

Affective Impressions of Groups versus Individuals in Interactions

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Affective impressions are how good, powerful, and active people feel about an individual or a group, and these impressions routinely shift during social interactions. Affect control theory specifies equations based on empirical data that predict how the affective impressions of individuals change in social interaction, but no research has applied this theory to groups in interactions (e.g., Verizon cheats a student; the AARP lobbies Congress). I propose three studies – surveys with experimental conditions – to examine the differences in the affective impressions (Q1) between groups versus individuals and (Q2) between groups versus individual group members, in social interaction. I hypothesize that certain perceived properties of groups such as group entitativity (i.e., how much a group is perceived to be a single unit) and group mind will change the affective impression process for groups compared to individuals. These studies will provide initial evidence for groups' affective impression process and therefore will be a launching pad for an NSF grant proposal to develop predictive affective impression equations for groups in social interaction. Additionally, this research has a broad impact in that it will begin a major extension to affect control theory, bridge affective and cognitive perceptions in research on groups, and can be directly applied and tested in organizations, task groups, voluntary associations, families, and other types of groups. Therefore, this research and its applications will produce a better understand of the effects of social interactions on different types of groups, both their situational impressions and longer-term public image.