

Assessment of Impact of Civil Rights Pilgrimage on Student Participants

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Background

Intercultural competence refers to a process-oriented model that combines attitudes of respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery according to Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence. This model displays the degree of intercultural competence as an ongoing process and requires individuals to assess their development over time (Deardorff, 2009). Postsecondary education has opportunities to increase and assess intercultural competence through the curriculum and co-curricular activities, particularly infusing intercultural perspectives into the educational experience through incorporating multiple cultural perspectives, drawing from students' diverse backgrounds, or encouraging immersion experiences (Deardorff, 2009).

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire strives to provide an inclusive atmosphere for multicultural students, as well as to facilitate the cultural competence of all students enrolled at the University. Ninety-three percent of the UW-Eau Claire and Eau Claire population identify as White (Office of Institutional Research, 2011), while Wisconsin is 86 percent White, according to 2010 census estimates. The national population, from the same census estimates, identifies as 72 percent White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). UW-Eau Claire's current enrollment of multicultural students is approximately seven percent, with the University defining multicultural students as those of African-American, American Indian, Hispanic, and/or Southeast Asian ethnic origin. One percent of all university staff are classified as multicultural (Office of Institutional Research, 2011).

Because of the homogeneous population of the campus and surrounding community, UW-Eau Claire students have limited opportunities for direct contact with people of color that will develop multicultural competence. Student exit interviews, conducted by the University Assessment Office in 2002 and 2004, provide qualitative insight into the homogeneous nature of the campus. Narrative responses indicated that students involved in international education or National Student Exchange were significantly more likely to report positive diversity experiences, which correlates with the development of multicultural competence. Such programs provide important opportunities for students to experience diversity that they may not otherwise have encountered. In addition, Plante, Lackey, and Hwang cite a marked increase in compassion and empathy among students who have participated in a week-long immersion trip over participants in a comparison group (Plante, Lackey, and Hwang, 2009). UW-Eau Claire students have also reported that while courses promoting diversity serve the purpose well, the lack of campus diversity made it difficult for students to experience diversity first-hand through contact with people of multicultural backgrounds.

Allport's contact hypothesis states that, "actual face-to-face interaction between members of clearly distinguishable and defined groups" in situations involving certain conditions will "improve people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward diverse others" (Seaman, Beightol, Shirilla, and Crawford, 2009). The contact theory relates directly to the construction of intercultural immersion experiences and situations constructed to encourage students to become interculturally competent.

In an effort to address the concern that students are not able to experience diversity directly at UW-Eau Claire, the University established a ten-day Civil Rights Pilgrimage in 2008. Students participating in the pilgrimage travel by bus to visit major sites of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s through 1970s. This pilot program merged service learning and experiential learning to increase multicultural competence of student participants. The trip experience has since been expanded to include a three-credit cultural diversity course that places emphasis on the role of women in the Civil Rights Movement. Student researchers further enhanced the knowledge gained through this multicultural competence, White privilege awareness and attitudes, and sexism as educational components of the Civil Rights Pilgrimage experience.

The goal of this experience is to expose students to new cultures and ideas, furthering their understanding of racism, sexism, White privilege, and multicultural competence. We anticipated that this experience would cause students to show movement in these key areas because of involvement on the trip and in the corresponding course.

Method

Overview

The Civil Rights Pilgrimage experience was developed to achieve the learning outcomes set by the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric. Participants learned of the immersion experience via campus advertisements. UW-Eau Claire students self-selected to participate in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage and accompanying study. In order to engage in this experience, students must pay a \$425 fee or receive a scholarship. Pilgrimage participants traveled to sites in Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma, Alabama; Gulfport, Mississippi; New Orleans, Louisiana; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Memphis, Tennessee. Itinerary items for the Civil Rights Pilgrimage included visits to historical sites and museums, interactions with people who were directly in the Civil Rights Movement, and other cultural experiences and opportunities for critical thinking about issues of social justice in the past and present. A total of 193 people participated in the immersion experience.

Modern Racism Scale

The Modern Racism scale assesses the attitude of White participants towards African-Americans (McConahay, 1982). Our measure of Modern Racism included six questions on a scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (e.g. "Over the past few years, the government and the media have shown more respect for Blacks than they deserve.")

