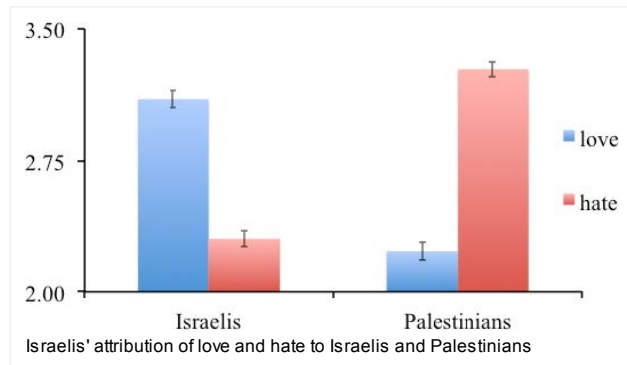




NEW SCHOOL STUDY: PERCEIVED HATRED INTENSIFIES CONFLICTS BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS, ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

**Intractability of Historic Conflicts Driven by “Motive Attribution Asymmetry”
Financial Incentives Can Spur Greater Empathy**

New York (October 20, 2014) – What makes human conflict intractable – and how can psychological research resolve historic disagreements? [A new study](#) published in the [Proceedings of the National Academic of Sciences](#) by a team of researchers from The New School for Social Research, Northwestern University and Boston College demonstrates how seemingly unsolvable political and ethnic conflicts are fueled by asymmetrical perceptions of opponents’ motivations – and that these tensions can be relieved by providing financial incentives to better understand what drives an adversary group.



EDITOR'S NOTE: [CLICK HERE TO READ STUDY](#)

“This research demonstrates a fundamental cognitive bias driving [historic] conflict intractability,” write researchers **Jeremy Ginges**, Assistant Professor of Psychology at The New School, **Adam Waytz**, Assistant Professor of Management & Organizations at Northwestern, and **Liane Young**, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Boston College. **“Understanding this bias and how to alleviate it can contribute to conflict resolution on a global scale.”**

The researchers executed a set of three experiments to determine how adversarial groups describe their own motivations (ingroup motives) and the motivations of their opponents (outgroup motives). Among both American Democrats and Republicans, and Israelis and Palestinians, the researchers consistently observed “motive attribution asymmetry” – that is, one group’s belief that their rivals are motivated by emotions opposite to their own.

Study One asked 285 American Democrats and Republicans to assess their motives and their opponents’ motives for conflict. Democrats reported that they were driven primarily by love of other Democrats rather than hatred of Republicans, but that they believed Republicans were driven more by hatred of Democrats than love for the GOP. Republicans mirrored these beliefs: they reported they were driven by love but Democrats were driven by hatred.

Studies Two and Three found similar attribution asymmetries among a group of 297 Israelis and 1,266 Gaza and West Bank Palestinians: ingroups consistently reported that they were driven by love, while they opponents were driven by hatred.

The researchers then undertook two additional studies to explore how attribution asymmetry affected conflict resolution, and how this effect might be reduced. In Study Four, a survey of 498 Israelis, researchers found a direct correlation between Israelis’ belief that Palestinians were motivated by hatred with a belief that Palestinians were unwilling to negotiate and that a win-win agreement was impossible. The study thus suggests that attribution asymmetry impedes conflict resolution.

The researchers’ final study sought to explore how motive attribution asymmetry, and thus impediments to resolution, might be reduced. Study Five offered Democrats and Republicans financial incentives for accurately assessing the motivations of their rivals. Once accuracy was incentivized, not only were individuals more likely to attribute love as a primary outgroup motivation, but they were more optimistic about the chances for a win-win resolution to long-running conflicts.

The study was supported by Northwestern University, Boston College, the Dispute Resolution Research Center at Kellogg School of Management, the National Science Foundation, and the Office of Naval Research. [Click here to read the entire paper.](#)

Founded in 1919, **The New School** was born out of principles of academic freedom, tolerance, and experimentation. Committed to social engagement, The New School today remains in the vanguard of innovation in higher education, with more than 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students challenging the status quo in design and the social sciences, liberal arts, management, the arts, and media. The New School welcomes thousands of adult learners annually for continuing education courses and calendar of lectures, screenings, readings, and concerts. Through its online learning portals, research institutes, and international partnerships, The New School maintains a global presence. Learn more at www.newschool.edu.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

79 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10003
www.newschool.edu

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Sam Blederman
212-229-5667 x 3094
sam.blederman@newschool.edu

