

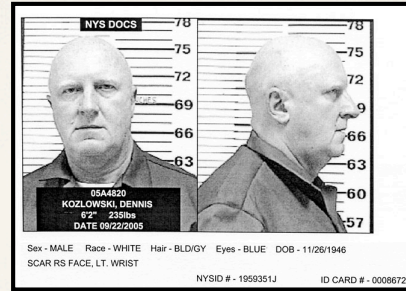


# On Wealth and Wrongdoing

## How Social Class Influences Unethical Behavior

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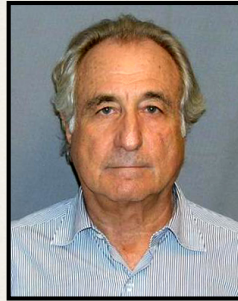
PAUL KAYHAN PIFE; MARCH 12, 2013; UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER



Dennis Kozlowski: Tyco CEO - \$100m/yr

He owned a huge art collection, a \$30 million house, two other homes, and a \$16 million yacht.

Accused of stealing 600m from Tyco.



Bernie Madoff



Thomas Coughlin



Greg Smith

It makes me ill how callously  
people talk about ripping  
their clients off....

Does wealth promote callousness?

# MY TALK TODAY

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- ✧ What is social class?
- ✧ Unethical behavior
- ✧ Generosity
- ✧ Moral reasoning



# SOCIAL HIERARCHY

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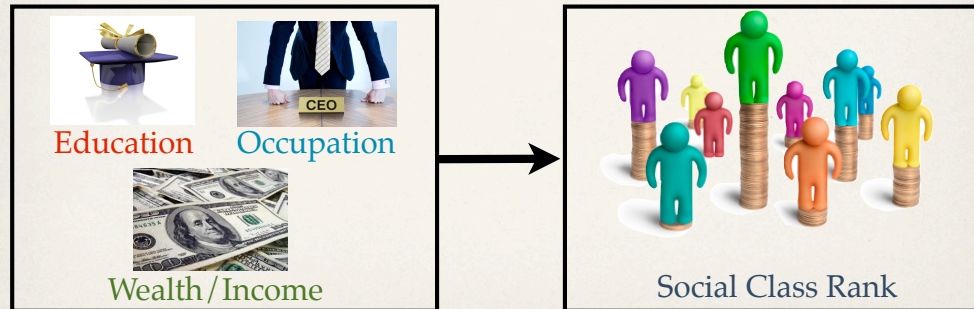


- ❖ Social hierarchy is ubiquitous
- ❖ Dominance affords increased access to reproductive mates, food, grooming

# HUMAN HIERARCHY

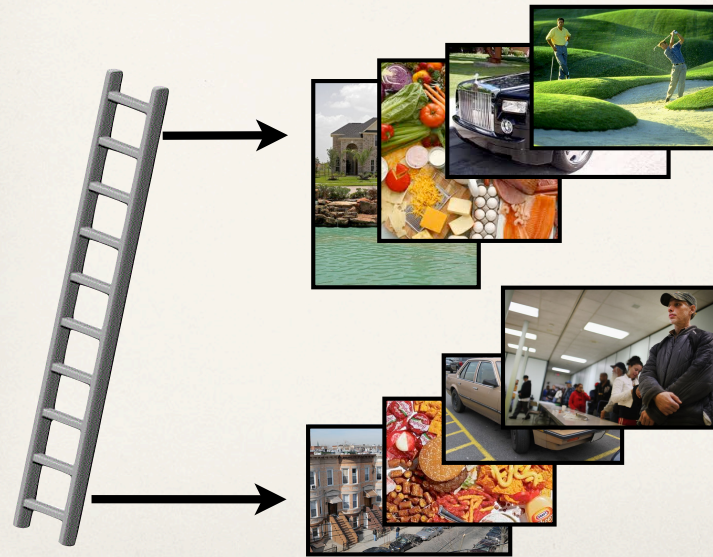
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- ❖ Different kinds of hierarchy (prestige, power)
- ❖ Social class hierarchy



