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ABSTRACT

The School of Education at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Utah developed a sister school program with teachers and children in Cuauhtemoc and Dublan (Mexico) to increase the culture vision of preservice teachers while simultaneously allowing elementary school children to develop culture awareness by participating in a cross-cultural learning experience. Student teachers from BYU were sent to the sister schools in Mexico, working under the direction of Mexican cooperating teachers as well as an onsite field instructor from the American sister school. At the same time, a child-to-child exchange developed joint fundraising projects for improvements to the Mexican schools and visits to Mexico by some of the American students. The preservice teachers in the program gained a substantive knowledge of how that culture affects the children, learning to look beyond color to see individuals within a unique cultural setting. American children participating in the program experienced similar though less extensive changes in their culture vision. Both student teachers and the sister schools students found that their talent and self-confidence developed through the new challenges and experiences, and that important lessons were learned through the service they contributed to the Mexican communities. (Contains 16 references.) (ND)

Sister Schools: An Experience in Culture Vision for Preservice Teachers and Elementary Children

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> If we can find ways of responding as individuals to multiple patterns of meaning, enriching rather than displacing those traditional to any one group, this can make a momentous difference to the well-being of individuals and the fate of the earth. What would it be like to have not only color vision but culture vision, the ability to see the multiple worlds of others. (Bateson, 1994, p. 53)

Who more than teachers needs this "culture vision," this ability to see the multiple worlds of others: of each child in the classroom, of each parent who guides and structures the life of the child, of each community member who influences and in turn will be influenced by the child? If, as Barrett (1993) claims, "we create and are created by culture," a teacher cannot effectively reach and teach any child outside the context of that child's culture. With the rapid growth in numbers as well as diversity of cultural minorities in America's classrooms, the ability of teachers to respond and adapt to cultural diversity has been acknowledged as "one of the most important issues (perhaps the most important issue) for educational practice today" (Cannella & Reiff, 1994).

However, the field experiences provided for most preservice teachers place the neophyte in a classroom where the "prevailing culture of teaching" is demonstrated and reinforced. Young teachers are often socialized, as were their mentors before them, into a profession in which cultural differences, including ethnic and linguistic diversity, are neither understood nor considered beneficial (Friesen, Kang & McDougall, 1995).

The School of Education at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah is an institution at which preservice teachers are predominantly Caucasian and middle class, in a geographic area in which nearby schools are predominantly Caucasian and middle class. Administrators and professors at this institution have long recognized the need for special programs to prepare graduates with the personal qualities as well as the

knowledge and specific skills they will need to teach in and contribute to a world of increasing diversity and interdependence of cultures, nations, and people.

There are, of course, many ways in which culture vision can be developed. One way to avoid subconscious absorption and perpetuation of a restrictive school culture is to remove the individual from that culture during an intense period in the teaching initiation. The culture shock that results from a complete geographic and cultural change forces participants to think critically and in a new perspective about the practices in which they have been trained (Vall & Tennison, 1991/92), about their own culture, and about their attitudes and approach to teaching. As a preservice teacher expressed it, close involvement with those of another culture requires that young people" take off [their] red, white, and blue glasses for awhile, and stand outside and look in" (Wilson, 1993, p. 21).

With the goal of removing these monocultural glasses and increasing the *culture vision* of preservice teachers, while simultaneously allowing elementary children to develop culture vision by participating in a cross-cultural learning experience, the School of Education at BYU has developed a sister schools program with teachers and children in Cuauhtemoc and Dublan, Mexico. After describing the genesis of this program and explaining the basic components and procedures involved, this paper will discuss the preservice teachers' development of culture vision in three important areas of their teaching competence: (1) empathy both for members of the specific culture in which they lived and taught and for all individuals who must adapt to a new language and culture, (2) resourcefulness and flexibility in teaching practice, and (3) desire and capability for giving service within any culture and context. As children from a nearby elementary school participate with the Mexican schools in a "sister schools" relationship, the growth of the young children will be discussed and compared with that of the student teachers. Reports of circumstances, learning, and growth are taken from written comments and personal interviews with both student teachers and elementary children regarding their participation in the program during recent years.

