

374.013
H 542

PN-AAS-064
EN 33613

F I R S T D R A F T

ATTITUDE CHANGES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES
OF A.I.D. PARTICIPANT TRAINEES

by

Carl F. Hereford
University of Texas

A paper delivered at the
Conference-Workshop on A.I.D. Participant Training
October 13-17, 1965

F I R S T D R A F T

Attitude Changes Toward the United States
of A.I.D. Participant Trainees

Carl F. Hereford

University of Texas

The A.I.D. Participant Training Program over the years has had the highly specific purpose of training foreign nationals in a variety of technical areas to facilitate the A.I.D. program for the trainee's country. The non-technical aspects of this training, intentionally or not, have always been an important part of the program in that these factors greatly influence the effectiveness of the trainee in his training situation, his use of the acquired knowledge and skill when he returns to his home country and his attitudes towards the United States. Consideration of the non-technical aspects of participant training directly, not as mere side effects of the program, has two purposes. The first is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the technical training and the second is to utilize these factors as a means of altering the trainee's attitudes toward the United States. While these two goals are clearly interrelated, this paper concerns itself primarily with the latter.

When we consciously set out to modify the trainee's attitudes toward the United States, we immediately enter into a new frame of reference. Different questions must be asked, new criteria employed, and a change in the orientation of the entire program must take place. The original concept of technical training was essentially a straightforward proposition: construct the country plan, determine the needs, select the persons who by virtue of position and ability could meet these needs and provide them the technical training necessary. In

actual practice, of course, this procedure frequently went awry, but the basic plan was simple and clearcut. With the addition of attitude change on the part of the trainee as a goal of the program, the picture becomes much more complicated.

In addition to the usual questions asked in selection, such as, "Who is capable of receiving and utilizing technical training?" we must now ask as well, "Who is amenable to attitude change?" From the viewpoint of attitude change, should we concentrate on the technician or the executive? If we anticipate a multiplier effect in the area of attitude, as well as in technical knowledge, who is the best communicator of these more abstract ideas, concepts and feelings?

Similar questions must be raised about the program itself. What now of the place of orientation? Should orientation be used as a propaganda or indoctrination procedure? Should the site of training be selected less on the basis of technical adequacy and more in terms of the picture presented of life in the United States? Should the educational plan be broadened to include cultural and social aspects of the United States, as well as the technical training the trainee needs? And what of the trainee himself? Should we show more concern for his welfare and adjustment than we do for his technical achievements? The same kinds of questions apply to debriefing sessions and to follow-up. If we are concerned with attitude change and not merely technical competence, it will make a great deal of difference in the manner in which these aspects of the program are handled.

A program concerned with attitude modifications as well as technical training will also place a different and more complex set of

demands on the A.I.D. personnel. Training officers and others involved with the program, both in the field and in Washington, must become sensitized to a different set of values and standards. They must make decisions using new criteria and evaluate results from a different point of view. How can A.I.D. personnel meet the demands placed upon them by a change in the emphasis of their program?

The answers to many of these questions lie in an understanding of the process of attitudinal change and in a clear definition of the goals to be achieved. These two factors are clearly interrelated. The strategy to be used is influenced by the goal desired. Just what is the goal we have in mind when we speak of attitude changes in relation to the A.I.D. Participant Training Program?

At first glance the goal seems to be quite simple. The Participant Training Program, in addition to providing technical knowledge, should also create favorable attitudes toward the United States on the part of the trainee. On closer examination this objective has several negative implications. It sounds manipulative, it places the trainee in the position of a passive recipient of pro-U.S. propaganda. It smacks of "image" creation. An objective such as this also immediately raises some extremely knotty practical problems. Just which favorable attitudes are we to inculcate in the trainees? What image do we wish to project? Given the assumption that the trainees arrive in this country with widely differing attitudes towards the United States and with great variability in the degree of readiness to modify these attitudes, how are we to design a program that will be equally effective with all trainees? And, probably the most difficult problem of all, how are we

to gain sufficient control of the trainee's environment to provide him with selected experiences leading to positive attitudes and eliminate the negative experiences that might have the opposite effect? In a free society, such a procedure is obviously impossible, as well as undesirable.

There is also evidence to indicate that it is extremely difficult to "teach" attitudes, or to implant a certain set of values in an essentially passive recipient. Attitudes resemble emotions in that they tend to be irrational and illogical; based on feeling rather than intellect. They are, therefore, not susceptible to modification by the rational educational methods we use so effectively in other areas. Attitude change requires the personal involvement and commitment of the individual, a situation which one rarely obtains when one consciously sets out to modify the attitudes of another.

