Scaling Conservatism

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This paper describes the development of a 35 item conservatism scale, Conscale I, together with the results of a principal components factor analysis of the responses of 219 subjects and item validation analyses using political party preference as a criterion. There was no evidence of a general conservatism factor. The results supported a view which sees conservatism consisting of several independent factors or dimensions.

A scale which has achieved considerable popularity in the past decade is the Wilson-Patterson Conservatism Scale, the C-Scale, (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). This scale represented something of an advance in attempting to deal with response bias (Peabody, 1966) by using a novel format. Fifty single words or catch phrases were employed rather than the typical attitude scale statement; three response categories — "Yes", "?", "No" — were used; and the scale content was evenly divided between positively and negatively keyed items. It was claimed that this scale format should reduce errors arising from item ambiguity and response biases.

However, the C-Scale, while being widely used in research in many countries, has been criticized in terms of the theory of conservatism upon which it is based (Stacey, 1977a, 1977b), and also on methodological grounds, in particular its failure to measure a general dimension of conservatism (Robertson & Cochrane, 1973) and the lack of discriminating power of the individual items (Ray, 1971). Sidanius (1976b) believes that the major shortcoming of the C-Scale's development has been the relative inattention to measuring the discriminative power of the total score and individual items against suitable criteria. He showed that his S4 Conservatism Scale was able to account for 2.13 times more variance than the C-Scale, when validated against political party perference, on a Swedish sample (Sidanius, 1976a). The study provided empirical support for a face-validity difference between the two scales. The C-Scale has been criticized for the disproportionate number of items which deal "with sex and transient matters" (Stacey, 1977b), whereas the S4 scale items sample seven content areas which, it is claimed, "have been traditionally considered to be the basic sub-components of Socio-Politico ideology" (Sidanius, 1976b). These are authoritarian aggression, religion, racism, political-economic conservatism, sexual repression, social conservatism, and ethnocentrism.

The purpose of the present study was to develop a conservatism scale, Conscale I, incorporating items from the Sidanius (1976b) 36 item S5 Scale (which is an improved version of the S4 Scale), from the C-Scale, and some which had been generated by a development sample of student subjects. Finally it was intended to validate Conscale I against political preferences and ratings of major political parties in New Zealand.

Method

Subjects

The "development" sample consisted of 26 male and 26 female third-year psychology students who were enrolled at the University of Canterbury in 1977. Their mean age was 23.13 years ($SD = 4.94$). They included 44 who gave their nationalities as "New Zealander", six "Malaysian" and two as "other". Twelve stated that they would vote Labour if an election were to be held on the following day, nine would vote National, 18 would

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vote Values, one Socialist Unity and 12 would not vote, this latter group including all of the Malaysian students.

The "validation" sample consisted of 111 male and 108 female subjects, made up of students and non-students who were acquaintances of those in the development sample. They were administered the 35 item Conscale I which had been developed from an original pool of 60 items. Their mean age was 29.21 years ($SD = 13.53$). Seventy-seven stated that they would vote Labour if an election were to be held the following day, 56 would vote National, 41 would vote Values, five would vote Social Credit, 39 gave no response, or said that they would not vote, and one objected. Although there was a wide range of occupational groups included in this sample, there was an over-representation of students and those in professional occupations. In terms of a comparison with the results of the 1975 general election, Labour and Values supporters were over-represented and National and Social Credit supporters were under-represented.

Procedure

The development sample of 52 subjects was given the task of developing a 35 item scale from a pool of 60 items using a Likert summated ratings procedure. The 60 items forming the initial pool were obtained from three sources. The subjects in the development sample were each asked to produce items of a similar format to the C-Scale for each of the conservatism dimensions listed by Sidanius (1976b). From these, 20 items were selected by the subjects, following discussion, as items which appeared likely to discriminate among subjects of varying degrees of conservatism. Second, 30 items from the 36 item S5 Scale were included, with six items from that scale (Recognition of provisional revolutionary government in Vietnam, Co-ed sauna, Immigration of blacks, Increased equality, Increased contact with Greece, and Increased democracy on the job) being eliminated by the writer on the grounds that they were less appropriate to the New Zealand setting. Finally, 10 items were selected at random from the C-Scale in addition to the three surviving S.5 items (Socialism, Mixed marriage, and Apartheid) which were also C-Scale items.

