



Satoshi Kanazawa  
The Scientific Fundamentalist

# Why Liberals Are More Intelligent Than Conservatives

Liberals think they're more intelligent than conservatives because they are.

Posted Mar 22, 2010



---

Harriet Hayes: "I don't even know what the sides are in the culture wars".

Matt Albie: "Well, your side hates my side because you think we think you are stupid, and my side hates your side because we think you are stupid."

*Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip, Nevada Day, Part I*

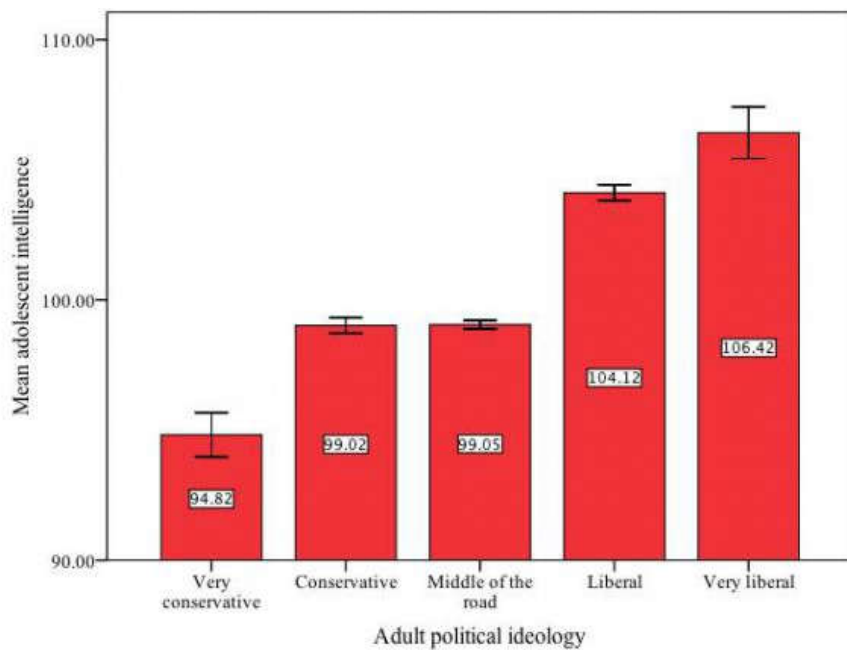
It is difficult to define a whole school of political ideology precisely, but one may reasonably define liberalism (as opposed to conservatism) in the contemporary United States as *the genuine concern for the welfare of genetically unrelated others and the willingness to contribute larger proportions of private resources for the welfare of such others*. In the modern political and economic context, this willingness usually translates into paying higher proportions of individual incomes in taxes toward the government and its social welfare programs. Liberals usually support such social welfare programs and higher taxes to finance them, and conservatives usually oppose them.

Defined as such, liberalism is evolutionarily novel. Humans (like other species) are evolutionarily designed to be altruistic toward their genetic kin, their friends and allies, and members of their deme (a group of intermarrying individuals) or ethnic group. They are not designed to be altruistic toward an indefinite number of complete strangers whom they are not likely ever to meet or interact with. This is largely because our ancestors lived in a small band of 50-150 genetically related individuals, and large cities and nations with thousands and millions of people are themselves evolutionarily novel.

The examination of the 10-volume compendium *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, which describes *all* human cultures known to anthropology (more than 1,500) in great detail, as well as extensive primary ethnographies of traditional societies, reveals that liberalism as defined above is absent in these traditional cultures. While sharing of resources, especially food, is quite common and often mandatory among hunter-gatherer tribes, and while trade with neighboring tribes often takes place, there is no evidence that people in contemporary hunter-gatherer bands *freely* share resources with *members of other tribes*.

Because all members of a hunter-gatherer tribe are genetic kin or at the very least friends and allies for life, sharing resources among them does not qualify as an expression of liberalism as defined above. Given its absence in the contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes, which are often used as modern-day analogs of our ancestral life, it may be reasonable to infer that sharing of resources with total strangers that one has never met or is not likely ever to meet – that is, liberalism – was not part of our ancestral life. Liberalism may therefore be evolutionarily novel, and [the Hypothesis](#) would predict that more intelligent individuals are more likely than less intelligent individuals to espouse liberalism as a value.

Analyses of large representative samples, from both the United States and the United Kingdom, confirm this prediction. In both countries, more intelligent children are more likely to grow up to be liberals than less intelligent children. For example, among the American sample, those who identify themselves as “very liberal” in early adulthood have a mean childhood IQ of 106.4, whereas those who identify themselves as “very conservative” in early adulthood have a mean childhood IQ of 94.8.



Even though past studies show that women are more liberal than men, and blacks are more liberal than whites, the effect of childhood intelligence on adult political ideology is twice as large as the effect of either sex or race. So it appears that, as [the Hypothesis](#) predicts, more intelligent individuals are more likely to espouse the value of liberalism than less intelligent individuals, possibly because liberalism is evolutionarily novel and conservatism is evolutionarily familiar.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

The primary means that citizens of capitalist democracies contribute their private resources for the welfare of the genetically unrelated others is paying taxes to the government for its social welfare programs. The fact that conservatives have been shown to give more money to charities than liberals is *not* inconsistent with the prediction from [the Hypothesis](#); in fact, it supports the prediction. Individuals can normally choose and select the beneficiaries of their charity donations. For example, they can choose to give money to the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, because they want to help them, but not to give money to the victims of the earthquake in Chile, because they don't want to help them. In contrast, citizens do not have any control over whom the money they pay in taxes benefit. They cannot individually choose to pay taxes to fund Medicare, because they want to help elderly white people, but

not AFDC, because they don't want to help poor black single mothers. This may precisely be why conservatives choose to give more money to individual charities of their choice while opposing higher taxes.

Incidentally, this finding substantiates one of the persistent complaints among conservatives. Conservatives often complain that liberals control the media or the show business or the academia or some other social institutions. [The Hypothesis](#) explains why conservatives are correct in their complaints. Liberals *do* control the media, or the show business, or the academia, among other institutions, because, apart from a few areas in life (such as business) where countervailing circumstances may prevail, *liberals control all institutions*. They control the institutions because liberals are on average more intelligent than conservatives and thus they are more likely to attain the highest status in any area of (evolutionarily novel) modern life.