

A Comparison of Attitude Changes by Education Juniors After Tutoring in Urban and Suburban Secondary Schools

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MOST education juniors in colleges and universities across the land probably have some kind of contact with school children as part of the requirements in their first education courses. The effects of these contacts are assumed to be highly beneficial, but little research has been done to find out if any benefits really appear.

The Problem

A study by Ingle and Robinson (1965) compared the attitudes of education students who attended an educational psychology class and also observed public school youngsters with the attitudes of students who only attended class. Both groups gained significantly on the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) (see Cook *et al.*), but there was no difference between the mean gains for the two groups. Apparently observing public school classes had no greater impact on attitudes toward permissiveness than had mere class attendance.

In a subsequent investigation, Ingle and Zaret (1968) reasoned that some kind of involvement and direct contact with children would have a greater influence on education students' attitudes toward children than simply passive observation of children in the classroom. They measured attitudes again with the MTAI. Both tutors and observers were in the same four inner city Milwaukee high schools.

It was found that the observers had a

significant mean MTAI gain of 14.33 points but that the tutors' mean gain was only 7.77. This was not significantly different from a gain of zero, nor was the difference between these two mean gains significant. The authors speculated that the direct contact of tutoring real pupils who were having academic problems might have dampened the tutors' enthusiasm for permissive methods of instruction and that this might be a realistic and not undesirable reaction.

They made an informal comparison of the results of their study (education students going to urban schools) and the earlier study (students going to suburban schools if they went anywhere) and noted that students going to urban schools either to tutor or to observe seemed to gain less on the MTAI than did students at suburban schools or students with no exposure to school children whatsoever. They suggested that a direct comparison be made of the attitudinal effects of tutoring in the two different kinds of schools. The present study was directed precisely at making such a comparison.

Two hypotheses were to be tested:

1. Tutors in both urban and suburban schools will have significant gains on the MTAI.

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2. Tutors in suburban schools will have significantly greater gains on the MTAI than tutors in urban schools.

The level of significance was set at .05.

Procedure

The subjects were 38 education juniors at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UW-M) during the spring of 1969. They were taking their first courses in education and were enrolled in two different sections of a course entitled "The Nature and Direction of Learning" taught by one of the authors.

Students in the two sections were fairly similar to education juniors at UW-M over the past years. Most were full-time students taking 12 credits or more. The percentage of women students was about 55 percent in both sections. The students ranged in age from 20 to 25 for the most part, although one or two in each section were over 30 years of age.

On the second day of class all students were given the MTAI, and during the second week arrangements for tutoring were made. Students who were already involved in some kind of tutoring or teaching were allowed to continue wherever they were and, thus, they were lost from the study. These students taught private music pupils at home, reading and math to junior high pupils in Milwaukee Boys' Clubs, and a variety of courses at other community agencies.

It was decided to assign all of the remaining students of one section to suburban high schools and all of the remaining students of the other section to urban Milwaukee schools. Over the past few years it has become apparent that an important class activity for the students was discussing tutoring experiences and plans. The decision to keep treatments separate was aimed at eliminating treatment contamination by any tutors hearing comments about experiences in the other type of school. As it turned out, only three or four class sessions for each section involved much discussion of tutoring experiences, but discussion in the suburban and urban sections did focus on suburban and urban school experiences respectively. Especially in the

urban tutoring section there was a noticeable focus upon teaching ghetto children.

It also turned out that the agents who made the tutoring assignments to Milwaukee schools sent all of our urban students to *one* school instead of to the intended four or five schools. That one school has a racial composition of about 50 percent black and 50 percent white students. The tutors at that school were assigned to pupils by one of the school counselors and they had to make contact with their pupils' regular teachers *via* their own devices, so these contacts were few in number. On the other hand, there were specific host teachers in the suburban schools who were assigned to each tutor and these teachers decided which of their pupils would be tutored. At the very least, these host teachers met each tutor at the beginning of the eight-week program. It is likely that suburban tutors and teachers got to interact and know each other better as the eight weeks passed because tutoring in the suburban schools was often reported to have taken place in the regular teacher's classroom or in a departmental office. In contrast, tutoring in the city school was usually done in the study hall, the cafeteria, or the school library.

In both sections, the tutors generally had two or three pupils, were tutoring in their major or minor area of concentration, and saw their pupils for one hour a week for eight weeks. The tutors kept no logs but they did write two analyses of interesting incidents when their pupils obviously made some progress.

During the last day of class the MTAI was given again. This was approximately two weeks after the tutoring program had been terminated.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis One stated that both groups would show a significant increase on the MTAI. Hypothesis One was supported. The results may be seen in Table 1.

