

Education of Non-European Ancestry Immigrant Students in Suburban High Schools

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Introduction

In the past ten years, the immigrant population in the United States has grown to 31.1 million (Malone, Baluja, Costanzo, & Davis, 2003). Of this number, 13 million people are new immigrants who arrived in the 1990s (Camarota, 2001). The annual rate of immigration to the United States between 1990 and 1999 was 1.3 million people. At this rate of growth, the projections for the number of immigrants for the year 2050 are set at more than 76 million (Camarota, 2001).

Historically, immigrants to the U.S. have settled in urban areas, however, recent trends have seen increasing numbers of immigrants settling in suburban areas (Camarota, 2002). Nearly 16.5 million immigrants have settled in suburbia in recent years (Camarota, 2002). Not all of these immigrants "fare equally well" (Olson, 2000, p. 38). Some of these immigrants are educated and have stable jobs and good incomes, while others have low levels of education and have trouble securing higher paying jobs (Olson, 2000).

Regardless of their educational backgrounds, all immigrants experience some amount of cultural disorientation which is associated with a lack of relevant experience to fall back upon, "compounded by the absence of familiar signs and symbols" (Igoa, 1995, p. 53). When immigrants enter the United States, they experience a "lack of access to the language, daily knowledge and common practices, and necessary skills of the mainstream society" (Rong & Preissle, 1998, p. 83). Thus, immigrants

coming to the U.S. often experience cultural disorientation and stress.

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the term immigrants is defined as people who migrate to the United States mainly for the purposes of education or work, or because of economic or political distress in their countries of origin, who live in the United States and who were not U.S. citizens at birth (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2004). This includes naturalized U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, illegal aliens, and those on long-term temporary visas such as students or temporary workers.

In this study, non-European ancestry immigrant students were those students whose ancestral background is other than European such as, African, Asian, Mexican, Pacific Islanders, Arabic, and Central and South American. These include recent immigrants and first and second generation immigrants who are the children of immigrants and were born in the U.S.

Statement of the Problem

Although immigrant families have traditionally settled in urban areas they are increasingly also settling in suburban areas (Camarota, 2002). According to the 2000 United States Census, 49.7% of immigrants lived in suburbs, compared to 49.8% U.S. born residents who reported living in the suburbs (Camarota, 2002). Therefore, immigrants are just as likely as people who are born in the U.S. to live in the suburbs.

The large number of immigrants who live in suburban areas could be interpreted as a positive sign that immigrants are successfully integrating into U.S. society and obtaining a middle class standard of living. However, some immigrants who are well educated and enjoyed middle-class lifestyles in their home countries often

find themselves struggling to survive. They had to leave all belongings behind, and their credentials are not recognized in this country. Consequently, they cannot find employment commensurate with their education, and many times they cannot find employment with a reasonable wage (Goodwin, 2002).

Rising numbers of immigrants in the United States have impacted the public school system. This increasing number of immigrants means that there are also increasing numbers of immigrant children whose first language is not English. Regardless of their backgrounds, the children of suburban immigrants share in their parents' sense of displacement, which in turn may affect their school achievement (Cornelius, 1995; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Academic achievement problems often are perceived as only occurring in inner city schools, which have historically had much larger numbers of immigrant populations. Consequently most studies conducted on immigrant education have concentrated on education in inner city schools (Bell, 2002; Maxson, Wright, & Houck, 2000; Solomon & Battistich, 1996). Thus there is a lack of research about teacher beliefs regarding immigrant children attending suburban public schools.

It is important to investigate the personal and professional beliefs of teachers to determine whether they need to be better prepared to meet the educational needs of immigrant children. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine suburban high school teachers' beliefs about non-European ancestry immigrant students; more specifically, suburban teachers' beliefs regarding the impact of students' cultural backgrounds on academic performance were examined. The research question guiding this study was: What are suburban high school teachers' personal and professional beliefs about immigrant students of non-European ancestry?