Background

The sister schools program began with children helping children. Prior to 1985 Brigham Young University had been involved with humanitarian projects in the area of Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, among the Tarahumara Indian people. It was apparent, however, that lasting improvements in the lives of the people would need to begin with the education of children. To assess what might be accomplished, administrators and teachers of an elementary school near the university visited Mexico to become acquainted with the conditions and needs of the schools. Equipment and supplies were desperately needed. One of the schools did not have indoor plumbing. The largest, best equipped of the schools in the area was frequently vandalized because there was no fence around it.

The principal returned with a new project for his students. The elementary school began as a sister school to a two-room school in the small rural town of Cienega de Castillo, an understaffed, undersupplied school with one teacher and 50 students in grades 1-4. As the project began to take shape, two additional Mexican schools joined the adoptive family. As merely sending money would patronize the children and their teachers, the principal asked the American children to raise money that could be "lent" to the Mexican children to fund projects and activities to obtain the necessary money to improve their schools. Children in both countries responded with enthusiasm. Exchange of cards and letters began, along with joint fundraising projects and eventual visits to Mexico by some of the American children, their parents, and their teachers. The university supported these efforts, and faculty from the School of Education became involved. Later the university began sending student teachers into these same sister schools. Today both the cross-cultural student teaching and the child-to-child exchange have become ongoing activities.

At present, the BYU School of Education is sending student teachers to the sister schools in Cuauhtemoc and to a school in Dublan, Mexico. Those in Cuautemoc teach completely in Spanish; those in Dublan, an area with stronger American influence, teach

for half the day in Spanish and half the day in English. All of them are under the direction of Mexican cooperating teachers, teaching subjects in all areas of the curriculum. Many teach community English classes in the evening as well. They live with Mexican families. Most of them participate in the work and daily activities of the family, as well as in school and community activities.

Through weekly faxes and telephone calls, the student teachers maintain close contact with their university supervisors and professors. In addition, they are supervised on site by a field instructor who is an elementary teacher from the American sister school. They are observed by university faculty at the beginning, middle, and end of their student teaching experience.

Many strengths have come from the program. When interviewed concerning their experience, most of the student teachers who have participated in the program have mentioned that the love and empathy they feel for their students has been for them the most striking gain they have felt from their participation.

Empathy

Student teachers from Brigham Young University, like student teachers who have participated in other programs requiring a "cultural plunge," felt apprehension going into a new and very different cultural context (Young, 1993, p. 70). They were concerned about the conditions under which they would live and teach, and they were uncertain about how they would survive without native proficiency in the language or first-hand knowledge of the customs, values, and lifestyles of the areas. As the conditions were not always comfortable, and the lack of linguistic and cultural experience produced some frustrating and embarrassing situations, the student teachers found that they gained empathy from both challenges.

Though few of the children in the American sister school were able to actually visit Mexico, and those who did could not remain long enough to be immersed in the culture, the children and their teachers learned the sharing and communicative power of

words and pictures. Seeds were planted within the children that may someday bloom into the forms of empathy experienced by the teaching participants.

Preservice Teachers

The experience of living with Mexican families as well as teaching in Mexican schools enabled the preservice teachers to develop a close personal appreciation for the life and culture of the Mexican child and a personal empathy for the way in which that culture affects the individual. During their stay in Mexico they gained both a substantive knowledge of the lifestyle and customs of the people and a perspective from which to understand the *why*'s and *how*'s behind the behavior and activities they observed (see Wilson, 1993).

Mexican culture. Several of the young Americans enjoyed fact that the pace of the Mexican culture was more relaxed, less hurried than the pace they were accustomed to in the United States. A student teacher recalled, "People are still busy, and there is still stress, but the air isn't hazy with it, and you don't feel it pushing down on you squashing you." A highly structured, well organized preservice teacher added, "You learn that you don't have to stick to your planner which has the next month planned out down to each five minutes. You learn that most of those important things don't matter."

