Ostracized Individuals Are Less Persuaded: Distracted or Straddling the Fence?

Tyler R. Shiflett
Advisor: Kipling D. Williams
Purdue University

Introduction

- Ostracism—being ignored and excluded—negatively affects individuals’ emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. As yet, no research has examined its impact on persuasive processing.
- Persuasion literature provides the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Wegener, 1999).
- ELM: We tend to peripheral cues (majority opinion, expert source) when we don’t have both the ability and willingness to elaborate intensively on a persuasive appeal.
- Ostracism literature has shown ostracized individuals:
  - React antisocially and aggressively before they begin recovering from the ostracism event (Williams & Wesselmann, 2010).
  - Look to conform once recovery has begun (Williams et al., 2000).
- Rumination tendency (RT) is the tendency one has for thinking about recent events that causes persistent, negative, and focused cognition.
- We hypothesize:
  - H1: Main effect for argument quality: higher persuasion index scores for those reading strong than weak appeal, no main effect for ostracism.
  - H2: Ostracism X argument quality interaction: those included will show more argument quality effects than those ostracized.
  - H3: Rumination Tendency X Ostracism X Argument quality 3-way interaction: ostracized participants with high rumination tendencies will show less argument quality effects than those in any other condition.

Method

- 59 undergraduate students (26 female) participated for course credit.
- 2 treatment conditions X 2(message strength) X 2message type (both messages argue for comprehensive exams), and asked to what extent they agree or disagree.
- Persuasion Index: α = .94.

Results

- Manipulation checks:
  - Ostracism index: (ignored and excluded) α = .96
  - Ostracized Participants felt more excluded and ignored:
    - (M = 4.3, SD = .95) compared to those not ostracized:
      - (M = 1.4, SD = .75), t(49) = 12, p = .002
  - % Throw: Ostracized participants reported getting thrown the ball less:
    - (M = 7.14, SD = 6.518) than those not ostracized:
      - (M = 34.3, SD = 9.234), t(49) = 12, p = .009
  - Argument Strength: those who read the strong message rated it as stronger:
    - (M = 5.6, SD = 1.044) than those who read the weak message:
      - (M = 3.8, SD = .891), t(49) = -2.35, p = .02
  - Main effect for argument quality: those who read the strong message had higher persuasion index scores:
    - (M = .37, SD = 1.26) than those who read the weak message:
      - (M = .49, SD = .93), t(49) = 2.78, p = .008
  - The ostracism X argument quality interaction was ns (Fig. 2)
  - The 3-way interaction between Rumination tendency, ostracism condition, and argument quality was non-significant.

- Results continued

Fig. 1. Cyberball

Fig. 2. Ostracism X Argument Quality

Fig. 1. Cyberball

Fig. 2. Ostracism X Argument Quality

Conclusion

- All manipulation checks were significant and in the right direction.
- Individuals in the ostracism condition knew they were being ostracized, and felt the effects of ostracism.
- Significant argument quality effect indicated a difference in the strength of the strong and weak message.
- Ostracism X Rumination
  - Included slope is a statistically straight line, likely due to having nothing to ruminate about
  - In line with Williams et al., (2000) individuals with low rumination tendency agree more following an ostracism experience regardless of the arguments quality.
  - Low RT ostracized individuals seem to be able to get past the ostracism experience and move on to recovering and conforming.
  - However, ostracized individuals with high RT exhibit the opposite responses.
- Because these participants have high RT, they continue to ruminate, which causes them to replay the ostracism event over and over, which likely precludes them from moving on from the ostracism event to recovery from it.

References


Address Correspondence to Tyler Shiflett (tshiflet@purdue.edu)