Modern Sexism Scale

The Modern Sexism scale evaluated views on prejudice and discrimination against women (Swim et al., 1995). To assess participant's views on sexism, an eight-question scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used (e.g. "Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.")

White Privilege Attitudes Scale

The White Privilege Attitudes scale examines factors such as awareness, willingness to confront it, and remorse (Pinteris, Potat, Spanierman, 2009). Measures of White Privilege consisted of 28 questions to deduce how aware White participants are of their own privilege (e.g. "I plan to work to change our unfair social structure that promotes White privilege.")

Association of American Colleges and Universities Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric

A set of 18 questions were developed by the researchers to accompany the AAC&U Rubric to assess participants' cultural competency (Rhodes, Terrel, et al., 2010) (e.g. "I ask questions about what belonging to a certain culture or group means in terms of stereotypes and their effects on everyday life.")

Openness NEO-PI

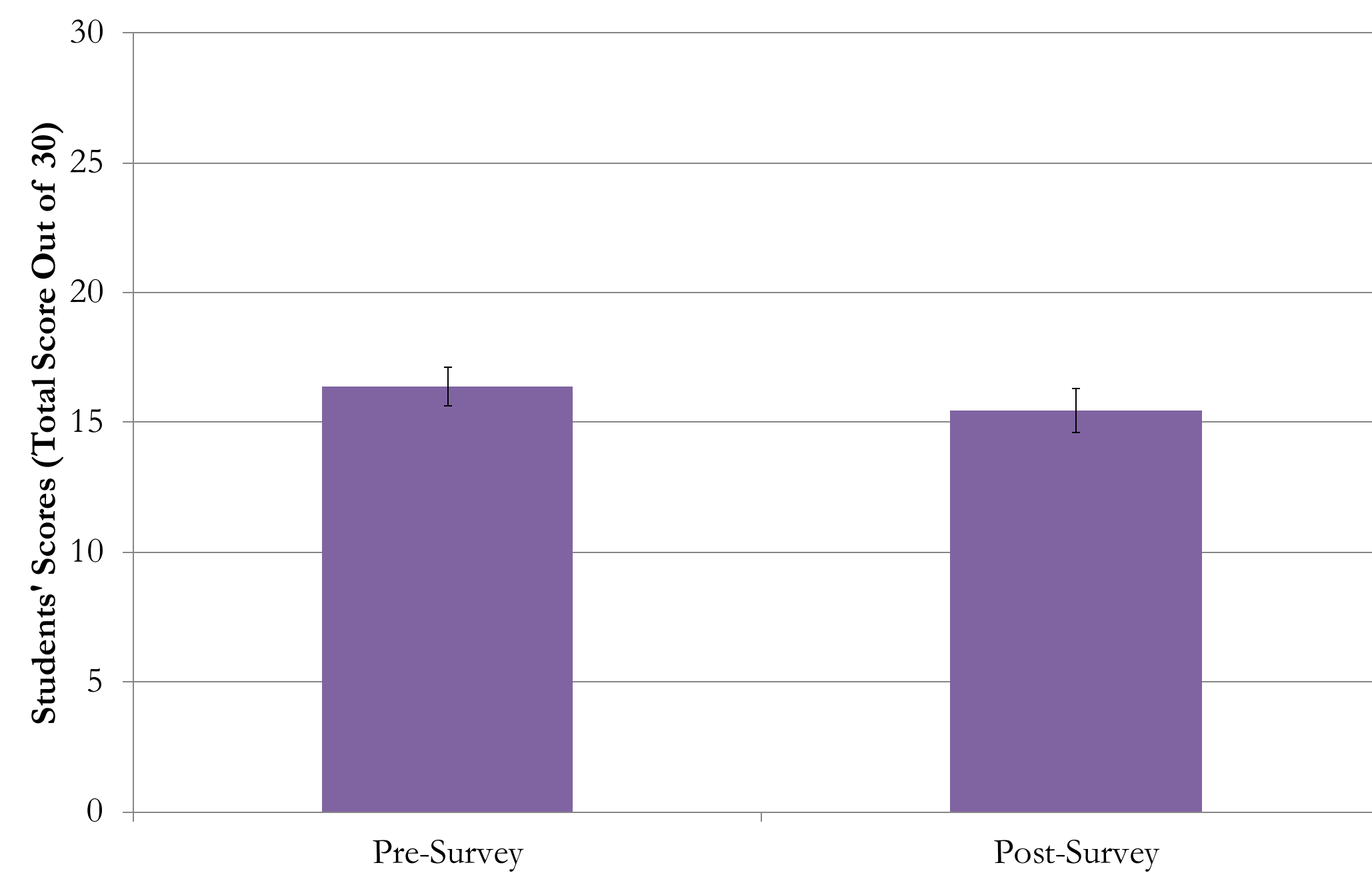
In order to assess how open participants are to opinions different from their own, they completed a questionnaire comprised of 56 questions (e.g. "I believe that laws and social policies should change to reflect the needs of a changing world.") Participants were also surveyed on the other four factors of the Big Five personality traits using the TIPI.