Another aspect of the Mexican culture that appealed to the young Americans was the warmth and closeness of the families. Their host families accepted them as family members and quickly initiated them into family life. One student teacher noted the contrast, "Children here are more respectful of their parents and each other, on the whole, because of the closeness of the families." Another enjoyed becoming a part of that milieu, "[My Mexican mother] introduces me to everyone as her other daughter. They treat me the same as their other children. I do the chores the same as everyone else and am included in everything."

There were a few aspects of the culture that the Americans decided they would not mind leaving in Mexico--fortunately these were minor ones. One cultural taste on

which several student teachers differed from their students and their Mexican families was the food: "Beans, oh are there ever beans, this place is full of 'em! . . .Brown beans are found everywhere, usually mashed and rolled in a tortilla." The local "treats" were easy for some of them to refuse: "Chile suckers--definitely under the 'objects' category as opposed to food, YUCK! . . . Watch out for the chile candy . . . . All the students here eat a lot of it, but I'm not sure why."

Lifestyles, family relationships, chores, customs, food--all these aspects of the Mexican culture became temporarily aspects of the preservice teachers' own culture. Like student teachers in other cross-cultural and multi-cultural programs, this group found that stereotyping they had previously absorbed was "mostly untrue" (Young, 1993). "I learned how Mexicans think, feel, live and love, and I feel better equipped to help children from this background now," one noted. Reflecting on her appreciation of the people in contrast to stereotypes and expectations she had formerly held, another summed up her change in attitude, "As we get to know the students' personalities, we don't see color."

Multicultural and ESL Children. Some of the preservice teachers chose to participate in the Mexican student teaching experience because, as a student teacher from rural Connecticut expressed it, "I would like to have more involvement in bilingual classrooms and teach in areas where there is a high Hispanic population." She definitely accomplished this goal. However the empathy she and her associates gained extended beyond the Hispanic child to include all multicultural and ESL children, as they experienced for themselves the uncertainties, challenges, embarrassments, and frustrations of surviving in a language they did not know well and in a culture with which they were not intimately familiar.

A number of the participating student teachers did not have extensive experience with the Spanish language. The challenges they faced were both intimidating and reassuring. As one wrote in her journal, "It's easier than I thought it would be to teach in

Spanish. . . . You learn a lot when you have to or else you make a complete fool of yourself." But besides learning how it feels to be a fool, they learned that other people are patient with fools--and that somehow fools manage to survive to laugh at themselves:

> The teachers here are very understanding of possible deficiencies in language skills. They help me with words that I don't know and they understand things even if I don't say them right. . . . I have found that I am not afraid of being in a Spanish-speaking culture. Sometimes when I am at the store or something I think, "so what?" and really mean it. Of course I don't know everything, but it's nice to know that I can get along and that I can learn what I don't know as it comes along.

Though every group assigned to a Mexican school included several student teachers, each found that in her classroom and at home with her host family she was "a minority of one" (Mahan & Stachowski, 1990, p. 18). The isolation was particularly pronounced in Cuauhtemoc, which is a rural area in which no one except for the American student teachers speaks any English. However, as one remarked philosophically, "Many of the things that could be termed 'disadvantages' actually made us develop talents that otherwise would have been left untouched. [We became] more personally self-reliant." Another expressed comparable personal growth in empathy, "I am more accepting than I would have been without the experience. I have greater patience with myself and others." The consensus of most of the participants was summed up by the student who stated, "*It has helped to broaden our view of life.*"

Sister school children

As the preservice teachers learned to look beyond color to see individuals within a unique cultural setting, children who participated in the sister school in Utah were experiencing similar though less extensive changes in their culture vision. Wooster (1993) calls attention to the need of such children by noting a cartoon published several years ago in which a student tells his teacher he needs more time to finish his world map as he is "only up to the fish market on the corner." Like Wooster, teachers and

administrators in the sister school recognized the need to move the children "well beyond the fish market on the corner" (p. 47).