If the direct creation of favorable attitudes toward the U.S. is not a feasible goal for the A.I.D. Participant Training Program, what can realistically be achieved in addition to the stated purpose of technical training? A reasonable by-product of this program should be an increase in the trainee's understanding of the United States, its people, its culture, its society, its problems. This objective need not be incompatible with the primary goal of technical training, though it will undoubtedly require some modification in the orientation and execution of the program. Neither does this objective bypass the desired goal of attitude change; indeed, it may be the most effective means by which modification in attitudes can occur. However, if we shift our goal from the creation of positive attitudes to that of

providing greater understanding, we are immediately faced with a crucial question: Does greater understanding result in positive attitudes? This question must certainly be answered equivocally. The evidence is still out, both at the individual and group level. Greater understanding does, however, permit more realistic relationships and increase ability to work together to achieve mutual goals. It should be mentioned that understanding in the sense it is being used here is a two-way street, but this is not our concern at this time.

Emphasis on promoting understanding rather than creating favorable attitudes relieves us of the task of deciding which attitudes are to be created or modified. Our job becomes one of providing opportunities and information; the burden of attitude change falls where it rightfully belongs, on the individual participant. We do not have to decide how he should feel about the United States when he finishes with his training. We only have to insure that he has a realistic and unbiased opportunity to formulate his own attitudes. If a parallel can be drawn from individual relationships, this is the process that occurs in friendship. It is very difficult to "sell" oneself to another on any but the most superficial basis. Friendship occurs as the result of genuine understanding and acceptance, of both the positive and the negative aspects of the other person.

As indicated earlier, the process of attitude change is very much related to the goal desired. Attitude change at more than a superficial level requires the participation and personal involvement of the individual. Attempts to instill certain favorable attitudes in another person is a one-way process. Essentially, some agent acts upon

the recipient. On the other hand, increasing the understanding of life and culture in the United States is a participating process. The individual must participate and become a part of the culture in order to understand it fully. This point cannot be underlined too strongly. Attitude change in any meaningful sense requires meaningful participation (ego involvement, to use another terminology) of the individual. Attitudes are not changed in the abstract, they cannot be taught and are probably only fleetingly influenced by even the most skillful propaganda. Attitudes develop out of personal experience and involvement.

This position regarding attitude change requires a great deal of confidence and trust in the individual. We must relinquish the position of authority and direction and accept the role of cooperation and collaboration. We can no longer take the position of wanting the individual to have this specific attitude or to develop in this particular direction or to think in these particular ways; rather we must want the individual to form his own attitudes, to grow and develop in his own unique manner in ways that are appropriate to his personality, background and existing attitudes and behaviors. We, both individually and collectively, frequently take the position that we know what is best for the other person or group, which usually turns out to be our way of thinking or doing. Then we wonder why the other person does not stop his obstructionist behavior and go ahead and do as we have indicated. This position seems to be a particularly easy one to take in international relationships. It requires a high degree of cross-cultural sophistication to really listen to suggestions for international cooperation that run counter to our own plans, to really

accept the idea that problems must be solved by mutual collaboration, to really admit the possibility that we, ourselves, might be able to learn something from those we are trying to help.

How does this orientation toward attitude change apply to the A.I.D. Participant Training Program? Since the program is designed to facilitate a mutually agreed on country program, there exists a ready-made opportunity for the kind of personal involvement on the part of the trainee necessary for attitude change. A.I.D., through its training officers and other personnel involved with this program, is in direct collaboration with the trainee, working toward a common goal. For the individual this goal is usually highly specific, making his involvement and identification with the process even easier. There exists a very real opportunity for the participant trainee to become involved at the emotional level necessary for attitude change to occur. He has something definite to achieve, something he feels is important, something to which he is committed.

This kind of personal involvement can perhaps best be illustrated in a cross-cultural sense by the phenomena known as "culture shock". Culture shock rarely occurs with tourists or visitors on guided tours, because of their lack of involvement and commitment. The tourist or visitor always knows he can withdraw from the situation if the going gets rough, and, in any event, he has no real personal stake in the venture. It is only when one must achieve something - teach, learn, earn a living, gather data - that he really comes to grips with the culture he is in. What to the tourist is picturesque or strange now becomes an obstacle and a frustration. The process of cue reduction and distortion that is perhaps amusing or at worst inconvenient for the tourist becomes a

serious problem of daily living for the person with a job to do. The participant trainee, by virtue of his commitment to the training program, is not a casual visitor to the United States. This commitment, if it represents a genuine personal involvement on his part, creates a fertile field for attitude change.

