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## Multicultural education and attitudes towards immigrant groups in the United States

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANT GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors

Anika Marie Lillegard-Bouton

University of Northern Iowa

May 2021

This Study by: Anika Marie Lillegard-Bouton

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has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation

University Honors

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**Abstract**

Individuals with higher levels of education tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigrant groups as well as immigration in general (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). This study examined the relationship between one particular type of education and attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups in the United States. As a part of a larger, ongoing study on attitudes of college students towards immigrant groups, participants completed measures of their multicultural education experiences. I hypothesized that individuals with higher levels of multicultural education experiences would report more positive attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups and that attitudes towards these immigrant groups would be more positive among individuals who have had any educational experiences with a foreign language compared to those who have not. Unexpectedly, there was no relationship between the level of multicultural education that participants reported and their attitudes towards immigrant groups, nor was there an association between attitudes towards immigrants groups and foreign language experience. These results could mean that there is no relationship between multicultural education and attitudes toward immigrant groups or that the measures used in this study did not adequately assess the relevant types of multicultural education or foreign language experiences.

*Keywords:* immigration, multicultural education, prejudice

### **Multicultural Education and Attitudes towards Immigrant Groups in the United States**

The United States has more immigrants than any other country globally, with over 47 million people living here who were born in another country (Young, 2017). As immigration rates continue to climb, the demographics of the United States have begun to change. Since 1970, immigration rates have increased rapidly, mainly due to high rates of immigration from Asian and Latin American countries (Batalova et al., 2021). As a result of immigration and other factors, the Census Bureau released a projection in 2015 stating that by the year 2044, non-Hispanic Whites may no longer comprise over 50% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). For some groups, this change in demographics is positive, but for others it is seen as a threat to their current way of life (Batalova et al., 2021).

As a reaction to this increasing diversity within the United States, anti-immigrant sentiment has become more common. Anti-immigration sentiment, or nativism, has been a recurring theme in the nation's history as a response to increased immigration rates (Batalova et al., 2021). In fact, there are many similarities between the nativism that occurred in the late 1800s and early 1900s and what is occurring today (Young, 2017). Politicians and the media present undocumented immigration as a security threat, leading to the popularity of ideas such as a wall along the southern border of the United States and increases in anti-immigrant protests (Batalova et al., 2021). Often these protests are focused on other topics such as unemployment and use immigration as a scapegoat for issues such as high unemployment rates and criminal activity within the country. All of these factors point to higher rates of nativism within the United States.

Whereas eradicating anti-immigrant sentiment and nativism from the country may not be possible, there are various ways that the stereotypes and prejudice that underlie these issues can

be reduced. One factor that may play a role in the stereotypes and prejudice that an individual develops towards other groups throughout a lifetime is their education level (Hjerm et al., 2018). The level and type of education a person experiences influence how they perceive cultures that are different from their own and how they react to these differences. Education could serve as means to limit prejudice and stereotyping towards racial and ethnic minorities, or more specifically, immigrant groups within the United States.

In the following sections I review research on the relationship between education and prejudice, and how multicultural education could function to reduce prejudice by decreasing threat, increasing intercultural interactions, and improving understanding of other groups. I then describe a study designed to investigate the impact of multicultural education on attitudes towards immigrant groups in the United States. For the study, college students completed questionnaires on their experiences with multicultural education and their attitudes toward three major immigrant groups in the United States (i.e., Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants). Additionally, I examined whether foreign language education is related to more positive attitudes towards immigrant groups in the United States.

### **Education and Prejudice**

Higher levels of education are related to lower levels of prejudice. More educated individuals tend to be more tolerant of racial and ethnic minorities than less educated individuals (Jackman & Muha, 1984). There also appears to be a direct link between lower levels of education and stronger anti-immigrant attitudes (Hjerm et al., 2018). Additionally, the more education that a person has had in their life, the more positive their attitudes tend to be towards immigrant groups and immigration in general (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). Educational

experiences are an important factor in the development of individuals' attitudes towards racial and ethnic minorities as well as immigrant groups in the United States.

There are many possible explanations for the relationship between education and attitudes towards minorities and immigrants. One theory is that social status is an important factor in prejudice. More educated individuals tend to have higher status, and therefore they perceive less threat from minority and immigrant groups (Jenssen & Engesbak, 1994). Higher status individuals may have more positive attitudes towards immigrants because higher status individuals have less fear of losing their job to an immigrant or fewer security concerns related to immigrant groups in general (Hellwig & Sinno, 2017). Economic and security concerns are two common threats that are associated with immigrant groups in the United States (Stephan et al., 2000). Hence, if higher status individuals are less likely to feel threatened by others, they may maintain more positive attitudes than individuals who are more likely to be concerned about their job security or their personal safety.

Another common explanation for the relationship between education and attitudes towards minority and immigrant groups is the socializing effect from one's social network of family and friends. The socializing effect refers to the fact that people with higher levels of education tend to come from families with higher levels of education and surround themselves with friends who are also more educated (Wodtke, 2018). These groups tend to have more positive attitudes towards minority and immigrant groups, so an individual's social network may influence that individual's likelihood to engage in prejudice or stereotyping rather than their personal educational experiences alone.