Mexican culture. Children in Utah and Mexico exchanged cards, letters, stories, and art work with the children in the Mexican schools. Like the preservice teachers, they came to know and enjoy many aspects of the Mexican culture. At the beginning of the program, typical comments were "I want to know the Mexicans better" and "I want to know about their traditions." As the exchange became exciting, the children began to feel close to the Mexican children. "We have new friends" and "I like having new friends" were common reactions of the younger students.

The teachers' and parents' observations confirmed the value of the experience. Teachers found new life in their social studies classwork: "[The children's correspondence] brings meaning to the curriculum"; "The project opens up curriculum into language, culture studies and map skills." Activities like the art exchanges, they found, "are ways of teaching curriculum." The parents were pleased with their children's learning experience, noting that the initial excitement did not subside once the program was under way and that "kids' interest in the other country remains after the special activities are over."

As with the preservice teachers, the children experienced a growth in appreciation and empathy along with their gain in substantive knowledge. One young student's reaction was very close to that of some of the student teachers: "I see others live simply but happily. I've learned that the Mexican people don't have as much clutter in their lives as we do." Another seemed also to echo the student teachers with his comment "I have gained a lot of respect for different cultures and walks of life." An observer who studied the sister schools as a master's degree project noted from extensive surveys of parents, teachers, and children: "These students learn more about cultural diversity. They are more realistic" (Palmer, 1992).

In fact, the exchange became an exchange in empathy, as the Mexican children responded with depth and insight to the letters and gifts of their new American friends:

"We would like to learn about your problems and how you live and think."

"Let's exchange cards, letters and pictures so we can know each other that way."

Minority children. Although the children in the sister school did not experience the challenges of being in a minority, they did experience some of the broadening that occurred with the student teachers. The school is located in an affluent, relatively homogeneous suburban neighborhood. To these children, Mexico was a splotch on a classroom map; Mexican children were stereotypes from social studies texts and an occasional trade book. But as they received letters from their new Mexican friends, the American children began to look beyond the stereotypes to enjoy the individuals, similarly though less intensively than the preservice teachers. Some of the children expressed a desire to learn Spanish so they could share their new friends' language. A football and some candy were included with the pencils and notebooks they sent to the schools, as the American children visualized their new friends feeling as they felt and enjoying what they enjoyed. Stories, drawings, and other forms of creative expression allowed them to see inside the other children and realize that ideas, imagination, and feelings were present behind the smiles in the storybook illustrations. "Their clothes are not nice, but the kids in Mexico are nice," one American student concluded. A teacher noted, "They have increased levels of sensitivity to others' differences. At the same time students learn how much alike they really are, even though they have different economic levels."

One of the American children showed surprising insight into his own growth: "I will never be the same. . . . There has been a change in my attitude and a change in my bias. I will always be interested in other cultures, and I will always be willing to help others."

The responses of the Mexican children showed that they too were experiencing personal empathy across the cultures: "It feels like you are friends or brothers or maybe even cousins"; "I wish your teachers and students could come very often so we could be very good friends and never fight." With gratitude for the candy and the football--along with pencils, notebooks, maps and glue sticks--the Mexican children sent to the Americans gifts that they made themselves. One of them explained, "Our gifts are so simple but sent with a lot of love."

Resourcefulness and Flexibility

In their study of student teachers who participated in British schools, Vall and Tennison (1991/92) found that "Preservice teachers who are taught following an empirical model experience great difficulty when confronted with the indeterminate realities of the [foreign] classroom where they must integrate theory and practice." However, when the British cooperating teachers treated them as independent problem solvers, these young people "had to discover the pertinent issues and experiment with new solutions" (p. 34). The student teachers participating in the Mexican sister schools experienced similar difficulties when the realities of their classrooms were different from those with which they had expected and prepared to cope. But like the student teachers in Britain, they found that the new challenges and experiments positively developed both their talents and their self-confidence.

