

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSERVATISM. PART II: WILSON'S THEORY AND GENERAL TRENDS IN THE STUDY OF CONSERVATISM

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The second part of a two-part review of the contemporary literature on the psychology of conservatism is presented. The development of the Wilson-Patterson C-Scale is described, as is the theory Wilson offers to explain conservatism, and both are evaluated. Working class conservatism is considered. General trends in the study of conservatism are discussed. Research carried out in New Zealand, based largely on the use of the C-Scale, is outlined.

In the first part of this review it was shown that the term "conservatism" has a number of meanings, and that psychologists who study conservatism often proceed without a reasonably clear definition or conception of conservatism to guide their work (Stacey, 1977). Questionnaire measures of conservatism are frequently used in empirical research which are of doubtful or limited validity. Different people have proposed various distinctions between what they see as political, economic, psychological and social forms of conservatism without any agreed conclusions being reached about the definition or nature of conservatism. Further, some psychologists have uncritically accepted the view that conservatism is primarily a working class phenomenon, often together with the view that people in the upper strata of society are liberal, tolerant and humane in all but money matters. The result has been a good deal of conceptual confusion, and a psychological literature on conservatism with a content much of which is out of accord with everyday political realities. This is evident in theories of Eysenck and Ray, which are outlined and critically evaluated in Part I. In this part of the review I shall examine the theory Wilson offers to explain conservatism, the analysis of working class conservatism, and then consider trends in the psychological study of conservatism, taking account of the limited amount of research carried out in this country.

## WILSON'S DYNAMIC THEORY OF CONSERVATISM

The conservatism scale devised originally at Canterbury University by Wilson and Patterson is meant to provide a measure of the general factor of conservatism which they assume underlies all social attitudes (Wilson, 1973). The C-Scale consists of 50 words and catch phrases each of which relates to some issue or concern such as School uniforms, Striptease shows, Horoscopes, Self-denial, Chaperones, Student pranks, Sabbath observance, Computer music, Nudist camps, Learning Latin,

Working mothers, Divine Law, Chastity, Church authority, Bible truth, Pyjama parties. The scale is "balanced" in that agreement with half the items and disagreement with the other half sums towards "conservatism". It yields a score which can range from 0 to 100. It was first used in New Zealand in the 1960s, but has since given rise to considerable interest and more recently has been used in research in Australia, Britain, Federal Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden and the U.S.A. The groups to yield the highest C-Scale scores have been John Birch Society members (U.S.A.) with a mean of 72.3, Gideons (N.Z.) with 70.5, and Dutch Reformed Church members (S.A.) with 68.3.

The C-Scale has been administered to professionals, businessmen, clergymen, clerical, technical and manual workers, housewives, military conscripts, pop musicians, secondary school pupils, students and adult education students, among others, and we have data on the relation of C-Scale scores to a range of things from aesthetic judgements and English attitudes on the Common Market to radicalism, religion, risqué humour, sex, and willingness to walk under ladders. Wilson (1973) believes the studies reviewed in the book:

... have clearly demonstrated the overwhelming importance of a general factor that is most appropriately labelled "conservatism". The conservatism syndrome was found to include religious dogmatism, right-wing political orientation (in Western countries), militarism, ethnocentrism, intolerance of minority groups, authoritarianism, punitiveness, anti-hedonism, conformity, conventionality, superstition and opposition to scientific progress (p. 257).

Though this syndrome is no more than a restatement of the list of characteristics attributed to the ideal conservative upon which the development of the C-Scale began (see Part I), it leads Wilson (1973) to propose that personality dynamics must be involved in the organization of social attitudes around a general factor of conservatism versus liberalism. Wilson then attempts to integrate a large number of empirical findings concerning the correlates of conservatism within the context of a theory of the psychological origins of the syndrome. He advances what is essentially a theory of attitude organization.

