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# Social influence on intention to quit smoking: The effect of the rhetoric of an identity relevant message

*Influence sociale dans l'intention d'arrêter de fumer : l'effet de la rhétorique d'un  
message pertinent pour l'identité*

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## Abstract

In a 2 (smoker's identity: weak vs. strong) x 2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful) factorial design, 65 smokers were exposed to an antismoking persuasive message depicting smokers as the targets of manipulation by the tobacco industry. The main dependent variables were change in intention to quit smoking and change in satisfaction with being a smoker. Results showed that strong-identity smokers, as compared to weak-identity smokers, reduced their intention to quit smoking and increased their satisfaction with being smokers when the message employed a disrespectful rhetoric (i.e., threatening targets' freedom), but not when it employed a respectful one (i.e., respecting targets' freedom). These results are discussed in terms of the idea that recipients high in identity-related involvement are sensitive to the

## Résumé

Dans un plan factoriel 2 (identité de fumeur : faible vs. forte) x 2 (rhétorique du message : respectueuse vs. irrespectueuse), 65 fumeurs ont été exposés à un message antitabac qui les décrit comme étant l'objet de la manipulation des industries du tabac. Les principales variables dépendantes sont les changements dans l'intention d'arrêter de fumer et dans la satisfaction d'être fumeur. Les résultats ont montré que les fumeurs avec une forte identité de fumeur, comparés à ceux avec une faible identité, ont réduit leur intention d'arrêter de fumer et augmenté leur satisfaction d'être fumeurs lorsque le message utilise une rhétorique irrespectueuse (menaçante pour la liberté des cibles). Ces effets n'apparaissent pas lorsque la rhétorique du message est respectueuse. Ces résultats sont discutés sur la base de l'idée selon laquelle les cibles

## Key-words

Social influence, Self-referent messages, Smoker identity, Identity threat, Defensive motivation, Smoking behaviour.

## Mots-clés

Influence sociale, persuasion, identité de fumeur, menace de l'identité, motivation défensive, comportement tabagique.

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way persuasive communications introduce a threat to their identity. In this case, sources need therefore to be respectful when advancing their arguments in order to avoid inducing targets' defensive motivation.

avant une forte implication identitaire sont sensibles à la façon dans laquelle une communication persuasive introduit une menace pour leur identité. Dans ce cas, les sources d'influence doivent négocier la façon dans laquelle elles présentent leurs arguments si elles veulent éviter l'apparition d'une motivation défensive chez les cibles.

## Introduction

One recurrent finding in persuasion literature is that the motivation to process information objectively (i.e., to reach a correct judgement) increases when outcome-related involvement increases (e.g., college students interested in academic policy proposals; cf. Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly, 1989). Attitude change is expected here to occur as a function of the quality of the persuasive information. However, when involvement is related to recipients' important values, beliefs or aspects of the self-concept, persuasive information is assumed to be threatening and recipients' motivation to process will be biased, i.e., it will be defensively orientated (Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla & Chen, 1996; Johnson & Eagly, 1989). Such processing is expected to result in a decrease in attitude change, and even possibly in a negative attitude change.

Several studies give credence to this analysis (e.g. Falomir, Invernizzi, 1999; Liberman & Chaiken, 1992; Slater & Rouner, 1996). For instance, secondary students who were all smokers, were divided into two groups on the basis of a measure of smoker's identity (e.g., « Do you feel a real smoker? ), those with a weak identity as smokers and those with a strong identity as smokers (Falomir, Invernizzi, 1999). After being exposed or not to an anti-smoking message which was attributed to an expert source and portrayed smokers as toys manipulated by the tobacco industries, they answered several questions measuring their attitudes, perceived peer norms and intentions to quit smoking. Results showed that, as compared to those with a weak identity as smokers, those with a strong identity were, after being exposed to the anti-smoking message, defensively motivated (i.e., they

shifted their attitudes further in favour of smoking and rated themselves as having greater support from their peers). Further analyses showed that this defensive motivation, and particularly the overestimation of friends' support for smoking, was related to their intention to quit smoking—i.e. they overestimated this support as a way of justifying their lower intention to quit smoking.

