



Political and Religious Orientations, Social Involvement, and Student Satisfaction with College

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Objectives

- ▶ The present study investigates how religious and political affiliation and identity affect UWEC students in terms of their satisfaction with their college experience.
- ▶ By drawing on previous research and the sociological theory of identity (SIT), the link between student levels of political and religious identity, campus engagement, and student satisfaction can be tested.
- ▶ Social Identity theory states that personal identities are developed through social interactions in groups and that identities change over time as more interactions occur.
- ▶ People develop a group membership by interacting with others and developing a sense that one is similar to others.
- ▶ People tend to see the reason for many of their experiences as caused by their central social identities.
- ▶ Those who perceive their social groups as being marginalized will tend to blame outside causes for their negative social experiences.

Hypotheses

- ▶ H1: The greater the identification as “politically conservative”, the lower the level of satisfaction with the UWEC experience.
- ▶ H2: The greater the identification as religious, the lower the level of satisfaction with the UWEC experience.
- ▶ H3: The more involved students are with student organizations, the higher the level of satisfaction with the UWEC experience.
- ▶ H4: The greater the number of friends at college, the higher the level of satisfaction with the UWEC experience.
- ▶ H5: The greater the self identification as “politically conservative”, the fewer friends on campus.
- ▶ H6: The greater the self identification as “politically conservative”, the fewer campus groups a student will belong to.
- ▶ H7: The greater the self identification as “religious”, the fewer friends on campus.
- ▶ H8: The greater the self identification as “religious”, the fewer campus groups a student will belong to.

Methods

- ▶ An online survey was distributed during the beginning of the 2012 spring semester with 144 students responding.
- ▶ Basic demographic information was collected as well as the students’ political and religious views and their level of social involvement at UWEC.
- ▶ Students also reported educational, social, and overall satisfaction levels with their UWEC experience.
- ▶ A 7 point Likert scale was used in many of the questions regarding satisfaction levels, religiosity, and political affiliation.
- ▶ Multiple regression was used to analyze the data.

Participants

- ▶ Of the 144 students who took the survey, 38 were male, and 106 were female.
- ▶ 94.4% of students fell between the ages of 18 to 23 with a total range between 18 to 49.
- ▶ The political views were more liberal-based with 37.5% of students indicating they were Democrats and 17.4% indicating they were Republicans. The remaining 45.1% responded no party or held views that did not fall into either of the two categories listed above.
- ▶ 66.7% of students reported having Christian beliefs while 33.3% reported having non-Christian beliefs.

Results

Table 1 shows the relationships between the independent variables of holding Republican views, reporting Christian beliefs, and being female with the dependent variables of the number of close friends on campus and the number of campus organizations a student is a part of. There were no significant relationships between any of the independent variables and the dependent variables. This indicates that being a Republican, Christian, or female has no bearing on the number of close friends on campus one has or the number of campus organizations they are a part of.

Table 2 shows the relationships between the independent variable of holding Republican views, reporting Christian beliefs, being female, the climate index, the people index, and the number of campus organizations a student is a part of on campus and the dependent variables of college living up to expectations, educational satisfaction, social satisfaction, overall satisfaction, and how likely one would be to recommend UWEC to others. The data show that females are less likely to see college as living up to their expectations, that Christians were more likely to recommend UWEC to others, that those who rated UWEC highly in the climate index tended to have higher educational and social satisfaction levels, and that those who rated UWEC highly in the people index tended to have higher educational, social, and overall satisfaction levels.

Table 1: Connecting to Others Regression Models

Independent Variable		Model 1	Model 2
	Republican	.341	-.282
	Christian	.395	.352
	Female	-.311	-.132
	R ²	.027	.017
		# of Close Friends	# of Campus Organizations
Dependent Variable			

Table 2: Identity and Satisfaction Regression Models

Independent Variable		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Republican	-.151	-.120	-.100	-.078	-.488
	Christian	.252	.404	.014	.294	.515*
	Female	-.528*	-.241	-.055	.136	.254
	Idea Climate Index	.010	.056*	.074**	.034	.026
	Connecting to People Index	.158	.101**	.179 ***	.137***	.106***
	# of Organizations	.182	.067	.082	.138	.069
	R ²	.296	.245	.458	.356	.306
		College living up to expectations	Satisfaction educational	Satisfaction social	Satisfaction overall	Recommend UWEC

Model 1 in Table 2 shows women are significantly less likely ($<.05$) to say college is living up to expectations compared to men, and this model explains 29.6% of the variation in responses. Model 2 shows significant relationships between educational satisfaction and the Idea Climate and Connecting to People Indexes ($<.05$ and $<.001$) that explain 24.5% of the variation. Model 3 again showed significant relationships between the social satisfaction and indexes ($<.01$ and $<.001$) that explain 45.8% of the variation. Model 4 shows a significant relationship between overall satisfaction and the Connecting to People Index ($<.001$) that explains 35.6% of the variation. Model 5 shows significant relationships between the likelihood of recommending UWEC and Christian identification and the Connecting to People Index ($<.05$ and $<.001$) that explains 30.6% of the variation.

Table Key

$<.05 = *$
 $<.01 = **$
 $<.001 = ***$

Republican = Republicans compared to Non-Republicans
Christian = Christians compared to Non-Christians

Female = Females compared to Males

Idea Climate Index = I don't talk about my ideas + I find the campus accepting of my religious beliefs + I find the campus accepting of my political beliefs + I feel like an outsider because of my religious beliefs + I feel like an outsider because of my political beliefs

Connecting to People Index = It's easy to meet people on campus + There are people with similar beliefs as me on campus + I have many close friends on campus

of Organizations = The number of campus organizations I am a part of

Discussion and Conclusions

- ▶ Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported while Hypotheses 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were not.
- ▶ The data show students who belonged to more campus groups had a significantly higher overall satisfaction with the UWEC. Those with more close friends on campus had a significantly higher educational, social, and overall satisfaction with the UWEC.
- ▶ Political views were not significantly related to the students' educational, social, or overall satisfaction with the UWEC college experience, nor with the number of friends or membership in campus organizations.
- ▶ Religious beliefs were also not significantly related to the students' educational, social, or overall satisfaction with UWEC college experience, nor with the number of friends or membership in campus organizations.
- ▶ Joining campus organizations, having friends on campus, and viewing the UWEC as an open place to other ideas and beliefs are strongly associated with the satisfaction levels of UWEC students.
- ▶ Students with Christian views were significantly more likely than other students to recommend the UWEC to others.
- ▶ Gender was significantly related to the perception of college living up to expectations with women finding UWEC to be lacking in these regards. Whether this was due to women having higher expectations when starting college or due to bad experiences is unknown at this time and requires more research to clarify.
- ▶ Despite what many would assume, the data does not indicate any negative effects of perceived bias on religious or political minorities on campus in terms of their satisfaction with the UWEC.
- ▶ The results of this study support of SIT, in that no matter what groups people belonged to, those who connect to other people on campus have a more positive experience inside and outside the classroom.

Sources

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