

Psychreg

In a series of studies, researchers have identified a striking correlation between perceptions of men's physical strength and their presumed political conservatism. These studies, conducted across diverse US samples, provide compelling evidence that physical formidability in men is often used as a heuristic cue to infer their political leanings. The findings were published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*.

The first study, involving 203 undergraduates, revealed that physically strong men were perceived as more conservative compared to their weaker counterparts. This perception extended beyond mere political identity and encompassed specific issues such as fiscal conservatism and social conservatism. Interestingly, the type of conservatism or the presence of wealth cues did not significantly alter these perceptions.

In the second study, involving 302 participants, the research delved deeper into the relationship between men's strength, socioeconomic status (SES), and perceived conservatism. The findings suggested that high-SES men appeared more conservative, regardless of their physical strength. This highlights the complexity of how physical and socioeconomic cues interplay in shaping our perceptions of political ideology.

Study 3, with 179 participants, focused on the moral foundations perceived to be endorsed by physically strong men. Here, participants attributed a higher endorsement of liberty-focused moral foundations to strong men, aligning more with conservative ideologies. This finding was particularly significant, as it demonstrated how physical cues could influence perceived moral leanings.

The final study, involving 210 participants, explored the specific aspects of physical formidability that might be linked to perceived conservatism. It was found that muscularity, rather than body fat, was a key indicator in perceiving men as conservative. This suggests that the physical traits associated with combat ability are central to these perceptions.

These findings have profound implications for understanding the psychological

mechanisms behind our perception of political ideologies. They suggest an evolved psychological calculus for identifying ideology through physical affordance judgements, with formidability heightening perceptions of conservatism.

While the studies consistently showed small effects, their regularity suggests a subtle yet significant impact of physical strength on perceived political orientation. However, it's crucial to note that these are perceptions and stereotypes, which may not always hold true in individual cases.

These studies open avenues for future research, particularly in exploring the cues of political affiliation in women and how these heuristic associations between conservatism and formidability might differ across cultures or regions.