

## REPLICATIONS AND REFINEMENTS

*Under this heading appear summaries of studies which, in 500 words or less, provide useful data substantiating, not substantiating, or refining what we think we know; additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the investigator or, when indicated, by requesting supplementary material from Microfiche Publications.*

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### DEVELOPMENTAL TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSERVATISM: A FAILURE TO REPLICATE\*

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Psychological conservatism is of considerable interest, since it reflects personality characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the development of children's psychological conservatism assumes some import. Powell and Stewart found that general conservatism, religious conservatism, ethnocentrism, and punitiveness decreased with age, while sexual conservatism increased with age.<sup>2</sup> They maintain that such trends are consistent with the child's internalization of parental norms and values. The utility of their conclusions is somewhat limited, however, as their results were based on descriptive statistics; no inferential data were presented. The present study assesses whether this same phenomenon obtains when inferential statistics are used to analyze the data. Since psychological conservatism may well be culture specific,<sup>3</sup> and the importance of replicating any findings across different cultures is essential, this study obtains further importance.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, G. D., Ed. *The Psychology of Conservatism*. New York: Academic Press, 1973. Fincham, F., & Barling, J. Moral judgment and psychological conservatism. *J. Soc. Psychol.*, 1979, **107**, 139-140. Wilson, G. D., Ausman, J., & Mathews, T. R. Conservatism and art preferences. *J. Personal. & Soc. Psychol.*, 1973, **25**, 286-288.

<sup>2</sup> Powell, G. E., & Stewart, R. A. The relationship of age, sex and personality to social attitudes in children aged 8-15 years. *British J. Soc. & Clin. Psychol.*, 1978, **17**, 307-317.

<sup>3</sup> Barling, J., & Evans, I. M. Multidimensional psychological conservatism in South Africa: The case of an authoritarian culture. Unpublished manuscript, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1978. Barling, J., & Fincham, F. Cultural and sexual effects on psychological conservatism in children. *J. Soc. Psychol.*, 1979, **107**, 15-21.

Three hundred and nine white elementary school children ( $\bar{X}$  age = 120.24 months,  $SD = 13.01$ ; 150 boys, 159 girls) completed the Children's Scale of Social Attitudes which assesses psychological conservatism.<sup>4</sup> This scale comprises 50 catch-phrase items. The children's responses were then subjected to a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation, and five acceptable factors emerged: Religion, Ethnocentrism, Social Conformity, Sex, and Punitiveness. Pearson correlations were then computed between the factor scores and the child's age. Neither the global conservative index ( $r = -.03$ ), nor Religion ( $r = -.02$ ), Social Conformity ( $r = -.05$ ), Sex ( $r = .01$ ), or Punitiveness ( $r = -.02$ ) was related to age ( $df = 308$ ,  $p > .10$  in all cases). Only ethnocentrism was related significantly to age ( $r = .36$ ,  $df = 308$ ,  $p < .001$ ): Older children were significantly more ethnocentric than their younger counterparts.

The results fail to provide conclusive support for Powell and Stewart's conclusions. Only ethnocentrism was related significantly to age: In this instance, older children were *more* ethnocentric than their younger counterparts. However, this phenomenon may still reflect an internalization of parental attitudes, as South Africa has been described as a relatively conservative and ethnocentric culture. That none of the other factors, or the global conservative index was related to age may be accounted for by two reasons. First, Powell and Stewart's sample comprised children aged 8-15 years, whereas the present study utilized *Ss* 7.5-11.83 years of age. It is possible, therefore, that such developmental trends may emerge only once the child enters the period of early adolescence. Second, however, it is feasible that the development trends referred to by Powell and Stewart do not reflect a statistically significant phenomenon, since they based their conclusions on descriptive statistics only. On the other hand, when inferential statistics were used, as in the present study, their findings were not replicated.

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson, G. D., Nias, D. K. B., & Insel, P. M. Manual for the Children's Scale of Social Attitudes. London: Children's Studies Ltd., 1972.