# CONCEPTUALIZING CLASS

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# SOCIAL CLASS



CLASS-SPECIFIC  
PSYCHOLOGIES



# UPPER SOCIAL CLASS



FREEDOM  
CONTROL  
INDEPENDENCE



PRIORITIZE SELF





# LOWER SOCIAL CLASS

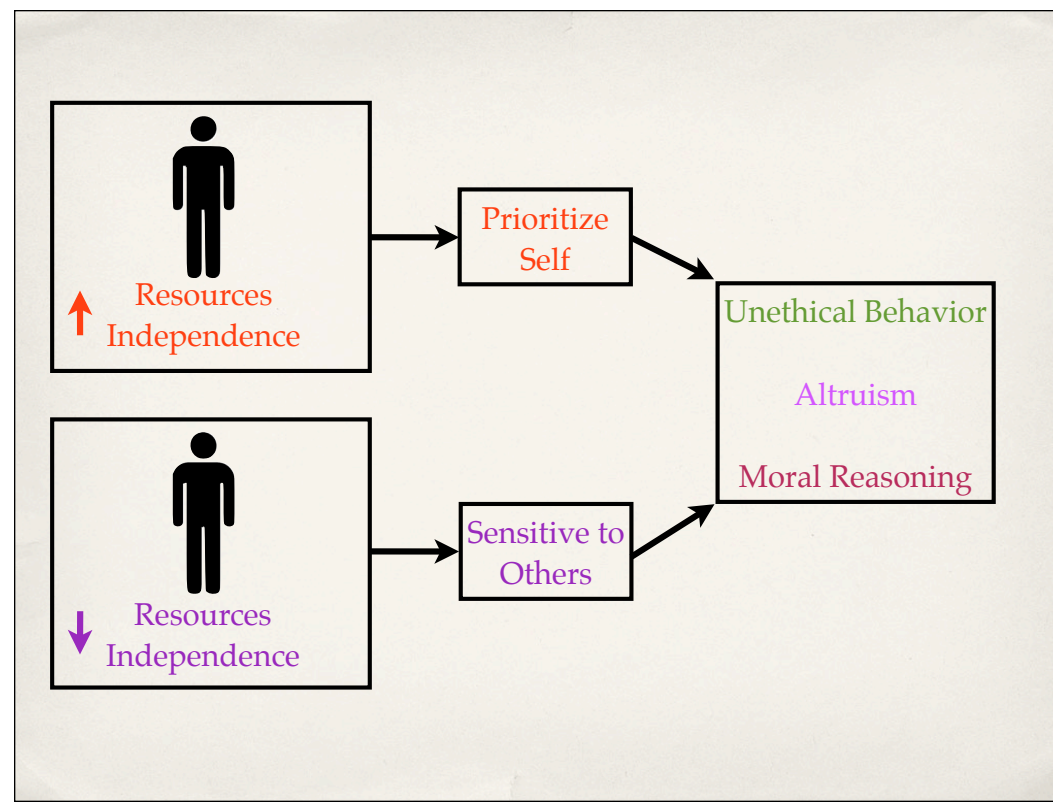


THREAT  
UNCERTAINTY  
DEPENDENCE



SENSITIVE TO OTHERS



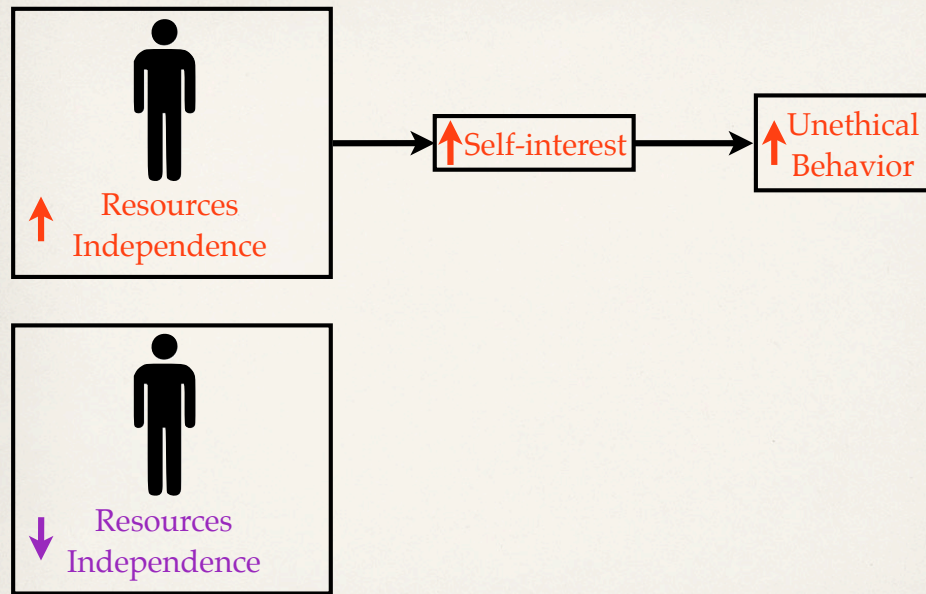


# CLASS AND ETHICS

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Who is more prone to act morally objectionable?

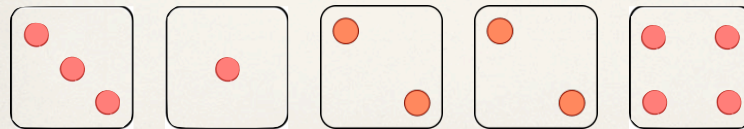




# CHEATING

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- \* 195 participants nationwide
- \* Online “game of chance” — \$50 prize
- \* Reported score greater than 12 = **cheating**



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)



# CHEATING

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- \* Attitude toward greed (Yamagishi & Sato, 1986)

