The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend: Examining the Negative and Positive Effects of Enemies

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Introduction

OVERVIEW

The present study examined the type of impact, both negative and positive, that enemies have upon the socially rejected, neglected, and the accepted.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Enemy relationships are common amongst childhood populations as well as adult populations. Research by Card and Hodges (2003) suggest that 65% of children have enemy relationships. According to Abecassis (2003) at least 70% of adults are involved in relationships with enemies.

What are the effects of enemies?

➢ Baumeister, et al. (2001) suggested that enemies possess the power to affect individuals views of themselves. Some enemy relationships may even have a bigger impact on the individual than their friendships (Abecassis, 2003).

➢ Often the impact enemies have on a individual are negative (Pope, 2003). Negative impacts includes an increased risk of depression, social anxiety, and a lower view of one's self-worth.

➢ However, recent research indicates that enemies have positives impacts as well. Sinclair (2004) found that enemies can motivate individuals to work harder and can facilitate friendship formation. Positive impacts can include increasing connections of like-minded others and motivation to outperform one's adversary (Smith, 2007).

What determines the effects of enemies?

➢ Abecassis (2003) suggest that friendships that provide support, self-disclosure, and intimacy to help protect individuals from enemies.

➢ Therefore, individuals who are socially accepted – and thus have supportive friend networks - may not be impacted negatively. In fact, some evidence (Abecassis, 2003) shows that people can become more popular when they have an enemy.

➢ However, individuals who are socially excluded don't have friends or support because they are socially rejected (actively picked on) or socially neglected (passively ignored).

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: We believed that individuals who were socially neglected (the passively ignored) and rejected(the actively picked on) would be impacted negatively.

Hypothesis 2: We believed that individuals who were socially accepted would be impacted positively.

Method

Participants: (n =296)
➢ Male Ss: 38.2 %, Female Ss: 61.8 %
➢ White Ss: 72.6 %, African American Ss: 24.3 %, Other (primarily multi-racial): 3.1 %
➢ Mean Age: 19.76 , SD: 2.40 1, Range: 17-38

Procedures: Participants were recruited using an online survey titled "Keep Your Friends Close and Your Enemies Closer"

Materials:

Peer Social Exclusion Scale-Revised (PSE-R)

➢ Assessed current level of peer exclusion with 40 items responded to with statement using a 6-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 6= *strongly agree*) an overall reliability of α =.94. It includes three subscales:

Subscale	Items	Reliability	Sample Item
Socially Rejected	15	α= .92	"People are unfriendly to me"
Socially Neglected	8	α= .86	"I feel invisible"
Socially Accepted	5	α= .77	"I get along with mostly everyone"

Revision of Sinclair's(2004) Enemy Impact Inventory (EII-R)

➢ Assessed the *negative* and *positive* influences enemies have on an individual's feelings, thoughts, and actions. It included the following sub-scales.

Negative Impact (NEI) Sub-scales		Positive Impact (PEI) Sub-scales	
Factor	Reliability	Factor	Reliability
Purpose/Goals	α= .82	Purpose/Goals	α= .89
Positive Self-Regard	α= .90	Positive Self-Regard	α= .90
Belonging	α= .89	Belonging	α= .84
Trust	α= .84	Trust	α= .83
Control	α= .85	Control	α= .88

Results

To examine the positive and negative effects of enemies we ran regressions using the different social exclusion sub-scales as the predictors and negative enemy impact as the outcome variable for the first regression, $F(3, 298)= 11.735$, p<.05, $R^2 = .11$ (See Table 1), and positive enemy impact as the outcome variable for the second regression, $F(3, 298)= 3.63$, p=.013, $R^2 = .04$ (See Table 2). On average people reported a mean of 4.56 ($SD = 1.16$) on NEI and a mean of 4.33 ($SD = 1.27$) on PEI.

Table 1: Regression Results on Negative Impact				Table 2: Regression Results on Positive Impact			
VARIABLE	B	SE B	β	VARIABLE	B	SE B	β
Socially Rejected	.112	.069	.131	Socially Rejected	.034	.078	.036
Socially Neglected	.214	.057	.286***	Socially Neglected	-.107	.065	-.130
Socially Accepted	-.164	.052	-.210***	Socially Accepted	.173	.059	.203***

Conclusion

SUMMARY

➢We found that individuals are impacted negatively and positively by enemies depending on how socially accepted or excluded they are by their peers.

Hypothesis 1: Our results showed that individuals who are socially neglected are impacted negatively; however individuals who are socially rejected are not impacted negatively nor are they impacted positively.

Hypothesis 2: Our results confirmed that individuals who are considered socially accepted are impacted positively by their enemies.

INTERPRETATIONS

➢ It may not be surprising that relationships we view as negative have negative consequences. However, it is worthwhile to note that this may not be the case for everyone.

➢ Specifically, socially accepted people appear to glean benefits from enemy relationships. Perhaps having a supportive social network helps them stand up to their enemies or form coalitions with peers to combat foes (e.g., uniting people through the recognition of a common enemy).

➢ In contrast, socially neglected people, who are accustomed to being ignored, get the attention of an enemy, it goes poorly for them. They have neither the peer resources nor the history of dealing with enemies to help them cope.

➢ It was surprising that social rejection did not predict negative or positive impacts. This may be because socially rejected people defensively deny in self-reports that others influence them one way or the other. Alternatively, there is new evidence that shows that those who are chronically socially rejected become "socially numb."

CAVEATS

➢ The data collected for this study was based on self-report and therefore those who were socially rejected may not be admitting to an effect. Behavioral observation studies would be important to conduct to see how socially rejected people actually deal with an adversary.

➢ There was no experimental manipulation in this study therefore, the surveys yielded correlation results and not causal results. Therefore, our results could be bi-directional. Such that reacting to an enemy negatively leads one to be isolated whereas reacting positively to an enemy leads to social acceptance.

IMPLICATIONS

➢ Our findings are somewhat consistent with past research. Although we found that enemies impact individuals negatively and positively, we also found that some individuals are not impacted at all. Future research should seek to replicate these results with observational studies and experiments to explore whether the findings are an artifact of the methodology.

TAKE HOME POINT

It is evident that enemies have a negative impact on individuals; however in some cases enemies may be good for us. Particularly when we have the support of friends.