The central proposition of Wilson's theory is that the common basis for all the various components of conservatism is a "generalized susceptibility to experiencing threat or anxiety in the face of uncertainty." The concept of uncertainty here includes both stimulus uncertainty (innovation, complexity, novelty, ambiguity, risk, etc.). Thus, some internal state or some aspect of the physical or social environment which relates to uncertainty is a partial determinant of an associated cluster of attitudes for the individual who has generalised vulnerability

to fear of uncertainty. For example, fear of supernatural forces is the partial determinant of superstition, fear of death is identified with religious dogmatism, fear of anarchy and social disruption with right-wing political attitudes, fear of complexity with conventionality, fear of novelty with conformity, fear of losing control of feelings and desires with anti-hedonism. Wilson suggests that certain genetic and environmental factors, including low intelligence, parental coldness, punitiveness, rigidity and inconsistency, and membership of the "lower classes", will give rise to feelings of insecurity and inferiority, which in turn will result in a generalized fear of uncertainty. This generalized fear of uncertainty manifests itself in avoidance of stimulus and response uncertainty. Dislike for and avoidance of uncertainty then give rise to an organized pattern of attitudes, the conservative syndrome.

Wilson (1973) argues that conservative attitudes serve an ego-defensive function:

They arise as a means of simplifying, ordering, controlling, and rendering more secure, both the *external* world (through perceptual processes, stimulus preferences, etc.) and the *internal* world (needs, feelings, desires, etc.). Order is imposed upon inner needs and feelings by subjugating them to rigid and simplistic external codes of conduct (rules, laws, morals, duties, obligations, etc.), thus reducing conflict and averting the anxiety that would accompany awareness of the freedom to choose among alternative modes of action (pp. 263-4).

Wilson presents 35 low to middling correlation relationships, the results of various empirical studies, which he feels can be interpreted as reflecting the effects of various genetic and environmental factors on C-Scale scores. However, he admits that many of the relationships were available before the theory was constructed, and that it was tailored to fit this evidence. He also refers to two studies based on the theory which appear to provide "strong support" for it. In one, relatively (but not absolutely) high C-Scale scorers among 30 U.S. students tended to dislike paintings involving a great deal of stimulus uncertainty. In the other, C-Scale conservatism was found to correlate .54 with fear of death among 74 U.S. students.

Available evidence does not confirm the interpretation either of the C-Scale as predominantly unidimensional in content or of its main component as a general factor of conservatism (Bagley, 1970; Feather, 1975; Ray, 1971; Robertson and Cochrane, 1973; Sidanius, 1976). A number of studies indicate the first factor accounts for less than 20 per cent of the total variance, and the first four factors account for between a quarter and a third of the total variance. That is, most of the total variance is unaccounted for in the major factors. A minority of the items do not correlate materially with the overall C score, a finding which one would not expect if a general factor were indeed

measured by the scale. In Ray's (1971) study more than half the items correlated less than .2 with the whole score. Wilson and Patterson ignored Kerlinger's (1967) conclusion that conservatism and liberalism are independent, and assumed that non-conservative responses to the C-Scale items are liberal responses. Though this may be reasonable for some of the items, it seems unreasonable for certain of them including Socialism, Evolutionary theory, Modern art, Birth control, Cousin marriage, Suicide, Computer music, White lies, Jazz, Casual living and Divorce. The C-Scale has very limited discriminatory power in the political realm, and on this count is inferior to the similar scale developed in Sweden by Sidanius (1976), as well as being less reliable and effective than the latter scale. Detailed inspection of the studies reported in this section strongly suggests the main component of the C-Scale is one of religion which also takes in the items Patriotism, Royalty, Military drill and Strict rules. It could be more appropriately called blimpish religiosity than conservatism. The C-Scale certainly has a racialist component and a conservatism of rather prurient sexuality, taken together, both reflect and result in an excessively constricted and imbalanced view of conservatism.

The last point raises the question—Are the C-Scale items an adequate sample of the field of social attitudes? To this question, the answer must be no. There are too many items dealing with sex and transient matters, and too few dealing with politico-economic concerns, major institutions and social values, political parties, the state and government, international affairs, political violence, the pursuit of self-interest, individualism, and co-operation (by way of comparison see Linden, 1975a, b; Fishbein *et al.*, 1976). The sample of items is so limited, that even if in several studies a main component emerged accounting for a great deal of the total variance, it would be unreasonable on this basis to assert that a factor of conservatism underlies the field of social attitudes. In scoring the scale, equal weight is given to items grossly unequal in their importance. Nudist camps carries as much weight as Royalty, Striptease shows as Socialism, Pyjama parties as Apartheid. This further inflates the significance of sexual and transient issues in research based on the C-Scale. In addition, the short item format raises acute problems of interpretation of research results. Wilson and Patterson believe the format has the advantages of high reliability and validity, and of low susceptibility to acquiescent response tendencies and to contamination by influences for socially desirable responses. However, if an item has many connotations and associations, one simply does not know to what people are responding. For instance, the meaning of a response to Socialism would seem to depend upon what the respondent means by the term. The welfare state? Bill Rowling? The Labour Party? Trade union militancy? Mao-Tse-Tung? The Chinese revolution? Stalin? Anti-religiosity? Creeping communism? Black liberation forces? The future hope of mankind? It is highly probable that there are different conceptions of socialism



