Personality and Politics—II
Punitiveness and Affect Displacement

Michael Milburn
Psychology 335

What are the origins of punitiveness?
- Childhood/personality development
  - Education?
  - Something else?

Affect Displacement
- Anecdotal: Alice Miller
- Experimental (short-term)
- Experimental/Survey (long-term)—Milburn, Conrad et al.

Alice Miller
- What are the central elements of the “poisonous pedagogy?”
- Elements:
  - Start young
  - Humiliate
  - Punish until stop crying
  - Punish obstinacy
- What are the roots of the “poisonous pedagogy?”
- Proverbs/Egyptian roots
- Is anyone who gets punished going to be a perpetrator?
- Central elements in her model:
  - Mistreatment/Affect Displacement
  - Denial

James Dobson—Dare to Discipline
- Start young
- Use physical punishment
- Spank to stop crying
- This book was so popular, Dobson is now owns a multi-million dollar radio network (“Focus on the Family”) and is a major player in right-wing Christian politics

What is Lasswell’s model?
What is the primary mechanism he proposes to explain the process he observes?
⇒ Affect Displacement
- What is Tomkins’ model of ideological development?
- People are attracted to an ideology that is emotionally satisfying and familiar to them

People are attracted to an ideology that is emotionally satisfying and familiar to them.
Childhood punishment, denial, and authoritarianism

I. Experimental evidence for affect displacement
a. Dollard et al. (1939)
   - anger
b. Weatherley (1961)
c. Rogers and Prentice-Dunn (1981)
e. Marcus-Newhall et al.

II. Long-term affect displacement—Theoretical statement
a. Adorno et al.; Lasswell, Psychopathology and Politics
b. Alice Miller, For Your Own Good; Bradshaw

III. Research on displacement of affect from childhood punishment
b. Milburn and Ezzati (1998)

Weatherly (1961)--Displaced Anger
- (IV-1) High and low anti-Semitic students identified
- (IV-2) Subjects angered by experimenter making highly insulting and deprecating comments to the subjects while they were filling out questionnaires (controls not insulted)
- (IV-3) Line drawing shown to subjects with four characters; two given Jewish names: Sam Goldblatt and Herb Rosen

Rogers and Prentice-Dunn (1981)--Anger and “repressive racism”
- (IV) White students at University of Alabama insulted by confederate (white or black)
- (DV) Given opportunity to shock the confederate
- RESULTS: Significantly higher shock levels administered to black confederate after being angered [in contrast: the control condition subjects administered lower shocks to black confederate than to white confederate]
Prejudice results in displaced aggression

- The insult manipulation was not enough to instigate aggression (no difference between aggression toward white confederate in insult or no insult condition)
- Race of confederate not enough (less aggression toward black confederate in no insult condition)
- The latent racism held by white students at the University of Alabama was activated or triggered in the black confederate/insult condition

Meindl & Lerner (1984)--Self-esteem and displaced aggression

- Forty-two Anglo Canadians as subjects
- (IV) Manipulated self-esteem--accident
- (DV) Answered policy questions related to Quebec (primed: “as a member of the English-speaking majority”)
- RESULTS: LSE subjects significantly less favorable to policies favoring Quebec

Meta Analysis of Research on Displaced Aggression

- Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) *JPSP*
- While displaced aggression not covered much in recent textbooks
- Effect is robust (Mean ES = .54)

Childhood punishment, denial, and authoritarianism

I. Experimental evidence for affect displacement
   a. Dollard et al. (1939)
   b. Weatherley (1961)--anger
   c. Rogers and Prentice-Dunn (1981)—anger
   d. Meindl & Lerner (1984)—low self-esteem
   e. Marcus-Newhall et al. meta analysis

II. Long-term affect displacement—theoretical statement
   a. Adorno et al.; Lasswell, Psychopathology and Politics
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III. Research on displacement of affect from childhood punishment
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Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)

- Study 1: Questionnaire study of UMass undergraduates
- IVs: Childhood punishment, gender, and therapy
- DV: Punitive political attitudes (death penalty, restrictions on abortion, use of military force)
Altemeyer Parental Punishment scale

- When you were 7-9 years old, around the second to fourth grade, how angry would your father or mother have gotten if they had found out that you:
  - Disobeyed them like going somewhere you were forbidden to go, or something you were forbidden to do? Would they have:
    • Spanked you
    • Taken away privileges
    • Scolded you
    • Expressed disappointment
    • Not punished you

Punitive Political Attitudes

- The U.S. should not hesitate to use military force when its national interests are threatened. (Strongly Agree--Strongly Disagree)
- Some people feel that the death penalty should often be used, others feel it should never be used. How do you feel? (Often be used--Never be used)
- By law, abortion should never be permitted--By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.

Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)

- RESULTS:
- Two significant two-way interactions
- Punishment by therapy
  - High punishment Ss without therapy more punitive than high punishment Ss with therapy
- Punishment by gender
  - High punishment males more punitive than low punishment males
  - High punishment females less punitive

Punishment by Therapy Interaction

Punishment by Gender Interaction

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**Punishment by Gender Interaction**

![Graph showing punishment by gender interaction]

**Conclusions**
- Childhood punishment is an important variable predicting adult support for punitive public policy
- This effect is mediated by two important variables: gender and therapy (our measure of denial)

**Limitations of Study 1**
- Limited to undergraduates
- Effect might result from education (discipline varies by education); uncontrolled since no variability
- Effect of negative emotion inferred, not measured

**Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)**
- **Study 2**: Telephone survey of people living in Eastern Massachusetts using same variables:
  - Punitive political attitudes
  - Gender, Therapy, Childhood Punishment
- Added covariates:
  - Respondents’ education
  - Respondents’ parents’ education
  - Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

**Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale**
- “Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates”
- “I have never intensely disliked anyone”
- “No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener”

**Results**
- Same two-way interactions replicated, controlling for respondents’ education and their parents’ education, and social desirability
Results

- Significant two-way interactions reflected in pattern of significant three-way interaction:
  - Punishment by Gender by Therapy
Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)

- **Study 2:**
  - Experiment embedded in survey
    - Recall/Catharsis Condition: recalled punishment first
    - Control: answered attitude questions first
- **RESULTS:**
  - Two significant three-way interactions with Condition

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**Punishment by Therapy Interaction (FEMALES)**

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<tr>
<th>Political Ideology</th>
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<th>Liberal</th>
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**Condition by Punishment by Therapy Interaction--CONTROL**

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**Condition by Punishment by Therapy Interaction--TREATMENT**

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**Condition by Punishment by Gender Interaction--CONTROL**

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Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)

EXPERIMENTAL RESULT:
- Subjects who recalled punishment were subsequently less supportive of death penalty than subjects who hadn’t first recalled their childhood experiences
- Supports conclusion that emotion from negative childhood experiences plays a role in adult attitudes on punitive public policy, mediated by gender and therapy

The Cognitive Neuroscience of the Politics of Denial

- George Lakoff, linguist and cognitive neuroscientist at UC Berkeley
- Moral Politics: Discusses how the “strict father” model of parenting affects the way conservatives think (non-consciously) about political issues
- Neural inhibition from recall of childhood punishment experiences
- Explanation only makes sense if you acknowledge a link between childhood experiences and political attitudes

Milburn and Ezzati (1998)

- IVs: Same parental punishment, therapy, and gender variables, and measures of emotional experience
  - Spielberger State-Trait anger scale
  - Taylor Manifest Anxiety scale
  - Fenigstein & Scheier Self-awareness scale
- DV: Altemeyer’s RWA scale

Spielberger State-Trait Anger Scale

- Anger Now (How I Feel Right Now)
  - “I am furious”
  - “I feel like yelling at somebody”
  - “I feel like hitting someone”
- Anger Reactions (When angry or furious…)
  - “I do things like slam doors”
  - “I express my anger”
  - “I make sarcastic remarks to others”

Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale

- “I am often sick to my stomach”
- “I often find myself worrying about something”
- “At times I lose sleep over worry”

Fenigstein & Scheier Self-awareness scale

- Introspection
  - “I am always trying to figure myself out”
  - “I’m generally attentive to my inner feelings”
  - “I reflect about myself a lot”
- Public presentation
  - “I’m concerned about the way I present myself”
  - “I usually worry about making a good impression”
  - “I’m self-conscious about the way I look”
Results
• Anger, anxiety, and self-awareness are significant predictors of authoritarianism
• Replicated the 3-way interaction of gender, punishment, and therapy found earlier with punitive political attitudes

Emotion, Self-awareness, and Authoritarianism

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<tr>
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<td>.109</td>
<td>1.083</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Dependent Variable: RWA

Punishment by Therapy (Males)

Childhood Punishment

Punishment by Therapy (Females)

Childhood Punishment

Conclusion
• Emotion from childhood mistreatment doesn’t just go away—it can remain and distort the public policy process—through the process of emotional displacement