

# Psychologists: Getting Liberals to Agree Really Is Like Herding Cats

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When he was President, Bill Clinton famously (and perhaps apocryphally) complained that getting Democrats to agree on a course of action was like herding cats, while the Republicans didn't seem to have this problem. All political parties are large coalitions of people with varied interests and beliefs, but is it possible that ideological differences between the parties could play a decisive role here?

A new paper by researchers at New York University, in press at *Psychological Science*, suggests that the answer is yes. A large body of psychological research has shown that people tend to overestimate how much others share their beliefs, feelings, and practices. But this new research suggests that this is *not* the case for those on the left end of the political spectrum – in fact, it's quite the opposite. Conservatives and moderates overestimated the degree to which other conservatives and moderates were like them, while liberals assumed they were more unique among party peers than they actually were. This “liberal uniqueness” perceptual bias could help to explain why it's harder to get Democrats to fall in line than it is for Republicans.

Read the whole story: [Scientific American](#)