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A STUDY OF SELF-CONCEPTS OF THE
BAPTIST STUDENT UNION AND THE
CHRISTIAN COMMISSION UNION AT
OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

By

Mack Blackwell

for

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A Study of Self-Concepts of the Baptist
Student Union and the Christian Commission
Union at Ouachita Baptist University

Introduction

One of the most important attitudes that a person has is the attitude concerning his self. "What a person thinks and how he behaves are largely determined by the concepts he holds about himself and his abilities."¹ How a person will act in any given situation is dependent on how he perceives himself and how he perceives the situations in which he is involved.²

In light of the previous statement a study was made of two religiously orientated organizations at Ouachita Baptist University. The purpose of the study was to determine to what extent measurable differences were present between the members of the Baptist Student Union and the members of the Christian Commission Union. Since a person's self-concept is of vital importance in his relations with those around him, it was thought that a study of self-concepts might reveal significant differences in the personality traits manifested by the two groups.

It is overtly apparent that the students who are active in the two organizations do not exhibit identical personality characteristics. One possible explanation of this phenomenon is that the differences in the structure and the purpose of the two organizations attract students of varying interests and abilities. The expressed purpose of the Baptist Student

Union is "to co-ordinate the actions of all the religious organizations and to be a connecting link between the student and the local church."³ The purpose of the Christian Commission Union is to "train students in social welfare and mission work."⁴

Another possible explanation which is closely related to the previous one is the supposedly higher social status that the Baptist Student Union has on campus. Because of its nature and function as a campus-wide organization, the Baptist Student Union seems to attract students who are known as campus leaders. The Christian Commission Union, on the other hand, has a limited campus function, and thus attracts students who are specifically interested in its work.

On the basis of previous research, several specific differences were anticipated in the relative position of the two groups on five factors of a self-concept scale. The following hypotheses were formulated.

1. Social Adaptability -- The subjects of the Baptist Student Union should exceed the subjects of the Christian Commission Union in social adaptability.
2. Emotional Control -- The subjects of the Baptist Student Union should exceed the subjects of the Christian Commission Union in emotional control.
3. Conformity -- The subjects of the Christian Commission Union should exceed the subjects of the Baptist Student Union in conformity.
4. Inquiring Intellect -- The subjects of the Baptist Student Union should exceed the subjects of the Christian Commission Union in inquiring intellect.
5. Confident Self-expression -- The subjects of the Baptist Student Union should exceed the subjects of the Christian Commission Union in confident self-expression.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms used in this report that should be defined and delineated. Self-concept refers to the more or less discrete perceptions of self which the person regards as characteristic of his being. Ideal self-concept refers to the kind of person an individual would like to be if he could be any kind of person he desired. Self-ideal discrepancy refers to the difference between the individual's self-concept and his ideal self-concept. This discrepancy between self and ideal yields an index of self-esteem or self-value since it indicates the way in which an individual perceives himself and the degree to which he values this state.⁵

The factors that are measured by the self-concept scale are of special interest. Social adaptability refers to the ability of an individual to fit into a social situation, be the life of the party, feel at ease with the opposite sex in a social structure, and be accepted by the group. Emotional control reflects the ability of a person to show calmness and controlled emotions in social situations. Social conformity indicates the extent to which an individual keeps the rules of society and conforms to the expectancy of his group. Inquiring intellect reflects the inquisitiveness of an individual in the academic field of endeavor. Confident self-expression refers to an individual's sense of self-sufficiency and self-confidence in social situations.

Design of the Research

The students used in this study were selected on the basis of their position in the respective organizations and their degree of participation in activities of the organization. It was assumed that the officers and the most active members of the two organizations would be fairly representative of their organizations. A list of fifteen of the officers (1964-65 term) and active leaders was secured from the sponsors of the two groups. This list was supplemented by a list of members who were considered to be active in the two groups by their fellow members. Twenty students were selected from each organization as subjects for this study.

The Sheer Q-Sort Self-Concept Scale⁶ was administered to each of the subjects. This scale consisted of one hundred statements which the subject was required to sort into eight piles on the metrics "unlike-me" to "like-me" and "unlike-ideal" to "like-ideal." The sort was a forced card sort in which the subject was required to place a specified number of cards in each pile. With this method it was possible to obtain the individual's self-perception and the value he attached to each characteristic.

The subjects were given the following instructions:⁷

1. Self-concept sort. Sort these cards to describe yourself as you see yourself from those statements that are least like you to those that are most like you.

2. Ideal self-concept sort. Sort these cards to describe your ideal person--the person you would most like within yourself to be. (The cards used in the ideal-sort were identical to those used in the self-sort.)

Three sets of scores were derived from the Sheer scale for each subject. These sets were the self-concept scores, the ideal self-concept scores, and the self-ideal discrepancy scores for each of the five factors measured. The scores of the two groups were compared in each of the five factors and were treated statistically by an analysis of variance from which a "t" score was derived.