in different sections of any national population and between nations, e.g. between Britain, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden. If a number of items each having various common meanings are brought together in a component of the C-Scale, it is very difficult to determine what the component is about. Ray's (1973) review of methodological findings relating to the C-Scale shows that it is not particularly reliable when applied to heterogeneous samples and it is not especially immune to acquiescent and socially desirable response tendencies (pp. 336-41). Finally I suspect that many of the issues raised in the C-Scale are the concern of small minorities only, e.g. Cousin marriage, Chaperones, Computer music, Nudist camps, Jazz, Learning Latin and Pyjama parties.

Given the problems with the C-Scale, conclusions about any facet of conservatism deriving from use of the scale must be treated with extreme caution. From the beginning of his research Wilson appears to have had two kinds of conservative in mind. The first might be termed the "Colonel Blimp" type, and the second the "Alf Garnett/ Archie Bunker" type. Studies of the factor structure of the C-Scale have simply yielded components bringing together in slightly different combinations the characteristics popularly associated with these two types. Like Eysenck, Lipset and Ray, Wilson sees conservatism as primarily a lower class phenomenon and pays no heed to the contrary evidence. He ignores non-blimpish conservatism in the middle and upper classes, including that connected with inherited riches, multi-national corporations, and with risk-taking activities in uncertain circumstances. He ignores the issue of the incidence of feelings of insecurity and inferiority in different social classes. As the C-Scale was not designed to sample the politico-economic-institutional characteristics of conservatism, correlational relationships with C-Scale scores are probably best regarded as relating to a blimpish, ethnocentric, religiosity attitude syndrome rather than to a general attitude syndrome. If the theory outlined by Wilson has any valid features, it is with reference to the former rather than the latter syndrome.

#### WORKING CLASS CONSERVATISM

A number of social scientists, while not disputing there is economic conservatism in the middle and upper classes, have argued or assumed that conservatism in general is concentrated in the working class, especially the manual strata of the working class. Reference has already been made to evidence contradicting this position. However, there is no denying the existence of much conservatism (including economic conservatism) in the manual working class of every Western country, nor its political importance. Even the Norwegian and Swedish social democratic/socialist parties, which have achieved a great deal of political success, have not succeeded in detaching nearly a third of the

people in the manual strata of their respective countries from centre-right political parties. The Conservative Party in Britain receives approximately half its electoral support from the manual working class despite the Party's overwhelmingly middle and upper class composition in terms of members, officers and public representatives, and its close links with the aristocracy, the officer élite of the armed forces, the public (i.e. fee-charging) schools, the press and mass media, and the institutional complex of private property and capitalistic activity which dominates the economy. The Conservative Party's many electoral successes during this century have helped stimulate research interest in working class Conservatism in Britain (Kavanagh, 1971; Parkin, 1967; Stacey and Green, 1971). This research has produced a number of conclusions.

Manual working class people in Britain who consider themselves "middle class" are more likely to support the Conservative Party, than those who take on the political coloration of the middle class, than their counterparts who consider themselves working class. Among the employed in the working class there is a positive relationship between smallness of employing organization and extent of right-wing attitudes and support for the Conservative Party. Attitudinally, working class Conservatives are similar to other conservative supporters in their antipathy to trade unions, and are less likely than other members of the working class to belong to a trade union. Older working class people, and particularly older women, are somewhat more likely than younger people to support the Conservatives. Women are much less unionized than men, and people employed in small organizations are less unionized than those in middling and large organizations, so that the relationships just referred to are inter-related. Other categories of working class people more likely than their counterparts to support the Conservative Party include church attenders, those brought up in small families (0-2 siblings), those with a spouse in non-manual employment, and the downwardly mobile into the manual strata. In general, right-wing beliefs, values and attitudes are positively associated with socially heterogeneous villages, communities and towns, and negatively associated with homogeneous working class communities. Non-manual ties, affiliations and/or influences at the inter-personal level appear to increase support for the Conservative Party.

