Abstract

Background: The purpose of this study was to examine the role of thinking in reducing prejudice toward stigmatized groups.

Method: Participants received a persuasive message composed of strong arguments in favor of South American immigrants or a control message. In order to distinguish high- from low-elaboration individuals, participants were asked to complete the Need for Cognition Scale (NC).

Results: As expected, attitude change was equivalent for individuals with relatively high and low NC. Importantly, although both high- and low-NC participants showed a reduction in the extremity of prejudiced attitudes, the stability of these changes was different. Two days later, the changes produced in participants with high NC were found to be more persistent than equivalent changes produced in participants with low NC.

Conclusions: An understanding of the processes through which prejudiced attitudes are modified can provide information about the long-term stability of such changes.

Keywords

Prejudice, need for cognition, persuasion, attitudes.