Miville-Guzman University-Diversity Scale - Short Form

The Miville-Guzman scale is a 15-item questionnaire that seeks to measure the attitudes of students concerning diversity (Miville et al., 1999). (e.g. "Individuals from different cultures, races, and/or ethnic groups can teach me things I could not learn elsewhere.")

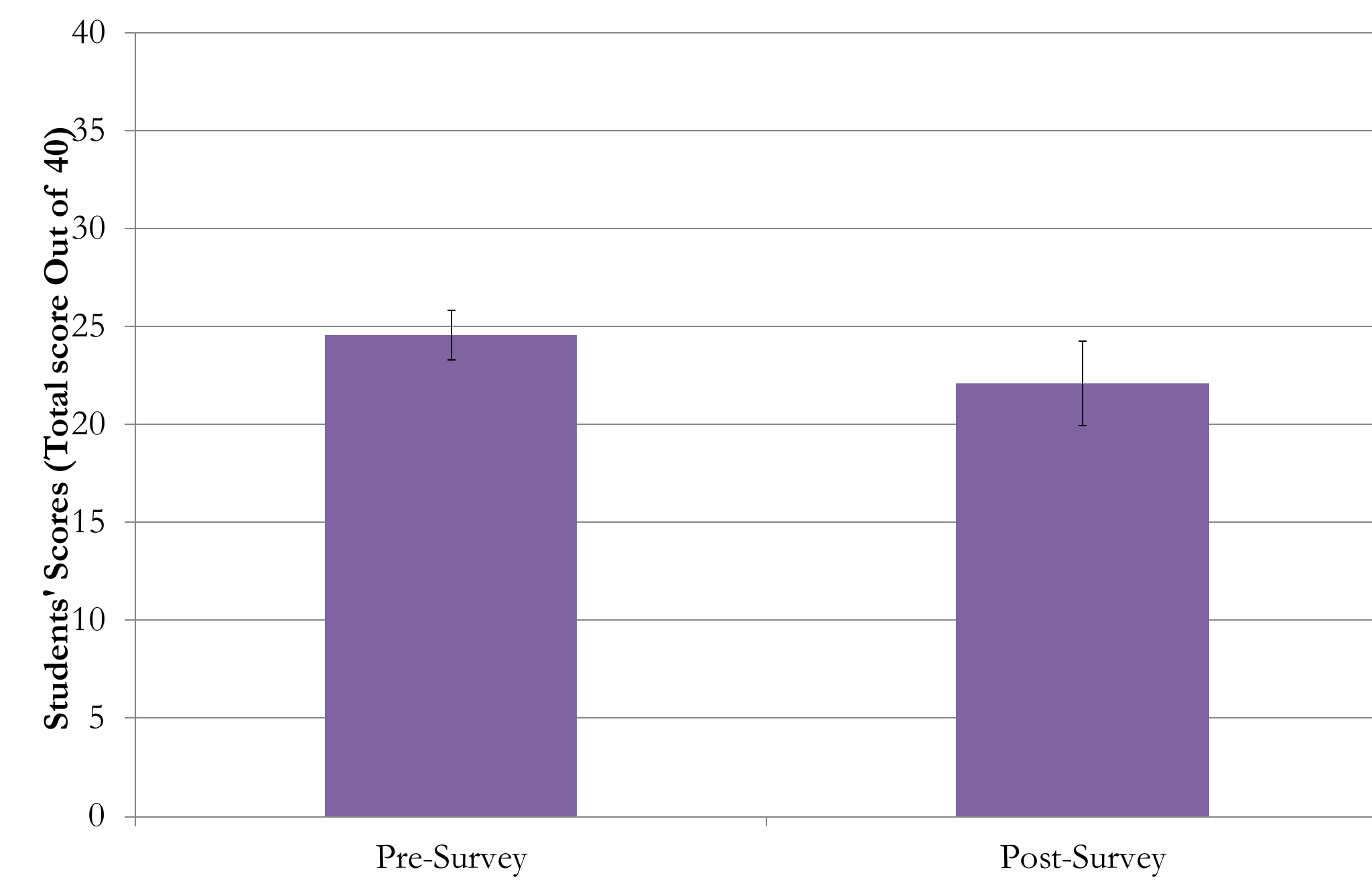
Results

Change in Students' Scores on the Modern Racism Scale