One important question that remains almost unexplored is how this defensive motivation can be countered. The hypothesis tested here is that the social relations within which targets have to deal with the threat (i.e. influence relationship) moderate the extent to which they are motivated to question their position (for alternative approaches, see Sherman, Nelson & Steele, 2000, and Slater & Rouner, 1996). More specifically, it is proposed that when the persuasive information poses a threat to the targets, sources should be particularly careful about how they introduce their argument. The minority influence paradigm suggests that behavioural styles could be a way of operationalising the influence relationship (cf. Magg, Mugny & Papastamou, 1998). In addition, behavioural styles have also proved to be relevant in explaining the influence of higher status sources (Moscovici & Lage, 1976). These studies showed that sources should not introduce their point of view unequivocally but need to take into consideration the characteristics of the targets if some influence is to occur. Indeed, it has been suggested that people are quite sensitive to their relationship with others of superior status (e.g. authorities), for instance in terms of standing, respect, politeness, and dignity (see Tyler, 1997; Tyler & DeGoeij, 1996). This relationship depicts the status they hold in the relationship and whether they are valued and treated fairly or not. Thus, willingness to accept the decisions of authorities is then determined by evaluations of procedure. The procedure is judged to be fair when it is seen as indicating a positive relationship, and unfair when it reveals a negative relationship. Therefore, authorities should propose their point of view in a respectful way rather than try to impose it. Only within a respectful influence relationship in which targets feel valued and treated fairly will they be likely to accept the challenge to their identity and position, and be able to reconsider these.

Falomir and Mugny (1999) tested the hypothesis that a disrespectful antismoking message (i.e., one that threatens targets' freedom), as compared to a respectful one (i.e., one that respects targets' freedom to decide), would reduce influence among personally involved recipients (i.e., smokers) but not among uninvolved recipients (i.e., nonsmokers). In the control condition there was no message. Results showed that smokers agreed less with the message's arguments, their attitude toward smoking was more favourable, and they rated the smokers' image less negatively when the message rhetoric was disrespectful than when this message was respectful or when no message was presented. As expected, these effects were not found for nonsmokers. Finally, the intention of smokers to quit was also lower when the message was disrespectful. These findings suggest that the rhetoric of the message, interpreted here as the manner in which sources make targets feel respected, moderates the degree to which targets question their behaviour and their acceptance of the challenge to their identity. Furthermore, the defensive motivation of smokers appears to be something more than a mere reactance effect (Brehm, 1966), since they not only resisted change but also asserted a positive social identity.

Finally, another question explored in the present study is the selective use of different defensive responses. Although any strategy able to ensure the desired confidence in one's own position might be expected (Chaiken et al., 1989), targets seem to use them selectively. Thus, the systematic processing of threatening information is expected to increase as personal relevance increases. It is obviously assumed here that the individual is capable of processing information effortfully. For instance, Liberman and Chaiken's study (1992) showed that when relevance was high subjects' defensive conclusions were not mediated by inattention to the message, or defensive avoidance of threatening information, but by an effortful criticism of those parts of the message that were particularly threatening. However, when information is available that contributes to targets' achievement of desired confidence (e.g., when heuristic cues such as opinion poll results are congenial to targets' preferences), a low-effort processing strategy is likely to confer sufficient defensive confidence (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1997). Finally, because persuasive attempts can in these circumstances constitute a general chal-

lenge to some aspect of the self, it could be expected that targets are motivated not only to resist change but also to maintain an overall positive evaluation of the self (e.g., by enhancing positive ratings of the ingroup image; Falomir & Mugny, 1999). Therefore, in addition to measures of change (i.e., smokers' intentions to quit smoking), the present study also included three additional measures in order to assess the use of defensive mechanisms: These were ratings of the content and authors of the persuasive message, a thought listing task measuring elaboration of the persuasive message, and a measure of overall satisfaction with their identity as smokers.

### ***Overview of the study and hypotheses***

The present study focuses on the relationship between identity-related involvement and the rhetoric of the influence attempt. The Falomir and Mugny study tested the effect of identity relevance by comparing two samples (i.e., smokers and nonsmokers) which were therefore not fully comparable. In the present study a single sample of smokers was divided into weak and strong smokers according to the strength of their identity as smokers. They were then exposed to an antismoking message attributed to an expert source. The rhetoric of the message was manipulated in such a way that the message either did or did not respect the smokers' freedom to decide the validity of the antismoking argument.

The main dependent variable was change in intention to quit smoking. The main hypothesis predicted an interaction between smokers' identity and message rhetoric. More specifically, those with a strong identity as smokers, as compared to those with a weak identity as smokers, will be more sensitive to the rhetoric of the message, i.e., they will resist a change in their smoking behaviour when the rhetoric is disrespectful but not when it is respectful. The respectful rhetoric is expected to allow targets to question their identity and their smoking behaviour. Other measures were included to assess different mechanisms of defensiveness (i.e., ratings of the message and its authors, a thought listing task, and change in satisfaction with being a smoker).