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Context

Teacher Beliefs and Immigrant Children

Attitudes, beliefs, and expectations have been found to guide teachers' responses toward various students (Good & Brophy, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Teachers' beliefs affect their attitudes toward immigrant students which, in turn, are likely to affect what these students learn (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Research has confirmed that teachers often hold misperceptions about the abilities of minority students, such as immigrant and African American students (Davidson & Lang, 1960; Entwisle & Webster, 1974; Graham, 1986; Maehr & Rubovits, 1973; Rist, 2002).

Research also shows that teachers' beliefs about students can lead to disparity in expectations and treatment based on the students' ethnicity (Guttmann & Bar-Tal, 1982; Hale-Benson, 1982). Moreover, the students are keenly aware of this discrimination (Davidson & Lang, 1960; Entwisle & Webster, 1974; Graham, 1986; Maehr & Rubovits, 1973; Rist, 2002). Teachers' beliefs certainly influence the academic achievement of these students (Goodwin, 2002; Payne, 1994; Valdes, 1998). Nieto (2004) states that the way students are thought about and treated by society and by educators in the schools they attend are important factors in creating academic success or failure.

The majority of immigrant students spend the entire school day with general education teachers who often are not prepared to work with students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Clair, 1993; Penfield, 1987; Scarcella, 1990). The lack of teacher preparation for educating immigrant students, in combination with teacher beliefs, can greatly influence teacher practices, which in turn will affect student performance (Good & Brophy, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

Attitudes, beliefs, and expectations have been found to guide and direct teachers' interactions with students (Good & Brophy, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Kennedy (as cited in Rath, 2001) stated that beliefs may be a product of a person's upbringing, a reflection of his or her life experiences, or a result of socialization processes in schools. Prospective teachers bring preformed beliefs into college courses, and then continue to shape their beliefs through instruction and interactions in schools.

Zeichner and Tabachnick (as cited in Rath, 2001) explained that these beliefs

remain latent during formal training in pedagogy at the university but become a major force once the candidate is in his or her own classroom. The attributions that teachers make to their pupils who are academically unsuccessful may reflect their beliefs and may also hinder their effective interventions with those pupils (Rath, 2001). Thus, students who are the targets of teacher attributions may actually be the victims of teacher belief systems (Rath, 2001).

As the immigrant population in the suburbs has increased, the immigrant student population has also increased in suburban schools; it is important, therefore, to ensure that all educators are prepared to work with this population. In addition, since low educational attainment and the resulting low wages of many immigrants are the primary reasons so many live in poverty (Camarota, 2002), it is important that teachers understand this population to be able to prepare their instruction appropriately. There is a need for a teaching staff that understands and can address the unique needs of this population as they encounter problems in second language learning and assimilation into the new culture.

Recent immigration has been primarily from non-European countries. The racial and ethnic complexity in schools that has resulted from this recent immigration movement has made it much more important to understand teachers' beliefs regarding immigrant students. It is vitally important to prepare teachers for the multiracial and multilingual populations they will teach in the schools.

Method

Participants

The study took place in a school district located in a suburb of a southeast Texas metropolitan area. The school district serves a population of more than 100,000 citizens. The community offers an economic base of petrochemical, fishing, and recreation industries, and highly technological companies. The biggest employer in the region has created a large community of educated foreign officials, many of whom have children enrolled in the school district.

The district has a student enrollment of more than 35,000. There are a total of 29 schools on 31 campuses. The district is composed of three high schools, three ninth grade centers, one alternative school for grades six through 12, seven intermediate schools for grades six through eight, and

18 elementary schools for kindergarten through grade five.

The participants in this study were general education teachers from two of the district's high schools. One of the high schools had a student population of 3,127 students, with 68% of the students being classified as White, 18% Hispanic, 8% African American, 4.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .5% Native American. The other high school served a student population of 3,554 students. Sixty-nine percent of those students were classified as White, 13% Hispanic, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.8% African American, and .2% Native American (Texas Education Agency, 2008). The campuses had some diversity, but the majority of the students were White.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was *Beliefs of General Education Suburban Teachers Towards non-European Ancestry Immigrant Students* (B-GEST) (Shodavaram, Weaver, Jones, & Ensle, 2004). The B-GEST is a five point Likert-type scale survey. A portion of the instrument was developed by the researchers from two different sources, *Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale* (LATS) (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994), and *Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey* (TMAS) (Baluch, Greig, Ponterotto, & Rivera, 1998), and adapted with the authors' permission.