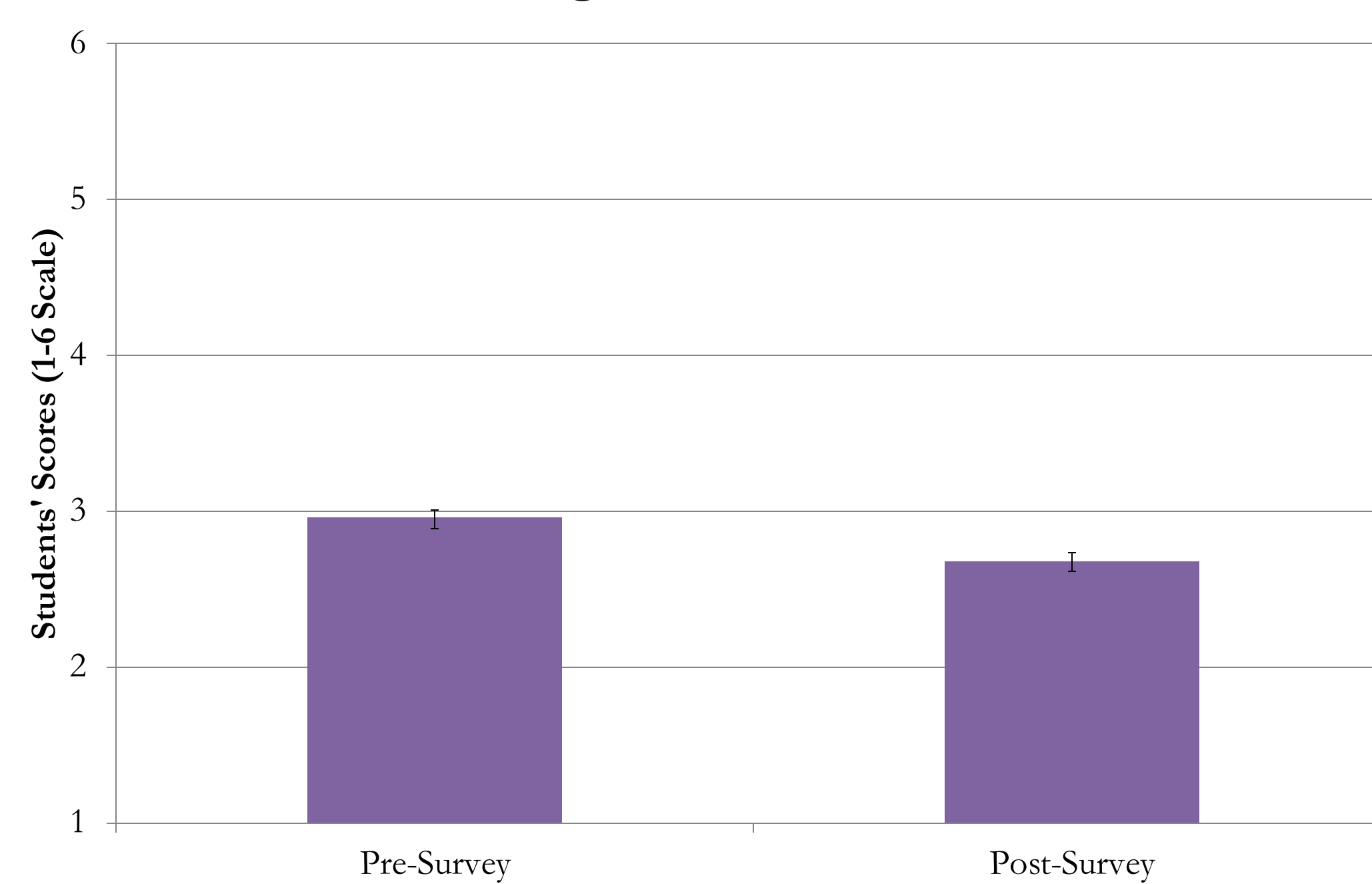
Among non-African American individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage ($n=98$), there was a significant change in scores on the Modern Racism Scale indicating a significant decrease in reported levels of racism from the pre-trip surveys ($M=16.37, SD=7.199$) compared to the post-trip surveys ($M=15.45, SD=8.440, t(97)=2.505, p=.014$).