Although the children in the American sister school did not encounter the classrooms first hand as the preservice teachers did, their participation was structured by their teachers and administrators to develop their creativity, initiative, and self-reliance as well.

Preservice Teachers

Not only were the student teachers used to hearing those around them speak American English, eat American hamburgers, and live by American Franklin Planners,

they were used to hearing American education lingo and observing American whole language and cooperative learning in the classroom. No one used terms like "if we had" in conjunction with words like *paper*, *notebooks*, *pencils*, or *chalk*. And preservice teachers were rarely assigned to do their practicum work in highly authoritarian classrooms.

But in Mexico, the lingo and the practices were different. Again the young Americans had to change their red, white and blue lenses--to realize that what they had learned in America to accept as "best practice" was often not known and sometimes not respected or not appropriate in the Mexican culture. Also they had to accept that the resources and supplies that had always been available in American school cabinets and offices were not necessarily available in other areas of the world. When the initial disequilibrium passed, however, the American teachers developed flexibility and resourcefulness that were to strengthen their ability to teach in any culture or situation.

Cultural Patterns. The preservice teachers in the Mexican sister schools program found, as did student teachers in British schools described by Vall and Tennison (1991/92), that "when the usual cultural patterns (whether conscious or unconscious) were not appropriately understood . . . [they] could not avoid noticing their own behaviors, standards, norms, and expectations." At first, the cultural differences resulted in "culture shock, disequilibrium, and ambiguity" (p. 34). Mexican teachers were authoritarian; their goal, as the student teachers noticed, was "strong control of their classes." Choral responses, a methodology the Americans had come to regard as obsolete, were common; cooperative group work was rare. Most seat work was individual. As one preservice teacher observed, "[The students] learn to answer together but not to work together."

When the culture shock and disequilibrium began to subside, the Americans noticed positive aspects of the Mexican teachers' work: "The teachers at the school do work hard. They do a good job and are dedicated to their classes. They are responsible

and sincerely love the children they teach," one wrote in her journal. Another affirmed that working with the Mexican cooperating teachers "has helped to broaden our view . . . there is a common purpose for the children."

As they critically examined the approaches and methodology in which they had been trained, the Americans realized that there was much of it that they could and wanted to adapt to their situation in the Mexican schools. They missed the encouragement for and modeling of these practices that they had experienced in their early practica and which they knew that their former classmates were receiving in American schools. But what might have been considered a deficit became another opportunity for growth. As one preservice teacher wrote several months after her return to the States:

> What we lacked in modeling by our teachers was made up for by our own modeling for each other. We observed one another once every week. Each of us had different strengths, and we were able to watch those being modeled and then copy them. . . . We inspired one another to do neat activities and innovative lessons. Because of this experience, I feel that I am better at cooperating and will be able to fit into a school more easily.

Preservice teachers inevitably have questions, and due to differences in practice and school culture, as well as barriers in language, members of this group were not able to question their cooperating teachers in the same way that they would have questioned American mentors who shared their backgrounds and training. Again, a frustration generated a personal gain: A student teacher later recalled, "We looked up our own answers and then shared them with each other. I think that I would not have gained the same attitude of self-reliance had I been told the answer to every question that I ever had."

As the preservice teachers learned to rely on themselves and their companions to examine their practices, methods, and assumptions critically, they found the Mexican cooperating teachers watching them with attitudes as curious and analytical as their own.

Some of the Americans found the Mexican teachers adopting American ideas and practices. One preservice teacher described this as "exhilarating," explaining further, "My teacher adopted my rules, my cues, and many of my routines and lesson designs. It was exciting to see that I was a positive influence in the life of my teacher as well as my students."

