

# Variation in U.S. Adults' Perceptions of Children's Intelligence

Stephanie Estrera, Nicole J. Wen, Ph.D., & Cristine H. Legare, Ph.D.  
The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Psychology



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## Background

- Young children have a high propensity to imitate and adhere to social norms of their cultural groups (Schmidt & Tomasello, 2012)
  - However, there is little experimental research that looks at the way adult's use conformity in their evaluative judgements of children.
- Conformity, obedience, and social responsibility intertwine with conceptions of intelligence in non-Western populations (Harkness et al., 2007)
- Western populations, such as the United States, tend to conceptualize intelligence with creativity and independence (Clegg, Wen, & Legare, 2017)
- Western populations rely heavily on teaching strategies that requires highly structured, explicit guidance (Legare, 2017)

## Research Questions

- Do adults use behavioral conformity as an indication of children's intelligence?
- Does higher exposure to children (i.e., more hours per week spent with children) affect an individual's preference for conformity?
- How does an individual's sociocultural orientation affect their evaluation of intelligence?

## Methods

### Participants (n=239)

- Female=60%
- Age  $M=40.58$ ,  $SD=15.65$
- African American (8%); American Indian or Alaska Native (1%); Asian (5%); White, Non-Hispanic (48%); White, Hispanic (32%); Mixed Race (6%)

### Measures

- Distributed on Amazon's Mechanical Turk
- Exposure to Children
  - Calculated hours spent per week with children
- Socialization Goals Questionnaire (Keller & Demuth, 2006)
  - 6 point Likert
  - 9 Independent Oriented Items (e.g., "In the first three years of life, children should become assertive")
  - 9 Interdependent Oriented Items (e.g., "In the first three years of life, children should develop close personal relationships")

## Methods (Cont.)

### Video Demonstration



- Preference for conformity measure

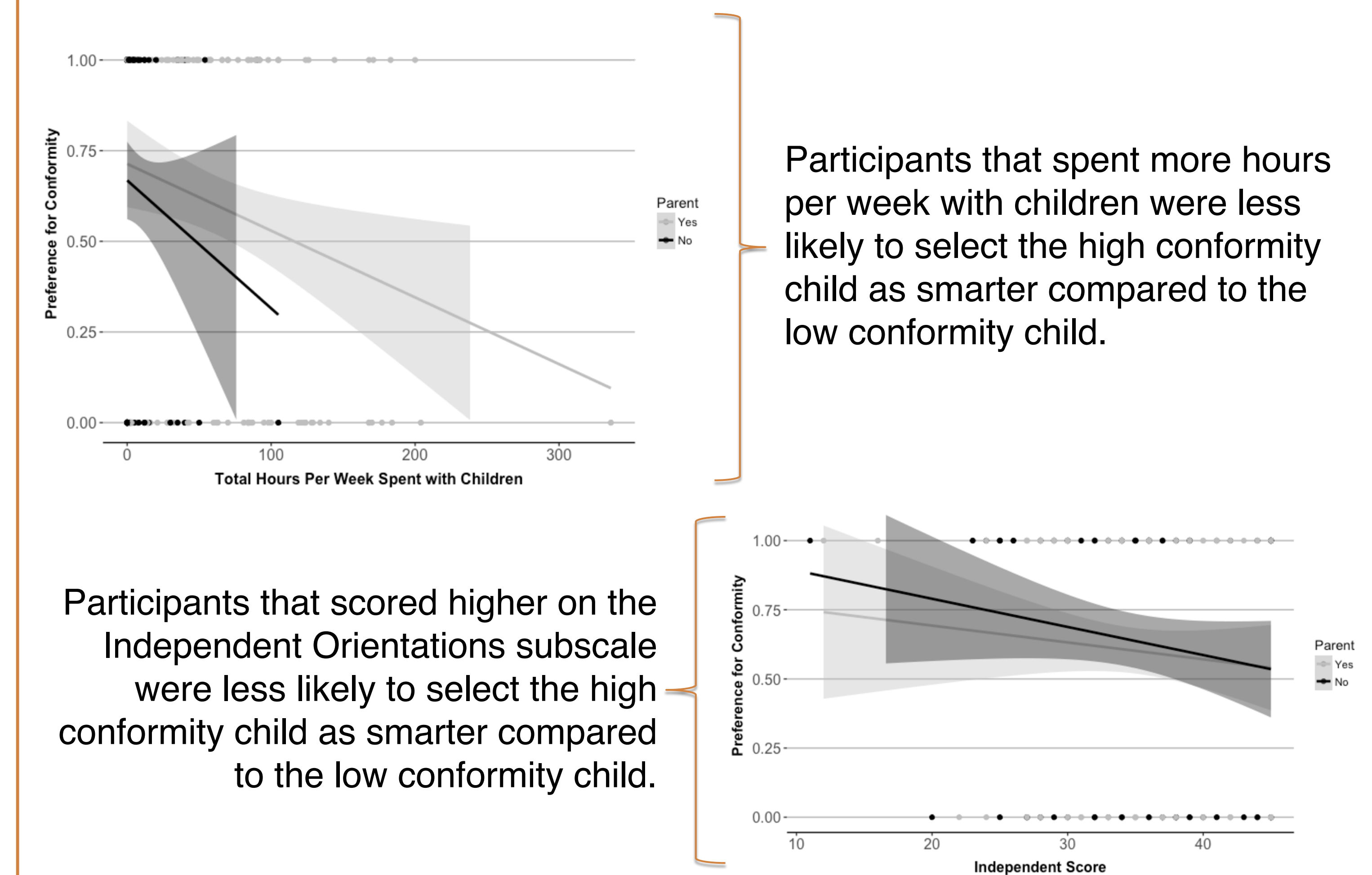
Question	Coding
Which child...	
1. Is smarter?	1 = Endorsed High Conformity Child
2. Is more well-behaved?	0 = Did not endorse High Conformity Child
	Intelligence and good behavior are both evaluative traits
	Explanations: Why?