The TMAS is a unidimensional self-report inventory of teachers' multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Construct validity, criterion validity, and score reliability of this survey were all within the satisfactory range (Baluch, Greig, Ponterotto, & Rivera, 1998). The LATS has a test-retest reliability coefficient of .72, which is satisfactory. The LATS questions were modified and reworded for the B-GEST.

The remainder of the B-GEST was adapted from *The Personal and Professional Beliefs About Diversity Scales* (Pohan & Aguilar, 1999) with permission of the authors. Pohan and Aguilar (1999) developed this instrument based on situations where there might be a direct conflict of one's personal and professional beliefs. For example, in a personal context, a teacher might believe that bilingualism is an asset in today's increasingly diverse and global society while the same teacher within the context of schooling might reject the notion of public monies being spent on bilingual education (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Thus, Pohan and Aguilar (2001) believe it is critical to measure beliefs about diversity

in both personal and professional contexts and their belief was adopted by these researchers.

The B-GEST consists of three sections: a demographic section which examines the teachers' age, race, education, and number of years of experience in teaching; the second section is about the personal beliefs of teachers regarding non-European ancestry immigrant students in relation to their daily lives; and the third section asks questions about teachers' professional beliefs concerning non-European ancestry immigrant students. There are five items in section two of the B-GEST (Shodavaram, 2004). Each question includes the option of an open-ended comment for the elaboration of the opinion of the surveyed teachers.

The third part of the B-GEST is based on items from three different surveys: the *LATS*, the *TMAS*, and the *Personal and Professional Beliefs About Diversity Scale* (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). All statements in the professional beliefs section also include the option of writing comments to each statement. The professional beliefs can be divided into the following five themes: (1) Second Language Learning, (2) Recognition of Diversity in Schools, (3) Integrated Classrooms, (4) Teacher Expectations, Needs, and Methods of Teaching, and (5) Multicultural Education.

The professional beliefs survey statements are distributed among the five themes. For example, statements 1, 4, 15, and 20 address Second Language Learning, while statements 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, and 19 address the theme Recognition of Diversity in Schools. In addition, statement 13 addresses Integrated Classrooms, while statements 3, 5, 10, 11, and 12 address the theme of Teacher Expectations, Needs, and Methods. Finally, statements 14, 16 and 21 focus on the theme of Multicultural Education.

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was distributed to 350 general education teachers at two high school campuses. Responses were received from 183 participants for a 52% return rate. The return for High School 1 (HS1) was 132 surveys; while in High School 2 (HS2) 51 surveys were returned.

The data were analyzed in the following manner. First, frequency counts were made of the responses to the demographic questions, the personal beliefs, and the professional beliefs sections. Second, a coding system (Wiersma, 2000) was used to analyze the responses to the open-

ended comments for each question in the personal and professional beliefs sections. Each similar answer of the same code was noted and marked. A frequency count for each code was then established. Third, frequency percentages were calculated for each response in all sections.

The results for the Likert scale items are reported in percentages. In the tables, percentages for strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree are shown. In the discussion, however, strongly agree and agree have been combined. Strongly disagree and disagree responses were also combined.

Findings

For the purposes of reporting the results, this section is organized in the following manner: (1) demographic background, (2) results from the Likert Scale items about the personal beliefs of teachers and the open-ended comments related to those beliefs, and (3) professional beliefs of teachers and the open-ended comments related to those beliefs.

Demographic Information

The majority of the respondents in these two suburban high schools were women of European descent. The number of European descent teachers was 151 (83%) of the total 183 teachers who responded. The second highest number was for teachers of African descent (10). There were nine participants of mixed ethnicity. Seventy-five percent of the participants were women.

Of the 183 teachers who responded, 107 had bachelor's degrees, 75 possessed master's degrees, and one teacher had a doctoral degree. The majority of the

teachers had one to 15 years of teaching experience, and only nine teachers of the 183 respondents had ESL certification.

