

Angry opponents seem bigger to tied up men

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A physical handicap like being tied down makes men over-estimate an opponent's size and under-estimate their own, according to research published August 7 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Daniel Fessler and Colin Holbrook from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Participants who were tied down in a chair envisioned an angry man in a picture as being taller than when they made the same type of guess while simply sitting in the chair without being restrained. In a second test where they were asked to state their own height based on visual marks on a wall, participants who were impaired significantly under-estimated their own height. The researchers ruled out effects of anxiety associated with being tied up by repeating the tests on people who stood on a teetering [balance board](#). Participants who were incapacitated by standing on this unbalanced surface also envisioned the angry face as belonging to a taller, more muscular person.

Based on these observations, Fessler concludes, "Men's experience of their bodies' physical capacities seems to be automatically processed with an eye toward potential conflicts with others."

All the participants in the study were [young men](#), and the researchers state that future studies may extend to include a wider variety of people in other social contexts, as well as pictures of faces depicting emotions other than anger.

More information: Fessler DMT, Holbrook C (2013) Bound to Lose:

Physical Incapacitation Increases the Conceptualized Size of an Antagonist in Men. *PLOS ONE* 8(8): e71306.
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