- \* *"It is not morally bad to think first of one's own benefit and not other people's."*

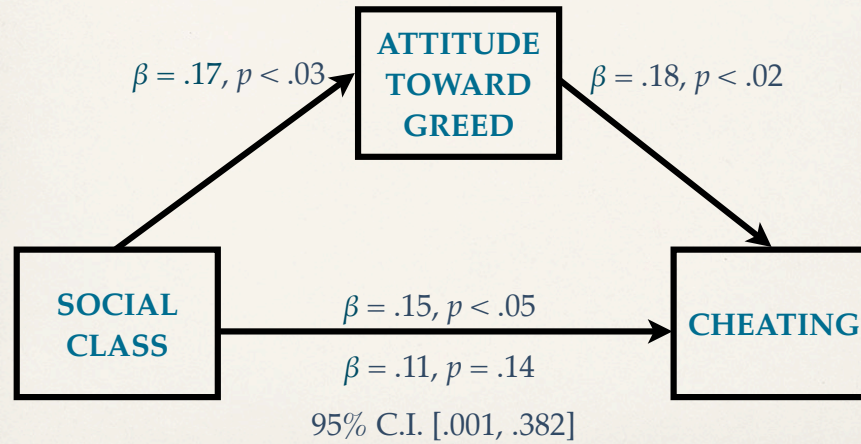
- \* Indicated their social class



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, PNAS)

# CHEATING

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(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)

# CAUSING UNETHICALITY

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- ✧ Correlational, confounds, causality
- ✧ Manipulate sense of class standing (Piff et al., 2010)

“Compare yourself to a person at the top (bottom) of the ladder representing society. This person has the most (least) money, education, and occupational prestige...”



- ✧ Cause unethically?

(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)

# CAUSING UNETHICALITY

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- ✦ 129 college students
- ✦ Manipulated sense of social class (**higher** vs. **lower**)
- ✦ Unethical decision making (Detert et al., 2008)

