

# The Interactive Mechanism of College Students' Group Identity and Role Identity

## -- Analysis on the Development Path of College Student Union

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### Abstract

In recent years, public opinion has frequently criticized the student union organizations in Colleges and universities, and the comments on the "bureaucratization", "socialization" and "darkness" of the student union organizations on social networks have become the mainstream views, so as to analyze the existing problems from a new perspective and construct the interaction mechanism between the identity and role identity of college students. It is emphasized that the interactive mechanism is the psychological motivation of students' life in the whole university period. The imperfect mechanism will lead to negative factors such as role conflict, role slackness and role confrontation, which will lead to the following problems: 1. Role conflict between position and name establishment; 2. Mismatch between organizational behavior and organizational goals; 3. Under the background of identity, the absence of role identity. The corresponding countermeasures and suggestions for the development of the student union are as follows: 1. We should strengthen the understanding and recognition of the role of the student union; 2. Reduce the administrative intervention in the selection of student union cadres; 3. Enhance the social adaptability of college students.

### Keywords

College Student Union; Identity; Role Identity; Influencing Factors.

## 1. College Student Union

The college student union is a student autonomous organization under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the guidance of the Communist Youth League, which has been set up in colleges and universities in China, adhering to the concept of serving students and realizing the interests of students, representing the rights of students. During the May 4th Movement, the first student union appeared in the history of our country. At that time, the name of the organization was the Student Autonomous Association, which was later changed to the Student Union after the founding of New China. Tsinghua students set up the first student delegation in 1919 to defend national dignity and awaken national consciousness at a time when the country was in danger of being exploited. The first Congress of the All-China Student Federation was held in Shanghai from June 16 to August 5 of that year. Since then, the Federation has held 27 congresses, and in August 2020, the 27th National Congress of the All-China Federation of Students deliberated and adopted the Resolution on the Work Report of the 26th Committee of the All-China Federation of Students and the Resolution on the Amendment to the Constitution of th ([http://qgxl.youth.cn/xljj/lcdh/202008/t20200828\\_12470768.htm](http://qgxl.youth.cn/xljj/lcdh/202008/t20200828_12470768.htm)). The existence of college student union organization plays an important role in safeguarding the rights and interests of students, cultivating comprehensive quality and ability, all-round development and other educational policies. It is a very important platform

for training young backbone, and also an important bridge and link between college student groups and between students and society.

## 2. The Raising of the Question

In recent years, public criticism of student union organizations in colleges and universities is not uncommon, and the "bureaucratization", "socialization" and "darkness" of student union organizations on social networks have become the mainstream views, resulting in a gradual decline in the recognition of student union organization by student groups, teacher groups and society. In 2011, a teacher of Renmin University of China published an online article titled "Student Union: The Darkest Corner of the University", which criticized and disclosed the negative impact of the student union on the university campus, causing a heated discussion on the Internet. On the "Zhihu" forum app commonly used by young people, the input of the keyword "Student Union" is also a series of doubts and disapproval of the Student Union and the "President of the Student Union". In recent years, the appointment announcement of student cadres in a university is too "formal" like a national cadre, which has also been resisted by the student group against the "student official" style. Faced with the problem of declining identity accumulated in recent years, On October 6, 2018, the Student Union of Peking University, the Graduate Association of Tsinghua University and the Graduate Association of Renmin University of China jointly launched the initiative of the Convention on Self-Discipline of Student Union and Graduate Association Cadres, which responded to and restrained the phenomenon of utilitarianism and vulgarization of student union cadres.

