination, outcries regarding illegal immigration, and other events, Latinos, especially Mexicans, wonder about their level of acceptance in the U.S.	4.28 (0.83)	4.38 (1.04)
4	Mexicans come to the U.S. mainly for economic reasons.	3.89 (0.92)	4.00 (0.72)
5	Mexicans who live in the U.S. are trying to improve their lives.	4.41 (0.87)	4.34 (0.90)
6	Even with added educational opportunities and incentives, students from Mexico generally do not pursue higher education or professional careers.	2.48 (0.85)	2.50 (1.16)
7	Arranging times for parent–teacher conferences is often difficult.	2.61 (1.10)	2.56 (1.13)
8	Mexican workers often need closer supervision.	1.43 (0.55)	1.56 (0.72)
9	The traditional Mexican family patterns of child rearing do not necessarily mesh with school values.	2.38 (0.99)	1.81 (0.90)
10	Strong religious commitments often make it difficult for Mexicans to appreciate the U.S. cultural value system.	1.89 (0.65)	1.69 (0.74)
11	Accepting low-paying jobs no one else wants means employers will choose Mexicans over others.	3.02 (1.21)	2.59 (0.95)
12	Mexican female students find it difficult to complete against males in school.	2.77 (1.10)	2.53 (1.08)
13	Mexican students fail in U.S. schools because they were provided substandard education in their country.	1.88 (1.00)	1.73 (1.08)
14	Mexican immigrants are slower to assimilate in the U.S. culture than previous non-Mexican immigrants.	2.05 (0.97)	1.96 (0.82)

were not that difficult to codify. While language might differ, the underlying strategy was rather easily determined. Some teaching strategies, both most and least effective, seemed to cut across both the pre-Puebla as well as post-Puebla surveys.

It cannot be overemphasized that these students were not only volunteering their time, but also regarded their experiences as critical to future teaching activities. What was learned during the 2 weeks would have a significant practical impact with regard to their classrooms. In short, there was little doubt as to their level of motivation, as compared to situations where diversity training is mandated as an administrative decision. On the other hand, given their higher level of motivation, we were in the position of having participants more highly sensitized to program elements. Being more tightly focused, they could provide feedback on program elements, which contributed to their learning.

In the postprogram survey, items that were cited as the most effective strategies that were NOT cited in the preprogram survey included:

1. Culturally responsive pedagogy. This calls for the teacher to connect culture, content, and curriculum, aligning classroom practice with students' cultural backgrounds. Failure to do so may impede student achievement (Mehan, 1979). Student preferences for learning formats have both individual and cultural origins. The literature urges that teachers use a

variety of formats to meet the multiple needs of diverse students (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). This might include, for example, the use of small cooperative groups (Kagan, 1994);

2. Classroom climate. Fostering a positive, caring, comfortable, and respectful environment was seen to reduce student anxiety and defensiveness (Krashen, 1997);
3. Interactive strategies. These were determined to be effective. A good example can be found in the area of reading. Teachers read to the students and then discuss the material (Pinnell & Fountas, 2002).
4. Direct and explicit instruction. Teachers emphasized the contributions of direct, explicit instruction (Genesee & Riches, 2005);
5. Strategic use of Spanish. Participants recognized that when teaching English as a second language, there are times when there is confusion about a concept, and elaboration in English is not adequate. Teachers should employ the native language of the child to help clarify the English, and also help the student make cross-language connections (Escamilla, Hopewell, Geisler, & Ruiz, 2007; Moll & Diaz, 1985).

It is important to note here that the above-mentioned strategies are ones that teachers said they would employ when they returned from Puebla, but not those that were on the pre-Puebla survey.

