

Why are they saying this? The perceived motives behind online posting and their psychological consequences

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Abstract

People have different intentions when sharing information online. However, are others able to interpret these motives and form accurate impressions of the poster? To investigate this, we put participants ($N = 307$) in imaginary opinion-based ingroup and outgroup online forums. In each, people were presented with different types of statements and asked for their impressions of the poster as well as of their own ingroup and outgroup. Negative impressions and intentions were more commonly linked to posters thought to be outgroup members, even when they exhibited similar behaviours to posters thought to be members of the ingroup. Notably, most types of contact increased people's liking of the ingroup and disliking of the outgroup. That said, a perceived effort to engage in genuine discussion over group matters by perceived outgroup posters appeared to shift outgroup impressions to be more positive. This highlights the potential benefit of deliberation in mitigating intergroup animosity.