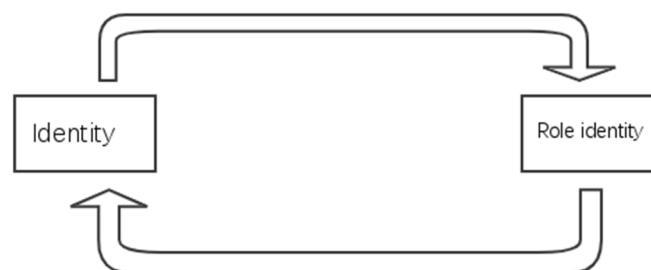
As the most influential and most widely covered student organization in the university, scholars have studied the college student union since 2008, and the teachers of the Youth League Committee of colleges and universities have also studied and responded to the problems and solutions in the college student union. [6] Dong Leiming believes that the phenomenon of "bureaucratization" and "formalism" of college student unions is an excessive emphasis on their own identity and self-symbolization. [7]; Liu Zhengzong and Jiang Ning, through the investigation and study of colleges and universities in Hunan, believe that the administration of colleges and universities is easy to lead to a small number of student cadres, and that student cadres in Colleges and universities are easy to become "scapegoats" for netizens to criticize the whole society or the bureaucratic bureaucrats in Colleges and universities. [8]. Through the summary, the current scholars for the phenomenon of college student union analysis angle is more comprehensive, and the research results provided by the relevant teachers who have direct contact with the student union provide a good research support for the subsequent research on the student union. But at the same time, the research tends to be homogeneous, the analysis is not deep enough, and there is a lack of innovative perspective. The development of college student union is in urgent need of self-innovation, and the purpose and significance of the study is not to "float on the surface" to carry out platitudinous slogans, but to make a deeper analysis of the problems existing in the development of student union, and to put forward suggestions and directions for the development of student union.

## 3. Analysis of the Problem

### 3.1. Identity and Role Identity of College Students

The analysis of college student union can not be separated from the important subject and organizational environment of college students. The problems in the development of student union can be summarized as the result of the imperfect interaction mechanism between college students' group identity and role identity. The concept of identity is a multidisciplinary concept. Spanning philosophy, sociology, psychology and other disciplines, this paper adopts the psychological view that the essence of identity is belonging in the sense of mind, and pays

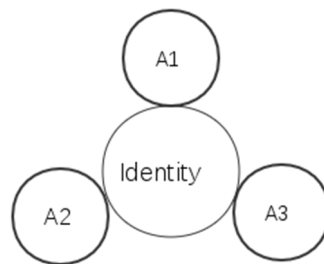
more attention to the belonging of identity at the psychological level of the group itself. [1]. The identity of college students has changed with the development of the times, with the reform of higher education, the increase of the number of universities and enrollment, from the late 1990s, the employment of college students has gradually become tense and the situation has become grim, which makes the identity of college students face an irresistible "devaluation", and college students are no longer the "rare product" of the times. As a result, the phenomenon that college students' self-identity has been reduced has been derived. There is also a growing discussion of questions such as "why go to college". Up to now, college students with post-90s and post-00s as the main body also have the phenomenon of "younger age" in their psychology. Compared with the situation that college students in the 1980s and 1990s faced earlier family responsibilities and social pressures alone, due to the improvement of material level and the higher degree of family protection, college students now generally have a lower degree of socialization. There are also problems such as lack of independent problem-solving ability, weak frustration ability, weak interpersonal skills, weak adaptability and so on. In view of these phenomena, in recent years, the mental health education of college students has gradually become an important part of higher education, and colleges and universities across the country have strengthened their attention and guidance to the mental health of college students. By way of illustration, The identity of college students is different, and the background of identity should be endowed with uncertainty, such as independence or dependence, freedom or restraint, academic or comprehensive. Compared with identity, role identity is more prominent in the compliance with the code of conduct given by the role and the commitment of obligations. [1] Role identity theory emphasizes the interaction between the environment and the individual. As a transitional period for students to enter the society, university is a platform to exercise and improve students' comprehensive ability, so in different student organizations or team environments, there will be different roles of college students. Such as class members, community members, class cadres, party members, student union members, activity participants and so on. As early as 2008, some scholars have studied the role identity of college students themselves, believing that the role identity of college students is a two-dimensional structure composed of positive identity and negative identity, including role orientation, role recognition and role adaptation. The components of negative identity include role conflict, role slackness and role confrontation. [2].



**Figure 1.** Legend of the role interaction mechanism

The interaction between college students' identity and role identity is the psychological motivation of students' life in the whole college period. The imperfect interaction mechanism will lead to negative factors such as role conflict, role slackness and role confrontation, which will affect the good development of individual college students.

(1) Influencing factors of college student union identity



**Figure 2.** Graphic representation of identity determinants

This paper argues that identity focuses on the identity belonging of the group's own psychological level. The identity of the student union in Colleges and universities will be affected by the environment, with multi-subjectivity, complexity and variability. The main body of influence is A1: society; A2: University teachers; A3: Non-student union group;

University is a transitional period to enter the society, and social identity is the main basis for many college students to make learning and growth plans, such as the value orientation of "student cadres" and "student union experience" in job recruitment, which will directly affect the definition and identity of other subjects to the student union identity. At present, most enterprises and institutions, The evaluation of students with student union experience and student cadre experience is very positive.

