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Gracious Guilt and Piggish Pride: Effects of Self-Conscious Emotions on Cooperation

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The Tragedy of the Commons





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What to do?

- Hardin (1968): “Mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon”
- Platt (1973): Shift reinforcement structures
 1. Immediate personal gratification, long-term shared negative consequences (defection)
 2. Immediate sacrifice, long-term shared benefits (cooperation)
- Cialdini et al. (1990): Highlight social norms

Emotions

- Emotions drive behavior – fast, not slow
- Goal: Identify emotions that will affect cooperation in social traps



Self-Conscious Emotions



Guilt – Arises when we’ve harmed someone, “behavioral stop mechanism” that motivates prosocial, reparative behavior



Pride – Arises when we’ve accomplished something admirable, facilitates promoting success for purpose of increasing status and access to resources

How do two self-conscious emotions – guilt and pride – affect cooperative behavior in a commons game?

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Guilt will lead to decreased consumption
- **H2:** Pride will lead to increased consumption

Participants

Participants: 105 ASU undergraduates

Final N = 91

44.0% Female

Age: $M=21.7$ yrs, $SD=4.1$ yrs

1 hour, “three separate studies”

1. Recalled emotion elicitation
2. Social Trap game
3. Game Feedback Sheet, individual differences

Recalled Emotion Elicitation

Please write about a recent time when you...

- **Neutral:** ...did your laundry
- **Guilt:** ...harmed or betrayed someone close to you