Conservative working class supporters infrequently see the British upper class as hostile to working class interests. Ideas of class interest and class conflict are less salient to them than to people in the working class on the political Left. They tend to feel their needs are met by the Conservative Party, are economically relatively satisfied, and are traditional in their attitudes, aspirations and perceptions of social relationships including those bound up with authority, élitism, hierarchy, inequalities and privilege. In their review of working class Conservatism Stacey and Green (1971) conclude:

It is possible to interpret the psychological characteristics of working class Conservative supporters as a deferential reaction to the élite in the social order and their voting behaviour as the means by which they register support for the party of the upper class. It also appears that they see answers to any and every social problem as being provided by leaders from the upper class and the professions . . . It is also possible to interpret the psychological data on working class Conservative supporters as reflecting a consciousness of authority and an orientation towards the power and influence of the upper strata among reasonably satisfied people deficient or relatively weak in working class consciousness. The distinct class influence is that, being manual working class, they see their best interests served by following and supporting those in authority/power rather than aspiring for success or to attain authority/power (p. 24).

Kavanagh (1971) has provided an incisive critique of the concept of deference as used to explain working class support for the Conservative Party, and shown that much empirical research has failed to demonstrate the existence of deference on a large scale in the working class. Widespread support for the monarchy is combined with recognition of the monarch's dignified role as head of state and a general appreciation of the monarchy's limited political powers and, in fact, tends to be politically shallow (Kavanagh, 1971; Rose and Kavanagh, 1976). The instrumental orientation to the Conservative Party of its working class supporters is undoubtedly more significant than any deference to political leadership based on ascriptive criteria or prestige.

While examining class consciousness in New Zealand, Bedgood (1977) provides a brief speculative account of "working-class conservatism" taking in manual and white-collar working class people, largely on the basis of the relevant parts of the scanty data to be outlined in the next section. Bedgood describes working class conservatives as holding authoritarian beliefs, being intolerant of minorities especially communists, being opposed to any extension of state welfare provisions, and combining an idealized faith in democracy as the will of the people with submission to authority and government. Bedgood interprets the authoritarian beliefs and militant anti-communism of working class conservatives as a continuation of the dominant bourgeois/liberal ideology in New Zealand society, with their sources in the central institutions of the dominant culture. He writes:

. . . working-class conservatism is the product of poor formal education, low information about current affairs, deference to the National party, religious conviction, and authoritarian character traits. Ignorance combined with passive personality traits engenders a willingness to submit to the dominant symbols of authority and conventional morality (p. 125).

Bedggood rejects both the liberal view of working class embourgeoisement and the equation of a very low level of proletarian consciousness in New Zealand with success for liberal democracy. He feels working class conservatives have internalized the bourgeois values of individualism and achievement, and that they perceive failure to achieve, real inequalities and discrimination in the opportunity structure as evidence of personal failing or the fault of some scapegoat group, which allows them to displace frustration and hostility into racism and anti-communism or self-animosity.

#### TRENDS IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF CONSERVATISM

Many students of conservatism have used a standard type of scale as a measure or index of conservatism in their empirical studies. Perhaps it is because such scales are easy to use and yield data readily amenable to statistical analyses that they are so popular. In recent decades a fair number of such scales have been published (Ray, 1973; Sidanius, 1976). Once a scale's characteristics have been established, it can be administered to many samples representing different 'populations' and correlated with all kinds of other variables. In this process the relation between what is measured by a scale and conservatism in society easily fades. Conservatism then becomes identified with the correlational company of the scale and possibly other conservatism scales, scales which only converge to a moderate extent. Psychologists have shown more interest in the psychometric credentials of conservatism scales, and how contaminated they are by acquiescence response bias, than in how people understand, define and act (or fail to act) upon those aspects of social reality which engage them. Sanford (1973) reached much the same conclusion about the psychological study of authoritarianism, which he felt had degenerated largely into an obsession with the F-Scale and its descendants.