Teachers also play a very important role in the identity of the student union, through various activities organized by the student union, there is no lack of contact with full-time teachers, administrative teachers, Youth League Committee, employment and other aspects of the work of teachers, at this time, the relevant teachers' guidance and expectations for students are very important. Some scholars suggest that the "de-administration" of colleges and universities can promote the solution of the current public opinion dilemma faced by student unions, which is also based on this.

In contrast, the non-student union group for the identity of the student union has more objective environment to make it so, on the current colleges and universities, "student union group" and "non-student union group" there is still a disconnection phenomenon. On the selection mechanism of college student union cadres, because the student union is set up from top to bottom, some scholars talk about the problem of excessive administrative intervention. The student union was born out of the parent body of the school administration at the beginning of its emergence, and its power was not granted by the majority of students, but by the school administration. [3]. Similarly, the proportion of the number of students will also bury hidden dangers of excessive administrative intervention: according to the survey on the organizational identity of the student union of Sichuan Normal University in 2014, there are 132 in-service student cadres from the chairman to the officers in the student union at the undergraduate stage. [4] According to the division of functional departments, it is roughly estimated that the number of student union cadres in each college is about 1000 for all student union groups and about 400 for student cadres. Among the tens of thousands of college students, the proportion of student union cadres is very small. Similarly, taking Sichuan University as an example, the proportion of student union groups in Sichuan University is 2.5%. Student cadres account for 1% of the total number. The above data show that if the selection mechanism is not recognized by the majority of student groups, or by the non-student cadre groups in the student union group, it will lead to a reduction in organizational identity, which will affect the identification of organization-related activities. As a result, the participation of activities is not high, the influence is insufficient, and the object of activities is

missing. Over time, the student union organization will lose its credibility among college students, which will lead to the student union organization only completing the tasks required by the guidance unit, and violate the original intention of serving the students. Eventually, it leads to the reduction of organizational identity of student union cadres. This has also been confirmed in the research of scholars-the research conclusion of Professor Chen Li of Sichuan Normal University shows that student union cadres have higher self-evaluation and lower organizational evaluation. [4].

### (2) Comparison of college students' organizational role identity

If we want to explore the student union organization in colleges and universities, we must have a comprehensive analysis and understanding of its similar student organizations. The student organization discussed in this paper can be defined as an organization that takes students as the main body of management, operation and organization of daily activities, and its object of activities is also oriented to college students.

## 3.2. Student Association

College student associations are student organizations established by college students on the basis of common pursuit, which are informal groups with clear development goals and norms and in line with the management regulations of the school associations. [5]. According to the analysis of relevant literature, student associations have the following characteristics compared with student unions: 1. Interest-oriented. Student groups are groups organized according to their own interests, including academic, sports, cultural and other categories. 2. Membership structure. Unlike the "younger age" of student union organizations (Chen Li, Sichuan, 2014), the composition of community members is more evenly distributed. 3. Selection mechanism. The leaders of each association are selected independently from within the organization, with less administrative intervention. 4. Name. The head of the association is generally called "head", which is more in line with the identity of the student group and has a higher sense of role identity than the "minister" and "chairman" of the student union organization.

## 3.3. Class

As the basic unit of education object in our education system, class covers all basic education, higher education and other education systems. This kind of student autonomous organization, which is led by schools and guided by teachers, maintains the coordination functions of students' daily learning and life. Also, Class leaders in colleges and universities play a role in assisting counselors to manage students' daily life, learning and class affairs, but in the other four organizations compared and analyzed in this paper, the functions of class cadres have the following characteristics: 1. For student groups, class cadres are most familiar with students because they cover all stages of learning. 2. Because of the long time and wide range of establishment, the monitor has a high degree of trust among the students, and is generally recommended and voted by the students.

## 3.4. Party Organization

Party organizations in colleges and universities are generally divided into classes or grades, and the most basic unit is the Party group, which is arranged by the Party branch to organize learning content, and is an important place for students to learn Party ideas. Except that branch secretaries are generally held by teachers, deputy secretaries, organizing members and group leaders are still held by students. Compared with student union organizations and student associations, Party organizations have the following characteristics. 1. Participants. Unlike student unions and student associations, the participants of Party organizations are all college students, and according to the provisions of the Party Constitution, they are every Party member (probationary Party member). 2. Cadre selection mechanism. Generally, they are

elected or directly appointed by the branch. 3. Nature of activities. Unlike student union organizations and student associations, the activities of Party organizations are all based on learning the Party's important ideas and understanding the ideological status of Party members. 4. Continuity. The behavior of participating in the activities of Party organizations is the behavior that Party members will continue before entering university or after graduation.