## Method

### Participants

Sixty five smokers (30 women and 35 men) participated in the study, introduced as a « Survey about smoking behaviour ». Their ages ranged from 15 to 80 years ( $M = 29.66$ ,  $SD = 13.92$ ). On average they had tried their first cigarette at the age of 14.35 ( $SD = 3.49$ ), and had become regular smokers at an average age of 18.73 ( $SD = 5.71$ ). At the time of the survey, they indicated they had been smokers for an average of 12.04 years ( $SD = 12.40$ ), they smoked an average of 15.43 cigarettes per day ( $SD = 8.24$ ), and 63.1% of them had tried at least once unsuccessfully to give up smoking.

### Pretest measures

#### *Smoker's identity:*

Three items assessed identity as a smoker. The first measured frequency of smoking behaviour (« How many cigarettes do you smoke per day? »), and the two others measured their feelings about being a smoker: « Do you identify with smokers? », « Do you feel a real smoker? » (1 = 'not at all' and 7 = 'yes absolutely'). Since the number of cigarettes smoked was indicated on an open-ended scale, the averaged score was computed using the standardised values of the three variables ( $\alpha = .76$ ). A categorical variable was computed from this score separating smokers who scored below 0 (i.e., 'weak-identity' smokers,  $M = -0.52$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ,  $n = 33$ ) from those who scored above 0 (i.e., 'strong-identity' smoker,  $M = 0.75$ ,  $SD = 0.30$ ,  $n = 32$ ).

#### *Intention to quit smoking:*

Two items measured smokers' intention to quit smoking: « Do you intend to quit smoking within the next two weeks? », and « Do you intend to quit smoking soon? » (1 = 'not at all' and 7 = 'absolutely'). An averaged measure of intention was computed ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ,  $\alpha = .68$ ).

#### *Satisfaction with being smoker:*

Three items measured satisfaction with being smoker: « Are you proud of being smoker? », « Are you satisfied with the image you have as smoker? », and « Are you satisfied of being smoker? » (1 = 'not at all' and 7 = 'absolutely'). An averaged measure of satisfaction was computed ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ,  $\alpha = .83$ ).

### Source's respectfulness

All participants were then asked to read the same antismoking message which was supposedly written by university professors (cf. Pérez & Mugny, 1990). This message analyses the socio-economic reasons why people smoke and depicts smokers as the targets of tobacco industry manipulation. As in the previous study (cf. Falomir & Mugny, 1999), in the respectful condition the message concluded with a respectful rhetoric that gave smokers the freedom to make their own choice (Brehm, 1966): « As University professors, our conclusion is that it would be desirable that every smoker works out these ideas and is willing at least to think about them. Nevertheless, it is the right of each smoker, personally and with complete freedom, to draw his/her own conclusions. ». In the disrespectful condition the message concluded with an 'imperative' rhetoric that denied smokers any freedom of choice: « As University professors, our conclusion is that it is absolutely necessary that every smoker has these ideas put in his/her head, and that he/she accepts them without discussion. There can be no question here of leaving to each smoker the freedom to draw conclusions as he/she chooses. ».

### Post-test

After reading the text participants were asked to evaluate, on several semantic differentials (seven-point scales), the content of the message (e.g., 'does threaten my freedom'—'does not threaten my freedom', 'true'—'false') and its authors (e.g., 'unqualified'—'qualified', 'non-experts'—'experts'). In order to analyse the extent (i.e., systematic processing) and valence (i.e., defensive processing) of message elaboration, participants were then asked to write down the most important ideas which came into their minds with respect to the text they had read (the amount of thoughts was limited to 4), and to evaluate each one on a seven point scale ranging from 1 = 'absolutely against smoking behaviour' to 7 = 'absolutely in favour of smoking behaviour'. Finally, participants again responded to the items measuring satisfaction with being smokers and intention to quit smoking. Two averaged measures of intention ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ) and satisfaction ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) were computed as in the pretest.