The subjects in the development sample then were asked to rate each of the 60 items in the pool, by responding "yes", "?" or "no". Conservative responses were "2", "?" responses "1", and non-conservative responses were scored "0".

Following a Likert scale item analysis, 35 of the original 60 items were selected to form Conscale I (Table 1). A copy of this refined 35 item scale was then administered to each of the 219 subjects who formed the validation sample. In addition, the age, sex, and probable voting behaviour (had an election been imminent), for each subject was recorded.

Results

Development of Conscale I

From the pool of 60 items, the 35 items with the highest item score — total score correlations (all $r = > .315$) were chosen to form Conscale I. Eighteen items were positively keyed and 17 were negatively keyed. Four C-Scale items (36%), 22 S5 items (73%), and 11 items of development

group origin (55%) survived the item analysis. Two of the surviving items were common to both the C- and S5 Scales — "Socialism" and "Apartheid".[1]

In the results reported in Tables 1 and 2 and elsewhere in the text, means which are greater than 1.0 show that subjects tended to respond to the item in a conservative fashion, while means which are less than 1.0 show responses to that item among the subjects were largely non-conservative. Not surprisingly, as the subjects in the development sample were students, their generalized response to the items during that phase was non-conservative. Forty-eight of the 60 items used during the development phase yielded means of less than 1.0, with an overall mean of .65 per item.

Some comparisons with previous studies are possible. On the 27 items which were common to the development scale and the Sidanius S4 Scale, Swedish university students (Sidanius, 1976b) had lower mean conservative scores on 23 items (88%) than the Canterbury students. However, on the 13 items common to the development scale and the C-Scale, Canterbury students had lower mean conservative scores on 11 items (85%) than Feather's (1975) Adelaide group of adults and teenagers, and lower mean conservative scores on 10 items (77%) than Ray's (1971) Australian Army 20 year old conscripts.

Conscale Means and Item-Total Correlations for Validation Sample

Subjects in the validation sample ($n = 219$) were less conservative than those in the development sample. Twenty-three of the 35 item means were less than 1.0 and the mean score per item was .91. On 33 items, the validation group means were more conservative than those for the development group, while on two items (social welfare and female priests) this order was reversed. Item means on the four C-Scale items, (Sabbath observance, Socialism, Apartheid and Divorce) suggest that the validation sample results approximated those of Feather's (1975) Adelaide sample of children and adults.

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[1] Details on means, standard deviations, and item-total correlations for all 60 items may be obtained from the author.

Table 1

Item Source, Means, S D's, Rotated Factor Loadings, and Communalities of Conscale

Item	Item Source[a]	Mean	S D	Rotated Factors[b]					h^{2c}
				I	II	III	IV	V	
1. harder measures against criminals	S	1.10	.91	043	−622	205	−397	125	674
2. U.S.A.	S	.95	.85	056	−171	083	−739	080	653
3. belief in authority	S	1.41	.82	286	−377	291	−307	−123	569
4. increased socialization	S	.82	.86	070	−092	061	−091	−010	538
5. socialism	S,WP	1.04	.84	025	−291	126	−146	−012	687
6. communes	S	.84	.84	−157	−136	339	−262	080	493
7. Christianity	S	1.38	.82	811	−095	052	−121	−068	753
8. free abortion	S	.89	.92	349	092	347	−194	163	581
9. spanking of children	S	1.24	.88	280	−335	051	−225	−090	579
10. harder police measures	S	.86	.86	240	−586	281	−202	−003	603
11. the People's Republic of China	S	.72	.74	238	−116	−093	228	016	532
12. capitalism	S	.92	.83	−024	−210	−078	−294	−002	682
13. social welfare	S	.23	.59	039	−012	104	−134	092	690
14. apartheid	S,WP	.33	.66	060	−605	−031	319	156	510
15. increased religious instruction in schools	S	.61	.83	618	−035	201	024	122	660
16. decreased weapons development	S	.40	.74	105	−205	148	−020	−376	572
17. tougher control for foreigners	S	.91	.85	061	−147	030	−070	006	646
18. nationalization of private companies	S	1.27	.83	066	046	116	−037	032	700
19. longer prison sentences	S	.65	.77	140	−677	072	−046	256	603
20. belief in the Bible	S	1.22	.82	829	−192	102	−008	046	755
21. NATO	S	1.21	.85	243	−009	−095	−626	−079	536
22 homosexuality	S	.97	.84	163	−103	623	050	264	641
23. sabbath observance	WP	.90	.87	718	−057	133	−094	044	641
24. divorce	WP	.70	.83	162	014	408	−064	374	694
25. capital punishment	D	.76	.87	027	−750	−022	−112	−033	664
26. Church is foundation of society	D	.74	.86	643	−100	078	−112	154	631
27. Black power	D	1.47	.73	060	025	085	−121	142	704
28. conjugal rights for prisoners	D	.92	.86	132	−330	248	−017	−043	759
29. legal prostitution	D	1.00	.90	203	081	578	027	173	595
30. female priests	D	.53	.76	066	−162	240	029	739	665
31. lower drinking age	D	1.41	.86	−050	−244	632	−115	015	575
32. spouse-swapping	D	1.62	.72	131	−046	664	096	−140	514
33. de-facto relationships	D	.71	.87	208	−020	584	−199	326	624
34. men are natural leaders	D	.69	.83	097	−303	−050	−022	557	559
35. compulsory military training	D	.59	.83	141	−409	−005	−142	−080	504
		Eigenvalues		3.403	3.179	2.824	1.832	1.619	
		% Variance		9.720	9.080	8.070	5.230	4.630	