### 3.5. The Club

Many large enterprises have clubs in colleges and universities, such as Unilever, Johnson & Johnson, Tencent, etc. Such organizations are established based on the needs and training of enterprises for talents. They are guided by the human resources department of the company and independently managed by college students. They regularly train their members' abilities, which belongs to the talent strategy of enterprises in Colleges and universities. Participating in the club will be likely to get the opportunity to practice or work in the corresponding enterprises, and will be highly recognized by other enterprises in the society (the degree of attention in the resume). It has the following characteristics: 1. Job hunting motivation. Most of the members who participate in the club have a strong interest in the enterprise, or are eager for internship experience, and the motivation of job hunting is to participate in it. 2. Sources of funds. The daily activity expenses of the club are generally borne by the enterprise. Compared with the cumbersome reimbursement process of the student union organization, the club has relatively sufficient funds.

## 4. The Performance of Imperfect Interaction Mechanism

This paper defines the imperfect interaction mechanism of identity and role identity of college student union as the contradiction between identity and role identity. Environmental identity includes social identity, university teacher group identity and non-student union group identity. The imperfect understanding of the role is not fully reflected in: They have a vague understanding of the organizational objectives of the student union and a misunderstanding that student cadres attach importance to appellation rather than substance. It is embodied in:

### (1) Role conflict between position and name establishment

Through the comparison of the role identification of common student organizations, it is concluded that the establishment of Party organizations has its particularity, the group it faces is Party members (probationary Party members), the operators of daily activities are also Party members (probationary Party members), and there are requirements of the Party Constitution, so there is no conflict between non-Party organizations and Party organizations. Next, comparing the similarities and differences between associations, clubs and classes and the establishment of student union positions, the position names of student unions are obviously characterized by "administration". The position names of student union cadres are "chairman", "minister", "secretary" and so on, which are similar to the official leadership of the country, while associations are often positioned by the position names such as "head" and "person in charge". As a student organization familiar to the student group, the position of the class is usually set up by "monitor", "organizing committee member", "learning committee member" and so on. From the perspective of position establishment, the name is one of the reasons why the student union is considered to be "bureaucratic". Among college students, the titles of "chairman" and "minister" can already be regarded as the exclusive names of the student union. It is precisely because some student cadres attach importance to the "appellation itself" and neglect the responsibilities and obligations they need to undertake under the "appellation".

### (2) Mismatch between organizational behavior and organizational goals

In contrast, associations are organizations established and joined independently by student groups, and their organizational goals are to carry out activities around a certain interest and

hobby. The goal of class organization is to manage students' daily study and life, under the guidance of counselors and teachers. The work of the "monitor" and "League branch secretary" of the class is to complete the tasks assigned to the class by the superior instructor and become a bridge between the teacher and the students. The organizational goal of the club is to cultivate students who are interested in internships or enterprises, such as interview skills, office skills, etc. The organizational goal of Party organizations is to organize Party members and students to learn Party theory and regular ideological exchanges among Party members. These four kinds of student organizations have clear organizational goals, and the target groups are very clear, and the evaluation of their work performance and social evaluation are very accurate. In contrast, the organizational goal of the student union is to uphold the concept of serving the students, to realize the interests of the majority of students, and to represent the rights of students, which means that the organizational goal of the student union is to represent the rights of students and to serve the majority of students. It is understood that the functional departments of the student union in Colleges and universities are generally divided into the organization department, the Publicity Department, the Ministry of Literature and Art, the Ministry of Sports, the Academic Science and Technology Department, the Outreach Department and the office, etc. The specific establishment and names of each school are different, but most of them revolve around these main tasks. Such as party and government propaganda work, literary and artistic competitions, sports competitions, academic and scientific research competitions, and the formulation of daily activities. Through consulting the literature and understanding the student union, most college students have little time and energy to carry out other activities besides completing these established activities. However, the number of student groups is huge and their demands are diverse. Therefore, from the perspective of non-student union groups, the activities organized by the student union can not meet their own needs, or can be achieved through other ways, so the participation in the activities of the student union is not high, and there is no sense of belonging. Eventually, the student union can not realize the interests of the majority of students, can not represent the rights of students, and gradually reduce the sense of identity.

