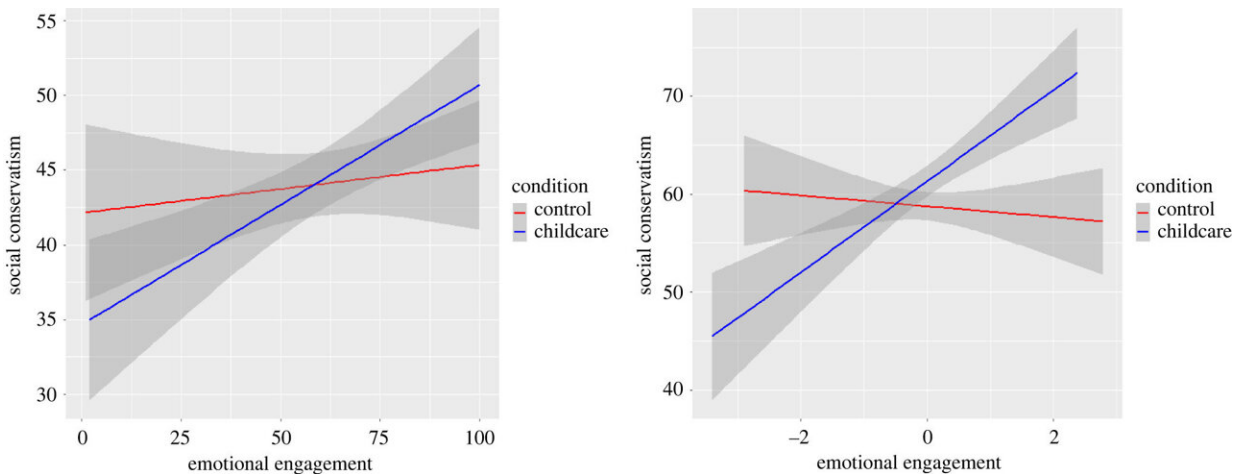


Link found between parenthood and social conservatism

September 8 2022, by Bob Yirka



Line plots showing effects of condition on social conservatism, moderated by emotional engagement with manipulation in Study 1 (left, $n = 376$) and Study 2 (right, $n = 1924$). Credit: *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* (2022). DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2022.0978

An international team of researchers has found a possible link between having children and degrees of social conservatism in people. In their paper published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, the group describes the research they conducted through surveys and interviews and what they learned.

Social conservatism in the modern era has come to be defined as a set of

beliefs held in common by socially conservative groups, such as the Republicans in the United States. Beliefs that define membership in these groups tend to include things like a pro-life stance on abortion, support of the [death penalty](#) as a reasonable punishment for some crimes and opposition to gay marriage, [premarital sex](#) and immigration. In this new effort, the researchers theorized that having children or being entrusted with the care of children might make people more socially conservative. To find out if that is the case, they carried out several studies that involved asking volunteers about their values.

The first study involved asking 376 university student volunteers to look at pictures of children or at imagined activities and then asking them to fill out a survey designed to grade their degree of social conservatism. The second study involved sending out 2,610 surveys to adults across the country asking them about their circumstances, whether they had children and their [political beliefs](#). Other studies involved sending out similar surveys to people in multiple countries.

The researchers found what they describe as an association between having children and an increase in social conservatism. They also found that the more children people had, the more conservative they became, and that those involved in childcare also became more conservative. The researchers note that they did not find any association between having [children](#) and economic conservatism, and in fact, many parents tended to see [government spending](#) as less of an issue. They also found that some of the views held by parents changed after their kids grew up and left home—like reduced support for subsidized daycare.

The researchers conclude by suggesting that their study challenges the notion that aging is one of the prime drivers to conservatism—parenthood, they suggest, plays a bigger role.

More information: Nicholas Kerry et al, Experimental and cross-

cultural evidence that parenthood and parental care motives increase social conservatism, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* (2022). [DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2022.0978](https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2022.0978)

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