a   S − S5 Scale, WP − Wilson-Patterson Scale, D − Development Group.

b   Decimal points ommitted and loadings >.30 underlined

c   Communalities of 11 factors with eigenvalues > 1.0.

Item-total score correlation coefficients for the validation sample ranged from .247 to .617. On only five items did the correlation coefficients fall below .300 (Capitalism .247, Social welfare .258, Apartheid .276, Decreased weapons development .256, and Tougher control for foreigners .257).

Factor Structure of Conscale I

Table 1 presents the item means, standard deviations, and rotated factor loadings for the factors with the five highest eigenvalues following a principal components analysis of the 35 item Conscale I, based on the responses of 219 validation sample subjects.

Table 2

Means, S. D.'s, for Labour, National and Values Preference Groups on Conscale Items

		Labour (N=76)		National (N=56)		Values (N=41)		
Items	F Ratio[a]	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Between Group Comparison[a,b]
1. harder measures against	12.328^{XXX}	.95	.94	1.57	.76	.76	.89	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
2. USA	8.433^{XXX}	.82	.84	1.30	.81	.68	.76	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
3. belief in authority	6.919^{XXX}	1.36	.83	1.68	.66	1.07	.93	L<N^{X} V<N^{XX} V<L^{X}
4. increased socialization	9.581^{XXX}	.55	.79	1.18	.88	.73	.81	L<N^{XX} V<N^{X}
5. socialism	11.681^{XXX}	.87	.79	1.46	.79	.78	.82	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
6. communes	7.322^{XXX}	.89	.83	.98	.86	.39	.63	V<N^{XX} V<L^{XX}
7. Christianity	8.745^{XXX}	1.33	.81	1.66	.70	.98	.88	L<N^{X} V<N^{XX} V<L^{X}
8. free abortion	3.011^{X}	.91	.95	1.07	.93	.61	.83	V<N^{X}
9. spanking of children	5.076^{x}	1.21	.88	1.45	.81	.88	.93	V<N^{XX} V<L^{X}
10. harder police measures	11.140^{XXX}	.80	.86	1.21	.87	.41	.71	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX} V<L^{X}
11. the People's Republic of China	2.322	.71	.71	.95	.78	.66	.76	V<N^{X}
12. capitalism	8.381^{XXX}	.67	.76	1.25	.86	.80	.87	L<N^{XX} V<N^{X}
13. social welfare	.878	.18	.56	.32	.66	.22	.61	
14. apartheid	1.370	.28	.60	.48	.76	.37	.73	
15. increased religious instruction in the schools	4.172^{X}	.59	.82	.91	.90	.44	.78	L<N^{X} V<N^{XX}
16. decreased weapons development	1.108	.41	.75	.50	.81	.27	.67	
17. tougher control for foreigners	4.276^{X}	.78	.83	1.19	.88	.80	.84	L<N^{XX} V<N^{X}
18. nationalization of private companies	3.584^{X}	1.18	.84	1.50	.79	1.10	.80	L<N^{X} V<N^{XX}
19. longer prison sentences	5.782^{XX}	.54	.76	.95	.82	.51	.68	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
20. belief in the Bible	7.811^{XXX}	1.25	.82	1.48	.76	.83	.80	V<N^{XX} V<L^{XX}
21. NATO	2.990^{X}	1.21	.70	1.42	.68	1.00	1.24	L<N^{X} V<N^{X}
22. homosexuality	5.615^{XX}	1.05	.80	1.11	.87	.59	.77	V<N^{XX} V<L^{XX}