Within this framework of the process by which attitude change occurs, some consideration can be given to modification of the various parts of the Participant Training Program. In the selection of trainees, for example, it would seem reasonable to add to the existing criteria that of capacity for growth and change in the attitudinal area. The personal flexibility of the individual would become an additional factor in his selection. To follow this position through to conclusion, his existing attitudes toward the United States would become of less importance than his capacity to change these attitudes. A candidate now rejected for security reasons might be accepted if it were felt that his attitudes (and the resulting behavior) were capable of modification through a living experience in the United States. The relative weight assigned to the various criteria would certainly have to be thought through at a policy level, but the addition of the criterion of susceptibility to attitude modification would certainly alter the selection procedure.

The joint planning of the participant's training program would become an essential element in the program, if we are to enhance the opportunity for attitude change. If the trainee is to become deeply committed and involved, he must participate fully in the planning stage. This participation should represent a great deal more than just an explanation or a "selling job" by the training officer. The training

officer would be in a crucial position in this regard. Not only is he the first representative of the United States with whom a meaningful contact is made, he must also have the sensitivity and capability of genuinely accepting the trainee as a full partner in planning the training experience. This is easily said, but very difficult to do. Yet, this point is a highly significant one in the process of involvement on the part of the trainee. As long as the trainee feels that his program has been handed down from above, he has an emotional "out". It is not his program, it is the program of A.I.D. Therefore, his commitment to it and subsequent involvement in it becomes limited.

The orientation periods, both pre-departure and in Washington, should serve to reduce the time required for adjustment to the training situation or, in other words, to cushion the culture shock. These sessions are certainly important and should be handled with as much sensitivity as possible. It seems obvious that the more smoothly the transition from home country to training situation can be made, the more positive the effect on the trainee will be. No one likes to have his check arrive late, or miss his plane connections, or be lost in a strange city. Human beings being what they are, a lumpy bed can color our whole reaction to a new place. However, orientation by necessity occurs before the individual has really come to grips with his new environment. Culture shock is essentially an individual and personal phenomenon. What bothers one person is of no concern to another. Problems easily resolved in one instance may become insuperable barriers in another. It is certainly true that the knowledge of the physical geography of a country is of little avail when you don't know which bus to take to get home. Orientation is essentially an intellectual process. The real emotional

coming-to-grips with the environment occurs when the trainee goes to work.

There are several rather obvious implications for the various kinds of training programs operated by A.I.D. when the reference point of attitude change is taken. Observational visits, though perhaps valuable from other points of view, appear to offer little opportunity for attitude change. The individual is not highly involved. He comes to observe, not to participate. He is also insulated from the environment by the group he is with and by the A.I.D. person who makes all the arrangements and takes care of the details. In addition, much of his information comes through the selective filter of an interpreter. Similarly, third country training, though perhaps extremely valuable for technical reasons, offers limited opportunities for modification of attitudes toward the United States.

The length of the training period is of great importance in terms of attitude change. The period of culture shock is highly variable from individual to individual, lasting from perhaps a few weeks to several months, but it always takes some time to adjust to a new environment. This period is frequently accompanied by a negative reaction, sometimes quite strong, toward the environment. When things become difficult for us, when we are frustrated in reaching our goals and objectives, when even day-to-day living becomes a chore, we are not likely to take the blame for this upon ourselves, but rather project it outwards onto the environment. A certain amount of paranoia creeps into the thinking of the person undergoing culture shock. Things are not just difficult, obstacles are deliberately being placed in his way.

People are not just strangers, but become enemies. As understanding and acceptance takes place and adjustment occurs, these feelings disappear, but if the trainee is returned home during this period, his overall reaction is likely to be quite negative. In terms of time, a training program of less than six months duration should be very carefully evaluated in the light of the individual trainee's background and experience.

From an attitude change point of view, variety in the training program becomes an important consideration. For example, the university campus can hardly be considered as a typical segment of American life. If this is the only environment to which the trainee is exposed, his opportunities for understanding American culture will be severely constricted. The combination programs of academic training, on-the-job work experience, and observational visits offer the trainee a much broader opportunity to observe and interact with U.S. culture. Here again the trainee should have a real part in the decisions as to where he will go and what he will see. As a general principle, attempts to shelter the trainee, to place him in a "safe" environment can only serve to limit the opportunities for increased understanding and minimize the involvement of the trainee.

