

Why Clinton and Trump backers don't mix

July 8 2016

Living around people with opposing political viewpoints affects your ability to form close relationships and accept other perspectives - and may even change your personality, finds a national study led by a Michigan State University scholar.

The findings also could help explain why so many Americans are moving to areas that suit them politically, further segregating the nation into "red" and "blue" states, said William Chopik, MSU assistant professor of psychology.

And while living among folks of common ideology may reduce conflict and promote individual well-being, it also could be stifling healthy political discourse, said Chopik, who was named one of [Forbes' "30 Under 30" for Science](#) in 2016.

"You might be happier if you're a conservative and you move to a stereotypical conservative place, or a liberal to a liberal one, but maybe that's one of the reasons we see all the deadlock and polarization along party lines," Chopik said. "If you never live among people you disagree with, how does compromise happen?"

The study, published online in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, examined national survey data of 19,162 people. The researchers looked at participants' political orientation, ideological climate and personality measures such as anxiety and avoidance (survey items include "I try to avoid getting too close to others" and "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things

look from their perspective").

Living among politically dissimilar others, the study found, had a psychological effect on people. These political "misfits" had difficulty depending on and accepting the viewpoints of others. Further, rather than assimilate or alter their dispositions to be more similar to their neighbors, they withdrew from relationships.

"Because living among politically dissimilar others is associated with a reduced sense of belonging, ideological misfits may feel as though they cannot reliably depend on the people around them," the study states.

In the current political climate, Chopik said it's not uncommon for conservatives not to know any Hillary Clinton supporters, or for liberals not to know any Donald Trump supporters. This may be at least partly the result of political segregation.

"Obviously, Trump supporters exist, and Clinton supporters exist, but people are choosing an environment where the other side doesn't exist," Chopik said. "As people continue segregating themselves into geographic areas according to political ideology, it's important to understand the psychological states of the individuals living in these discordant communities."

Provided by Michigan State University

Citation: Why Clinton and Trump backers don't mix (2016, July 8) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-07-clinton-trump-backers-dont.html>

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