A final explanation connecting education and attitudes towards immigrant groups is that multicultural education, or education from a variety of cultural perspectives, could be a factor in



reducing prejudice and stereotyping (Hjerm et al., 2018). This explanation contends that the more an individual is exposed to information about other cultures, the more accepting they tend to be of individuals from these cultures and the less likely they are to rely on stereotypes or prejudice to form judgments about minority or immigrant groups. The idea of multicultural education and its potential benefits has led some researchers to examine its impact in more detail within the educational system.

### **Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education is defined as “any form of education or teaching that includes the histories, texts, and perspectives of people from a variety of different cultural backgrounds” (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013). Some examples of multicultural education include learning about the cultural norms, history, or language of another group. The goals of multicultural education are to expose students to cultural perspectives that may differ from their own and to give students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds an equal educational experience (Banks, 1993). Theories and methods of multicultural education have been studied in detail in the United States as the country continues to become more diverse (Wodtke, 2018). Unfortunately, there is a gap between multicultural education theory development and the practice of multicultural methods within the education system (Banks, 1993).

Whereas not all schools implement multicultural education, many workplaces and schools currently require diversity training to improve relations between different groups. Diversity training can be an effective way to lessen stereotypes and prejudice in the workplace. The participants of forty different diversity workshops within an aviation company consistently reported that they found the training practical, informative, and personally enriching (Tan, 1996). Online diversity training is also a popular method used to reduce prejudice and stereotypes in the

workplace. Monitoring the impact of online diversity training in workplaces reveals that it impacts attitudes towards other groups and has some moderate impacts on intergroup behavior (Chang et al., 2019). Some workplaces also use various forms of implicit bias training to combat prejudice. Implicit bias training has produced mixed results and often has little to no real impact on thoughts and behavior (Forscher et al., 2019).

Diversity training within schools can have a positive effect on prejudice and stereotyping among teachers. For teachers, having some sort of diversity training before beginning to teach in their own classroom is related to their level of commitment to social justice within the classroom (Garmon, 2004). Additionally, teachers who participated in diversity training over the summer reported personal growth and that they made changes to their curriculum after the training (Booker et al., 2016).

Diversity training in the school can also impact students. For example, students who took a prejudice and conflict seminar had lower implicit and explicit bias scores towards students of color after taking the class (Rudman et al., 2001). After completing a diversity training program focused on gender and race, students also reported feelings of a greater sense of community and personal growth (Booker et al., 2016). These results are important because they show that some stereotyping and negative attitudes are malleable and can be changed over time through the process of diversity training or more generally, multicultural education.

**Decreased Threat.** One way that multicultural education can create more positive attitudes towards cultural groups is through reducing feelings of threat. Prejudice towards minority groups as well as immigrants often comes from fears or perceived threats that are not realistic (Jenssen & Engesbak, 1994). Immigrant groups from different locations tend to be associated with different types of threat (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). For example, people report

more security fears related to Muslim immigrants and economic concerns related to Eastern Europeans (Hellwig & Sinno, 2017).

According to integrated threat theory (Stephan et al., 2000), there are four types of threat that cause prejudice: realistic, symbolic, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Realistic threats include economic or security concerns. Symbolic threat includes threats to one's culture or worldview. Whereas symbolic threats are not tangible, they include the fear of losing one's culture or current way of life. Intergroup anxiety comes from fears of being judged by people from a different group. Finally, negative stereotypes are often false ideas about another group and their actions (Stephan et al., 2000). Multicultural education could limit prejudice by lowering the levels of threat that are associated with various immigrant groups within the United States.

Programs that are focused on reducing levels of threat between different groups can help lessen prejudice. In an examination of attitudes towards ethnic minorities, the level of perceived threat that the participants held had more of an impact on their individual attitudes than any of the other possible explanations examined, including cognitive sophistication, authoritarianism, and open mindedness (Hello et al., 2007). Additionally, when primed to think about the human qualities of an outgroup prior to interacting with members of the outgroup, participants reported less feelings of threat and reduced prejudice towards the group in general (Pavetich & Stathi, 2020). Multicultural education could function to diminish some prejudice and stereotyping by demonstrating that many of these fears and threats related to immigrants are based on generalizations and are not an accurate representation of the individuals themselves.

**Increased Intercultural Interactions.** Another way that multicultural education can help reduce negative attitudes towards immigrant groups is by encouraging intercultural interactions. Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) proposes that continued contact between people from different

racial or ethnic groups will increase positive relations among the groups. There are four main criteria for Contact Theory: equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support by social and institutional authorities (Allport, 1954). All of these factors are important in reducing prejudice, but contact alone between two groups without any of these conditions can still reduce negative attitudes as long as the environment is not hostile or dangerous (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

While not all the criteria are necessary for contact to improve interactions, if a situation meets one or more of the criteria, it results in a larger positive effect (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). A typical classroom would likely meet all of the criteria of Contact Theory. All the students are of equal status, they often have to engage in intergroup cooperation for assignments, they have the common goal of succeeding in their classes, and the teacher can serve as a supportive authority figure. Integrating intercultural contact, in direct or indirect forms, regularly into education is one way to limit prejudice and increase positive relations among different groups of students. Repeated contact between groups has the most significant impact on intergroup relations (Allport, 1954). Involving students in repeated exposure to a variety of cultural groups could be a way to limit prejudice and stereotyping towards racial/ethnic minorities or immigrant groups.