Changes in Students' Scores on the Modern Sexism Scale



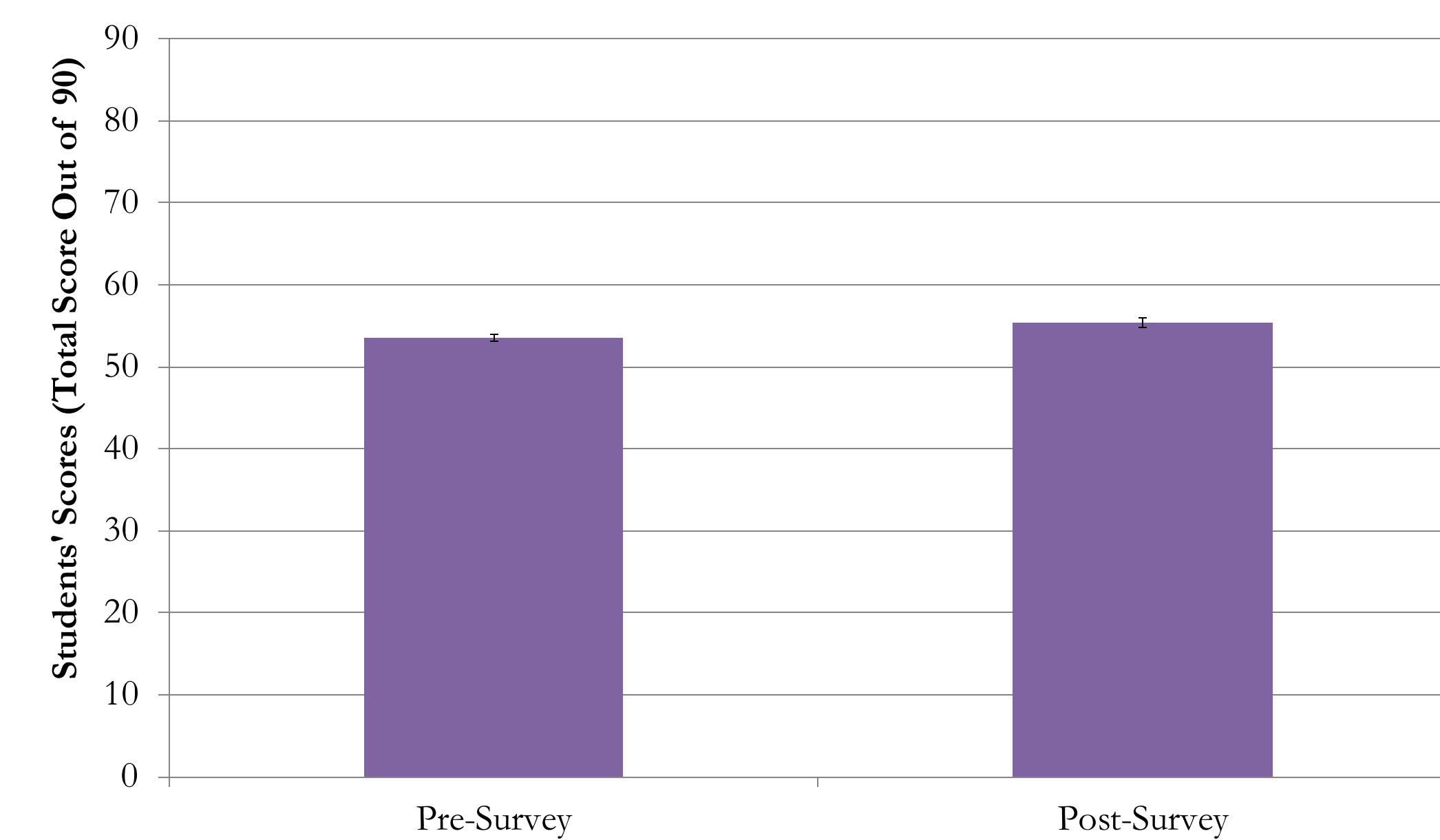
Among males who participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage ($n=17$), researchers failed to find a significant change in scores on the Modern Sexism Scale pre-trip surveys ($M=24.59, SD=5.209$) compared to the post-trip surveys ($M=22.12, SD=8.788, t(16)=1.095, p>.05$, indicating no significant change in levels of reported sexism).

