

To Be Subtle or To Be Clear?: Comparing Strategies for Changing People's Attitudes Towards Social Groups

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Abstract: The problem of deciding which strategy to use to influence a target audience's social identity beliefs is of interest to social influence practitioners as well as social cognition researchers. This paper compares the effectiveness of three social influence strategies in terms of their ability to lessen their reader's affiliation for a targeted social group. We designed three messages that vary in terms of (a) how well they hide their persuasive intent and (b) clarity of the message. Our results indicate that message clarity had a stronger impact on people's group affiliation than the persuasive intent of the message. The most rhetorical and blunt Message 1 was more effective in reducing people's affiliation for the targeted group than the more subtle narrative Messages 2 & 3. The most subtle Message 3 was least effective in terms of being able to reduce subject's affiliation for the targeted group.