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

Ostracism—being ignored and excluded—negatively affects individuals’ emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. As yet, no research has examined its impact on persuasion. Fifty-five participants were randomly assigned to be included or ostracized using Cyberball, a virtual ball-toss game. They then read a persuasive message comprised of either strong or weak arguments that advocated comprehensive examinations. Included participants agreed with the message if it contained strong arguments and disagreed with it if it contained weak arguments. Ostracized participants, however, were unaffected by the strength of the arguments and reported neutral responses. I discuss whether ostracism is a distracter or if it motivates people to seek the safe haven of neutrality.