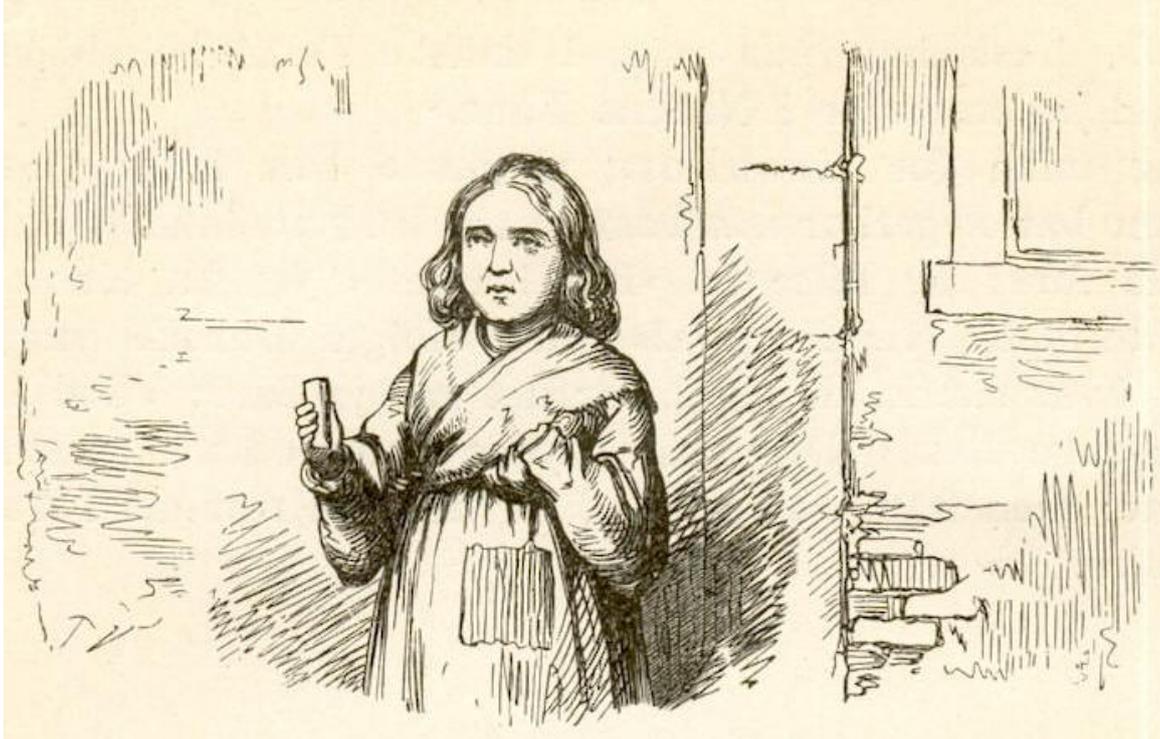


Two papers have recently come out on the relationship between physical and interpersonal warmth.



Pedersen's illustration of Andersen's tale "The Little Match Girl"

The [first](#), by Zhong and Leonardelli, shows that feelings of social exclusion can literally make you feel cold, while the [second](#), by Williams and Bargh, shows that feelings of warmth make you like people and be nice to them (well, slightly more so). Below are the abstracts and some questions to our fellow anthropologists. (You can find an ungated version of the first paper [here](#)).

Chen-Bo Zhong and Geoffrey J. Leonardelli

Cold and Lonely: Does Social Exclusion Literally Feel Cold?

Psychological Science

Volume 19 Issue 9, Pages 838 - 842

Metaphors such as icy stare depict social exclusion using cold-related concepts; they are not to be taken literally and certainly do not imply reduced temperature. Two experiments, however, revealed that social exclusion literally feels cold. Experiment 1 found that participants who recalled a social exclusion experience gave lower estimates of room temperature than did participants who recalled an inclusion experience. In Experiment 2, social exclusion was directly induced through an on-line virtual interaction, and participants who were excluded reported greater desire for warm food and drink than did participants who were included. These findings are consistent with the embodied view of cognition and support the notion that social perception involves physical and perceptual content. The psychological experience of coldness not only aids understanding of social interaction, but also is an integral part of the experience of social exclusion.

Lawrence E. Williams and John A. Bargh

Experiencing Physical Warmth Promotes Interpersonal Warmth

Science 24 October 2008:

Vol. 322. no. 5901, pp. 606 - 607 "Warmth" is the most powerful personality trait in social judgment, and attachment theorists have stressed the importance of warm physical contact with caregivers during infancy for healthy relationships in adulthood. Intriguingly, recent research in humans points to the involvement of the insula in the processing of both physical temperature and interpersonal warmth (trust) information. Accordingly, we hypothesized that experiences of physical warmth (or coldness) would increase feelings of interpersonal warmth (or coldness), without the person's awareness of this influence. In study 1, participants who briefly held a cup of hot (versus iced) coffee judged a target person as having a "warmer" personality (generous, caring); in study 2, participants

holding a hot (versus cold) therapeutic pad were more likely to choose a gift for a friend instead of for themselves.

The authors of both studies seem to assume that this link is universal, perhaps based on early feelings of warmth being associated with closeness to caregivers. Do some people have experiences with similar associations between physical and interpersonal warmth in other cultures? Or, more interestingly maybe, of opposite associations? Could the link be reversed in cultures in which feeling cool is valued (for climatic or other reasons)?