## Results

### *Perception of the message*

The 2 (smoker identity: weak vs. strong)  $\times$  2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful) ANOVAs performed on the semantic differential scales indicated a significant main effect of the message rhetoric factor only on the 'authoritarian (1)–(7) not-authoritarian', 'flexible–rigid', 'aggressive–not-aggressive', 'does threaten freedom—does not threaten freedom', and 'interesting—not interesting' scales. As expected, the disrespectful message, as compared to the respectful message, was perceived as more authoritarian ( $M_s = 2.91$  vs.  $4.30$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 9.20$ ,  $p < .004$ ), rigid ( $M_s = 5.56$  vs.  $4.93$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 3.06$ ,  $p < .09$ ), aggressive ( $M_s = 3.09$  vs.  $4.40$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 7.94$ ,  $p < .007$ ), threatening ( $M_s = 4.56$  vs.  $5.65$ ;  $F_{1,61} = 3.83$ ,  $p < .06$ ), and less interesting ( $M_s = 4.21$  vs.  $3.35$ ;  $F_{1,57} = 3.86$ ,  $p < .06$ ). Differences in degrees of freedom are due to missing data. It is important to note that the rhetoric induction did not affect the perceived persuasive quality of the message, as revealed by the lack of effects on dimensions such as convincing ( $F_{1,61} = 0.02$ , n.s.), false ( $F_{1,61} = 1.07$ , n.s.), plausible ( $F_{1,61} = 0.01$ , n.s.), or coherent ( $F_{1,61} = 0.06$ ).

### *Perception of the authors*

The same analyses performed on the semantic differential scales measuring perception of the authors revealed a significant main effect of the message's rhetoric only on the 'trustworthy (1)–(7) untrustworthy', 'smokers—nonsmokers', 'intelligent—unintelligent', 'unqualified—qualified', and 'honest—not honest' scales. The authors of the disrespectful message, as compared to those of the respectful message, were perceived to be more untrustworthy ( $M_s = 4.59$  vs.  $3.13$ ;  $F_{1,59} = 15.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ), nonsmokers ( $M_s = 5.45$  vs.  $4.61$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 3.94$ ,  $p < .06$ ), unintelligent ( $M_s = 4.36$  vs.  $5.21$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 6.35$ ,  $p < .02$ ), unqualified ( $M_s = 4.30$  vs.  $5.00$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 3.77$ ,  $p < .06$ ), and less honest ( $M_s = 3.21$  vs.  $2.48$ ;  $F_{1,60} = 3.49$ ,  $p < .07$ ). Differences in degrees of freedom are due to missing data. Again, the rhetoric of the message did not affect the authors' perceived credibility ( $F_{1,60} = 0.39$ , n.s.), expertise ( $F_{1,60} = 2.22$ , n.s.), or competence ( $F_{1,60} = 0.43$ , n.s.).

### *Thought elaboration*

The number of thoughts generated was interpreted as a measure of the extent of information processing ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ). The 2 (smoker identity: weak vs. strong)  $\times$  2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful) performed ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the experimental factors ( $F_{1,60} = 8.47$ ,  $p < .005$ ). The lowest systematic processing occurred in the least conflictual condition, namely when smokers with weak identity were exposed to the respectful message ( $M = 1.43$ ). Post hoc analyses showed that systematic processing was greater for such subjects when the rhetoric of the message was disrespectful ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $F_{1,60} = 7.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Given respectful rhetoric, systematic processing was also greater among strong-identity subjects ( $M = 2.76$ ) than among weak-identity smokers ( $F_{1,60} = 6.04$ ,  $p < .02$ ). For strong-identity smokers effect of the respectful rhetoric did not differ from that of the disrespectful ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $F_{1,60} = 2.78$ ,  $p < .11$ ).

The valence of thoughts was interpreted as an indication of defensive processing. One measure was computed by averaging the participants' ratings of self-generated ideas (cf. method), and a second measure was computed by subtracting the number of thoughts favourable to smoking (those evaluated over 0) from the number of thoughts unfavourable to smoking (those under 0). The ANOVAs performed on these measures did not reveal any significant effect ( $F_s < 1$ ).

### *Change in intention to quit smoking*

A 2 (smoker identity: weak vs. strong)  $\times$  2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful)  $\times$  2 (intention to quit: pre-test vs. post-test) mixed ANOVA was performed with repeated measures on the last factor.<sup>1</sup> This analysis revealed a significant interaction between the two independent factors and the within-subjects factor ( $F_{1,61} = 5.46$ ,  $p < .023$ ). Table 1 presents the means for change in intention to quit as a function of smoker identity and message rhetoric. Since the test for the heterogeneity of variances was significant (Levene test ( $3.61$ ) =  $2.96$ ,  $p < .04$ ), analyses

1. The 2 (smoker identity: weak vs. strong)  $\times$  2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful) ANOVA performed on the pretest intention scores did not show any significant effect ( $F_s < 1.70$ ).

