Long-Term Effects of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Civil Rights Pilgrimage

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Background

The Civil Rights Pilgrimage (CRP) is an immersion experience that has been offered 20 times with 1206 total participants available for study. Participants go on a ten-day pilgrimage, visiting key historical locations of the civil rights movement, hearing mass meetings, and speaking with influential foot soldiers. Anecdotally, many participants report a life-changing experience, bringing what they learned back to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and into their own lives. In order to understand the CRP’s impact, we will investigate how or if the CRP has changed participants’ lives one to ten years after the experience by acquiring descriptive survey research. This research supports the claim that cultural immersion experiences have a positive and lasting impact (https://www.aacu.org). Immersion experiences help participants gain abstractive understanding skills like thinking outside the box, called higher order thinking (Prawat, 1991).

Political Engagement Scale

Activities with a focus on social justice educate participants on how to apply learning through civic engagement (Arrin, 1995). The political engagement scale measures participants’ attitudes and willingness to support social justice external causes, and how campus experiences affect activism (Doolittle & Faul, 2013). We predicted that the CRP’s long-term effects would also include themes of social action and civic engagement.

Modern Racism Scale

The Modern Racism Scale (MRS) is perhaps the most widely-used measure of modern racism (McConahay, 1986). The MRS was developed to measure subtle forms of racism that are prevalent in the United States today, and includes questions that indicate whether an individual engages in racist attitudes (Kim, 2006). We predicted that the CRP would encourage anti-racist behavior and attitudes.

Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale

The Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS) measures social attitudes regarding negative, affective, and behavioral aspects of Universality-Diversity Orientation (UDO) (Fuentes et al., 2010). The scale examines empathy and cosmopolitanism through shared experiences with others (Ponterotto, 2010). Research regarding diversity using the M-GUDS shows higher scores among those in inclusive settings (May, 2012). Our research utilizes the M-GUDS scale to evaluate respondents’ perceptions on racial identity, prejudice, and diversity.

Method

This research project assessed CRP participants 3 months to 10 years after they went on the trip. Participants completed the Political Engagement Scale, the Modern Racism Scale, the M-GUDS, and qualitative questions on why they believe the trip impacted them. Participants were surveyed through email, distributed through the university’s email list, and past Civil Rights Pilgrimage Facebook pages. We did descriptive statistics and frequencies on all data, independent sample t-tests on all data, one-way ANOVAs for the activism orientation scale and M-GUDS data, and reliability analysis on all data to determine validity.

Results

![Activism Orientation Scale](image)

The above graph shows the results from the Activism Orientation Scale Study: 25.2% scored near the top, 29.1% scored near the middle, 26.4% scored near the middle, and 19.3% scored near the bottom. We divided the Activism Orientation Scale into two subscales (28). The six highest scored responses were all a part of the conventional subscale. This shows that the participants on the CRP were more likely to engage in low risk methods of political activism than high risk methods. Race comparisons had a statistically significant difference between white individuals and people of color in the six conventional activism responses. Women’s scores were more positive and lasting, compared to men’s scores.

![Modern Racism Scale](image)

The above graph shows the results from the Modern Racism Scale Study. A lower score indicates lower endorsement of racist ideologies.

![Civil Rights Pilgrimage Effects](image)

The above graph shows the results from several general questions to test the effects of taking the Civil Rights Pilgrimage. This is tested from t=0, t=1, t=5, t=7, and t=10.

Discussion

Of the participants who responded to our survey, 77.5% were women, 21.9% were men, and 0.6% other; 74.4% were white and 25.6% were students of color. We divided the Activism Orientation Scale into two subscales (28). Five of the six lowest scored responses were a part of the conventional subscale. This shows that the participants on the CRP were more likely to engage in low risk methods of political activism than engage in high risk methods. Race comparisons had a statistically significant difference between white individuals and people of color in the six conventional activism responses. Women’s scores were more positive and lasting, compared to men’s scores.

![Acknowledgements](image)

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