

# Haters spend more time... hating? Study sheds light on activity levels based on one's attitude disposition

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We already know haters are predisposed to be that way. Now we see they also spend a lot of time at fewer activities than their non-hater counterparts. But in a twist of irony, that grumpy person at work may actually be pretty good at their job since they spend so much time on fewer activities, thereby giving them the opportunity to hone their skills in specific tasks.

It's all covered in a new study published in the journal *Social Psychology*. It seems that a person's "dispositional attitude" – whether the person is a "hater" or a "liker" – plays an important role in his or her activity level.

The article, "Liking more means doing more: Dispositional attitudes predict patterns of general action," is written by Justin Hepler, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Dolores Albarracín, Annenberg School for Communication and Department of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania. Assuming that our disposition motivates behavior, Hepler and Albarracín suggested that people who like many things (those with positive dispositional attitudes) also do many things during the course of a week, while people who dislike many things (those with low dispositional attitudes) do very few things with their time.

They were right. In two studies, participants reported all of their activities over a one-week period and also completed a measure of

dispositional attitudes. Although haters (someone with a low dispositional attitude) and likers (someone with a high dispositional attitude) did not differ in the types of activities they pursued, haters tended to do fewer activities throughout the week than did likers. Nearly 15 percent of the differences in how many activities people conducted during a typical week was associated with being a hater versus a liker.

Haters and likers also did not differ in how much time they spent doing activities throughout the week; they merely differed in the number of activities that they did. As a result, haters spent more time on any given activity than did likers. Thus, compared with likers, haters could be characterized as less active because they do fewer things, or they could be characterized as more focused because they spend more time on the small number of things they do.

"The present results demonstrate that patterns of general action may occur for reasons other than the desire to be active versus inactive," the researchers wrote. "Indeed, some people may be more active than others not because they want to be active per se, but because they identify a large number of specific behaviors in which they want to engage."

Hepler and Albarracín suggest that their findings may have implications for understanding the development of skills and expertise. For example, likers may adopt a jack-of-all-trades approach to life, investing small amounts of time in a wide variety of activities. This would leave them somewhat skilled at many tasks. In contrast, when haters find an activity they actually like, they may invest a larger amount of time in that task, allowing them to develop a higher skill level compared to likers. They said future work should confirm this possibility.

This same pattern could also be relevant to attentional control. For example, likers may have more difficulty sustaining attention on a task because they perceive so many interesting and distracting opportunities

in their environment. In contrast, because haters like so few things, they may be unlikely to be distracted when they are doing a task, and thus their generalized dislike may actually benefit their attentional control.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania

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