Higher levels of intercultural communication among college students are related to more positive attitudes towards immigrants (Qu et al., 2018). Inter-ethnic relations between Chinese and non-Chinese students in Indonesia improved the most when teachers employed regular intergroup contact within their classrooms (Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2020). Additionally, more positive attitudes can be achieved using imagined interaction. After a group of Italian students were shown videos of intercultural friendship between Italian students and immigrant students,

they showed more positive outgroup attitudes, less negative outgroup stereotypes, and increased willingness to engage in contact with the immigrant group compared to the control group that was not shown the videos (Vezzali et al., 2019). Multicultural education can serve as a means to foster intergroup contact by encouraging students to engage with others from different backgrounds and also by exposing them to these types of interactions through course materials.

**Improved Understanding.** Finally, multicultural education improves understanding of the norms, traditions, and histories of other cultures. Improved understanding of another culture can eliminate false stereotypes and increase a sense of mutual understanding. Awareness of the differences between various cultural groups can result in more understanding and appreciation for the cultures and individuals from these groups (Carpenter et al., 2007). Increased understanding of the humanity of another group can also improve relations and limit prejudice (Pavetich & Stathi, 2020).

Multicultural education can limit prejudice by providing insight into the norms, beliefs, and practices of another culture to increase mutual understanding. In Russia, students in schools with required classes on religions of other cultural groups demonstrated more positive attitudes towards members of these cultures on surveys (Naumenko & Naumenko, 2016). Learning about the histories of other cultures can also improve attitudes. When teachers included topics such as racism, discrimination, and ethnic victimization into their history and current events lessons in primary schools, students reported more positive inter-ethnic attitudes (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). Including educational content about other cultures can help students develop a deeper appreciation for diverse perspectives and people, also known as cultural pluralism. Moreover, students at schools that prioritize cultural pluralism as a classroom norm in Germany demonstrated more positive outgroup orientation than students in a similar school without the

same emphasis on cultural pluralism (Schwartzenthal et al., 2018). The process of learning even basic information about another culture can improve intercultural attitudes and could lessen various stereotypes associated with immigrant groups in the United States.

### **Foreign Language Education**

One aspect of multicultural education involves learning the languages of different cultures. Foreign language education can improve various cognitive functions (Gojkov-Rajic & Prtljaga, 2013) and may also play a role in improving attitudes towards immigrant groups. Foreign language education can allow for more intergroup contact with minority and immigrant groups in the United States who may speak languages other than English. This intergroup contact can improve relations and lessen prejudice or negative attitudes towards these groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

In some cases, direct contact between these groups is not possible, but indirect contact can also have an impact on relationships between individuals from different cultures. Indirect contact involves learning about the beliefs, values, and norms of people from different groups (Allport, 1954). Engaging in indirect contact can improve attitudes towards others and lessen prejudice (Collins & Clément, 2012). Foreign language education can function as a form of indirect contact between various groups. The process of learning another language makes people more open to tolerating diversity (Gojkov-Rajic & Prtljaga, 2013). Additionally, individuals report decreased fear of assimilation if they have experienced some level of foreign language education (Clément et al., 1980). The process of learning a language serves as a window into another culture. In situations where direct contact is not achievable, foreign language learning could be a tool to decrease prejudice and stereotyping by serving as a form of indirect intercultural contact.

### **Current Study**

Increased immigration rates within the United States have caused another surge of anti-immigration sentiment and nativism within the country (Young, 2017). Many factors play a role in negative attitudes and prejudice towards immigrants, including education. Higher levels of education are linked with more positive attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities as well as immigrant groups (Hjerm et al., 2018). The type of education an individual has experienced can also impact prejudice. Whereas implicit bias training is not always effective in altering prejudice and behavior, diversity training can decrease prejudice in workplaces as well as schools (Chang et al. 2019). Multicultural education could also serve as a means to limit prejudice and stereotyping by reducing feelings of threat, encouraging intercultural communication, and promoting improved understanding of other groups.

Previous research on this topic has focused on education in general and its impact on negative attitudes, prejudice, and stereotyping towards outgroups. The link between higher education and lower prejudice levels has been studied in depth, but less research has been done on specific types of education and how approaches such as multicultural education impact prejudice and stereotyping, especially in schools. In this study I examined specifically how experiences with multicultural education and foreign language education in school relates to attitudes towards immigrant groups in the United States.

This study was part of a larger ongoing study on college students and their attitudes towards immigrant groups in the United States. The participants completed a survey with items about their attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups. These three groups were selected because they are major immigrant groups within the United States and are associated with specific threats related to current events. First, since the events of 9/11, Arab

immigrants have often been associated with national security issues and the threat of terrorism (Pavetich & Stathi, 2020). Chinese immigrants are currently associated by some with the threat of COVID-19, which was an issue during the period of data collection. Some individuals believe that the pandemic came from China, and it has come to be called the “Chinese virus” by some people (Budwani & Sun, 2020). Finally, Mexican immigrants are often associated with job loss as well as drug and crime rates, which led to the movement to “build a wall” along the southern border of the United States (Batalova et al., 2021). The idea of building a wall and other immigration issues were topics of debate throughout the period of data collection. After completing the items on attitudes towards the immigrant groups, participants answered questions about their experiences with various aspects of multicultural education, including items about foreign language education. Then they completed a short openness to experience scale and a demographics section.