- **Pride:** ...accomplished something other people respected or found admirable

Social Trap Game (adapted from Galinsky et al., 2003)

“You and 99 other participants in this study share access to a common pool of \$1,000 dollars. You are free to ask for as much money from that pool as you like. But you should also be careful not to ask for too much, because **if at the end of the study everyone’s requests add up to more than the \$1,000 that is in the pool, then nobody, including yourself, will receive anything.** In other words, if the sum total of all 100 requests adds up to more than \$1,000, no one gets any money.

How much money would you like to take from the pool?”

Game Feedback Sheet

1. Describe the rules of the game you played
2. How does your outcome as an individual depend on the decisions made by everyone else?
3. How do everyone else's outcomes depend on the decision that you made?
4. What is the best strategy for success?
5. Any other thoughts about the game?

Participant Ejection

5 removed based on their stories

9 removed based on Feedback Sheet:

- (2) Didn't understand rules of game
 - E.g., thought it was first come, first served
- (1) Didn't believe game would work
 - “I picked the number randomly. I just can't believe that everyone can keep it below the limit”
- (6) $\$1,000/100 = \100
 - “The best way to win is to figure out your share and take a little bit less”
→ “\$90 😊”
 - “The best idea would be for all participants to ask for less than \$100”

Results

105 original participants:

Any guesses as to how much?

105 original participants: **\$4,370.82**

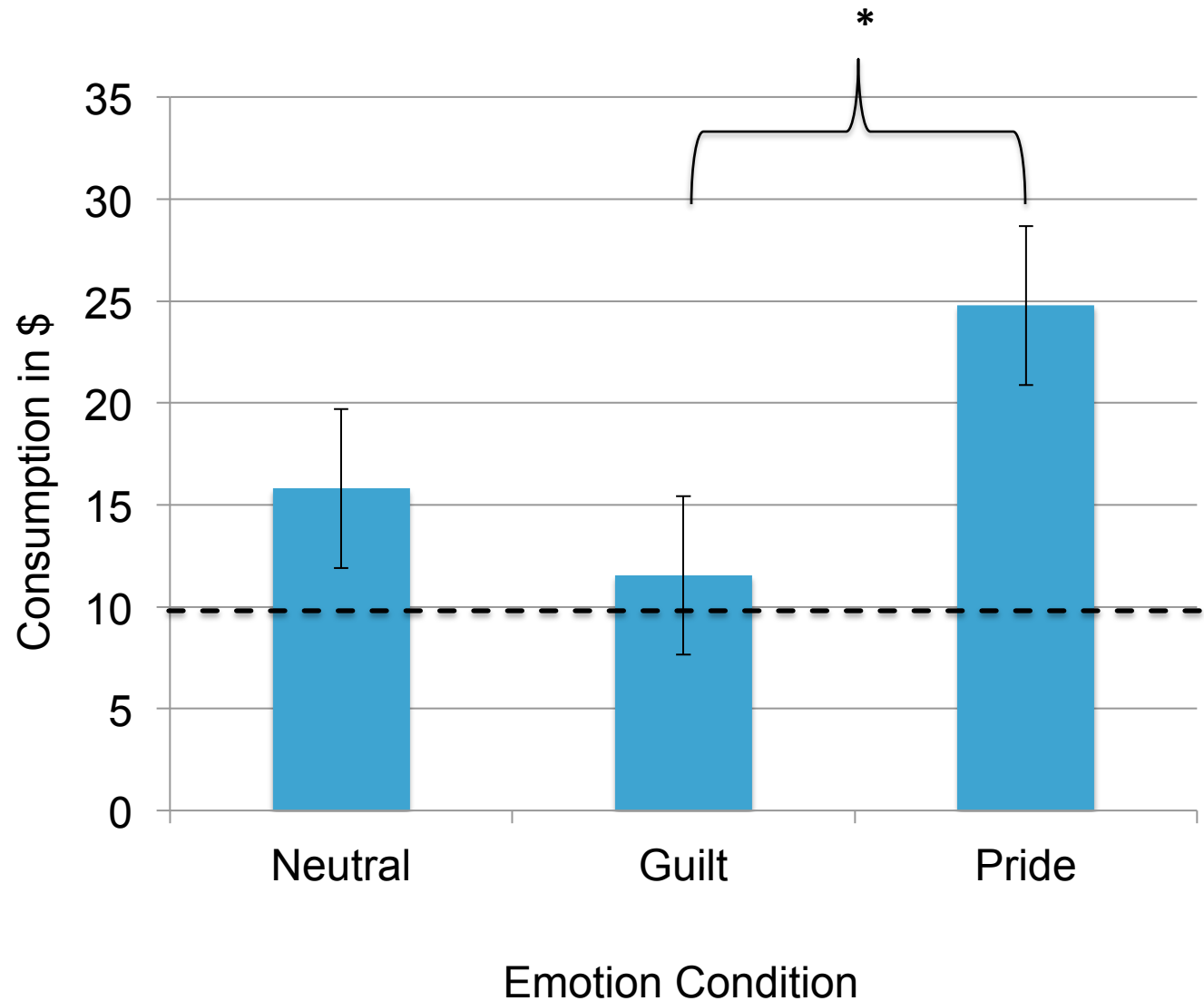
Minus the two \$1,000 takers: **\$2,370.82**