for differences between experimental conditions were performed for separate variance estimations. Those with strong identities as smokers reduced their intention to quit more when the rhetoric of the message was disrespectful ( $M = -0.33$ ) than when it was respectful ( $M = 0.09$ ;  $t(22.5) = 2.71$ ,  $p < .02$ ), whereas the difference between these conditions was not significant among those with a weak identity as smokers (respectively,  $M = 0.11$  and  $M = -0.21$ ;  $t(27.6) = 1.14$ , n.s.). Additionally, smokers with a strong identity changed more negatively than smokers with a weak identity when the message was disrespectful ( $t(31.4) = 1.96$ ,  $p < .06$ ), but not when the message was respectful ( $t(16.4) = 1.32$ , n.s.). Finally, analyses for pre-test/post-test differences showed that the change in intention to quit was significant only in one experimental condition: strong identity smokers decreased their intention to quit when the message was disrespectful ( $M = -0.33$ ;  $F(1,61) = 4.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

TABLE 1  
Change in intention to quit smoking and in satisfaction with being a smoker.

Message rhetoric:	Smokers identity:	Disrespectful		Respectful	
		Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong
Intention	N	19	15	14	17
	M	.11a	-.33b*	-.21ab	.09a
Satisfaction	SD	.77	.52	.80	.32
	M	-.32ab1	.58c*	.10ac	-.42b*
	SD	.54	.71	.80	.89

Note.  
In line, means with different letter differ at  $p < .06$   
Pretest - posttest differ at (1)  $p < .07$  and (2)  $p < .05$

### Change in satisfaction with being smoker

The 2 (smoker identity: weak vs. strong)  $\times$  2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful)  $\times$  2 (satisfaction: pre-test vs. post-test) mixed ANOVA performed with repeated measures on the last factor revealed a significant interaction between the two independent factors and the within subjects factor ( $F(1,61) = 14.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>2</sup> Means are presented in Table 1. Strong

2. The 2 (smoker identity: weak vs. strong)  $\times$  2 (message rhetoric: respectful vs. disrespectful) ANOVA performed on the pretest intention scores did not show any significant effect ( $F's < 0.70$ ).

identity smokers increased their satisfaction more than weak identity smokers when the message was disrespectful (respectively,  $M = 0.58$  and  $M = -0.32$ ;  $F(1,61) = 12.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while a difference in the opposite direction was almost significant when the message was respectful (respectively,  $M = -0.42$  and  $M = 0.10$ ;  $F(1,61) = 3.78$ ,  $p < .06$ ). In addition, strong identity smokers increased their satisfaction more when the message was disrespectful than when it was respectful ( $F(1,61) = 14.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No difference was observed for weak identity smokers ( $F(1,61) = 2.51$ ,  $p < .12$ ). Analyses for pre-test/post-test differences showed that those with a strong identity as smokers significantly increased their satisfaction when the message was disrespectful ( $F(1,61) = 9.23$ ,  $p < .003$ ) but decreased it when the message was respectful ( $F(1,61) = 5.57$ ,  $p < .03$ ). Among weak identity smokers, the disrespectful message tended to decrease satisfaction ( $F(1,61) = 3.49$ ,  $p < .07$ ), but no effect was observed for the respectful message ( $F(1,61) = 0.23$ , n.s.).

### Correlational analyses

To better explore the underlying processes accounting for change in intention to quit smoking, several correlational analyses were performed between this variable and the other additional variables (perception of the message and its authors, scores for generated thoughts, and change in satisfaction with being smoker). Only the condition in which a significant negative change was observed (i.e., that involving strong identity and a disrespectful message) produced significant or almost significant correlations. The negative change in intention to quit found in this condition was related to ratings of the message as false ( $r(15) = -.62$ ,  $p < .02$ ; 1 = 'true', 7 = 'false') and unimportant ( $r(15) = .51$ ,  $p < .05$ ; 1 = 'unimportant', 7 = 'important'), and to perceptions of the source as untrustworthy ( $r(15) = -.48$ ,  $p < .09$ ; 1 = 'trustworthy', 7 = 'untrustworthy'), dissimilar to targets ( $r(15) = .56$ ,  $p < .04$ ; 1 = 'dissimilar to you', 7 = 'similar to you') and far from to their ideas ( $r(15) = .59$ ,  $p < .03$ ; 1 = 'far from your ideas', 7 = 'close to your ideas'). No significant correlations were found with the systematic information processing scores, or with change in satisfaction with being a smoker.