I had two main hypotheses: (1) Individuals with higher levels of multicultural education experiences would also report more positive attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups in the United States; (2) there would be a significant difference in attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups in the United States between individuals who have had any educational experiences with a foreign language compared to those who have not had any experience with a foreign language with individuals who had had foreign language education showing more positive attitudes.

### **Method**

This study was pre-registered at <https://osf.io/wc62d/>.

### **Participants**



Participants were Introduction to Psychology students at the University of Northern Iowa who completed the study for class credit. Previous studies similar to the current study showed a medium-sized effect (Gojkov-Rajic & Prtljaga, 2013; Hjerm et al., 2018). After completing a power analysis using G-power (Faul et al., 2007), for a medium-sized correlation with .95 power, and an alpha of .05, I found that I would need at least 134 participants. In total there were 174 college student participants. The average age of the participants was 18.93, with a standard deviation of 1.14. The sample was primarily female, with 137 women, 34 men, and 3 who chose “not listed.” The sample was also 97% White. Most of the participants were first-year students (113 or 65%), 38 were sophomores, 15 were juniors, 7 were seniors, and 2 were unlisted. All of the participants were U.S citizens.

The pre-exclusions for this study were that participants had to sign up through the psychology participant pool, be at least seventeen years old, and be a college student. If a participant completed the study in less than twenty minutes or missed two or more of the attention checks, then their data were excluded from analyses; 17 participants’ data were excluded for these reasons.

### **Procedure**

As part of a larger study about personality and attitudes towards immigrant groups, participants completed measures of their attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups along with Bosnian refugees and African Americans in a randomized order. Then they completed several personality measures, including a social dominance orientation scale, a right-wing authoritarianism scale, a patriotism scale, and an interpersonal reactivity scale in a randomized order. Next, they completed items on stereotypes, COVID-19, multicultural education, experiences with foreign language education, and a short version of the Big Five

Personality Measure. Finally, they completed a demographics section with some general background information.

### **Measures**

In this analysis, I focused on the following measures:

**Modern Racism Scale.** The Modern Racism Scale (Akrami et al., 2000) measured participants' attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups. There are nine items for each of the three major immigrant groups, including items such as, "It is important to employ individuals who speak Arab language/Chinese/Spanish." Responses are given on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was modified in two ways: 1) Items were changed to refer to the United States and to specific immigrant/refugee groups rather than immigrants in general; 2) two items were changed to fit the United States context. "It is important to invest money in teaching immigrants their mother tongue" was changed to "It is important to employ individuals in schools who speak XX (immigrant group) languages," and "a multicultural Sweden would be good" was changed to "XX have a positive effect on the United States' economy and lifestyle." The Modern Racism Scale towards Swedish immigrants has an inter-item correlation of .36 (Akrami et al., 2000). Additionally, the Modern Racism Scale was correlated with Conservatism (.39) and Modern Sexism (.54), which indicates construct validity (Akrami et al., 2000). Finally, it showed a Cronbach's alpha of .82 (Akrami et al., 2000). In this study, the measure had a Cronbach's Alpha of .85 for the Arab Modified Modern Racism Scale, .85 for the Chinese Modified Modern Racism Scale, and .86 for the Mexican Modified Modern Racism Scale.

**Multicultural Education Measure.** The multicultural education questions (Appendix B) provided information about the experiences of each participant with various aspects of

multicultural education. These items were adapted from the School-Wide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist (Nelson et al., 2008). The original scale consisted of 33 items, some of which were developed for students and others for teachers and parents. The measure used in this study was adapted to have only 20 items, four of which were directly from the original such as “Literature selections for classes and libraries have reflected a variety of cultural perspectives.” The other 16 items were author-created based on research on important factors in multicultural education such as “I have learned about the history of non-western cultures.” Responses were given on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Analysis of the original measure indicates that two major factors, Policy and Practice, explained 72% of the total variance. Additionally, the items had a Cronbach’s alpha of .89 (Nelson et al., 2015). In this study, the scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .91.

**Foreign Language Education Measure.** There were nine author-created items included to measure experiences with foreign language education (Appendix C). They included items such as “Do you speak a language other than English?” Then participants who had foreign language education rated themselves on their speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills as basic, intermediate, or advanced. They also indicated where they learned the language (at home, in school, or other).

**Openness to Experience Scale.** The adapted openness to experience scale provided additional information about the level of openness among the participants (Soto & John, 2017; Appendix D). The scale included three items including, “I am someone who is fascinated by art, music, and literature” from a Big Five Personality Traits measure. Responses were given on a scale of 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). The openness to experience items had a Cronbach’s alpha of .84, and it was also correlated with measures of Intellectual Curiosity (Soto

& John, 2017). In this study the three openness to experience items had a Cronbach's alpha of .44. The three items in this scale had poor reliability within this study. It was only used in exploratory analysis to create a correlation table that controlled for openness to experience as openness to experience could be related to both multicultural education experiences and attitudes towards immigrant groups.