Change in Students' Scores on the White Privilege Attitudes Scale



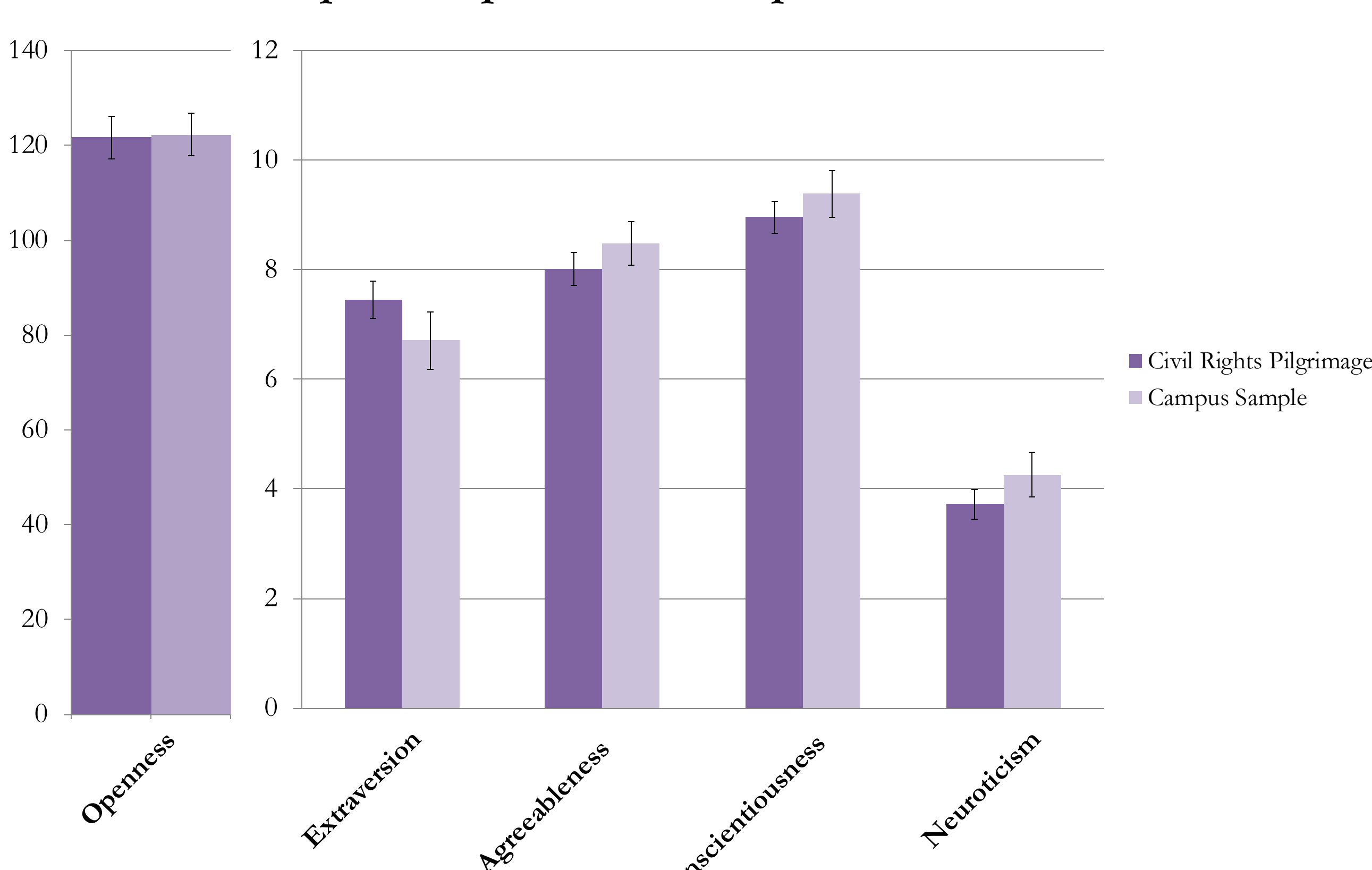
Among White individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage ($n=64$), there was a significant change in scores on the White Privilege Attitudes Scale indicating an increased awareness of privilege from the pre-trip surveys ($M=2.96, SD=.44$) compared to the post-trip surveys ($M=2.68, SD=.56, t(63)=3.70, p<.001$).