23. sabbath observance	7.559^{XXX}	.81	.84	1.27	.84	.66	.82	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
24. divorce	.680	.68	.80	.79	.91	.59	.84	
25. capital punishment	11.988^{XXX}	.64	.83	1.25	.88	.51	.78	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
26. Church is foundation of society	6.553^{XX}	.70	.85	1.11	.87	.51	.84	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
27. Black power	1.168	1.38	.75	1.57	.74	1.39	.77	
28. conjugal rights for prisoners	3.776^{X}	.86	.86	1.18	.86	.73	.84	L<N^{X} V<N^{X}
29. legal prostitution	1.691	.93	.87	1.16	.93	.85	.88	
30. female priests	3.564^{X}	.53	.74	.75	.86	.34	.62	V<N^{X}
31. lower drinking age	2.129	1.30	.91	1.59	.80	1.31	.82	L<N^{X}
32. spouse-swapping	2.991^{X}	1.72	.62	1.63	.73	1.41	.81	V<L^{X}
33. de-facto relationships	8.021^{XXX}	.71	.82	.98	.98	.29	.64	V<N^{XX} V<L^{XX}
34. men are natural leaders	7.622^{XXX}	.72	.84	1.04	.87	.39	.67	L<N^{X} V<N^{XX} V<L^{X}
35. compulsory military training	8.222^{XXX}	.47	.77	.93	.91	.32	.69	L<N^{XX} V<N^{XX}
$\overline{X}$ Total	28.122^{XXX}	29.80	11.22	40.55	10.20	24.05	12.40	L<N^{XXX} V<N^{XXX} V<L^{XX}
$\overline{X}$ Age	1.764	31.18	15.07	28.93	13.03	26.29	11.00	
r age/scale		.125		.274		.292		

[a] $_X$ $p < .05$
$_{XX}$ $p < .01$
$_{XXX}$ $p < .001$
[b] L – Labour, N – National, V – Values

The communalities listed in Table 1 apply to the eleven factors extracted, all with eigenvalues > 1.0.[2]

Factor I is obviously *Religious Fundamentalism* (Belief in the Bible, .829; Christianity, .811; Sabbath observance, .718; Church is foundation of society, .643; and Increased religious instruction in the schools, .618; but also with Free abortion having a surprising .349 loading). Factor II is *Anti Punitive Authority* (Capital punishment, -.750; Longer prison sentences, -.677; Harder measures against criminals, -.622; Apartheid, -.605; Harder police measures, -.586; Compulsory military training, -.409; Belief in authority, -.377; Spanking of children, -.335; Conjugal rights for prisoners, -.330; and Men are natural leaders, -.303). Factor III involves *Individual and Sexual Freedom* (Spouse swapping, .664; Lower drinking age, .632; Homosexuality, .623; De-facto relationships, .584; Legal prostitution, .578; Divorce, .408; Free abortion, .347; and Communes, .339). Factor IV is difficult to interpret (U.S.A. -.739; N.A.T.O., -.625; Harder measures against criminals, -.397; Belief in authority, -.307). It looks similar to Factor II but it has a loading of .319 for Apartheid. Factor V similarly is not easy to interpret (Female priests, .739; Men are natural leaders, .557; Divorce, .374; De-facto relationships, .326; and Decreased weapons development, -.376). It might possibly be interpreted as *Liberal Conservatism*.