On the B-GEST, respondents were asked about their personal experience with ethnic diversity. The teachers were asked whether their personal experience with ethnic diversity had been very limited, limited, or extensive. They were also asked whether their experience was mostly negative or mostly positive. This question also allowed respondents to indicate if they could not recall anything about their experience with ethnic diversity. Respondents were able to select more than one option.

The data indicated that 42% of the respondents did have extensive experience with people of other races and ethnic groups. Twenty-five percent of the participants said they had limited experience with people of other races and ethnic groups. Only 46 respondents chose to comment on whether their personal experience with ethnic diversity had been positive.

Personal Beliefs

This section summarizes the responses to the Likert scale items and the open-ended comments regarding the five personal beliefs statements. These items asked the respondents about their personal beliefs regarding recognition of diversity, race relations, and national policies in conjunction with immigration, diversity as strength to the nation, and the importance of learning English (refer to Table 1). In this section, 90% responded positively to the statement, "There is nothing wrong with people from different racial backgrounds having/raising children." Ninety-three percent also responded positively to the statement, "People should develop meaningful friendships with others from

**Table 1
Personal Beliefs**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. There is nothing wrong with people from different racial backgrounds having /raising children.	2*	2	6	28	62
2. America's immigrant and refugee policy has led to the deterioration of America.	30	36	16	11	4
3. Accepting many different ways of life in America will strengthen us as a nation.	2	4	10	46	37
4. People should develop meaningful friendships with others from different racial/ethnic groups.	1	2	4	38	55
5. It is more important for all immigrants to learn English than to maintain their first language.	3	15	22	34	24

* The numbers are reported in percentages.

Research

different racial/ethnic groups." Furthermore, with the third statement, "Accepting many different ways of life in America will strengthen us as a nation," 83% of the respondents supported this statement. Thus, this appears to indicate that the majority of respondents believe in the recognition of diversity and relationships with people from other races.

The personal beliefs section allowed the respondents to make comments regarding each of the statements. Some of the statements received more comments than others (refer to Table 2). For example, personal belief statement three focused on the ways to strengthen America as a nation. It stated: "Accepting many different ways of life in America will strengthen us as a nation." Four out of the six who commented on this statement agreed with acceptance of diversity but also stressed that

immigrants should adapt to the dominant culture and that this might shake the common bonds for a short period of time. One comment stated that acceptance was the reason for the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Personal belief statement 5 is about the importance of learning English instead of maintaining immigrant students' first languages. This statement prompted 20 comments with two distinct convictions; 14 teachers strongly agreed that learning and speaking English was the most important adaptation to be successful in this culture and more important than maintaining their first language. In contrast, six teachers said that immigrants should maintain both English and their first languages.

Professional Beliefs

This section summarizes the re-

sponses to the Likert scale items and the open-ended comments regarding the 21 professional beliefs. In this section of the survey, items 1, 4, 15, and 20 addressed the theme of Second Language Learning. The item that had the most agreement in the responses was item 1. Results indicated that 64% of the respondents agreed that parents should be counseled to speak English (see Table 3).

Analysis of the open-ended comments revealed numerous responses (see Table 4). There were 13 comments related to counseling parents to speak English; six of these respondents stated that parents should be encouraged to emphasize the acquisition of English. Four of the 13 comments indicated that parents should be encouraged to speak both English and the first language with their children. Finally, three respondents mentioned that it was not the school's role to counsel the parents about this issue. In addition, there were 19 responses related to item 20. Of these, 12 of the respondents said that students should not speak languages other than English in class.

Another theme explored in the survey was that of the Recognition of Diversity in schools. There were eight items related to professional beliefs and the recognition of diversity (see Table 5). In terms of whether having non-or-limited English proficient students in the classroom was detrimental to the learning of other students, 73% respondents disagreed that this was the case. Respondents also agreed that a teacher's job is challenging because of diversity (63%). Perhaps because of this, 78% of the respondents agreed that teachers need to be knowledgeable about students' racial and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, 61% agreed that teachers should have experience working with students from diverse backgrounds. Finally, another item with a high level of agreement was the one that stated that it is important for students to be aware of diversity in the classroom (89%).