Changes in Students' Scores on the AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric



Among individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage ($n=66$), there was a significant change in scores on the AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric from the pre-trip surveys ($M=53.55, SD=3.75$) compared to the post-trip surveys ($M=55.44, SD=4.88, t(65)=-3.18, p=.002$, indicating that levels of intercultural competence significantly increased).

Differences in Personality Traits Between Trip Participants and Campus Control



Between individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage ($n=74$) and individuals from a random sample of students on campus ($n=31$), there was not a significant difference in Openness scores on the NEO-PI Openness survey, or a significant difference in Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, or Neuroticism scores on the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (all $p>.05$).

Discussion

Overall, the scores on each of the subscales were displaying movement in the expected direction. Students exhibited a statistically significant increase in awareness of White privilege and a reduction in racism. Researchers also found evidence of students' increased intercultural knowledge and competence on the Association of American Colleges & Universities Intercultural Knowledge and Competence instrument. Although results for the Modern Sexism Scale were not significant, researchers found evidence of a trend in the expected direction of reduction in sexism. There were no significant differences in participants' scores on the Modified Miville-Guzman University-Diversity Scale (Short Form).

Limitations for this study include a small sample of males participating in the immersion experience for analysis of the Modern Sexism Scale. This is not a surprising characteristic of the sample, as the UW-Eau Claire campus community is predominantly female. However, our sample has become increasingly diverse in more recent years with a larger number of international students and students of color than is representative of the campus population participating in the Civil Rights Pilgrimage. This has provided white students on the immersion experience with additional opportunities to interact with other students from UW-Eau Claire with more diverse backgrounds. These demographic characteristics of the group may have provided some justification behind the statistical significance displayed on the measures.

Researchers attempted to develop a comparison group by surveying students completing diversity education courses without an immersion experience; however, the sample size from this study was too small to garner a legitimate comparison. UW-Eau Claire requires students to complete courses with a diversity emphasis. The course offered in conjunction with the Civil Rights Pilgrimage fulfills this requirement. A comparison group would show a difference in cultural diversity course requirement and an immersion requirement as a method to fulfill the intercultural competence development learning outcome.

Since students self-select into the immersion experience, a control sample was taken of the entire campus to compare individuals' levels of openness and other personality traits. No significant differences were found in openness or the other personality traits, which shows that students who self-select into the immersion experience are representative of the larger campus population.

Researchers chose to use the Modified Miville-Guzman University-Diversity Scale (Short Form) in an effort to have a common assessment across UW-Eau Claire's domestic intercultural immersion experiences. Three other projects use this instrument. Because results were not statistically significant, the researchers plan to collaborate with other immersion projects to find a more effective common assessment.

Assessing the effectiveness of immersion experiences as a mechanism to achieve the intercultural competence development learning outcome for UW-Eau Claire students is a campus priority, as it considers the development of an immersion requirement for all undergraduate students. As such, a future direction for the research will include an expanded comparison group sample from across diversity education courses. Researchers will explore incentives to offer for survey completion to increase sample size.

The next step in our research is to continue to validate the researcher-developed instrument which assesses movement along the AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Rubric. Further study, development, and validation of this instrument could result in a widely-used tool across institutions of higher education for the assessment of movement across learning outcome rubric domains.

These results indicate that this immersion experience is an effective tool for increasing intercultural competence through a marked decrease in levels of White Privilege Attitudes and racism, as well as an increase in Intercultural Knowledge and Competence. Researchers plan to continue this study to garner a larger sample size and produce data to report stronger supporting effects of the Civil Rights Pilgrimage. We also plan to extend the use of our AAC&U rubric instrument to other immersion experiences on the UW-Eau Claire campus to be used as a common measure of intercultural competence.

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