Genuine Solidarity or Performative Pretense: The Role of Instrumentality and Authenticity in Shaping Perceptions of Allyship

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Abstract

Individuals across numerous societies are increasingly recognizing the importance of allyship in curbing social injustice and advancing the interests of oppressed and marginalized groups. Nonetheless, actions meant to communicate allyship are not always perceived as intended. Drawing from the literature on collective action and signaling theory, we explored the psychological mechanisms that inform perceptions of allyship behaviors. We predicted that perceptions of the communicators’ instrumental motivations and authenticity drive the extent to which communicators are perceived as allies. Results from three studies that considered interracial communications supported our hypotheses. Through this research, we highlight the types of ally behaviors and messaging that are likely to be interpreted as disingenuous in order to suggest more adaptive strategies for conveying and enacting allyship.