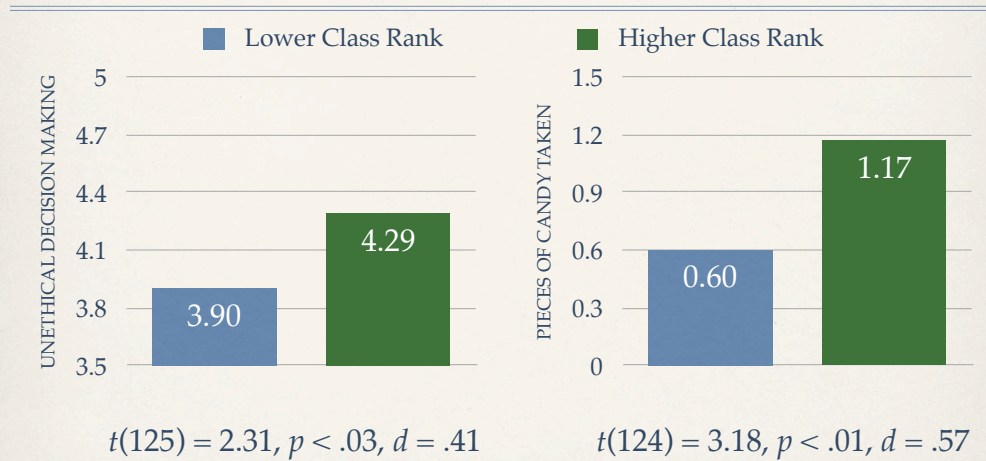
"You've waited in line for 10 minutes to buy a coffee and muffin at Starbucks. When you're a couple of blocks away, you realize that the clerk gave you change for \$20 rather than for the \$10 you gave him. You savor your coffee, muffin and free \$10."

- ✦ Taking candy (Campbell et al., 2008)



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)

# CAUSING UNETHICALITY



Feeling wealthy can cause unethical behavior

(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)



# “GREED IS GOOD”

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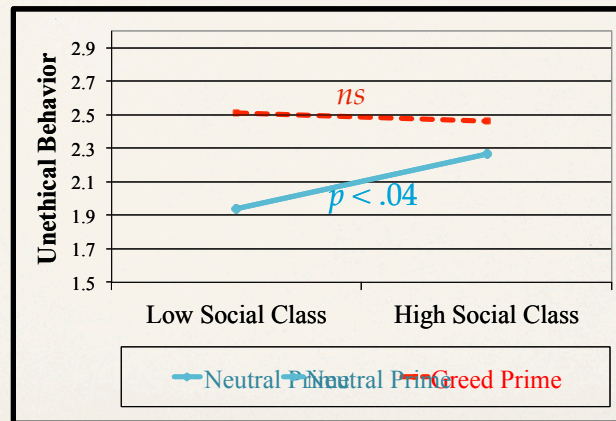
- ✦ Further test process
- ✦ 95 nationwide adults (subjective SES)
- ✦ Write about: Greed is Good vs. Control
- ✦ Propensity to engage in unethical behavior at work  
(Chen & Yang, 2006)



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)

# GREED IS GOOD

Social Class X Greed Prime Interaction:  $\beta = -.29, p < .03$



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)

# FIELD STUDY

- ❖ Unethical behavior in the lab
- ❖ Real-world context

§21869

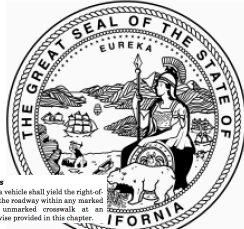
**Freeway: Stationary Vehicles Displaying Emergency or Warning Lights**

21869. (a) The driver of a vehicle approaching a pedestrian within any marked or unmarked crosswalk shall exercise due care for the safety of any pedestrian upon a roadway.

Amended Ch. 1010, Statutes 1971. Operative May 1, 1972.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

## 2012 VEHICLE CODE



§21869

**Freeway: Stationary Vehicles Displaying Emergency or Warning Lights**

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Amended Ch. 1010, Statutes 1971. Operative May 1, 1972.