The non-training activities of the trainee while in the United States should be directed toward increasing his understanding of life in the United States. These opportunities for understanding are increased as the trainee is integrated into the normal pattern of everyday life. Following this principle, dependents should accompany the trainee whenever possible, group living situations composed entirely of

foreign students should be broken up, and close relationships with U.S. citizens encouraged. The objective should be to put the trainee in the same situation that his American counterpart would encounter under similar circumstances. Rather than change the environment to accommodate the foreign trainee, he should be helped to adjust to the environment as it is. In this connection, consideration should be given to substantial expansion of the counseling branch of the O.I.T., in order to facilitate the trainee's adjustment to his training situation.

The use made of post-training seminars or retreats should be carefully considered in the light of attitude change. Utilizing small group techniques, these sessions could offer an excellent opportunity for the trainee to think through his experiences in the United States, to gain a still broader perspective by discussion with other trainees and to consolidate his attitudes and feelings about the U.S. These sessions should also give an opportunity for the trainee to consider his situation when he returns to his home country. If the training experience has been meaningful, there will be readjustments for him to make when he returns. Culture shock in reverse is not an unknown phenomenon. Neither should the communication aspects, now emphasized in most training seminars, be slighted. If we grant importance to the multiplier effect and the diffusion of technical knowledge, we should give equal emphasis to the returning trainee as an influence in cross-cultural attitudes.

Follow-up activities with the trainee once he has returned to his home country should also be geared to maintain and reinforce the attitudes that have developed towards the United States during his training

period. The best agents for this reinforcement are probably not employees of A.I.D. but rather contacts that the trainee made in the States. However, A.I.D. can play a part in this follow-up activity by making available not only technical information but cultural material as well.

The implications for the A.I.D. Participant Training Program described above are based primarily on a theoretical position regarding attitude change that is largely unsupported by hard research evidence. There is an obvious need to investigate the non-technical aspects of the A.I.D. training program, not only from the point of view of the influence of these factors on the technical training itself, but also from the viewpoint of changes in attitudes toward the United States. The methodology for such research is not particularly difficult, though the execution is laborious and fairly costly. This kind of research does require experimental control of a sample of the training program population. An illustration of the kind of research designed to answer some of the questions posed by consideration of the non-technical aspects of the training program is attached to this paper as an appendix. In view of the size and scope of the A.I.D. Participant Training Program, some such controlled investigation of factors related to this training and to attitude change seems eminently justified.

The basic position taken in this paper is that attitude change occurs through personal involvement of the individual. A corollary of this principle is that inculcation of specific attitudes is extremely difficult, as this places the individual in a recipient rather than a participant role. The more feasible program, then, is one providing opportunities for increased understanding and deeper commitment and involvement on the part of the individual. This position requires

confidence in and genuine acceptance of the participant as an individual: an individual who must grow in his own unique fashion and develop the attitudes and behavior that are appropriate to him and his experiences. We must accept him as a genuine collaborator in the process of change. Within the context of the particular program under consideration, a second kind of confidence is called for as well. This is the confidence that reasonable people, given an adequate opportunity to understand the United States, its people, its culture, its problems, will form attitudes that will permit us to work together to solve mutual problems.

Appendix

Illustrative proposal for:
EVALUATION OF NON-TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF AID
PARTICIPANT TRAINING PROGRAM

Primary objective:

Evaluation of the non-technical aspects of the AID training program as they relate to attitude changes toward the US and the objectives of the program.

Training program (technical):

One calendar year (2 semesters plus summer session) to lead to a BS or MS in Education at a US university. Trainees would take regular courses selected to meet their needs just as any other student.

Factors to be studied:

Selection: Most trainees are proposed by their supervisors. All applicants would be rated by their supervisor (more than one if possible) and two groups would be selected; those having the highest supervisor ratings and those having the lowest ratings. Selection variables could be spelled out for the supervisors in the instructions for the ratings, including factors relating to attitude change.

Orientation: Pre-departure orientation would consist of written materials sent to trainees plus a physical group meeting with a representative or representatives of the university in which the training would take place. Orientation after arrival in the US would consist of a fairly intensive program of at least

30 days duration before training began toward the university, the US, campus life, etc. Half the trainees would receive these programs, the other half would get only minimal orientation and would arrive at the university immediately before training commenced.