Results and Discussion

It is recognized that the term self-concept does not accurately represent the phenomenon reported in this study. The term self-report is possibly a more accurate term for this phenomenon. The self-report is an approximation of the self-concept and is affected by various factors. "How closely the self report approximates the subject's 'real' self concept will presumably depend upon at least the following factors:

1. The clarity of the individual's awareness.
2. The availability of adequate symbols for expression.
3. The willingness of the individual to cooperate.
4. The social expectancy.
5. The individual's feeling of personal adequacy.
6. His feeling of freedom from threat."

With the preceding limitations in mind, the results of the study are presented in the following table.

TABLE I

Comparison of Self-concept scores of Baptist Student Union
and Christian Commission Union through use of Mean Scores #
(N = 40)

Factors	BSU	CCU	t
Self-concepts			
Social Adaptability	111.15	108.50	.68
Emotional Control	90.80	93.00	.40
Conformity	102.40	109.15	1.87 **
Inquiring Intellect	94.10	94.90	.32
Confident Self-expression	103.00	92.45	2.48 *
Ideal Self-concepts			
Social Adaptability	118.05	111.65	1.89 **
Emotional Control	110.15	105.70	1.25
Conformity	124.15	122.80	.49
Inquiring Intellect	103.00	98.60	1.67
Confident Self-expression	107.25	105.55	.48
Self-Ideal Discrepancy			
Social Adaptability	9.30	8.60	.00
Emotional Control	22.05	16.00	1.63
Conformity	21.75	15.15	1.91 **
Inquiring Intellect	10.90	11.00	.00
Confident Self-Expression	14.80	11.35	1.04

* Significant at .02 level of confidence (2.44)

** Significant at .10 level of confidence (1.69)

Mean scores were rounded to the nearest whole number for computation of t score.

The hypotheses set forth at the beginning of the study were supported in three cases and were refuted in two cases. As expected, the Baptist Student Union subjects exceeded the Christian Commission Union subjects in the factors of social adaptability and confident self-expression, and the Christian Commission Union exceeded the Baptist Student Union in conformity. However, the Baptist Student Union subjects did not exceed the Christian Commission Union subjects in the factors of emotional control and inquiring intellect as was expected.

Significant differences were found between the self-concept scores of the two groups in two factors--conformity and confident self-expression. A significant difference was also found in the social adaptability factor of the ideal self-concept scores and in the conformity factor of the self-ideal discrepancy scores.

The results of the study tend to support the theory that the Baptist Student Union attracts students of higher social reactivity and receptivity. Because of their higher social status on campus, the subjects of the Baptist Student Union group feel that they are more socially adaptable than do the subjects of the Christian Commission Union group, and are thus more confident in their self-expression. Also because of their status, the subjects in the Baptist Student Union group do not feel that they have to conform to social expectations as rigidly as others in order to be socially accepted.

The data shows that the students in the Christian Commission Union group exceed the students in the Baptist Student Union group in the factors of conformity, emotional control, and inquiring intellect. Although only one of these factors is statistically significant (conformity), the pattern suggests that these students are more serious and reserved in their social interaction. Because of their lower social reactivity and receptivity, the students in the Christian Commission Union group feel that they need to conform to social expectations in order to be accepted by the group.

An interesting observation is the fact that the ideal self-concept of the subjects of the Baptist Student Union is higher in all five factors than that of the subjects of the Christian Commission Union. At first this seems to be a positive factor in favor of the subjects of the Baptist Student Union. However, a look at the self-ideal discrepancy scores throws a different light on the picture.

The self-ideal discrepancy scores of the Baptist Student Union subjects are also higher and thus more negative. Since the self-ideal discrepancy score is an index of self-esteem and self-value, the greater the score the more negative it is. In view of this factor, it seems that the subjects in the Christian Commission Union group have more self-esteem and self-value than those of the Baptist Student Union group. This factor is possibly as important as the significant differences between the means.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the results of the study:

1. There are significant differences between the self-concepts of the members of the Baptist Student Union and the members of the Christian Commission Union in the factors of conformity, confident self-expression and social adaptability.
2. The members of the Baptist Student Union are of higher social reactivity and receptivity than the members of the Christian Commission Union.
3. The members of the Baptist Student Union are more socially adjusted than the members of the Christian Commission Union as shown by their self-concept scores.
4. The members of the Christian Commission Union are more self-adjusted than the members of the Baptist Student Union as revealed by their lower self-ideal discrepancy scores.

Summary

This study of self-concepts has revealed significant differences between the two groups measured. As has been indicated the differences may be attributed to the social status of the two groups. However, this phenomenon may be a circular process in which the cause and the effect are hardly distinguishable.

The scope of this study is not wide enough to make

sweeping generalizations about the entire membership of the respective organizations. It is probable, however, that an enlarged study of the two groups would reveal similar and perhaps more accented differences in their self-concepts.

On the basis of this study it would seem that the respective organizations need to give special attention to the negative aspects in the self-concepts of their members. This action would not only enrich the member's personal life, but would also enhance the organization's effectiveness.

FOOTNOTES

1. Combs & Snygg, p. 122.
2. Combs & Snygg, p. 122.
3. The Tiger, p. 32.
4. The Tiger, p. 32.
5. Butler & Haigh, p. 56.
6. The Sheer scale was developed by Dr. Daniel Sheer of the University of Houston.
7. Butler & Haigh, p. 57.
8. Combs, Super, & Courson, p. 494.

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