



# You didn't build that: Differences in alpha pride predict attitudes towards inequality

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## Unequal Wealth Distribution

- Many have noted America's unequal distribution of wealth.<sup>1</sup>



## Political Conservatism and Tolerance of Inequality

- Political conservatism is defined, in part, by a tolerance of inequality.<sup>2</sup>
- This tolerance is reflected in the economic policies proposed and endorsed by conservative politicians.<sup>3</sup>

## Why are Conservatives More Tolerant

- Research has highlighted the relationship between affect, moral attitudes, and political orientation.<sup>4,6</sup>
- Differences in affect may also explain unique views towards inequality.



## Differences in Pride Experience

- Pride is a self-conscious emotion in reaction to appraisals of the self as the cause of a positive event.<sup>7</sup>
- Pride has been associated with hierarchy-endorsing attitudes.<sup>8</sup>
- Two distinct sets of appraisals may lead to different types of pride experience.<sup>9</sup>
  - Beta Pride
    - "I am proud, because of what I did."
    - Internal, unstable, controllable
  - Alpha Pride
    - "I am proud, because of who I am."
    - Internal, stable, uncontrollable

## Hypotheses

- Trait-level differences in alpha pride may help explain conservatives' greater tolerance towards inequality.
- Experiences of alpha pride (compared to beta pride) increase tolerance towards inequality).

## Alpha Pride Helps Explain Conservatives' Attitudes Towards Inequality

- 38 participants completed study on Amazon Mechanical Turk
- Measures included:
  - Demographic information
  - Political conservatism (single-item)
  - Alpha and Beta Pride<sup>9</sup>
  - Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)<sup>2</sup>
  - Tolerance of unequal distribution<sup>10</sup>

"Economists sometimes break down the population in the US into quantiles - from the top 20% to the bottom 20% - from the richest to the poorest. We would like you to estimate what percentage of the total amount of wealth in the US, each of these groups own."

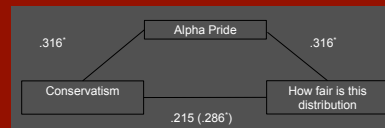
Quantile	Percentage of Total Wealth
Top 20%	80%
Bottom 20%	1%

This is the real actual distribution of wealth in the US.

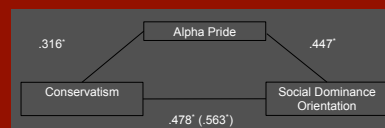
Quantile	Percentage of Total Wealth
Top 20%	80%
Bottom 20%	1%

How fair or unfair do you think this distribution is?

- Trait-level experiences of alpha pride were associated with political conservatism and beliefs that the wealth distribution in the US is fair
- Alpha mediated the relationship between conservatism and beliefs in fairness of wealth distribution



- Alpha pride also mediated the relationship between political conservatism and Social Dominance Orientation



## Inducing Alpha Pride Leads to Elevated Social Dominance Orientation for Conservatives

- 84 participants completed study on Amazon Mechanical Turk
- Responded to assessment of political orientation
- All participants completed a difficult math test

Example: If 10 gallons of orange juice are added to 40 gallons of a mixture that is 10 percent orange juice, then what percent of the resulting mixture is orange juice?

- All participants told they did well (93<sup>rd</sup> percentile)

- Some were told this was a test of intellect and innate ability (stable, uncontrollable) and some received feedback that it was a test of effort and focus (unstable, controllable).

### Beta Pride Prime:

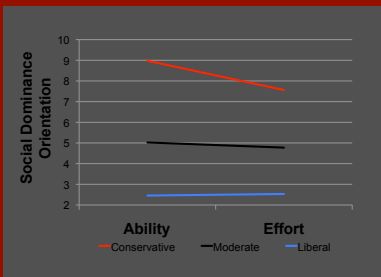
**Ability**  
(Stable/ Uncontrollable)  
Feedback: Your score on the test is a reflection of an innate, stable ability to work through math problems quickly and handle large numbers. If you got a high score (above the 80th percentile), you should feel proud of your innate intellect.

### Alpha Pride Prime:

**Effort**  
(Unstable/ Controllable) Feedback: Your score on the test is a reflection of your ability to focus on problems and keep working on them even when you are tired. It is not a measure of an innate ability or intellect. In fact, it is possible that on another day, your score would be lower. If you got a high score (above the 80th percentile), you should feel proud of your diligence and effort today.

- All participants completed a measure of SDO.

- A two way analysis of variance with condition (Ability x Effort) and political orientation (liberal, conservative, or moderate) revealed a significant interaction,  $F(2, 78) = 2.72, p < .05$ .
- Conservatives in the effort condition reported lower SDO scores than those in the ability condition.



## Key Findings

- Liberals and conservatives differ in trait levels of alpha pride.
  - While alpha pride is overall low across the political spectrum, there is a positive relationship between conservatism and alpha pride.
- Trait-level of alpha pride help explain a part of the relationship between conservatism and endorsement of inequality.
  - Alpha pride mediates the relationship between political conservatism and both social dominance orientation as well as beliefs that the actual wealth distribution in the US is fair.
- Experiences of alpha pride lead to increased tolerance of inequality among conservatives
  - Liberals and moderates may be experiencing a floor-effect.
- Differences in how liberals and conservatives interpret success, here operationalized as wealth and status, may help explain different political attitudes including tax policy and welfare expansion.

## References

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