## Discussion

The present study showed that recipients of an identity-relevant persuasive message (i.e., participants with a strong identity as smokers exposed to an antismoking message) need an appropriate influence relationship (i.e., a respectful rather than a disrespectful persuasive message) if they are not to be defensively motivated. Specifically, those with a strong smoker identity, as compared to those with a weak smoker identity, decreased their intention to quit smoking when the message threatened their freedom, but not when the message respected it. Unexpectedly, the respectful rhetoric did not significantly increase the intention to quit in strong-identity smokers. This result suggests that the theoretical considerations may be better predictors of resistance processes to expert influence (defensive motivation effects) than of processes allowing change, at least for the sample considered in this study.

Another important result of this study concerns the change in satisfaction with being a smoker. Whilst smokers with weak identity did not change their satisfaction according to the rhetoric of the message, smokers with a strong identity increased their satisfaction when the message was disrespectful and decreased it when the message was respectful. This finding suggests that strong-identity smokers are motivated to assert their satisfaction with their identity when confronted with a disrespectful antismoking message, but that they are ready to question their identity when confronted with a respectful antismoking message—i.e., they are able to acknowledge the threat to their identity. These results provide further support for the hypothesis that a respectful influence relationship contributes to a decrease in defensive motivation. Finally, the fact that the change in satisfaction was not correlated with the change in intention to quit suggests that not all motives can be reduced to mere resistance to change (i.e., to the restoration of freedom), and that targets may also be defensively motivated to emphasise the worth of their social identities (see Falomir & Mugny, 1999).

As regards the additional measures, the results showed that systematic processing (i.e., the number of thoughts generated) was high in all conditions except in that in which less-involved targets were exposed to the respectful message (i.e., the least conflictual condition). These results suggest that identity-related involve-

ment and the rhetoric of the message are each by themselves sufficient to increase effortful information processing. However, no effect was observed for the biased processing scores, and none of these measures was correlated with the measures of change. These findings suggest that both resistance to change and change in satisfaction with identity as a smoker were not mediated by the cognitive responses to the persuasive message (i.e., by a systematic defensive processing of antismoking information). Nevertheless, evaluation of both message and its authors varied according to the rhetoric of the message: In the disrespectful rhetoric condition both the message and its authors were evaluated more negatively. No effect was observed as a function of the targets' own involvement. As regards correlations with change in intention to quit smoking, the degree of negative change observed when strong-identity smokers were exposed to the disrespectful message was correlated with the perceptions of the source and the arguments. These findings suggest that resistance to change followed a low-effort heuristic processing strategy according to which negative judgements about the message and its authors allow targets to achieve the desired level of defensive confidence (see Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1997; Slater & Rouner, 1996).

Another remaining question concerns the extent to which these results can be associated particularly with the expertise of the source. This cannot be answered conclusively without comparing the effects of expert and non-expert sources directly. Nonetheless, several possibilities can be considered. It has been suggested (cf. Falomir, Mugny & Pérez, 2000) that smokers will be motivated to resist persuasive attempts with an antismoking message in part because of factors related to these kinds of campaigns such as the use of expert sources, because smokers perceive their use as introducing a constraint to yield to the antismoking point of view. Therefore, expert sources should be particularly likely to benefit from a reduction in the negative consequences associated with the constraint they introduce. This could be done, for instance, by establishing influence relationships in which smokers feel valued and fairly treated. Indeed, it has been observed (Falomir, Mugny & Pérez, 1996; Pérez, Falomir & Mugny, 1995) that an expert source (i.e., university professors) has more influence on smokers' intentions to quit



smoking when the experimental situation allows them to smoke, rather than prevents them. This pattern of results was particular to the expert source since the reverse was observed in a non-expert source condition (i.e., students or a minority group as source). These findings may be interpreted by assuming that smoking allows an assertion of the smokers' autonomy and therefore counters the constraint associated with the influence of an expert.

In conclusion, these findings are in agreement with the idea that one way sources can get around the threat they introduce in their communications is to manage the face or public identity of the recipient. Rather than imposing their threatening point of view, they have to be more respectful and considerate with the target. Although this represents a quite spontaneous strategy in interpersonal interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holtgraves, 1997), it is not so common in persuasive campaigns which are more inclined to impose a socially and scientifically legitimised attitude or behaviour (e.g., health campaigns). These concerns seem of particular relevance when persuasive messages carry some threat to the targets' identities.

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