The theme of Recognition of Diversity in Schools did not prompt as many open-ended comments as that of Second Language Learning (see Table 6). The comments that were received reflected various opinions. For example, two teachers stated that they believed that the presence of limited English proficient students was detrimental for the learning of other students while one teacher stated that it was not the language that was detrimental; it was the behavior of individual students.

There was one item that related to the theme of Integrated Classrooms (item 13). Results indicated a high level of agreement

Table 2
Personal Beliefs—Open-ended Comments

Question #	Statement	Number of Comments
1.	Immigrants having/raising children	2
2.	Immigrant policies cause for deterioration	4
3.	Accepting immigrants results in strength	6
4.	Develop friendships with other races	3
5.	More important to learn English than to maintain their first language	20

Table 3
Professional Beliefs—Second Language Learning

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Parents of non-European ancestry immigrant students with non- or limited-English-proficiency should be counseled to speak English with their children whenever possible.	7*	14	15	52	12
4. At school, the learning of the English language by non-European ancestry immigrant students with non- or limited-English-proficiency should take precedence over learning subject matter.	6	20	28	28	17
15. Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.	10	24	26	31	6
20. Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in class.	13	28	23	19	15

*The numbers are reported in percentages.

Table 4
Professional Beliefs—Second Language Learning

Question #	Statement	Number of Comments
1.	Parents counseled to speak English	13
4.	Learning English more important than learning other subjects	10
15.	Instruction in immigrants' first language	11
20.	Students not allowed to speak any other language	19

(85%) with the statement that students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit from participating in racially integrated classrooms (see Table 7). There were only three comments to this item.

Another section of the survey addressed items related to Teacher Expectations, Needs, and Methods (see Table 8). In terms of teacher expectations, 74% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that “To be aware of different needs of non-European ancestry students is not relevant for the subject that I teach.”

Results also indicated that 67% of the respondents agreed that teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group. Table 9 summarizes the open-ended comments related to this theme. Teachers indicated that they should receive training on how to meet immigrant students’ needs (10 comments) and that students should be grouped according to ability (9 comments).

The final theme explored in the survey was that of Multicultural Education (see Table 10). Items 14, 16, and 21 were related to this theme. Interestingly, these items received the most responses of Undecided of any of the themes (24%, 29% and 24%). Almost half of the respondents agreed that historically, education has been monocultural while 24% disagreed with this statement. Forty-seven per cent of the respondents disagreed that multicultural education is most beneficial for non-European background students. Twenty-one percent of the respondents agreed with this statement.

Finally, almost equal percentages of respondents disagreed (38%) and agreed (37%) with the statement (item 21) that multicultural education is less important than content area instruction. This item also received ten comments. Eight of the comments stated that all areas of learning are important while two respondents stated that understanding is important especially for assimilation into the dominant culture.

Discussion

The results of the study encompassed personal and professional beliefs of suburban teachers of non-European immigrant students. Personal beliefs are beliefs about diversity in general and in a more personal sense (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). This is in contrast to professional beliefs which refer to beliefs of teachers regarding the schooling of immigrant students. Pohan

Table 5
Professional Beliefs—Recognition of Diversity in Schools

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. Having a non-European ancestry immigrant student with non- or limited-English proficiency in the classroom is detrimental to the learning of the other students.	28*	45	14	11	3
6. At present, a teacher's job is challenging because of the diversity in the classrooms.	2	16	16	38	25
7. When dealing with non-European ancestry immigrant students, their communication and behavioral styles often are interpreted as behavioral problems.	8	38	21	25	6
8. A teacher's job is more rewarding than ever because of the classroom diversity.	6	14	29	32	16
9. It is important even for students to be aware of diversity in the classroom.	1	1	7	53	36
17. Large numbers of students of non-European ancestry are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel.	16	24	39	15	4
18. In order to be effective with all students, teachers should be knowledgeable of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of students.	1	6	13	57	21
19. In order to be effective with all students, teachers should have experience working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.	4	12	21	42	19

* The numbers are reported in percentages.