Some kinds of knowledge, certain values, beliefs and attitudes are largely restricted to limited social groups, others are much more widely spread through society, and yet others are very widely spread through industrial societies. Items which attract a very high degree of support or opposition in varied samples, or which reflect the experiences of 'non-respectable' or unusual minorities, are not the sort of material of which conservatism scales have been constructed. Items that feature in such scales tend to focus upon matters about which there is a noticeable amount of disagreement within the confines of the social consensus, and sometimes unduly reflect the interests of the university educated. Speculations about communism or fascism derived from data obtained via the use of conservatism/radicalism scales are likely to be unsound because such scales contain very few if any distinctively communist or fascist items. The probability is that a direct study of the values, beliefs, attitudes and activities of Communists or Fascists



would yield an outcome markedly different from that of a comparable study of the general population of say New Zealand, Britain, the Netherlands or the U.S.A. The same will apply to some other relatively homogeneous social groups, e.g. the landed aristocracy, trade union officials, finance capitalists, women's liberationists, Maori land activists, Welsh nationalists.

Conservatism scale items can be regarded as reflecting the dominant value systems of modern Western societies: value systems that hold considerable sway, especially in the middle and upper classes. Such items usually deal with beliefs, values, attitudes, preferences, and activities directed towards the maintenance of the existing social system, its institutions and values, and towards defending the rightness of existing social relationships. Individuals and groups who reject and/or challenge the status quo receive little consideration in conservatism scales. They have featured more prominently in empirical studies based upon a wide selection of single items rather than upon the use of one or more scales and a few individual items. Heavy reliance on research results obtained by using scales such as the Eysenck R-Scale and the Wilson-Patterson C-Scale carries the hazard of producing a simplistic and misleading literature which projects a spurious similarity of concerns and cognitive structures in different sections of any national population and also across nations.

A number of researchers working in different countries have attempted to describe political attitudes and behaviour in terms of a small number of dimensions (see Eysenck, 1975; Lindén, 1975a, b; Ray, 1973; Sjöberg and Capozza, 1975). In this enterprise, factor analysis and multi-dimensional scaling have been the popular techniques of dimensional analysis. Most researchers have reported a pre-eminent or dominating dimension relating to the economic organization of society. It has been described in terms such as "right-left", "conservatism-liberalism", "conservatism-radicalism", "conservatism-socialism". In all studies subsidiary additional dimensions have been reported, and the pre-eminent dimension has always appeared more constricted than the economic structure to which it relates. The weight of opinion is against the view that a major dimension underlies the entire field of social attitudes. It is also against the view that the various national multi-party political systems are solely uni-dimensional in nature, that is from right to left along the political spectrum. Among the subsidiary dimensions reported by researchers, the following appear to be of particular significance: (a) centralism-decentralism or region or urban-rural depending upon locale; (b) individual versus social or collective responsibility/individualism-collectivism; (c) authoritarianism; (d) religiosity, often combined with moral dogmatism and/or sexual inhibiteness and/or anti-communism; (e) racialism; (f) epicurism-puritanism/anti-hedonism; (g) humanitarianism; (h) establishment versus rebellious outlook/evolutionary change. After social class, religion is the most important explanatory variable of electoral be-

haviour in the Western countries of continental Europe, Scandinavia and the English-speaking world (Rose, 1974). Though religion interdependently of class, it can contribute to political life somewhat independently of class (Barron and Young, 1970; Hazelrigg, 1970; Rose, 1974; Smith and Rodriguez, 1974). The religious dimensions of conservatism warrants far more attention from psychologists than it has received.

A minority of researchers oppose the view that there is one pre-eminent dimension and interpret research results in terms of several independent factors (see Ferguson, 1941; Ray, 1973; Stone, 1974). Obviously different researchers prefer different interpretations of available research results. Nevertheless, whatever one's theoretical stance and approach to dimensional analysis, any factor obtained by any technique may not be equally applicable to all sections of a national population and may not have the same meaning in all social groups. This last point is illustrated in Sjöberg and Capozza's (1975) study of the structure of party preferences of Italian students. All political groups of students show the same right-left dimension, but the second dimension does not have the same meaning in all groups. Among communist and socialist students it appears as a dimension of socialism versus capitalism-fascism, whereas among other political groups it appears as a dimension of the political centre versus the right and left extremes.

One of the major dimensional studies is of particular interest because its author related the positions of political party members to five attitude dimensions (Lindén, 1975a, b). The goals of Lindén's research project were to describe significant attitude differences in Swedish politics, to transform observed attitude variance into a small number of dimensions, and to determine relative party positions within each dimension. Local election candidates of the five largest Swedish political parties served as subjects. They responded to 97 attitude statements in which political, economic and institutional issues were represented. The intercorrelations of the attitude variables were analyzed by the principal factor method. The pre-eminent factor to emerge was called "centralism-socialism" by Lindén, the subsidiary factors were called "centralism-decentralism", "individualism-collectivism", "epicurism-puritanism", and "establishment-rebellion". Differences in relative party positions within each dimension are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Attitude dimensions and related positions of political parties in Sweden in 1975: Cons = Conservatives, Libs = Liberals, Cts = Centrists, SDs = Social Democrats, Coms = Communists.