Category	Content Criteria	Examples
<b>Conformity</b>	Participant mentioned that the child followed the directions, copied the adult, engaged in a specific action modeled by the adult, paid attention to what the adult did, or knew how to complete the task; included normative judgements	"She was able to remember the correct order, the shape, the actions of the presenter" "Copied the adult."
<b>Creativity</b>	Participant mentioned that the child displayed creativity or indicated that the child displayed behavioral variation such as mentioning a specific action the child did that was different from the adult's	"She used all the beads rather than just three." "She saw what she had to do and made it her own."
<b>No Preference</b>	Participant mentioned that they thought both children were smart/well-behaved but did not provide any additional information	"Both are smart."

Predictors	Evaluation of Child			
	Smart		Well behaved	
	$\beta$ (SE)	OR [95% CI]	$\beta$ (SE)	OR [95% CI]
<b>Intercept</b>	1.15 (0.61) †	3.15 [0.95, 10.43]	1.08 (0.70)	2.96 [0.75, 11.62]
<b>Sex</b>	-0.29 (0.19)	0.75 [0.52, 1.09]	0.41 (0.07) †	1.50 [0.99, 2.27]
<b>Parent (yes)</b>	-0.07 (0.21)	0.93 [0.61, 1.41]	-0.08 (0.24)	0.92 [0.58, 1.47]
<b>Hours Spent with Children Per Week</b>	-0.01 (0.01)**	0.99 [0.99, 1.00]	-0.01 (0.01)	0.99 [0.98, 1.00]
<b>Interdependent Score</b>	0.08 (0.02)***	1.08 [1.04, 1.12]	0.06 (0.02)**	1.06 [1.01, 1.11]
<b>Independent Score</b>	-0.08 (0.02)***	0.93 [0.89, 0.97]	-0.07 (0.02)**	0.93 [0.89, 0.98]

†p < .10. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

## Results



## Conclusions and Future Directions

### Conclusions

- A participant's Independent/Interdependent Orientation impacts their likelihood of viewing a high conforming child as smart.
- The amount of time spent with children also impacts a participant's perception of intelligence.
- Gender nor parental status does not impacts participant's preference for conformity.

### Future Directions

- Conducting a similar experiment in other, Western countries.
- Applying a similar model using children of color

## References and Acknowledgements

### References

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