Internal Consistency

Correlation coefficients, using a Spearman-Brown correction, were obtained separately for groups of 109 and 110 subjects from the validation sample, first on a comparison of Conscale I first half and Conscale I second half scores, and then on odd item and even item scores. On first-second half scores, the 109 subject subsample correlation was .92 and that for the 110 subject subsample was .83. The odd-even correlations were .92 and .87 respectively. The results of

these measures of internal consistency were similar to those quoted for the C-Scale by Wilson (1973).

Acquiescence Bias

Yeasaying scores were obtained for the total validation sample by weighing each "yes" response as two and each "?" response as one, i.e. regardless of item keying (Wilson, 1973). The scores could range between zero and 70 with a chance score equal to 35. The obtained mean yeasaying score was 34.78 ($SD = 6.66$). Twenty-one percent ($N = 45$) of the sample had yeasaying scores greater then one standard deviation above the mean, and 14% ($N = 31$) of the sample had yeasaying scores which were lower than one standard deviation below the mean. This indicates that 65% of the sample had yeasaying scores within the range of plus or minus one standard deviation of the mean. This result, together with the mean yeasaying score being so close to the expected chance score, suggests acquiescence and non-acquiescence biases were not of marked importance in this sample.

Validation of Conscale I on Political Party Preferences

The subjects in the validation sample were grouped according to expressed political party preference. The item means and standard deviations for the three largest groups (Labour, National and Values) represented in the sample are recorded in Table 2.[3]

Significant F ratios were found for 27 of the 35 items. Twenty-seven items discriminated between Values and National groups, 20 items discriminated between Labour and National and only ten items between Labour and Values. The groups differed significantly on total scale scores ($F = 28.122$) but not on age. the correlations between total scores and age were positive for each group, but in each case the associations were weak, and nonsignificant.

Eighty-six judges from a first year non-advancing psychology class were asked to rate the four major political parties on a 0 (Left) — 100 (Right) scale. Table 3 records

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[2] This analysis, which was run on a Burroughs 6718 computer, employed a principal components analysis taken from the IBM S.S.R. package and modified by Prof. R. A. M. Gregson, whose assistance along with that of Dr M. B. Simmonds, is gratefully acknowledged. Details of the factor loadings for all eleven factors extracted may be obtained from the author.

[3] The responses of the five Social Credit preference subjects and the 41 subjects who said that they would not vote, that they objected, or who recorded no response, were not included in the detailed analysis reported in Table 2.

the resulting mean ratings of Labour, National, Values and Social Credit parties as well as the mean total Conscale I scores for supporters of each party drawn from the validation sample. The correlation between these two variables was $r = .92$ $(.05 > p > .10)$.

Table 3

Total Conscale Scores and Ratings of Political Parties

Party	Total Conscale Scores of Party Supporters in Validation Sample		Ratings of Political Parties by Judges[a]	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
Labour	29.80	11.22	39.45	13.87
National	40.55	10.20	64.35	17.89
Soc. Credit	35.20	11.32	44.25	19.20
Values	24.05	12.40	35.17	19.61

Note $r_{Conscale\ Ratings} = .92$ $(.05 < p < .10)$
[a] Ratings 0 (Left) − 100 (Right)

Discussion

The results of the item analysis indicated that a considerably higher proportion of the Sidanius items were discriminating when compared with those of C-Scale origin, a result which is at first sight surprising in that the C-Scale was initially developed on New Zealand samples. Unlike the Sidanius items, several of the discarded C-Scale items (e.g. moral training, Royalty, teenage drivers, co-education, birth-control, conventional clothes, working mothers) now appear passe. While they may have discriminated among those holding to differing degrees of conservative attitudes a decade ago, such issues seem less likely to polarize people in the later 1970's.

The results of the factor analysis of Conscale I revealed no evidence of a general conservatism factor, unlike the C-Scale results reported by Wilson (1973). The first factor, which accounted for 9.7% of the variance, was obviously religious in content, and thus similar to C-Scale factors obtained by Feather (1975) and Robertson and Cochrane (1972) and emphasized by Stacey (1977b). Factors II and III are similar to factors produced in previous C-Scale studies (e.g. Feather, 1975) while Factor V appears to represent an attitudinal position typified by the slightly more liberal members of the National Party in New Zealand. The first

four Conscale factors accounted for 32% of the variance, which compares with Feather's 23.5% and Robertson and Cochrane's 27.5% using the C-Scale. The first three factors account for similar percentages of the variance but none of these can be interpreted as "a pre-eminent or dominant dimension relating to the economic organization of Society" (Stacey, 1977b).