### (3) Absence of role identity under the background of identity

Student union cadres are first students and then student cadres. As college students, they are already facing the status quo of reduced identity and higher requirements for self-improvement, and the inadequacy and imperfection of role identity will only aggravate the negative role identity. Most of the members and cadres of the student union are freshmen and sophomores, and the identity of these students is more unstable. Most of their role recognition comes from senior schoolmates, and they lack the understanding of organizational goals and the study of organizational spirit. Compared with identity, role identity is more prominent in the observance of the code of conduct and the commitment of obligations given by the role. Once the role identity is absent, the student union as a platform for training ability is not worthy of the name. Put the cart before the horse.

## 5. Summary and Suggestions

Student cadres suffer from the discussion and pressure of network public opinion, and can not be separated from the environment of colleges and universities. Students are only one of the many main bodies in colleges and universities. As the object of education, they should be better guided, rather than become "administrative" or "utilitarian" backstabbers of some teachers. This paper is based on the interaction mechanism between identity and role identity. This paper analyzes the problems arising from the current student union and puts forward the following suggestions.

(1) Strengthen the understanding and recognition of the role of the student union

The student union of colleges and universities across the country is not a disorderly organization. The All-China Federation of Students (hereinafter referred to as the "All-China Federation of Students") is a joint organization of the student union of colleges and universities, the graduate student union and the secondary school student union under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. It is an official organization of student autonomy. The members of the student union in Colleges and universities should strengthen their study of the constitution and rules of the And timely improve their own articles of association. Without a unified and correct organizational goal, there will be many mistakes and problems that run counter to the organizational goal. It is the spirit and responsibility of the backbone of the Communist successors in the new era to shoulder the sense of responsibility and mission at all times.

(2) To promote the harmony and unity of college students' identity: to reduce the administrative intervention in the selection of student union cadres;

There is a situation that the selection mechanism is not open and transparent enough in the student union organization. In addition to the election mechanism of the president of the student union through personal speeches and public voting, other positions at the school level and college positions are selected by the student union, which is not necessarily scientific. Because the selection of student union cadres is based on their previous efforts in organizational work and comprehensive ability. However, due to the particularity of the student union organization, its service object is all college students, and the cadres elected through non-democratic voting to represent the rights of student groups are easily questioned. The change of the times has given college students different missions in the new era. It also brings different challenges. The group of college students is a powerful force of unity, rather than a separate and mutually exclusive identity. The student union is a yearning for many students who have just entered the university campus. The excessive administrative intervention of colleges and universities will only make the student union lose its original intention and form a trend of gradual division. So, For the more benign and healthy development of the student union, the autonomy of the cadre selection of the student union should return to the group of college students, so as to achieve the encouraging education of listening to young people and watching young people.

(3) To promote the unity of effective interaction between college students' identity and role identity: to enhance college students' social adaptability.

Behind the problems faced by the student union is also the problem of social adaptability of college students, which is manifested in the "separation" conflict between student groups and social integration. College students have the ability to choose and judge independently, and the establishment of the student union is also a place for the school to exercise students' comprehensive abilities of organization, planning and management. So why does such a place to exercise ability become "antagonistic" to the student group? This is the manifestation of the role conflict in the process of socialization of college students, and the contradiction is the "fragmentation" phenomenon in the process of socialization. All these confirm the saying that "university is a small society". Whether it is the student union cadres who attach importance to rights and neglect obligations among student cadres, or the members of the student union who have not gained a sense of belonging in the organization, resulting in role slack and role confrontation, or the people's teachers who criticize the student union organization, they are all members of the "society" of the university, and some of them are lost in the complicated university life. Some of them are more determined to pursue their goals. However, society has no obvious boundaries, "society" is not a bad term, everyone comes from society, everyone is about to go to society, but in the school environment which has been protected, college students have not yet adapted to the span from minors to adults, or perhaps say that they have not adapted to the span from minors to adults. Everyone in this group enters



the "society" at different times, some fast, some slow, and this time difference is the starting point of all contradictions and conflicts. Therefore, enhancing the social adaptability of college students can promote the effective interaction between identity and role identity, and add a richer color to the freedom in the university.

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