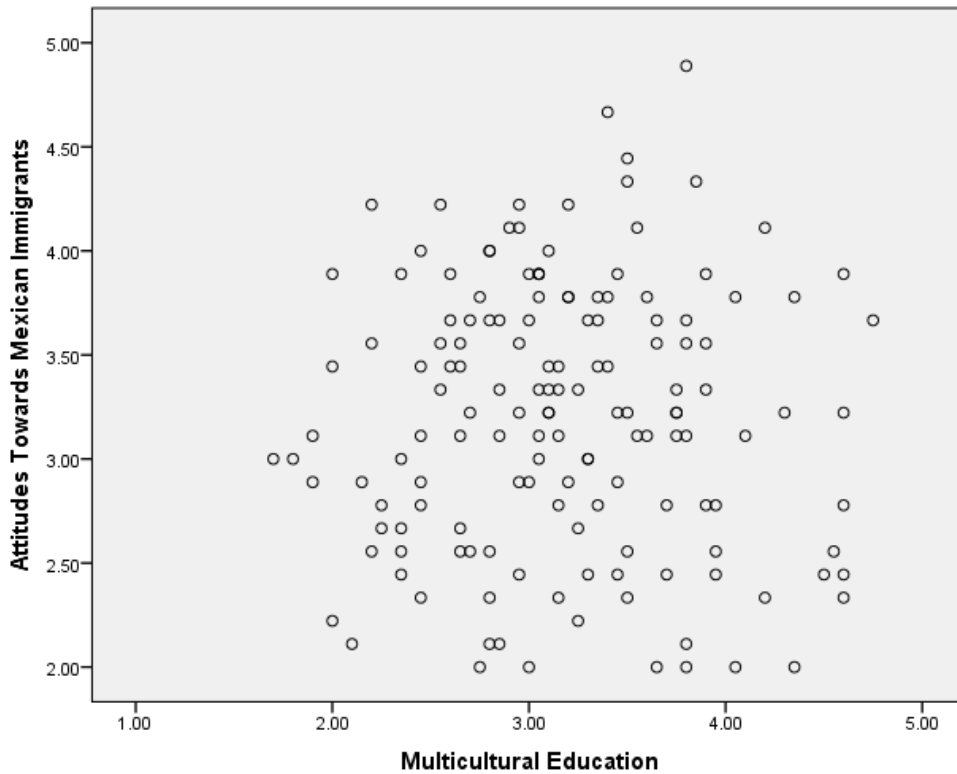
**Demographics.** The demographics section (Appendix E) gathered basic information about the participants. There were 44 items in this section assessing information such as age, gender, ethnicity, and major.

### Results

There was no correlation between the level of multicultural education and attitudes towards Arab ( $r(146) = -.06$  95%CI [-.21, .10]), Chinese ( $r(149) = -.05$  95%CI[-.20, .11]), or Mexican ( $r(148) = -.02$  95%CI[-.18, .14]) immigrant groups in the United States. The three versions of the modified Modern Racism Scale for Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrant groups were correlated with one another, but not with the modified School-Wide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist scale used to measure experiences with multicultural education (Figure 1 and Table 1). The mean for the multicultural education scale was 3.18 with a standard deviation of .67 ( $n=150$ ), showing a moderate level of experiences on average. Correlations of all variables are provided in Appendix F.

**Figure 1**

*Multicultural Education by Attitudes towards Mexican Immigrants (scatterplots for other groups were similar)*



**Table 1**

*Correlations between Multicultural Education and Attitudes towards Immigrant Groups*

	M	SD	Multicultural Education	[95% CI]	Arab Prejudice	Chinese Prejudice
Arab Attitudes	3.43	.59	-.06	[-.21, .10]		
Chinese Attitudes	3.45	.59	-.05	[-.20, .11]	.86*	
Mexican Attitudes	3.21	.63	-.02	[-.18, .14]	.81*	.82*

*Note: \*significant at the .05 level, ns range from 172-174*

After controlling for openness to experience, the correlation between multicultural education and attitudes towards immigrant groups was slightly stronger, but still not statistically significant for any of the three immigrant groups (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Correlations between Multicultural Education and Attitudes Towards Immigrant Groups Controlling for Openness to Experience*

	Multicultural Education	Arab Prejudice	Chinese Prejudice
Arab Prejudice	.08		
Chinese Prejudice	.06	.87*	
Mexican Prejudice	.13	.79*	.81*

*Note:* \*significant at the .05 level,  $n = 174$

As a part of a further analysis, I examined whether there were any specific items within the multicultural education scale that were correlated with the Modern Racism Scale for Mexican immigrants to determine whether some aspects of multicultural education might be correlated with attitudes towards immigrant groups even if the whole scale was not. I chose to use Mexican immigrants because the results of the Modern Racism Scale were similar among the three groups and participants in this study would be more likely to have been exposed to members of this group compared to Arab or Chinese immigrants. After examining each item, I found that the strongest correlation was .256, which is still a small correlation (Figure 5). I also found that three of the items had a relationship that was significant at the .05 level. Two of those three items were designed to measure students’ experiences discussing multicultural education materials.

