

STUDIES IN REALISM ANIMISM AND  
ARTIFICIALISM IN CHILDREN OF A  
SELECTED ETHNIC GROUP

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## ABSTRACT

This study of realism, animism and artificialism in the selected ethnic group of children in Sri Lanka is modeled on Piagets study.

The clinical method and the standardized procedure for the investigation of animism by R.W. Russel and Wayne Dennis served as instruments for gathering data. Documentary sources in anthropology, reported research of cross-cultural Piagetian studies were also used to gather additional data.

The elements of population of interest consisted of children belonging to the Tamil ethnic group studying in pre-schools and schools of Colombo and Jaffna. The sample was purposive stratified and proportionate. The stratification was done on the basis of geographical area, age, sex and socio economic background.

The final sample consisted of 400 children their ages ranging from 3 yrs 0 months to 12 yrs to 11 months. Care was taken to match the different age groups in sex geographic area and socio economic background, so that the extraneous variables would cancel out.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To study animism and the allied concepts of realism and artificialism in children of a selected ethnic group in Sri Lanka.

- a) To re-examine Piaget's (1924) contention that the development of the child's conception of animism consists of four substages, with reference to the selected ethnic group.
- b) To study the correlation of the stage of the concept of animism with chronological age in the selected group.
- c) To identify the factors associated with the development of the animistic and allied concepts in the selected group.

The data gathered was subjected to qualitative and quantitative statistical analysis. On the results of it the following conclusion were drawn.

1. It is possible to classify individuals into the stages of animistic concepts suggested by Piaget.
2. The relationship between the chronological age and the percentage of students attaining the different stages represent gradation. There are however very wide individual differences.
3. The frequency of animistic responses decreases with increasing chronological age.
4. The difference in the degree of animistic thinking in boys and girls is not statistically significant.

5. There is correspondence between the stages of animism and artificialism. Though the correlation between animism and artificialism is not a perfect positive one, at all stages.
6. In respect to animism and allied concepts the sequence of stages seems to be a global trend, the ages at which children attain the different stages may vary in different cultures. It was also found that the level of concept attainment is a function of training as well as maturation from middle childhood onward. It may be said that there are fundamental properties of thought which are universal to all mankind especially in childhood.
7. There are analogies or convergence between the thought of the child and primitive or pre-historical thought in the areas of animism and allied concepts. The reason for the analogy is beyond the scope of our research.
8. The factors which contribute to animism and allied concepts in the older children were found to be mainly the influence of religion cultural tradition folk lore, literature and influence of elders.

The conclusion drawn in this investigation cannot be generalised due to the limitation of the sample.

It is hoped that these findings would be useful to the pre-school and primary school Educators.