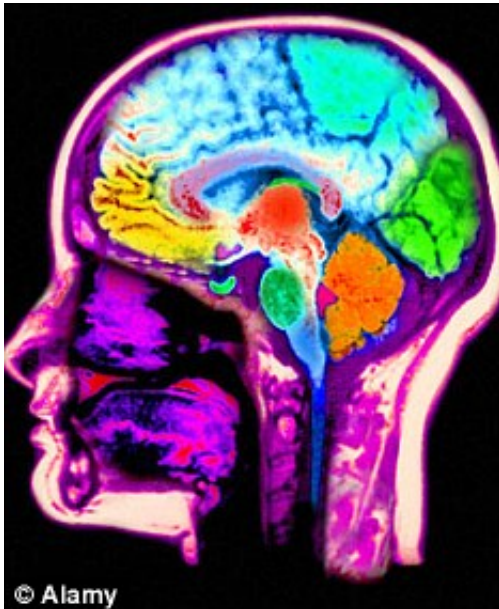


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The roots of racism are in our brains, based on empathy

By [Fiona Macrae](#)

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Cognitive activity: The study found that there is a basic difference in the way peoples' brains react to those from other ethnic backgrounds

The roots of racial prejudice lie deep within the brain, research has suggested.

A study found that when we watch someone from our own race do something our brain simulates the action mentally as a form of empathy, known as 'mirroring'.

But when we see someone of a different race do the same thing we make much less effort to empathise.

Researchers asked a group of white men to watch film clips of white, black and Asian men picking up a glass of water and drinking.

While the men watched the videos the scientists hooked them up to machines that monitored whether their brains mimicked the action.

The men's brains lit up most when watching someone of their own race.

All the viewers were white but the researchers believe the results would still have been similar with any other group.

Writing in the Journal Experimental Social Psychology, Dr Michael Inzlicht said he believed people are born with a tendency to group others on how like themselves they are.

Dr Inzlicht said the research did not necessarily mean prejudice was innate, adding that discrimination about race, religion or hair colour was 'probably learnt'.