**Table 2***Correlations between Multicultural Education and Attitudes Towards Mexican Immigrants*

Multicultural Education Item	Correlation
I learned about history from primarily the perspective of the United States.	.256*
I have participated in discussions about racism in the U.S.	-.225*
I have participated in discussions about different cultures.	-.200*
I have interacted with students from a variety of racial groups outside of school.	-.143
I have learned about various religions (other than my own).	-.112
I have examined my own racial identity.	.108
I have been involved in community service and service learning activities.	-.091
I have examined my own culture/heritage.	.084
I have learned about racial and/or ethnic minorities in the U.S.	.081
I have been made aware of current events occurring in other countries.	-.077
There were students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds in my schools.	.070
I have studied the maps of different continents.	-.068
I have listened to speakers from different cultures.	-.054
I have had teachers/professors from different countries.	.039
I worked only with students from my own racial/ethnic groups on projects or other assignments.	.031
There were celebrations and events that represented various cultures.	.023

Literature selections for classes and libraries have reflected a variety of cultural perspectives.	.014
I have had teachers/professors from racial/ethnic minority groups.	.014
I have learned about the history of non-western cultures (Asia, Africa, etc.)	.012
I have learned about immigration and related topics.	.010

Note: \*significant at the .05 level,  $n=174$

Additionally, there was not a relationship between foreign language education and attitudes towards immigrant groups in the United States. There was no significant difference in attitudes towards Arab immigrants ( $t(157)= 1.01, p=.312, d= .22, 95\%CI[.01, .43]$ ), Chinese immigrants ( $t(159)= 1.23, p= .223, d=.29, 95\%CI[-.02, .42]$ ), or Mexican immigrants ( $t(159)= 1.22, p= .225, d= .27, 95\%CI[.04, .38]$ ) between individuals with any experience in foreign language and those without any foreign language experiences (Figure 3). I looked at foreign language experiences in general ( $n = 27$ ) initially because there was even a small number of people who had foreign language experience from school.

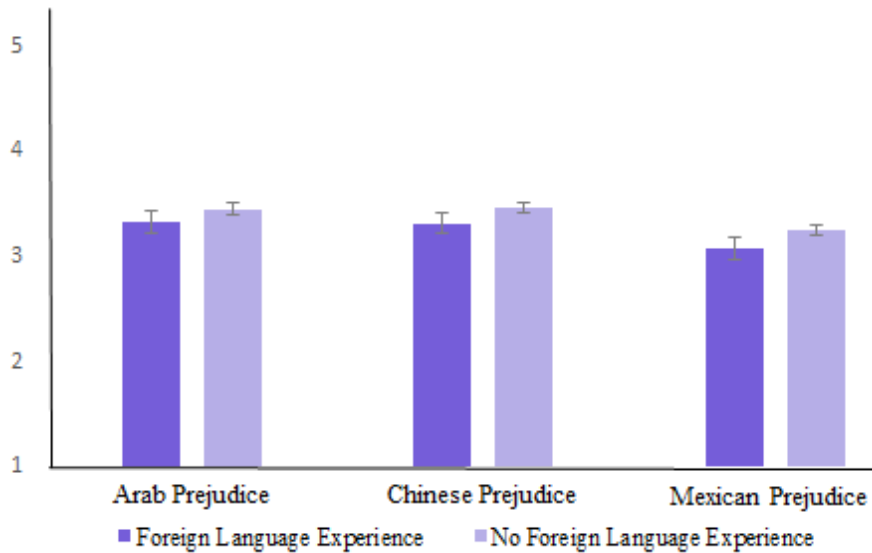
As a part of a further analysis I did a  $t$ -test to examine whether there was a significant difference between attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants groups among those who had foreign language experience specifically in school ( $n=20$ ) and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in attitudes for Arab immigrants ( $t(156)= .659, p=.264, d=.20, 95\%CI[.03, .45]$ ), Chinese immigrants ( $t(158)= .775, p=.255, d= .19, 95\%CI[.00, .41]$ ), or Mexican immigrants ( $t(158)= .549, p= .249, d= .21, 95\%CI[.03, .44]$ ). Overall, 16.7% of participants reported that they spoke at least one language other than English ( $n=27$ ). Of the participants who indicated they spoke another language, 55.6% spoke one other language, 37.0% spoke two, and 7.4% spoke three or more other languages. Within the participants who indicated



that they spoke at least one language other than English the largest group was Spanish (84%), followed by French and German.

**Figure 3**

*Attitudes towards Immigrant Groups by Foreign Language Experience*



*Note:* Bars represent standard errors.

### Discussion

Unexpectedly, the level of multicultural education that participants reported was not related to their attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, or Mexican immigrant groups. Additionally, there was not a significant difference between individuals with foreign language experience compared to individuals without foreign language experience in terms of their attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, or Mexican immigrant groups.

There are several possible reasons why multicultural education was not correlated with attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, or Mexican immigrant groups in this study. First, the items that were used to measure the participants' levels of multicultural education may not have accurately

measured this variable. The items were adapted from the School-Wide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist (Nelson et al., 2008), which was originally designed for students, teachers, and parents to evaluate a school on its level of cultural competence. Using only the items from the scale that were created for students and adding many new author-created items may have altered the construct validity of the scale.

Another possible explanation for the lack of a relationship could be because the measure of multicultural education was based on self-report. Individuals may have exaggerated their experiences with multicultural education or simply forgotten whether they had participated in the types of activities that the scale referred to since it could have been from any time throughout their education. In addition, a possible reason that there was no relationship could be that rather than choosing multicultural education experiences, these experiences were required of students. If this is the case, then the experiences may not be as related to attitudes because students felt forced to participate in these activities. They may have not enjoyed the multicultural aspects of their education or simply not noticed these aspects and therefore, multicultural education might not have had as strong of an impact on their attitudes. Finally, a relationship could simply not exist between multicultural education and attitudes towards immigrant groups. It is possible that while higher education is linked to more positive attitudes towards immigrants in general, more specific types of education are not as directly linked to attitudes.