Of equal importance are the strategies that participants cited as least effective that were not cited on the pre-Puebla survey, but were cited on the post-Puebla survey. These include:

1. Assessment strategies that are not performance based (Gottlieb, 2006);
2. Strategies that were not solely focused on high-order thinking without attention to language teaching (Bloom, 1956);
3. Emphasis on discrete skills instruction, the teaching of particular skills in isolation. An example would be teaching letter names and sounds without the support of books or even connecting the letters to words (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001);
4. An English-only program, basically an immersion approach, which reflects more of a "sink or swim" policy (Ovando, Collier, & Coombs, 2003). This is interesting, given that many of the teachers participating in the Study in Mexico program are, themselves, teaching in English-only programs.
5. The use of lecturing per se. This was regarded as generally ineffective (Richard-Amato, 2003);
6. Programs not using a visual/hands-on approach. Visuals, as used in second-language instruction, involves the use of graphs, realia, etc., which aid in student comprehension of structures, concepts, and vocabulary. Hands-on learning involves students actively engaging in such activities as speaking, reading, writing, art, drama, etc. (Richard-Amato, 2003); and
7. The absence of teacher modeling of correct or desired forms of language. This was treated as not a good practice (Pinnell & Fountas, 2002).

While not considered strategies per se, the following postsurvey comments were also considered to be evidence of change in teachers' knowledge bases about creating effective educational experiences for English language learners:

1. The use of assessment tools designed for English-speaking students do not reliably assess student progress (Gottlieb, 2006);

2. Some schools rush students through the curriculum to prepare for “high-stakes” testing. This sometimes means critical learning events are given short shrift, resulting in a situation in which needed experiences are ignored (Richard-Amato, 2003);
3. A failure to connect what is being learned to student experiences was seen as detrimental to academic success; and
4. A strategy that seemed more often ignored, rather than downgraded, seemed to reflect the belief that parents of second-language learners were limited in their ability and interest to help their children. However, recent research has found that, “By linking the life of the school with that of its corresponding mainstream and ethnic communities, parents and other community members can achieve a strong sense of ownership in the education of their children” (Ovando et al., 2003, p. 381). This need to better and more effectively involve parents of English language learners was noted.

Generally, students referred to both their coursework and teaching experiences in schools in Puebla as a basis for their selection or rejection of teaching strategies. This was to be expected, since the survey dealt with classroom behavior. This does not mean there were not other changes as a result of their immersion in the culture; however, the changing of potential teaching behavior—particularly the caliber of strategies listed above—is seen as a significant benefit of the Study in Puebla experience.

DISCUSSION

It would seem that a diversity-centered program such as this one is not only multifaceted, but effects among participants were not predictably distributed. Indeed, perhaps the most important finding of this study is that multifaceted immersion programs result in multifaceted outcomes. In providing the rationale for their choices, participants seemed to combine their classroom experiences with the university courses they were taking. This seemed to result in a confluence of influences.

For example, there was comparatively little change regarding attitudes. Admittedly, this was a group of individuals with initially strong positive beliefs regarding Mexican American students, so the possibility for change could have been somewhat limited. Putting it another way, the Puebla experiences were compatible with participant preexisting beliefs and thus apparently provided little incentive for attitude change. However, it should be noted that this argument can only be applied to those specific attitudes we presented in this study.

But if attitudes did not significantly change, there is evidence of much more diversity of opinions regarding teaching strategies. It would appear that the participants felt they had a number of teaching options to consider and could distinguish between most and least effective. This increased sensitivity to strategy selection can only have a positive impact in the classroom. Certainly it can be argued that as a result of these experiences, participants might be more able to implement a greater variety of more-effective teaching strategies and perhaps better monitor their own teaching performances.

Still, while one might argue that participants were exercising their independent right of choice, and the strategies chosen or rejected might be more meaningful in their classroom. However, there is a caveat in their selection of strategies. The teacher has to recognize that a general

classroom strategy is just that. Besides the strategies themselves, hopefully the Puebla experience began the process of deconstructing any lingering stereotypes in favor of treating students as individuals. This would mean that while the strategy chosen was believed to be of benefit for the class as a group, the teacher would also begin to recognize the necessity of monitoring individual student impact. The recognition and acceptance of individual differences is a most necessary outcome of any diversity program.

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