I	<i>socialism</i>	—	Coms	SDs	Cts	Libs	Cons	—	<i>capitalism</i>
II	<i>decentralism</i>	—	Cts	Coms	Libs	SDs	Cons	—	<i>centralism</i>
III	<i>collectivism</i>	—	Coms	SDs	Libs	Cons	Cts	—	<i>individualism</i>
IV	<i>puritanism</i>	—	Cts	SDs	Coms	Libs	Cons	—	<i>epicurism</i>
V	<i>rebellion</i>	—	Coms	Libs	Cts	Cons	SDs	—	<i>establishment</i>

The results summarized in Table 1 point to the significance of the right-left dimension for structuring attitudes relevant to party allegiance within the Swedish political system. Dimensions II and III are next most important for differentiation within the bourgeois ("borgerligt") or centre-right parties. Dimension IV seems least important for party allegiance though Centrists turn out to be the most puritan in outlook, while Dimension V differentiates the Social Democrats and Communists along traditional reformist-revolutionary lines.

Little empirical research has been carried out in New Zealand relevant to the subject of this paper other than that based on the use of the Wilson-Patterson C-Scale, which has been outlined in Boshier (1972) and Wilson (1973). Unfortunately the sample employed in the C-Scale research projects are either above average in formal education or disproportionately religious or both, so that they are far from representative of the general population in these characteristics at least. A number of local surveys carried out in different cities have been reviewed by Bedggood (1975) in his attempt to develop a general model of the function of political ideology in the maintenance of political order in New Zealand.

It appears that in this country mean C-Scale scores differ little if at all between men and women. But in both sexes C-Scale scores tend to rise with age. The best predictor of C-Scale conservatism seems to be frequency of church attendance, with Roman Catholics contributing more to this than Anglicans and Non-conformists. Having no religion is a significant inverse predictor of C-Scale conservatism, as is number of years of university education. It would appear that racialism as identified by C-Scale items is most strongly expressed by two groups: (a) those who have a nominal commitment to religion; and (b) those who are dogmatic and fundamentalist in their religious beliefs. People who are fully assimilated into a church and are not dogmatic in outlook tend to be relatively free of prejudice, as do those with no religious commitment. Although religious beliefs and attitudes tend, in general, to be positively related to racialism, they are independent in certain groups. For example, while Salvation Army cadets and young humanists are differentiated by C-Scale items dealing with religion and sexuality, both groups are alike in showing very low levels of racialism. Militaristic and/or punitive beliefs and attitudes also tend to be positively related to racialism. Boshier (1972) concludes there may be at least four relatively distinct types of conservatism in New Zealand society: (a) racist-retributive; (b) socio-sexual fundamentalism, expressing strong commitment to traditional morality and opposition to change in the status of women; (c) socio-religious rigidity; and (d) intolerance of youth. Wilson's (1973) analysis of the factor structure of the C-Scale implies conservatism in New Zealand has these five components: (a) militarism-punitiveness; (b) anti-hedonism; (c) racialism; (d) religious fundamentalism; and (e) anti-art, which deals

with opposition to progressive art forms. In this structure the strongest association is between racialism and militarism-punitiveness, followed by that between anti-hedonism and militarism-punitiveness, and then that between racialism and religious fundamentalism. The restrictive and traditional orientation towards sexuality that features in conservatism in our society does not do so in Sweden (Sidanius, 1976).

Bedggood's (1975) paper makes it clear that the available scanty data tell us relatively little of substance about beliefs, values, attitudes and political orientations in New Zealand. On the basis of these data and professional experience, it seems social scientists generally agree there is widespread acceptance of political authority, traditional values and conventional morality among New Zealanders (Levine, 1975; Pitt, 1977; Trlin, 1976). There is also agreement that economic and racial cleavages are the major sources of conflict in society. However, it is considered that conflicts are circumscribed by the dominant consensual ideology which reflects the widespread legitimization of state and government, the rather subject orientation of the populace, and the cultural homogeneity of New Zealand society.

