

Thinking Globally and/or Acting Locally? Community Service and Civic Engagement Orientations of Berkeley Undergraduates

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The following summarizes an initial look at a research question prompted by two civic engagement concerns, first, that University of California undergraduates have the opportunity to engage in local community service, and, second, that our students develop a global civic orientation, that is, become “citizens of the world.” The research question is this: For University of California undergraduates, what is the relationship between a Community Service Orientation (CSO) and a Global Civic Orientation (GCO)? Further, how does examination of these two orientations advance our understanding of undergraduate civic engagement?

Berkeley UCUES Spring 2005: An Overview

- Professor Flacks has reported on the UCwide Spring 2004 UCUES results. In Spring 2005 only the Berkeley campus administered UCUES. Using a full census approach, we will be completing the data collection this month, and we are projecting an overall response rate slightly greater than fifty percent.
- The Berkeley Spring 2005 UCUES uses a core question plus module design, that is, all respondents complete a set of basic questions on the undergraduate experience (including those about the experience within the major, thus permitting “drill down” of the results to the departmental level) and then one of five specialized modules (academic engagement, civic engagement, student services, student development, and “wild card”).
- The research findings reported here is a first look at the Spring 2005 Berkeley results for the Civic Engagement module where we already have a 50% response rate and over 2100 completed surveys.

Defining the Community Service Orientation Index and the Global Civic Orientation Index

- A Community Service Orientation (CSO) index was constructed using a composite measure of past, present (including hours per week spent), and anticipated community service and a measure of importance of having opportunities for community service. These two measures have a 0.48 correlation.
- A Global Civic Orientation (GCO) index was constructed using three measures: a composite measure of frequency of use of Internet news sources, national television news and reading of a daily newspaper; importance of being well-informed about world issues; and frequency of discussion current events or news with friends. Correlations among these three measures are 0.34, 0.36 and 0.42.
- Analyses were run to assess the possibility of three relationships between CSO and GCO:
 - A substantial **POSITIVE** correlation between CSO and GCO because **both are expressions of a more general civic engagement orientation;**

- A substantial **NEGATIVE** correlation between CSO and GCO because **the two are competing orientations or modes of civic expression**;
- Essentially **NO CORRELATION** between CSO and GCO because **the two reflect unrelated and different modes of civic expression**.
- A positive relationship would suggest other measures correlate in the same direction with CSO and GCO, a negative relationship would suggest other measures correlate in the opposite direction with CSO and GCO, and no relationship would suggest that some measures correlate with CSO while others correlate with GCO

Main Finding: The Community Service Orientation (CSO) and Global Civic Orientation (GCO) Appear to be Two Separate and Largely Independent Forms of Civic Engagement

- The overall correlation between CSO and GCO is an extremely modest +0.12.
- The magnitude of this correlation is consistent across and within a large number of student subgroups, e.g., year in school, various demographic categories, and political subgroups.
- The significant exception is how family income moderates the CSO-GCO relationship: for low and especially middle-income students, the CSO-GCO correlation is stronger, while for high-income students the correlation is actually negative (-0.01).

An Exploratory Typology of Community Service and Global Civic Orientations – Background Factors

- Scores of below 5 and above 8 were used to define low and high scores on the 12-point CSO Index and scores of below 9 and above 13 were used to define low and high scores on the 18-point GCO Index, yielding the following: (A) Low-Low n=190; (B) Low CSO-High GCO n=145; (C) High CSO-Low GCO n=165;(D) High-High n=226
- The “four-corners” of the CSO-GCO distribution provides tangible illustration of how some background factors are related to the Community Service Orientation while others are related to the Global Civic Orientation.
- For example, women, underrepresented minority students, and students whose parents were not born in the United States are higher than their counterparts on CSO, while upper-classmen and white students are higher than their counterparts on GCO.
- By field of study, Political Science, Psychology, and Molecular & Cell Biology majors are high on CSO, while EECS, Mechanical Engineering, and Architecture majors are low; Political Science, English, Business Administration, and Double majors are high in GCO, while Architecture, MCB, Mechanical Engineering, EECS and Economics majors are low.

Using the CSO-GCO Typology to Illuminate Variation in Civic Engagement and Political Views of Berkeley Undergraduates

Self-reported gains in both interpersonal skills and leadership skills are correlated with both CSO and GCO.

The two high GCO combinations are more likely to see themselves as liberal (or far left), but even more likely to report “strong” political beliefs regardless of political orientation

The two high GCO combinations are much more likely to view the country as headed in the wrong direction.

The overall striking finding, however, is how the High-High combination stands out relative to the other three combinations on a wide range of items including voting, being well informed about campus issues, choosing to enroll at Berkeley if starting over, and levels of satisfaction with both academic and social aspects of undergraduate life.

Implications for Further Research and Policy

Fostering civic engagement: one strategy or two?

Harnessing the power of UCUES, e.g., longitudinal analyses of the development of civic engagement orientations

Using (triangulating with) other data sources and studies, e.g., evaluations of service learning and community service outcomes