

Study of the Day: Why There's No Love Lost Between Political Enemies

May 15, 2012

The Atlantic:

PROBLEM: Usually, visceral states, or internal conditions that we want badly to change, can get so overwhelming that we project them onto others. A person who's freezing, for instance, would likely assume that the people around him must be cold as well. But how far does this effect extend?

METHODOLOGY: To see if political rivals can also feel each other's pain, researchers led by Ed O'Brien asked subjects to read a short story about a person who was either a left-wing, pro-gay rights Democrat or a Republican proponent of traditional marriage. This character goes hiking in winter and gets lost with no food, water, or extra clothes. After reading the story, they asked the participants whether the hunger, thirst, or cold was most unpleasant for the hiker and what the hiker most regretted not packing. They were also asked how hungry, thirsty, and cold the hiker felt, and what their own political views were. The researchers then compared the answers of respondents who were warm and comfortable in the nearby library with respondents who were cold and miserable outside during winter.

Read the whole story: [The Atlantic](#)