Additionally, there are various possible explanations as to why foreign language education was not related to attitudes towards Arab, Chinese, or Mexican immigrant groups in this study. First, similar to multicultural education experiences, if students were required to complete courses in a foreign language, the experience might not be as related to attitudes because they had no choice. Additionally, only 27 in total out of the 174 participants reported

having experience with foreign language. The first item that was asked about foreign language was “Do you speak a language other than English?” Participants may have interpreted the item as asking whether they speak another language fluently. In order to properly examine the relationship between foreign language education and attitudes towards immigrant groups, it might be necessary to add another item asking if they are familiar with or have ever tried to speak another language to be able to evaluate the participants who have had foreign language experience but do not consider themselves able to speak the language fluently. It could also help to seek out a sample that would have more experience with foreign language education and compare it to a sample that has less experience with the topic. Finally, it could be possible that there is no relationship between foreign language education and attitudes towards immigrant groups.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of this study is the sample of participants. The sample in this study was mainly White and mainly female. Additionally, the sample consisted of all college students. Because the study was designed to examine different levels of education, using only college students may have not been the best approach. It is likely that most of the participants in the study came from somewhat similar educational backgrounds and shared many similar experiences due to curriculum standards in the country, especially since most of the participants attended high school in the same state (92% of the participants were originally from Iowa). Also, 42% of participants indicated that their high school was made up of 90% or more White students, which suggests that many of the participants may have had little contact with people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds.

Additionally, focusing only on college students may be a limitation in this study because attitudes often develop and change during college. As individuals leave their home and are exposed to new people, new topics, and a new environment, they often experience changes in some of their attitudes. Using a larger and more varied sample could be one way to improve further research on this topic. Future research could benefit from a similar study with adults who have completed college and people who did not attend college in order to examine their attitudes.

It could also be beneficial to examine these relationships with an experiment. One potential way to do this would be to examine students' attitudes towards immigrant groups before and after they participate in specific multicultural education experiences such as classes focused on other cultures.

### **Implications**

The results of this study did not support the idea that multicultural education is related to attitudes towards immigrant groups. It is possible that requiring multicultural educational experiences such as foreign language classes or non-western culture classes may make students less inclined to take away as much information from these classes. It could be more beneficial to allow students a broader range of choices in regards to foreign language courses and other multicultural education experiences. If students believed they had more of a choice in these classes and topics they might enjoy them more and take away more information that could alter negative attitudes, prejudice, and stereotypes. Additionally, based on my exploratory analysis, discussion-based courses might be more effective at improving attitudes towards immigrant groups.

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## Appendix A

### Modern Racism Scale (Akrami et al., 2000)

The following questions are about your impressions of X (Chinese, Arab, or Mexican) immigrants. Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the following items.

1. \*It is important to employ individuals in schools who speak X (Chinese, Arab, Mexican) languages.
2. There have been enough programs designed to create jobs for X immigrants.
3. \*It is easy to understand X immigrants' demands for equal rights.
4. \*X immigrants get too little attention in the media.
5. X immigrants are too demanding in the push for equal rights.
6. Discrimination against X immigrants is not a problem in the United States.
7. Racist groups are not a threat to X immigrants.
8. \*Special programs are needed to create jobs for X immigrants.
9. \*X immigrants have a positive effect on the United States' economy and lifestyle.

\*reverse scored

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neither Agree nor Disagree

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

## Appendix B

### Multicultural Education Items (Nelson, et al., 2008)

During my education...

1. ~I have learned about the history of non-western cultures (Asia, Africa, etc.)
2. ~I have learned about various religions (other than my own).
3. +Literature selections for classes and libraries have reflected a variety of cultural perspectives.
4. \*~I learned about history from primarily the perspective of the United States.
5. ~I have learned about racial and/or ethnic minorities in the U.S.
6. +I have been involved in community service and service learning activities.
7. ~I have had teachers/professors from different countries.
8. ~I have had teachers/professors from racial/ethnic minority groups.
9. ~I have studied the maps of different continents.
10. ~I have listened to speakers from different cultures.
11. ~I have been made aware of current events occurring in other countries.
12. ~I have learned about immigration and related topics.
13. ~There were students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds in my schools.
14. \*~I worked only with students from my own racial/ethnic groups on projects or other assignments.
15. +I have interacted with students from a variety of racial groups outside of school.
16. +There were celebrations and events that represented various cultures.
17. ~I have examined my own culture/heritage.
18. ~I have examined my own racial identity.
19. ~I have participated in discussions about racism in the U.S.
20. ~I have participated in discussions about different cultures.

\*reverse scored

+modified from the original

~author-created

1. Not at all
2. Very little
3. Somewhat/sometimes
4. Much/many times
5. A great deal

**Appendix C**

**Foreign Language Education Items**

1. What is your major?
2. Do you speak a language other than English? Y/N

If so:

Which language(s)?

Please evaluate your own skills in that language:

<b>Speaking Skills</b>	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Listening Skills</b>	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Writing Skills</b>	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<b>Reading Skills</b>	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced

Where did you learn it?

- a. School
  - i. How many years?
- b. Home
- c. Other

**Appendix D**

**Openness to Experience Scale (Soto & John, 2017)**

I am someone who...

Is fascinated by art, music, or literature.

Is original, comes up with new ideas.

Is complex, a deep thinker.