Table 6
Professional Beliefs—Recognition of Diversity in Schools

Question Number	Statement	Number of Comments
2.	Presence of immigrant students detrimental to other students	7
6.	Teacher's job challenging because of diversity	7
7.	Immigrant students' behavioral styles are interpreted as behavioral problems	7
8.	Teachers' jobs are rewarding because of diversity	7
9.	Students should be aware of diversity	2
17.	Immigrants are improperly placed in special education classes	6
18.	Teachers should have knowledge of other cultures	4
19.	Teachers should have experience with other cultures	4

Table 7
Professional Beliefs—Integrated Classrooms

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms.	1*	4	9	61	24

*The numbers are reported in percentages.

and Aguilar (2001) state that there might be situations where personal beliefs can be in direct conflict with teachers’ professional beliefs.

Beliefs about issues such as immigrants having children, friendships across

race and ethnicity, immigrants’ second language learning, immigration and refugee policies, and diversity as a strength to the nation are situated within the context of one’s personal sphere. In terms of personal beliefs about diversity, 90% of the teachers

Table 8
Professional Beliefs—Teacher Expectations, Needs and Methods of Teaching

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. Regular-classroom teachers should be required to receive preservice or inservice training to be prepared to meet the linguistic needs of non-European ancestry immigrant students.	9*	25	21	32	13
5. Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group.	3	15	14	49	18
10. To be aware of different needs of non-European ancestry students is not relevant for the subject I teach.	31	43	11	9	2
11. Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of non-European ancestry immigrant students.	18	42	12	20	6
12. Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.	13	39	17	20	9

*The numbers are reported in percentages.

Table 9
Professional Beliefs—Teacher Expectations, Needs and Methods of Teaching

Question Number	Statement	Number of Comments
3.	Teachers should receive training to meet needs of immigrant students	10
5.	Teachers need to change teaching methods.	3
10.	Awareness of diversity irrelevant to other subjects	4
11.	Teachers need not adjust method of teaching	7
12.	Students grouped according to their ability	9

Table 10
Professional Beliefs—Multicultural Education

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Un-decided	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant (European) group.	7*	17	24	33	16
16. Multicultural education is most beneficial for students belonging to non-European cultures.	13	34	29	18	3
21. Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, computer literacy, history, etc.	13	25	24	25	12

*The numbers are reported in percentages.

surveyed believe that people from different races should be able to have and raise children. The majority, 93%, also said that people should develop meaningful friendships with people from different racial backgrounds. This may indicate that the majority of the respondents have accepting and affirming beliefs about diversity. This may be a predictor of their teaching behavior as Bandura (1982) stated, in that beliefs mediate knowledge and action such as skills in teaching. The respondents' be-

liefs may, therefore, indicate encouraging beliefs towards non-European ancestry immigrant students which may translate to their ability and skill in teaching these students.

Another personal beliefs statement, "Accepting different ways of life in America will strengthen us as a nation," also received 83% approval. Acceptance by the dominant group, as well as the immigrants' adaptability to the dominant culture, play an important role in the

education of immigrant students (Portes, 1999). The respondents seemed to agree with this idea. According to Noel (2000), schools play a critical role in facilitating immigrants' socialization and integration into American society. These educators' beliefs may indicate that the educators in the two surveyed schools will act positively in their role as socializers.

Professional beliefs are important influences on immigrant students' education. For the purposes of this research, the professional beliefs section measured teachers' beliefs in five major themes that are critical to the education of immigrant students. These themes are: Second Language Learning; Recognition of Diversity in Schools; Integrated Classrooms; Teacher Expectations, Needs, and Methods; and Multicultural Education. The statements that were positively or negatively agreed upon by the majority of the teachers appeared in three out of the five categories: Recognition of Diversity in Schools; Integrated Classrooms; and Teacher Expectations, Needs, and Methods.

