



Social Identity and Intercultural Competence Among Staff at Concordia Language Villages

Rachel C. Peterson

Abstract

This research examines the social identities and intercultural competence of counselors at Concordia Language Villages[1]. Driven by a desire to understand more about the people who make the decision to work at camps of this kind, where peace education is embedded in the overall curriculum, I asked how staff identity may be influenced by such peace education-related experiences. More specifically, can CLV staff experiences be influenced by or linked to growth in their social identities and intercultural competence? The preliminary findings and analysis of this research project are presented.

Introduction

When we think of summer camps we tend to think first of the children and youth who participate. They are, after all, a fundamental factor in the summer camp equation. Without young participants, summer camp is just a quiet place in the woods or a hushed classroom. Another important factor, however – and one that is perhaps not examined as frequently – is the summer camp staff. Without qualified staff there to guide and support the experiences of the campers, camp would likely be an unstructured and unsafe environment. It is important to know what happens to staff members as they work at camps. How do different camp curricula effect the way staff members identify themselves and identify with others, and what kind of long-term learning can this lead to among the staff?

At Concordia Language Villages, staff members focus on guiding villagers down the path towards “responsible global citizenship” through language and culture education. Because “understanding and appreciating cultural diversity” and “being able to communicate with confidence and cultural sensitivity in more than one language” are just a couple of the objectives of the Language Villages, I propose that a form of peace education is happening there.

Methods

Participants. Participants were 2006 Concordia Language Villages staff members whose ages ranged from 18 to 44 (mean = 22.8, s.d. = 4.85). Eighty six staff members from five villages were involved in the survey study (4 Chinese, 17 French, 34 German, 21 Norwegian, 10 Spanish).

Materials and Procedure. A composite survey was used to capture the main information about CLV staff member’s social identities and degree of intercultural competence.

- The Crisp and Lewis Social Identity Survey was used to measure the social identity of CLV staff members.

- Olson and Kroeger’s Relational Measure of International Experience, Global Competency, and Intercultural Sensitivity was used to measure staff members’ levels of intercultural awareness.

Crisp, Richard J., and Ann Lewis. *Measuring Social Identity in the Professional Context of Provision for Pupils with Special Needs*. School Psychology International, 2004, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 404-421.

Olson, C. L. and K. Kroeger. *Global Competency and Intercultural Sensitivity*. Journal of Studies in International Education, 2001, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 116-137.

Concordia Language Villages mission statement. Retrieved January 27, 2007 from <http://www.concordialanguagevillages.org/>

Research Questions

1. Do staff feel a sense of shared identity with their fellow CLV staff members? Are their scores on the Crisp and Lewis Social Identity Survey (identification with prototypical group members (SI ID), perceived typicality (SI PRO), and public reference (SISPR2)) influenced by such factors as age, time spent abroad, number of years on staff, experience as a villager, and village of employment?
2. Is there a correlation between staff member’s experience at a village and their degree of global competence and intercultural sensitivity? Are their scores on the Olson and Kroeger Relational Measure of International Experience, Global Competency, and Intercultural Sensitivity (cultural competence, global engagement, activity, and perspective) influenced by experience as a villager or the particular village they work at? Are the scores on both surveys correlated with one another?

Results

Significance of Social Identity Survey scores as related to the factors age, weeks spent abroad, years on staff, villager experience, and village of employment.

	SI ID	SIPRO	SISPR2
Age	(-) significant	(-) significant	not significant
Weeks Abroad	(-) significant	not significant	not significant
Years on Staff	(+) significant	(+) significant	not significant
Villager/Non-villager	significant between-group difference	not significant	not significant
Village	some significant between-group differences	some significant between-group differences	not significant

Significance of Intercultural Competence Survey scores as related to the factors villager experience, village of employment, SI ID, and SIPRO.

	Cultural Competence	Global Engagement	Activity	Perspective
Villager/Non-villager	no significant differences	no significant differences	no significant differences	no significant differences
Village	no significant differences	no significant differences	no significant differences	some significant between-group differences
SI ID	not significant	(+) significant	(+) significant	(+) significant
SIPRO	(+) significant	(+) significant	(+) significant	(+) significant

Future Research

This survey data will be supplemented with 7 in-depth interviews with CLV staff members who have worked for either two years or 5+ years. It will be included in a master’s thesis in peace and conflict transformation studies at the University of Tromsø, Norway.



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[1] Concordia Language Villages is comprised of 14 villages, each specializing in teaching language and culture to children and youth between the ages of 7 and 18. My personal experience with CLV began when I was a villager at Skogfjorden, the Norwegian Village, and continues as I have worked on staff since the summer of 2001.