# UNETHICAL DRIVING

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1



2



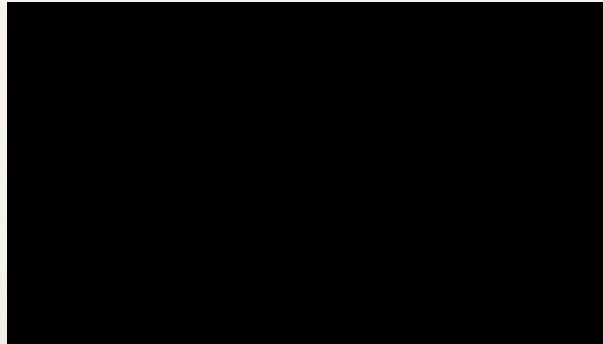
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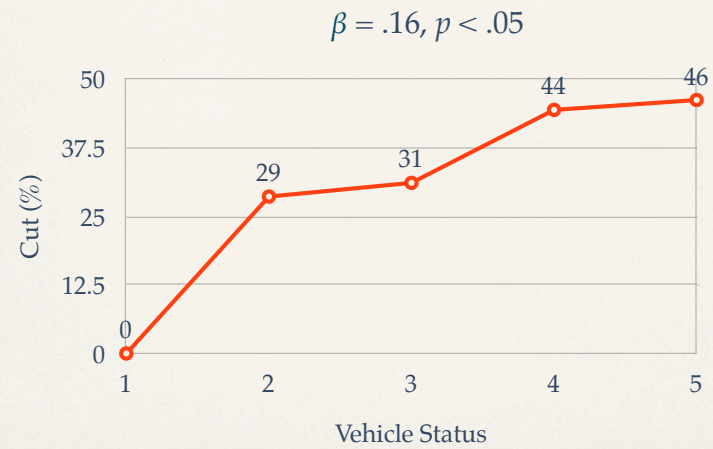


5



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)

# UNETHICAL DRIVING



(Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012, *PNAS*)



# CLASS AND ETHICS

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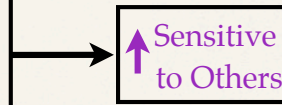
- ✧ Higher social class associated with (certain) unethical acts
- ✧ Greed more positive, moral
- ✧ Plato: Greed at the root of personal immorality
- ✧ Lower class perhaps more ethical, despite disadvantage
- ✧ Class differences in sensitivity to others, altruism

# CLASS AND ALTRUISM

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Who is more likely to incur costs to help?

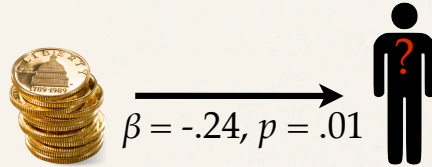




# CLASS AND ALTRUISM

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## ✦ Study 1: Generosity in dictator task



(Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010, *JPSP*)

# CLASS AND ALTRUISM

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- ✦ **Compassion:** Sensitivity to others' welfare (Goetz et al., 2010)
- ✦ Prompts prosocial action (Batson & Shaw, 1991)
- ✦ Explain class differences in helping behavior?



# HELPING

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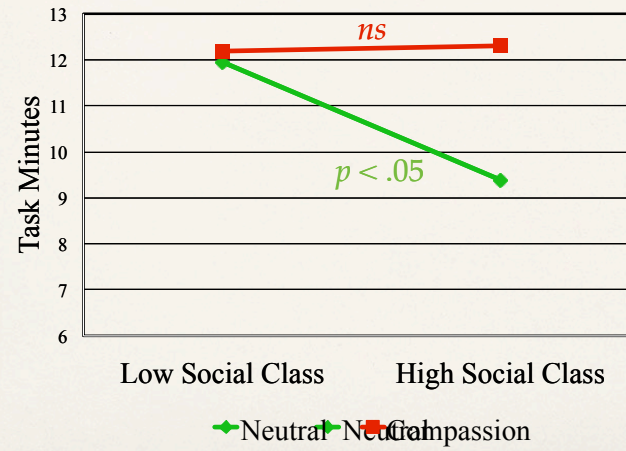
- ✦ 91 participants (annual income: \$15,000 - \$150,000)
- ✦ **Compassion induction:** Child poverty
- ✦ **Control:** Neutral
- ✦ Introduced distressed partner
- ✦ Helping behavior: Task minutes (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001)



(Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010, *JPSP*)

# HELPING

Social Class X Compassion Interaction:  $\beta = .31, p < .05$



(Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010, *JPSP*)

# CLASS AND ALTRUISM

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- ✧ Having less, giving more
- ✧ Class differences in compassion, empathy (e.g., Stellar et al., 2012)
- ✧ Extend to a different domain of moral reasoning

# MORAL REASONING

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- ✦ Utilitarian choice: Lesser harm for the greater good  
(e.g., Cushman & Greene, 2012)



- ✦ Empathy, concern (e.g., Greene et al., 2001, 2004; Loewenstein & Small, 2007; Slovic, 2007)
- ✦ Dispassionate choices to serve the greater good