Final 91 participants: \$1,605.83

Average request: \$17.65

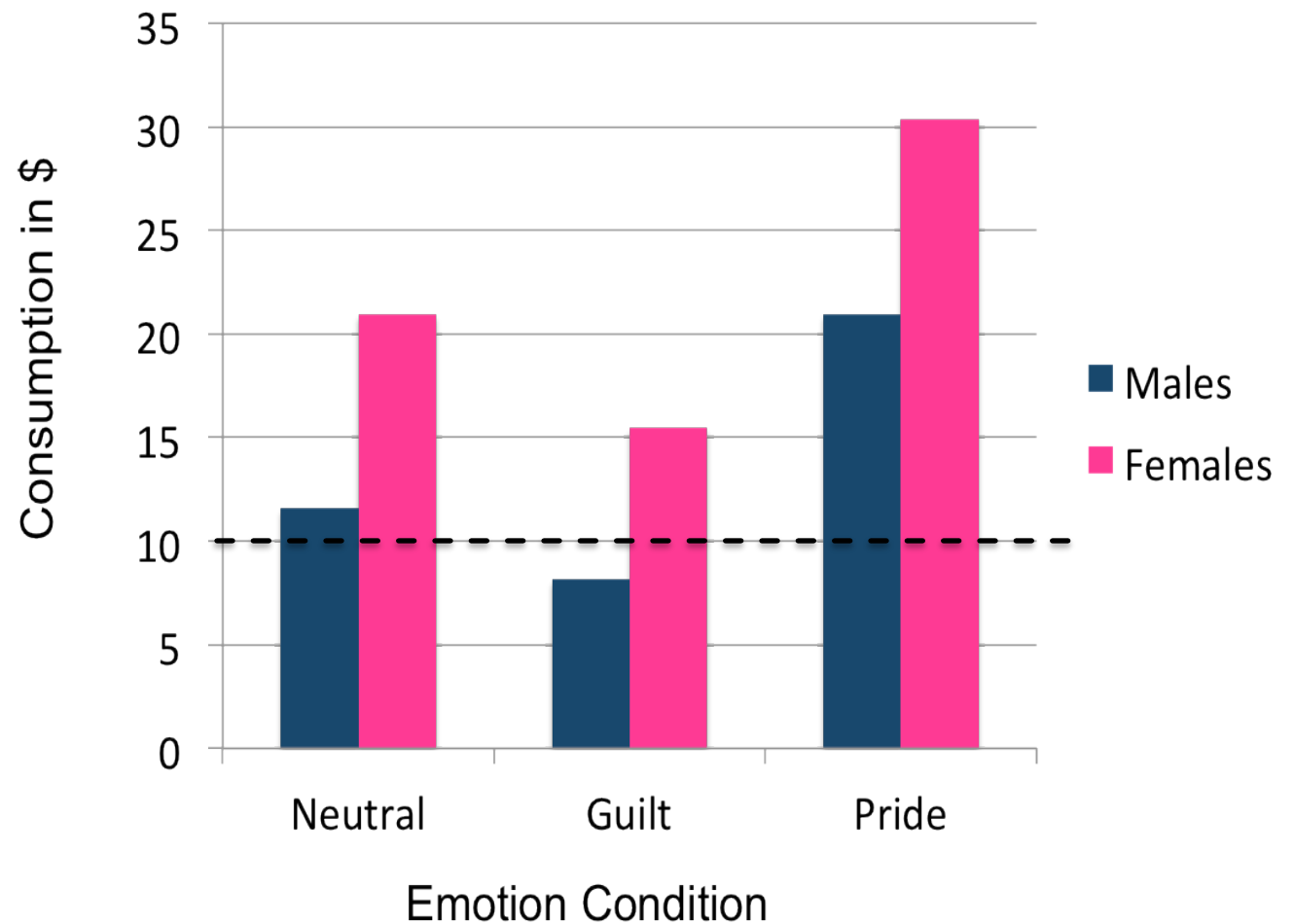
Results: Consumption by Emotion

- Main effect of Emotion:
 $F(2, 90) = 3.09$,
 $p = .051^\dagger$



Results: Consumption by Emotion, Sex

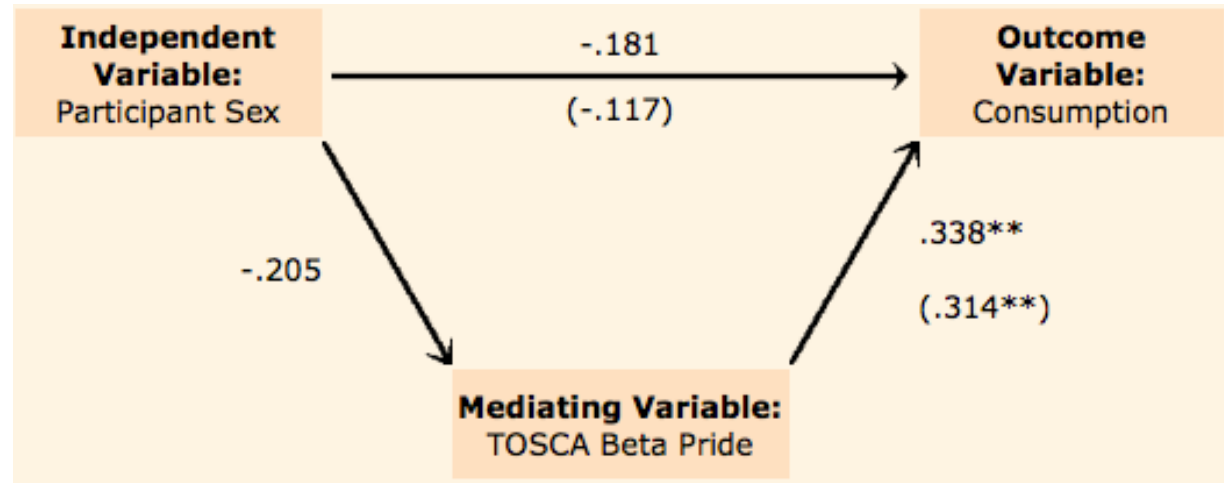
- Marginal main effect of Psex: $F(1, 90) = 3.51, p = .065^{\dagger}$