Hypothesis Two stated that tutors in a suburban situation would show a significantly greater gain than tutors in an urban school. Hypothesis Two was not supported. As can

Location of School	Pretest		Post-test		Gain		t	Level of Significance
	Mean	S	Mean	S	Mean	S		
Suburbs	48.45	27.70	57.90	31.76	9.45	15.86	2.66	.05
City	38.83	20.54	59.44	21.19	20.61	19.02	4.60	.001

Table 1. Significance of Gains in Attitudes on the MTAI

be seen from the results in Table 2, there was a reversal, with the tutors in the urban school showing the greater gain. The difference was not significant using a two-tailed test. (It would have been significant using a one-tailed test, but this would not have been legitimate.) Nevertheless, the magnitude of the difference was considerable. Also included in Table 2 is the comparison of the pretest scores of the two groups, which indicates that the difference between them was not significant, although the urban mean was lower than the suburban mean.

	Suburban Mean	Urban Mean	Difference	t	Level of Significance
Pretest	48.45	38.83	9.62	1.18	N.S.
Gain	9.45	20.61	-11.16	-1.93	N.S.

Table 2. Significance of Differences Between Treatment Groups

There are several alternative explanations of the result that was so unexpected, that is, of greater attitude gain for urban tutors.

First, it is possible that the MTAI's reliability is low enough to permit a sizable regression to the mean between pretests and post-tests that spuriously suggests a large gain for whichever group's mean happened to be lower on the pretest. It happened in the Ingle and Zaret study also (1968) that there was simply more room for gain by one group (their observers) between pretest and post-test by 10 points. However, the reported split-half reliabilities of the MTAI are consistently above .88 so the Standard Error of Measurement (S.E.M.) with $SD=25$ would be about 9 points. It is not very likely that *all* of the Ss in one treatment group had *observed* pretest scores that were two S.E.M.'s below their *true* scores because of sampling error and then regressed to their *true* scores on the post-test. So the gains apparently are not accidental.

Second, it is possible that the events in the college classes (especially the discussions) caused differences in attitudes toward permissive teaching. Looking back, the instructor can remember no such influence that he introduced. The discussions were different in the two sections, but that seemed to be the result of the tutors' differential experiences rather than the result of preexisting differences between sections (for example, different kinds of informal class leaders).

Finally, it is possible that the amount of contact between tutor and regular classroom teacher, whatever the location of the school, is influential in changing attitudes toward children. The MTAI manual shows that the scores for experienced teachers are considerably lower than those for education juniors, so experienced teachers might be expected to endorse more authoritarian views in our tutors' presence than our tutors, themselves, held. If we recall that tutor-teacher contact was minimal in the urban school in this study and fairly great in the suburban schools, the possibility of attitude change by this method becomes rather reasonable.

It is still likely that there is greater permissiveness in suburban schools than in urban ones, but this was not apparent here because of the lack of contact with teachers in the urban school. Thus, one might expect that there would be no differences between attitude changes for tutors in suburban and urban schools if they had contact with their pupils only, but there would be great differences between suburban and urban tutors if they had a considerable amount of contact with the regular classroom teachers as well. The suburban tutors would be expected to become especially more permissive.

A comparison of the mean gains of the groups studied in this and the two previous investigations gives support to the general importance of teacher contact. Recognizing

Authors	Group	Location	Activity	Teacher Contact?	MTAI Gain
Ingle and Robinson	A	Suburban	Observe Class study	No	29.85
	B			No	23.17
Ingle and Zaret	C	Urban	Observe Tutor	Some	14.33
	D	Urban		Yes	7.77
Harmon and Ingle	E	Suburban	Tutor	Yes	9.45
	F	Urban		No	20.61

Table 3. A *Post Hoc* Comparison of MTAI Gains as Influenced by Contacts with Teachers

that no tests of significance can be made, the data in Table 3 indicate the following trends:

1. The greater gains tend to be made where there are no appreciable contacts with teachers. Groups A, B, F, and to some extent C are examples.

2. The least gains tend to be made when interactions with both pupils and their teachers occur. Examples are groups D and E.

Some comments about future research can be made. It is clear that the *post hoc* argument given above needs to be tested experimentally. Further, some other outcomes than MTAI scores should be observed as consequences of tutoring. These might

include persistence in the School of Education, willingness to do practice teaching in an urban school, self-concept changes, and instructional methods while practice teaching. Finally, some additional information about students might be helpful in determining who should be sent to urban and who to suburban schools. Certainly, their willingness to tutor in one or the other location would be worth study. If there is a national or local need for urban teachers and if a tutor's original preference does not influence what he gets out of the experience, then tutoring assignment to schools could be based on other considerations.

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