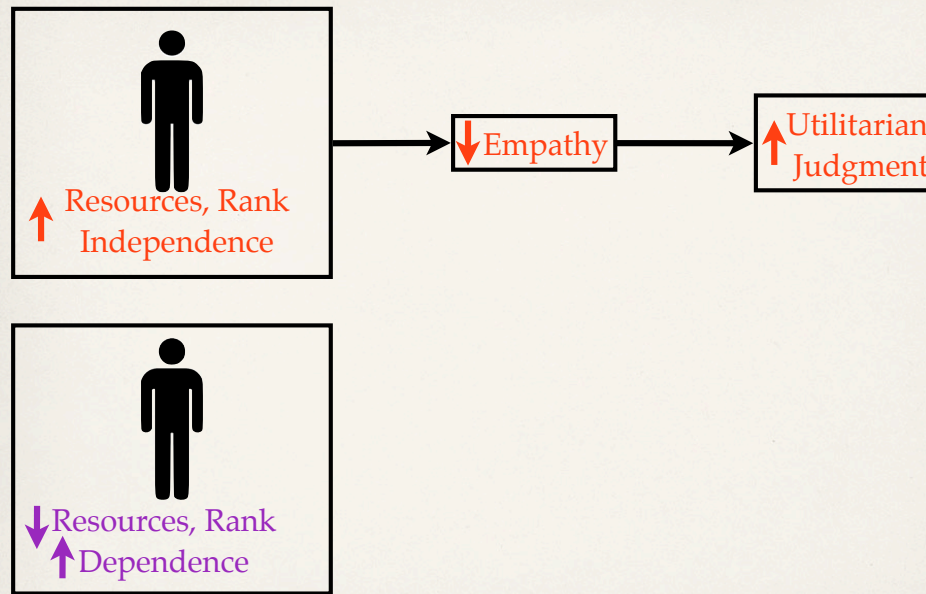
# CLASS AND UTILITARIANISM

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Who makes utilitarian decisions to maximize the greatest good for the greatest number (Bentham, 2001)?

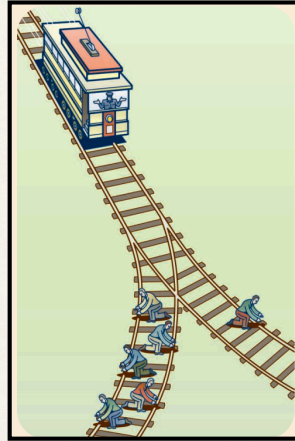




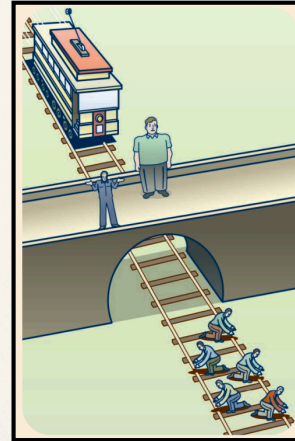


# CLASS AND UTILITARIANISM

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$B = .15, p = .19$



$B = .40, p < .001$

(Côté, Piff, & Willer, 2013, *JSPS*)

# CLASS AND UTILITARIANISM

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\* 229 participants (annual income: \$15,000 to \$150,000)

\* Allocation task (adapted from Small & Loewenstein, 2003)

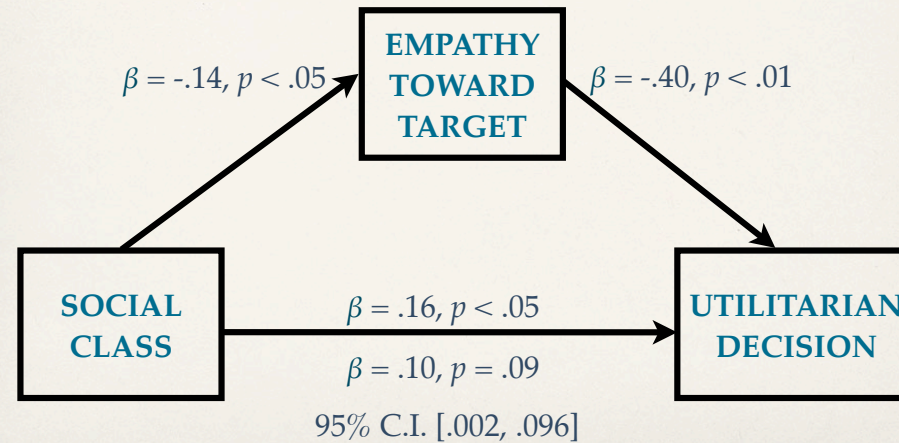


\* Reported empathy for **LOSE target**, then chose: \$0-\$5

(Côté, Piff, & Willer, 2013, *JPS*)