As affirmed by Mahan and Stachowski (1990), the act of teaching is a "cross-cultural encounter" (p. 16). An alert and empathetic teacher will teach to the personal "culture" of each individual. Preservice teachers in an international teaching situation experience the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation and communication in a particularly striking way. Because they have made adaptations on a large scale, they are more conscious of the need to make adaptations, and they have developed both the skills and personal strengths required to make them effectively.

Material and resources. Although adaptations in approach and methodology were ultimately the most challenging, adaptations necessitated by cultural differences in resource availability were often frustrating and intrusive. And making such adaptations developed resourcefulness and creativity in the preservice teachers that would not have emerged for most of them in more comfortable American classrooms. One young American who had done her student teaching in a poverty-area school in Cuauhtemoc recalled her situation and affirmed what she had learned:

> Our school was very poor and did not have the resources that one would normally expect in an elementary setting. There was no paper, nor crayons, nor copy machines. Things that we would normally have taken for granted were not available. The thought of having my own desk thrills me. We had to become inventive. Trying to decorate our rooms was often a nightmare. Nothing would stick to those cold, cement walls. But with a little ingenuity and a sheet of dry wall, I had a bulletin board. We had to make do with what we had available and

not moan too much about what we didn't. I think I can teach anywhere as long as I have a little sticky-tack and a couple of Marks-a-lot.

Sister School Children

Resourcefulness and creativity are qualities inherent in elementary children, yet sometimes for children in homogeneous, affluent neighborhoods these qualities do not develop as fully as they might if children are not challenged with necessities beyond their own comfortable lives. To challenge the sister school children, their principal and teachers asked them to design their own projects to raise money for their Mexican friends. Children were to decide what they could do, plan the materials they would need, calculate costs, purchase supplies, and carry out their ideas. The children examined their own interests and skills, ranging from cooking and crafts to physical education. They sold cookbooks, ribbons, bracelets, sashes, wrapping paper, and punch. In addition they started a new school tradition of a yearly "Tarahumara Run" for the Tarahumara children. One child sighed, "We had to use math." A teacher remarked, "The older students got a lesson in economics through the sale of items."

Along with a little practical math and economics, the children's inventive talents were challenged and developed as they raised money for supplies, just as the preservice teachers' talents were developed by learning to get along without an abundance of supplies. It was to counter the lack of physical resources that both children's and preservice teachers' personal resources were honed.

Service

These cross-cultural preservice teachers found, as did those who participated in Mahan and Stachowski's (1990) study of another cross-cultural student teaching experience: "When learning requirements above and beyond classroom teaching and management are blended into the student teaching process, desirable community, cultural, and global learnings can happen, do happen, and are indeed valued by the student

teacher[s]" (p. 16). Among the learnings most valued by the Brigham Young University group were those which developed from the service they contributed to the Mexican communities in Cuauhtemoc and Dublan. Similarly, the children in the sister school experienced the joy and development that comes from offering service to those they have come to respect and love.

Preservice Teachers

Service learning, according to Stanton (1987), contributes a values approach to experiential learning. The American preservice teachers went to Mexico equipped with middle class American values, prepared to transform classrooms and educate children; however they were to find that some of the most meaningful service was to take place in the communities that formed the social and cultural context for those classrooms and children. As Darling-Hammond (1995) has pointed out:

> Teachers need to build a rich knowledge base and develop tools for assessing student thinking, for understanding students' prior knowledge and backgrounds, and for connecting to students' families and communities. If teaching fails to connect with the students, there is no learning. (p. 9)

Connecting with the students through serving their families and communities took forms most student teachers never experience.

Student teachers found that service to their host families and to their students' families was an expectation and an opportunity. One of the students in Dublan found that when her Mexican mother was absent from the home, she was expected to take over both cooking for the family and supervising young children, which she did often. She wrote, "Here you have to depend on each other, and each family is seen as a unit because it is." The student teachers found, as those involved in Mahan and Stachowski's (1990) overseas program, that each of them became "an integral member of the family" and that they could depend on that family for "support, companionship, and 'daily survival' do's and

don'ts" (p. 20). Many of the Dublan student teachers participated in teaching English classes in the evenings for parents of their students. They enjoyed becoming personally acquainted with the parents and helping them connect to their children's school experience. As one teacher was later to recall, "Since we knew what the kids were learning in school and we were teaching their parents as well, they all could practice their English at home."