As one might expect, Bedggood (1975) states high income, long formal education, affiliation to the Anglican Church, and politico-economic conservatism are related to support for the National Party. (Pitt, 1975, points out that the 1972 and 1975 general elections indicate there are large numbers of "floating voters" in New Zealand at present.) Bedggood (1975) shows there is evidence for the existence of authoritarian, democratic/populist, conservative/traditional, and anti-communist attitudinal dimensions in the populace. Anti-communism tends to be associated with limited formal education, religious conventionalism, opposition to civil liberties and the civil rights of minorities, advancing age, lack of personal trust, and support for the National Party. Support for public welfare measures is due more to left-wing political influences than to exposure to formal education. Supporters of welfare measures tend to be persons of low rather than high education. Even so, in the higher occupational strata it seems that persons with high education are more oriented to the public welfare than those with low education. High education is also associated with a non-militant or neutralist stance on international issues. Many of these features of conservatism in this country are displayed in public conflicts over issues such as racialism and sport, immigration policy and practice, ethnic politics, women's liberation, opposition to abortion and sterilisation, obscenity and indecency in the arts and mass media, and industrial relations legislation. The collections of papers in three recent books indicate that social scientists feel, by and large, New Zealand society is becoming more authoritarian and conservative in the current decade of this century (Levine, 1975; Pitt, 1977; Trlin, 1976).



## CONCLUSIONS

The first issue encountered by the student of conservatism is the awkward problem of definition. Conservatism has been defined in sundry ways and analysed into many different components. The psychological literature deals with a number of types of conservatism which overlap to varying extents. Psychologists have tended to restrict themselves to the characteristics or properties of conservatives and conservatism, and to show little concern with strategies of conservation and struggles for power and influence in society, including the power to structure the symbolic representation of the social world. Property-related behaviour is an area from which psychologists on the whole have steered well clear (Loewental, 1976). The major exception, the work of William Domhoff on American ruling class cohesiveness and power, is frequently dismissed on the grounds of superficiality and sensationalism (Domhoff, 1967, 1972, 1974). Conservatism bears in important ways on the relationships between different social groups and classes, on the relative distribution of riches, income, power and prestige in society, and on social change. The control of most of the major institutions and media of information lies in the hands of dominant groups and outside the hands of the numerous subordinate groups, including subordinate conservative groups, as well as those who challenge the social order and those who are widely rejected as ridiculous or wrong.

Empirical studies based upon various indices of conservatism have consistently shown that Western conservatives, compared with liberals, socialists and communists, tend to be more capitalistic, religious militaristic, royalist, racially prejudiced, authoritarian, strict in their views on laws, rules and discipline, punitive towards wrongdoers and deviants, committed to traditional morality, concerned with individual autonomy and the pursuit of self-interest, lacking in personal trust, antipathetic to trade unions, and anti-communist. Conservatives are more likely to hold hereditary theories of aggression, selfishness and war, to have a relatively high expectation of war in future times, and to take a combative approach to international affairs. Conservatives tend to be more approving of social gradations, hierarchy and inequalities. Though there are wide individual differences among conservatives, and in their characteristics they overlap to some extent with other socio-political groups, these empirical relationships suggest Ray's Burkean conclusion, that a conservative is essentially someone who has a hardened or cynical view of humanity, applies to a significant number of conservatives.

Wilson's thesis, that the basis for all the various components of conservatism lies in a generalized fear of uncertainty, has received a certain amount of empirical support for the racist, religious and sexual components of conservatism as defined by the C-Scale. Assuming there is some validity in the thesis for these components, whether fear of uncertainty plays a role in any of the other components is very

much an open question. Conservative attitudes serve ego-defensive functions, as Wilson stresses, yet they also serve social functions. They are not only characteristics of individuals, but also features of the dominant culture and the social structure that underlies it. The maintenance of the social structure, with its existing distribution of riches, power and prestige, is aided by widespread acceptance/acquisition of conservative attitudes, beliefs and values. And such acceptance/acquisition is fostered by major institutions and the mass media. The way conservative attitudes, beliefs and values typically relate to each other is informative about the society that produces them as well as about the people who hold them. Psychologists need to relate findings about individuals, groups and classes to social structures, and to their maintenance and change. Further understanding of conservatism will depend upon increased definitional and conceptual clarity, the use of a wide range of empirical procedures in different target populations, the generation of new and increasingly more sophisticated theoretical insights, and more intensive exploration of the aspects of conservatism that have hitherto been neglected.

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