

The Introduction of “Social Deportment” as the Fourth Psychological Process in the Study of Social Identity Theory

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Abstract:

Humans are social animals and therefore, very little of a human's life is conducted in isolation. An individual has an innate biological drive to form and maintain lasting, positive, and impactful interpersonal relationships within groups. Tajfel suggested the emotional and value significance that the individual associates with group membership, creates and defines an individual's place in society and thereby, creates an individual's second level of identity which he referred to as “social identity.” There are three psychological processes associated with social identity. These three processes are social categorization (i.e., identifying individuals into groups), social comparison (i.e., comparing the characteristics of the different groups), and social identification (i.e., determining to which groups the individual identifies). Social identity theorist suggests that the dichotomization of groups which comes from these three psychological processes, leads to an “us” vs “. them” perspective where group members not only engage in favoritism toward their own group members, but also engage in a type of bias perception or prejudice toward individuals outside the group. While this bias perception or prejudice often results in modest or slight negative behaviors consisting of circumscribing or destroying of the freedom, expression, or integrity of opposing group members, researchers have found that in some situations adversarial groups perceived members of the outgroup as being less “equal” or “human,” leading to severe negative behavior and/or justified violence toward members of the out-group that jeopardize the outgroup member's physical or psychological well-being.

While the three psychological processes have great merit in the study of social identity theory, the current author suggests that there is a void in research of what happens after the individual's creation of social identity. To help fill this void the current paper introduces “social deportment” as the fourth psychological process. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “deportment” as “the manner in which one conducts oneself: behavior.” Research has found that personality factors and the degree of difference between identity groups can determine the severity or hostility of behavior toward adverse group members. “Social deportment” will explore the relationship between a group member's social identity and their behaviors toward members of the out-group.