



# Perceptions of Racial Diversity: Effects of Campus Tours on Prospective Students



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## Abstract

This study investigates whether a campus tour given by the Admissions office of the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire that communicates explicit visual and verbal messages pertaining to diversity will create positive perceptions of racial diversity on campus for prospective students. This study is important to both the university and prospective students, as research has shown that participating in cultural experiences can strengthen University students' impressions of their institutions and improve their self-esteem and familial relationships (Jenkins, 2009). Research also suggests that a diverse population is more educationally effective than one that lacks diversity (Hurtado, et al. 1998). Approximately 125 prospective students will participate in this study by taking a campus tour and completing a questionnaire. Participants will be split into an experimental group, receiving our enhanced tour, and a control group who will receive a regular UWEC tour. Both groups will be asked to complete a pre-test and a post-test regarding the tour, from which our data will be extrapolated. We expect to find that students who experienced the enhanced tour will form more positive perceptions of and also an increased awareness of diversity at UWEC. For the purposes of this poster, only the data gathered from the diverse tour will be discussed.

## Relevant Literature

- ❖ Racial diversity is the extent of knowledge about diverse groups as well as issues related to diversity and how they are adapted into classroom curriculum (Muthuswamy, et al., 2006).
- ❖ A diverse student population is more educationally effective than one that lacks diversity (Hurtado, et al., 1998).
- ❖ Impression management is the goal directed activity of controlling or regulating information in order to influence the impressions formed by an audience (Wolfe Morrison & Bies, 1991).
- ❖ Campus visits and tours are important opportunities for the college to communicate desired messages about itself (Chapman, 1981).

**RQ1:** How do explicit visual and verbal messages pertaining to racial diversity communicated during a University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus tour affect high school students' perceptions of the University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire?



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## Methods

### Participants

19 total participants (8 men and 11 women) with 17.26 as the average age. Over 95% of the participants were Caucasian.

### Procedure

The campus tour was conducted by a controlled tour guide and enhanced to include explicit visual and verbal messages pertaining to racial diversity. Prior to the tour, participants were given a paper survey regarding their perceptions of various aspects of the UW-Eau Claire campus including racial diversity. They were given the same survey immediately after completing the campus tour.

## Results

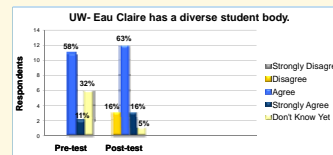


Figure 1

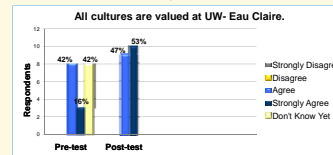


Figure 2

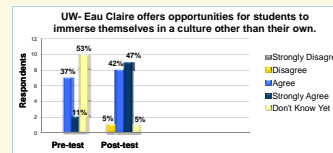


Figure 3

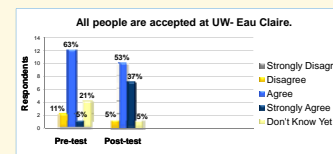


Figure 4

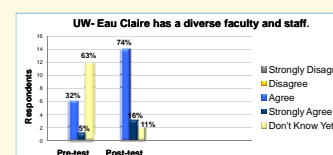


Figure 5

### Quantitative Data:

Explicit visual and verbal messages pertaining to racial diversity communicated during a University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire campus tour reduced uncertainty about racial diversity and increased positive perceptions of diversity at UW- Eau Claire.

### Qualitative Data:

"Based on your knowledge of UW- Eau Claire, please identify two values you believe are most important to this institution."

Responses to this open-ended question included:

"Diverse teachers", "Welcoming", "Diversity",  
"Safe/diverse", "Friendliness", "Immersion"

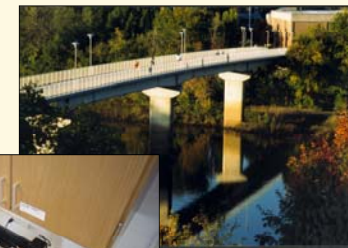
## Implications

### Limitations:

Ninety-five percent of participants classified themselves as Caucasian; therefore their perceptions of racial diversity did not necessarily represent those of the general population. Although the route and script were the same for each tour, questions asked by tour participants varied, eliciting slightly different messages throughout the tour. Although students were assured that their answers had no effect on their admissions status, their answers still could have been skewed due to concern for their acceptance to the university.

### Future research:

Research possibilities include conducting a tour involving a larger sample of racially diverse prospective students to analyze their likelihood of attending the university, as well as assessing current students' perceptions of racial diversity on campus.



## References

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