The failure of Conscale I items to yield a general conservatism factor is consistent with the results of several previous studies (e.g. Feather, 1975; Ray, 1971; Robertson and Cochrane, 1973). The results of the present study thus support a view which sees conservatism consisting of several independent factors or dimensions (Stacey, 1977b).

The results of the validation analyses show that three-quarters of the Conscale I items discriminated between supporters of Values and National political parties and half of the items discriminated between supporters of Labour and National. However, eta-squared (n^2) values, computed for each item, were all low, ranging from .01 to .13. Although the Conscale total scores discriminated between the three groups $(F = 28.12, p < .001)$ again eta-squared was low $(n^2 = .25)$. Thus political party preference accounted for much less of the variance in Conscale I total scores (25%) than with total S5 Scale scores for Sidanius's (1976b) Swedish student and High School samples, where the eta-squared values were .71 and .56 respectively.

The differences among the political preference groups reported in Table 2 are much as one would expect, given some knowledge of the three political parties involved. Values and Labour supporters show predictable differences on items associated with traditional values (e.g. Belief in the Bible, Belief in authority, Christianity, Harder police measures) and socio-sexual issues (Homosexuality, Spouse-swapping, De facto relationships). Because Conscale I, like the C-Scale and S4 and S5 Scales, has few environmental-conservation items, there is less opportunity for discrimination between Values and other groups than might be the case if the items included some that are representative of this dimension, which is a major feature of the Values ideology. The Labour-National differences are also largely predictable. The items showing no significant

differences between these groups are concerned with traditional values (e.g. Belief in Bible, Spanking of children), socio-sexual issues (e.g. Spouse-swapping, Homosexuality, Free abortion) and some political issues (Social welfare, and decreased weapons development). Some minor differences are interesting. Values supporters are slightly more favourably disposed towards Socialism than are Labour supporters. Labour supporters are slightly more negative towards spouse-swapping than are National. On five items, all three groups were conservative — Belief in authority, Nationalization of private companies, Black power, Lower drinking age, Spouse-swapping. It is unfortunate that so few Social Credit supporters were included in the sample. With five respondents an item validation analysis of their responses would not have been worthwhile.

There is high agreement between total Conscale I scores and ratings of the major political parties along a "left" — "right" scale. The product-moment correlation coefficient is high although not quite significant, but the rank-order correlation for the same data is $r_s = 1.0$

It is perhaps surprising that Conscale I, which contained 24 items in common with the S5 Scale, did not yield higher eta-squared coefficients when each item was validated against political party preferences. Admittedly the non-S5 items which made up the remainder of Conscale I are not markedly political-economic in content. However, the results in Table 1 and 2 do not suggest any differential validity for items of S5 Scale, C-Scale or development group origin. It seems likely that a conservatism scale could be designed to be highly valid when correlated against a political preference criterion, i.e. if the items which formed the development pool were selected on face-validity grounds for their perceived relevance to the political system and/or situation within a given country. Such items might be developed from party manifestos and literature made use of during election campaigns.

Conservatism therefore seems to be what you wish to make it, or how you wish to measure it. It seems naive to expect that any so-called general conservatism factor as measured by any one test is going to be robust enough to survive over time, and across different cultural settings and yet remain highly valid when assessed against criteria as varied as say political party preference, religious affiliation or reported sexual behaviours. The value of the C-Scale lies not in its particular item content, or repeated demonstrations of its factorial structure, but rather in its utility as an attitude scaling method. The technique provides for relatively easy scale construction and yields a resultant measure with a simple format, and, as the results of this study show, one which is relatively free of acquiescence bias (cf. Cloud & Vaughan, 1969).

Investigators who wish to study conservatism (whatever they may think that is) are better advised to do what many attitude researchers have done in the past. They should use custom-made scales, developed from item pools which possess at least face-validity, and validate them against suitable criteria on samples from the subject populations which are to be studied, rather than rely on an off-the-shelf product.

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