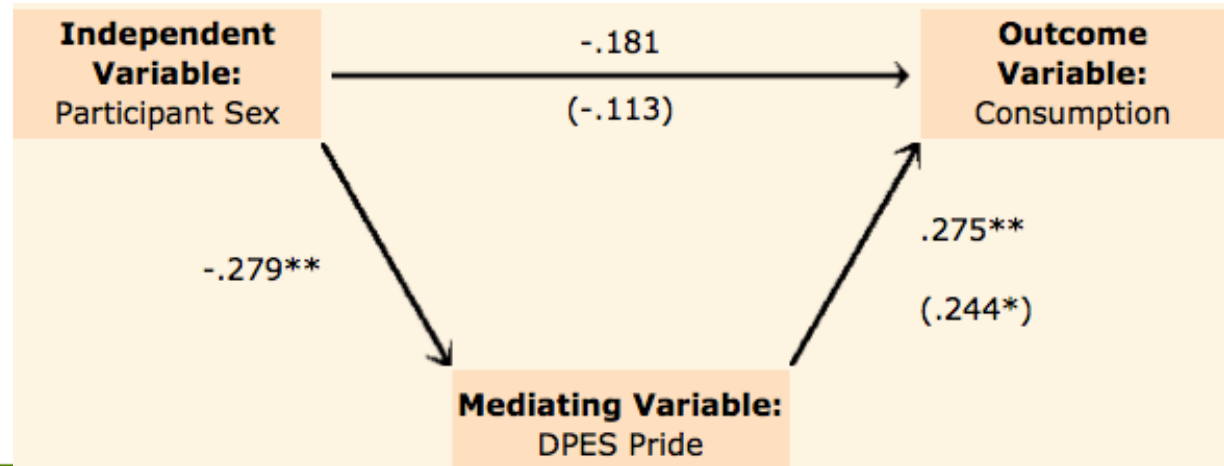
Sex, Pride, and Greed

- Sex effect marginally mediated by dispositional pride

- TOSCA-Beta Pride
 $z = -1.66, p < .10$



- DPES Pride
 $z = -1.76, p < .10$



Categories of Consumption

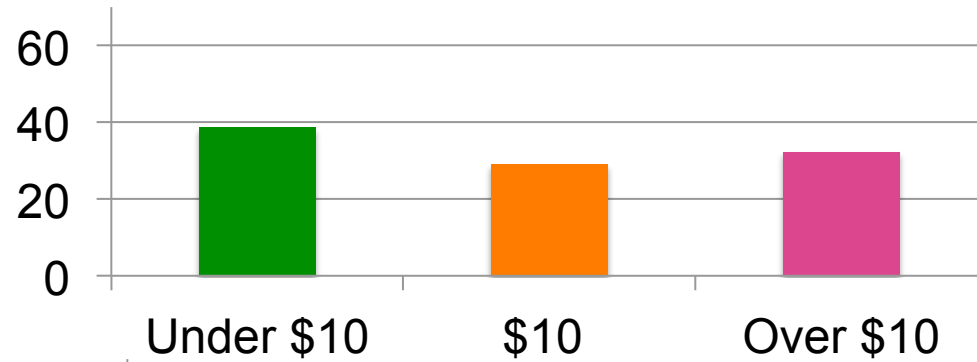
Fair Share is \$10

- Prosocial: Less than \$10
- Cooperative: \$10
- Selfish: More than \$10

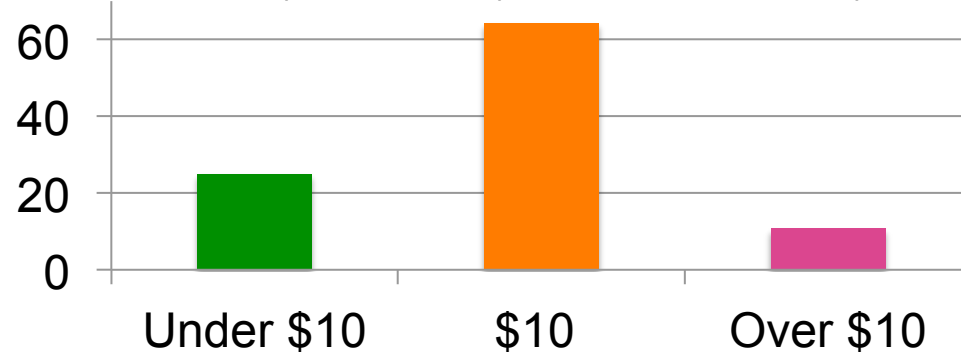


Frequencies of \$ Requests

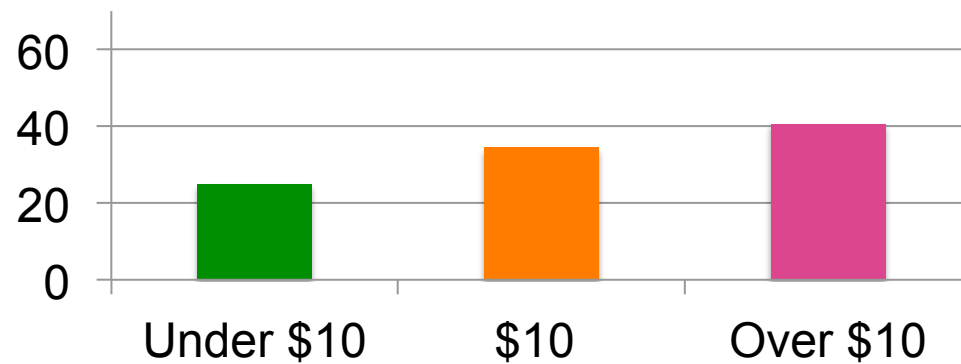
Neutral



Guilt



Pride



$X^2(4, N = 91) = 11.22, p < .05$

Lessons for Resource Management

- Emotions – influence cooperation in predictable ways, consistent with proposed function
 - Emotions may not be as “good” or “bad” as they seem
- Cognitive mechanisms behind failure
 - Difficulty calculating “fair share” and situational parameters
 - Need systematic examination of individual thought patterns and personality characteristics

Thank you!

Collaborators:

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Susan Ledlow



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