1: Disagree strongly

2: Disagree a little

3: Neutral; no opinion

4: Agree a little

5: Agree strongly

**Appendix E**

**Demographics Section**

Age:

Gender:

Man

Woman

Transgender Man

Transgender Woman

Gender Nonconfirmng

Nonbinary

Not Listed

Which of the following do you identify with? Check all that apply.

European American or White

African American or Black

Asian American or of Asian descent

Hispanic or Latino American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Mixed ethnicity, please specify:

Other, please specify:

Classification:

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Not Listed

Are you a U.S. citizen? Yes/No

What is the zip code of your hometown?

What is the approximate population of your hometown?

Less than 1,000 people

1,000 - 10,000 people

10,000 - 50,000 people

50,000 - 100,000 people

100,000 - 500,000 people

500,000 - 1,000,000 people

1,000,000 - 10,000,000 people

More than 10,000,000 people

Approximately what percentage of the students in your high school were White (and not Hispanic)?  
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

What is/are your major(s)? Check all that apply.

Natural Sciences (e.g., Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry)

Business (e.g., Management, Accounting, Marketing)

Humanities (including Philosophy, History, English)

Education

Social Sciences (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Political Science)

Arts (e.g., Photography, Ceramics, Sculpture)

Undecided

Other, please specify:

Minor (if any):

Is English your first language? Yes/No

Do you speak more than one language fluently? Yes/No

If yes, what language(s)? Please list all.



What is your mother's employment status?

Employed

Out of work, looking

Out of work, not looking

Homemaker

Retired

Student

Unable to work

Other, please specify:

Not listed

What is your father's employment status?

Employed

Out of work, looking

Out of work, not looking

Homemaker

Retired

Student

Unable to work

Other, please specify:

Not listed

What is your mother's highest level of education?

Less than high school

High school or equivalent

Some college

Technical degree

Two year degree

Four year degree

Graduate degree

I don't know

Prefer not to answer

What is your father's highest level of education?

Less than high school

High school or equivalent

Some college

Technical degree

Two year degree

Four year degree

Graduate degree

I don't know

Prefer not to answer

Do you pay attention to the news and current events? Yes/No

What is your main source of news? Check all that apply.

Newspaper

Magazines

Television

Radio

Internet

Friends (or other people)

How informed would you consider yourself considering news and current events?

Not very informed

Somewhat uninformed

Moderately informed

Somewhat informed

Very informed

Overall, how liberal or conservative are your political views?

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Moderate
- Somewhat conservative
- Conservative
- Very Cosnervative

In terms of economic issues (e.g., taxation, welfare, privatization of social security), where would you place yourself on the following scale:

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Moderate
- Somewhat conservative
- Conservative
- Very Cosnervative

In terms of social and cultural issues (e.g., abortion, affirmative action), where would you place yourself on the following scale:

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Moderate
- Somewhat conservative
- Conservative
- Very Cosnervative

In terms of foreign policies, where would you place yourself on the following scale:

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Somewhat liberal

Moderate

Somewhat conservative

Conservative

Very Cosnervative

Do you have any friends who are Mexican immigrants? Yes/No

If yes, how many?

Do you have any friends who are Chinese immigrants? Yes/No

If yes, how many?

Do you have any friends who are Arab immigrants? Yes/No

If yes, how many?

Do you have any friends who are Bosnian refugees? Yes/No

If yes, how many?

Do you have any friends who are African Americans? Yes/No

If yes, how many?

How much contact do you have with Mexican Immigrants?

None A little Moderate Quite a bit Very much

How much contact do you have with Bosnian Refugees?

None A little Moderate Quite a bit Very much

How much contact do you have with African Americans?

None A little Moderate Quite a bit Very much

How much contact do you have with Chinese Immigrants?

None A little Moderate Quite a bit Very much

How much contact do you have with Arab Immigrants?

None A little Moderate Quite a bit Very much

If you do have contact with one or more of the groups above, in what settings does this occur?

Have you ever taken any classes that dealt with multiculturalism or diversity? Yes/No

If yes, what classes? Please list all.

Which of the following do you identify with?

Catholic

Protestant (e.g., Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Christian)

Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints)

Jewish

Muslim

Agnostic

Atheism

Other, please specify:

None of the above

Prefer not to answer

Please rate how religious you are based on the following scale:

Not at all religious

A little religious

Somewhat religious

Moderately religious

Very religious

Appendix F

Correlations for All Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Arab Prejudice (1)	3.43	.59										
Chinese Prejudice (2)	3.45	.59	.86*									
Mexican Prejudice (3)	3.21	.63	.81*	.82*								
Multicultural Education (4)	3.18	.67	-.06	-.05	-.02							
Foreign Language Experience (5)	1.80	.37	.08	.10	.10	-.27*						
Gender (6)	1.80	.40	-.13	-.23*	-.20*	-.11	.15					
Political Orientation (7)	3.75	1.70	.67*	.68*	.68*	-.09	.06	-.15*				
Arab Friend(s) (8)	1.90	.36	.25*	.19*	.13	-.29*	.28*	.03	.13			
Chinese Friend(s) (9)	1.80	.39	.12	.12	.08	-.17*	.17*	-.01	.11	.37*		
Mexican Friend(s) (10)	1.60	.49	.30*	.28*	.23*	-.22*	.24*	.01	.11	.27*	.30*	

Note: \*significant at the .05 level, ns range from 169-174