Counseling-advising: Half the trainees would be assigned a permanent counselor-advisor (faculty or staff?, graduate students?) during their training with regularly scheduled appointments (weekly, every two weeks, monthly?). This would consist of what has been described as a "hand-holding" operation; counseling concerning academic problems, social activities, housing, making full use of university facilities, arranging for psychotherapy if needed, etc. The other half would have no assigned counselor, but would rely on the regular services available to foreign students.

De-briefing: Half the trainees would attend a de-briefing retreat of about one week duration at the completion of training. This retreat would use group processes for the evaluation of the experience, orientation to home country, and methods for communication of new knowledge and skills. The other half would return home immediately after training.

Knowledge of English: This variable would be neutralized by the selection of the trainees (teachers of English or using English competence as a requirement for application) in order to keep the N within reasonable limits.

Subjects:

Plan #1 -- US University - Foreign Ministry of Education contract for postgraduate work for teachers of English with 1-5 years experiences.

Plan #2 -- US University - Foreign University contract for final undergraduate year of teachers in training or postgraduate training for recent graduates.

Research design:

Covariance design as follows:

		Counseling-Advising		No Counseling-Advising	
		Debriefing	No Debriefing	Debriefing	No Debriefing
Supervisor + rating	Orientation	10	10	10	10
	No Orientation	10	10	10	10
Supervisor - rating	Orientation	10	10	10	10
	No Orientation	10	10	10	10

Pretest at earliest possible moment--with the application or before leaving home country.

Post-test at completion of training (in US) for those not being debriefed, at completion of debriefing (in US) for the others.

Follow-up #1 six months after return to home country.

Follow-up #2 one to two years after return to home country.

Measurements:

New attitude scales, or modification of existing ones, for attitudes toward US and stated objectives of the AID training program.

Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values adaptation using prediction device (prediction of US values)

Semantic differential or sentence completion to measure attitudes toward US

Goals of training (pre) - Goals achieved (post)

Biographical data (pre)

Timing of program:

To conform to Latin American school year the training should be spring semester, summer session, and fall semester. The orientation group should arrive early in January, the no-orientation group late in January.

Secondary objectives:

Evaluation of technical training, using GPA and degree obtained or not obtained, in relation to the first three factors under study.

Evaluation of technical and non-technical program in follow-ups through trainee's opinion and objective data such as career advancement, specific applications, supervisor's ratings, etc.

Qualitative evaluation of technical and non-technical program and general information on problems of foreign students through reports from counselor-advisors.

Qualitative evaluation of technical and non-technical programs through content analysis of debriefing sessions.

RIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Beals, Ralph L. & Humphrey. No Frontiers to Learning: The Mexican Student in the United States. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1957.
2. Bennett, John W., Passin, Herbert & McKnight, Robert K. In Search of Identity: The Japanese Overseas Scholar in America and Japan. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1958.
3. Davis, J. James. "Perspectives of Turkish Students in the United States." Sociology and Social Research, 1963, Vol. 48, 47-57.
4. Gruen, Walter. "Attitudes of German Exchange Students During a Year in the United States." Public Opinion Quarterly, 1959, Vol. 23, 43-54.
5. Hassan, Abdel-bassitt M. "Attitudes of American-Educated Foreign Students toward American Democratic Orientation." Journal of Social Psychology, 1962, Vol. 57, 265-275.
6. Hereford, Carl F. Changing Parental Attitudes through Group Discussions. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1963.
7. Hereford, Carl F. "Student Exchange Visits and Values." Proceedings, VIII Congress Interamericano de Psicologia, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 1963.
8. Lambert, Richard D. & Bressler, Marvin. Indian Students on an American Campus. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1956.
9. Morris, Richard T. The Two Way Mirror. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1960.
10. Sewell, W. H. & Davidson. "The Adjustment of Scandinavian Students," Journal of Social Issues, 1956, Vol. 12, 9-25.
11. Smith, H. P. "Do Intercultural Experiences Affect Attitudes?" Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1955, Vol. 51, 469-477.
12. Smith, M. Brewster. "A Perspective for Further Research on Cross-Cultural Education." Journal of Social Issues, 1956, Vol. 12, 56-68.
13. Smith, M. Brewster. "Cross-Cultural Education as a Research Area." Journal of Social Issues, 1956, Vol. 12, 3-8.
14. Useem, John & Ruth H. The Western-Educated Man in India. New York, Dryden Press, 1955.
15. Veroff, Joseph. "African Students in the United States." Journal of Social Issues, 1963, Vol. 19, 48-60.
16. Watson, Dorothy Jeanne & Lippitt, Ronald. Learning Across Cultures: A Study of Germans Visiting America. Ann Arbor, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1955.