The student teachers were fortunate that their service extended beyond the families into the communities that had become their temporary culture. Those in Cuauhtemoc found themselves with hammers and paint brushes in their hands as well as markers and chalk. The schools were primitive in their physical plants and facilities, and the student teachers were called on to paint walls and build fences. Early in the development of the program, some participated with mentors from the university in bringing electricity to one of the rural schools. Their service extended further as they also painted and repaired an orphanage near one of the schools and joined other teachers and students in making quilts for it.

Mahan and Stachowski (1990) found in their study of an overseas student teaching program that "student teachers who participate in community activities meet community people, and examine community dynamics, will develop a deeper understanding of that community's products--its children, and consequently add a new dimension to their classroom instruction" (p. 19) and that their students' learnings were "of a significantly broader scope, encompassing more community and world perspectives and influences" (p. 14). Similarly, the on-site supervisor of the Mexico student teachers reported that they were "learning to care about others and taking an active role in doing something to meet the needs of children in another culture." The students voiced some of these gains as they reflected on their experience. One explained, "I feel like I was part of the community here. Not just in the classroom with the kids, but I was part of the faculty and the entire community." Another expressed her new perspective:

> In this community everyone has to stick together. Dublan is very small and there is just enough of every*one* to go around (most of the time) but never with any left over. In order to make things work, everyone has to participate. . . Everyone helps each other out too. In general there is at least one of everything here and if you need it, you just go borrow it. Everyone knows who has what, and everyone is happy to share. It not only makes life easier, it knits the community together.

One of the critical questions proposed by Johnson and Ochoa (1993) regarding multicultural preparation of teachers was whether they would be able to "examine their own assumptions about societal goals" and "think critically about these goals related to problems of developing countries or global issues" (p. 67). Similarly, Houser and Chevalier (1993) call attention to a consensus among many teacher educators of the need for European Americans to deepen their understanding of the needs and perspectives of other cultures by developing a broader, multifaceted understanding of themselves. Through placing themselves in Mexican families and communities--tending children when it was expected, teaching English where it was wanted, building and painting where it was needed--these young people found within themselves the ability to become integral, contributing members of this society in which there was "just enough of everyone"--including student teachers--"to go around, but never with any left over."

Sister School Children

Parker Palmer (1987) has written that today's children "have always been taught about a world out there somewhere apart from them, divorced from their personal lives; they never have been invited to intersect their autobiographies with the life story of the world" (p. 108). Realizing how far their affluent, suburban community was from the "world out there somewhere apart," administrators and teachers at the sister school decided that through service the children in their school might have the opportunity to intersect. As mentioned by Kendall (1990), service learning can help students become sensitive to the effects their decisions and actions may have on the lives of others and in

the process promote a sense of social and civic responsibility, in addition to respect for cultures and cultural differences of others. To work toward these goals, the principal and teachers explained to the children about the Mexican school that had broken windows because there was no money to buy materials to build a fence to protect it. They told them about classrooms without pencils and notebooks, about children with no balls or other play equipment for their recess. The Mexican children, the teachers said, were willing to work to make things and sell things in order to raise money for their school, but they had no money to buy ingredients and supplies. The American children could afford ingredients and supplies; the teachers asked if they would be willing to work to make money to lend to the Mexican schools.

The American children went to work: They bought, mixed, crafted, and sold, earning over nine hundred dollars to send to the three Mexican schools. They wanted to just give the money; however the teachers explained that lending would allow the Mexican children to gain the self-confidence that comes from raising their own funds and returning the loan. One child concluded, "They will pay it back but we won't take it"; another proposed a more tactful solution: "We'll just loan it to another school."