Recognition of Diversity in Schools

Statements 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, and 19 from the B-GEST represent the category of Recognition of Diversity in Schools. Of these eight statements, only numbers 9 and 18 met the 75% standard. These statements are: "It is important even for students to be aware of diversity in the classroom" and "In order to be effective with all students, teachers should be knowledgeable of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of students."

Thus, there is a need for teachers and students from the mainstream society to understand the complex lives of these immigrant students as they strive to acculturate to the U.S. Among the respondents surveyed, 89% believe that students should also be aware of diversity in the classroom.

Integrated Classrooms

Statement 13 in the B-GEST is relevant to the category of Integrated Classrooms. This is another professional belief that can greatly influence classroom behavior (Pohan & Aguilar, 1999). Experiences with diversity include learning about diverse people and gaining experience with diverse peers in the classroom (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

Classrooms with high levels of diversity can help students learn to think in ways that are more inclusive (Nieto & Bode,

2008). Respondents of the survey positively agreed with the statement, "Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms." A very solid majority (85%) agreed with this statement. There is a wide variety of individual, school, and societal benefits for all students in the classroom, including those students who are from racially isolated neighborhoods that may be attributed to diversity experiences.

Teacher Expectations, Needs, and Methods

Teacher expectations, what they need in order to be successful, and the methods they employ in teaching is another important theme in professional beliefs. Statements 3, 5, 10, 11, and 12 of the professional beliefs section of the B-GEST represent this theme. Of these five statements, number 10, "To be aware of different needs of non-European ancestry immigrant students is not relevant for the subject I teach," approached the 75% standard, with 74% disagreement from the surveyed teachers.

Whatever the subject may be, using student experiences and identities as an appropriate foundation for the curriculum is important (Nieto, 2004). Teachers in this survey seem to agree that being aware of different needs of immigrant students is relevant to the subject they teach.

Second Language Learning

Unlike the rest of the categories in the diversity scale, second language learning is a theme that included statements from both the personal and professional beliefs sections. The statements related to the issues of language learning and priorities in language learning did not receive 75% agreement or disagreement on the Likert scale items. However, this theme did receive the most written comments. These comments are arranged in Table 6 in ascending order starting with the highest number of comments received to the least number of comments received from the surveyed teachers.

There were several statements regarding second language learning for which the responses did not reach the 75% standard for agreement or disagreement. For example, 58% of educators surveyed believe that immigrant students should learn English rather than maintain their first language, in contrast to 18% who disagreed with the same statement. Secondly, 64% believe in encouraging the parents of im-

migrant students to speak English with their children, as compared to 21% who did not agree that parents should be counseled to speak English with their children. This may indicate that the surveyed teachers feel the need for immigrant students to acquire English in order to be successful in their education.

The results of the B-GEST indicate that teachers believe in the need to be aware of immigrant students and the challenges of being an immigrant. They also believe in integrated classrooms for racially isolated students and in teaching according to the needs of immigrant students irrespective of the subject they teach.

Recommendations

Previous research has been conducted on the beliefs of urban high school teachers towards diversity in their classrooms (Bell, 2002; Maxson, Wright & Houck, 2000; Solomon & Battistich, 1996), however, no adequate research has documented the beliefs of teachers in suburban school districts regarding diversity, especially in regards to non-European ancestry immigrant students. For this reason, this study was conducted to investigate the beliefs of suburban teachers regarding the growing immigrant population, especially students from Mexico, South and Central America, and African and Asian countries. The information gathered is important in light of the recent surge in immigrant populations in the suburbs as well as in cities (Camarota, 2002).

This study, limited in its scope, can be further enhanced by increasing the numbers of schools surveyed. It is hoped, however, that the issue of teacher beliefs and the education of non-European immigrants will be further illuminated. As schools become more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse, it is incumbent upon educators to understand how teacher beliefs impact the education of all students.

Raths (2001) states that "the attributions that teachers make to their pupils who are doing poorly may reflect their beliefs but also hinder their effective interventions with pupils" (p. 2). Given this, educators must recognize that personal and professional beliefs have an influence on education. While a few studies on this issue have attempted to address this impact, for the near term, educators must continue to aspire to improve current teaching practices to better meet the needs of all students.

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