# CLASS AND UTILITARIANISM

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(Côté, Piff, & Willer, 2013, *JSPS*)

# CLASS AND UTILITARIANISM

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- ✦ Differential empathy → Moral reasoning

Emotions drive  
moral judgments



David Hume

Immanuel Kant

Reason should be  
the driving force

- ✦ “Tug of war”: **emotion** (*don't push him!*) vs **reason** (*push!*)
- ✦ Wealth influences which process guides one's ethics

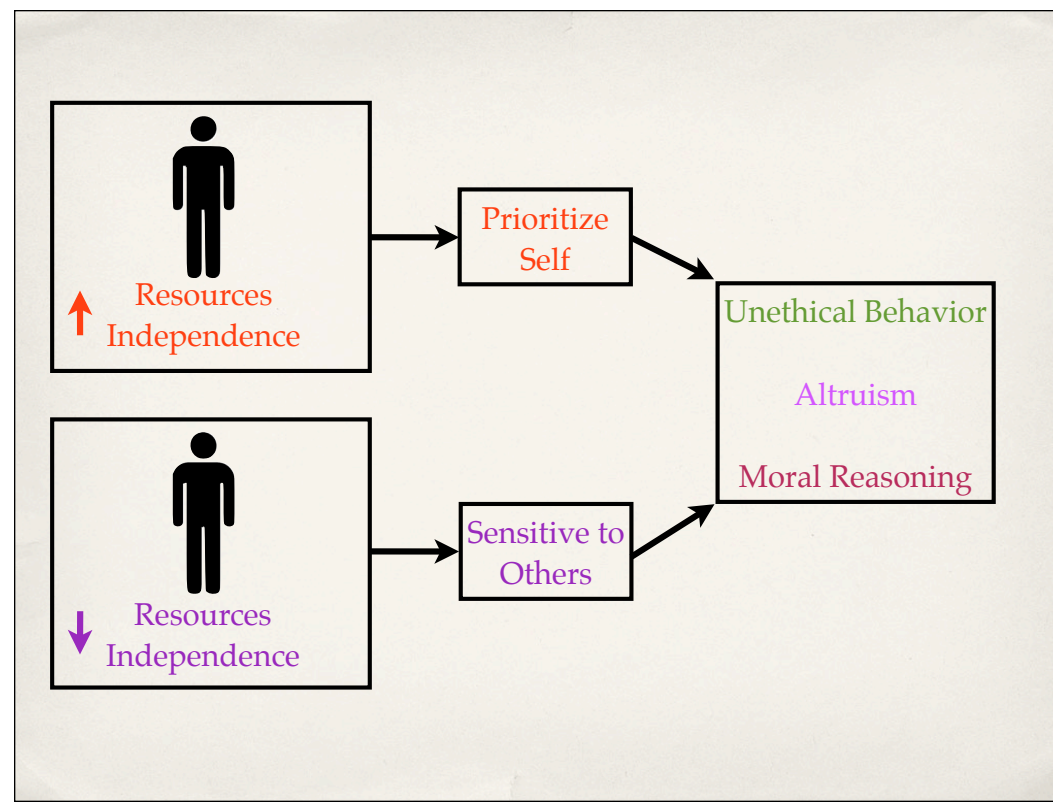


# SUMMARY

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*Let me tell you about the  
very rich. They are different  
from you and me.*





# SUMMARY

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- ✦ Social class is *inscribed in people's minds*
- ✦ Arise from the social context
- ✦ Differences are neither *categorical* nor *essential*
- ✦ Self-perpetuating dynamic

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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- ✦ Cross-cultural extensions
- ✦ Extensions to other domains
- ✦ How these patterns might be changed