The Mexican children did buy supplies and make baskets and piñatas to sell, as well as buying and reselling oranges, pork rinds and candy. The fence was eventually built around the vandalized school. In addition, one school's roof was repaired; another received much-needed paint. Inadequate plumbing in one of the schools was improved. Supplies purchased with the money sent by the children included desks, doorknobs, mops, brooms, gasoline for the school's heaters, soap, and geometry games. As one American child proudly urged, "I think we ought to keep spending money on the sister schools to help them fix things like their bathrooms." "I like helping them with pencils, paper, cards and presents," another declared. Though the tree the Americans sent eventually died, and the football fell into the fire and had a hole burned in it, the

children's interest and enthusiasm continued. "I would like to be helping more and more!" one of them exclaimed.

Teachers and other observers noticed positive changes in the children's attitudes and personalities. "I like seeing what happens in my classroom when children are involved helping others," one teacher wrote. "Our students have the opportunity to reach out and learn to sacrifice and understand others," another teacher confirmed. When children were interviewed, their comments left no question of the validity of their teachers' observations. "This project helps our school become better as we help others," one of the children claimed. "It makes me feel good inside," another child added. After interviewing children on all grade levels, a university graduate student observer concluded, "Students are more aware of the impact they can have in someone else's life. They also have more opportunities to show they care about others" (Palmer, 1992).

Conclusion

Participating with schools in Cuauhtemoc and Dublan, Mexico has developed, refined, and strengthened the culture vision of both preservice teachers and sister school children from a predominantly Caucasian, middle class university and community population. As an ongoing program, it continues to do so each year with each new group of participants. Preservice teachers have developed empathy for Mexican children as they have experienced personally the culture of the families and communities that mold these children, as well as the schools that educate them. Preservice teachers have eaten beans, cooked meals, tended children, participated in festivals, and taught English classes for the community. But these activities have not always been easy or pleasant. Student teachers have learned what it is like to struggle to find words to communicate their needs; they have experienced the frustration of having to adapt to majority practices that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Having experienced minority status first hand, they will feel and respond differently to the minority children who will struggle with language or culture shock in their own future classrooms. Children participating in a sister school

near the preservice teachers' university have developed empathy as well, as they have formed relationships with the Mexican children through exchanging letters, stories, drawings, cards, and gifts. They have learned to see beyond the Mexican children's clothes, language and poverty to appreciate and enjoy the individuals who have become their friends.

Both preservice teachers and sister school children have refined their culture vision as they have developed resourcefulness and flexibility in reaching out to the Mexican children. Student teachers have examined critically those practices that they had once assumed would be universally effective since they had learned them in university classes and watched them implemented in American schools. They have found approaches to learning and management different in Mexican schools, and they have had to evaluate, synthesize, and adapt--encouraging, modeling, and answering questions for one another when their Mexican cooperating teachers have not been able to provide them with the mentoring they desired. They have become highly creative when they have had to teach without chalkboards, bulletin boards, textbooks, notebooks, and even pencils; but their confidence has grown as they have realized that they can do so--that their ability to teach does not depend on physical supplies. Children have also become resourceful and creative as their principal and teachers have challenged them to design their own projects to raise money to help Mexican children raise money for repairs, equipment, and supplies for their schools. They have learned math, economics, and a good deal of persistence.

The culture vision of all participants has been strengthened through service. Preservice teachers have participated in the daily work of their host families, in addition to teaching English to the parents of their students. They have learned that they can contribute to the life of their communities and in turn can benefit from the wisdom and support that communities can give. They have painted, planted, cooked, and quilted. Children have also felt the strength of giving and serving. They said they felt that their

school was stronger because they were extending themselves for others, and their teachers and parents have noticed visible changes in their attitudes and behaviors.

If the hope for the world's future rests with future schools and future citizens, the sister schools and cross-cultural student teaching programs at Brigham Young University have shown one way to promote the necessary culture vision. As one of the young children declared, "I will never be the same."

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