

Personality and Politics—II Punitiveness and Affect Displacement

Michael Milburn
Psychology 335

What are the origins of punitiveness?

- Childhood/personality development
 - Education?
 - Something else?

- 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

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

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*
 - b. Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good*; Bradshaw
- III. Research on displacement of affect from childhood punishment
 - a. Milburn, Conrad, Sala, and Carberry (1995)
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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

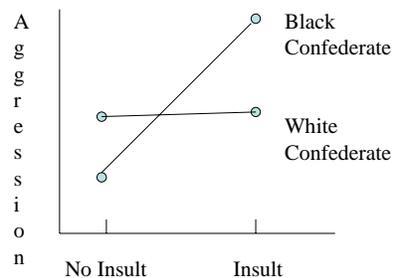
Weatherly (1961)--Displaced Anger

- (DV)--subjects asked to write story about characters in picture; acts of aggression toward characters with Jewish names counted
- RESULTS:
- After being insulted, anti-Semitic subjects directed significantly greater fantasy aggression toward Jewish characters; low anti-Semitic subjects directed less aggression after being insulted

Rogers & 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]

Rogers and Prentice-Dunn



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) *JSPS*
- While displaced aggression not covered much in recent textbooks
- Effect is robust (Mean ES = .54)

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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

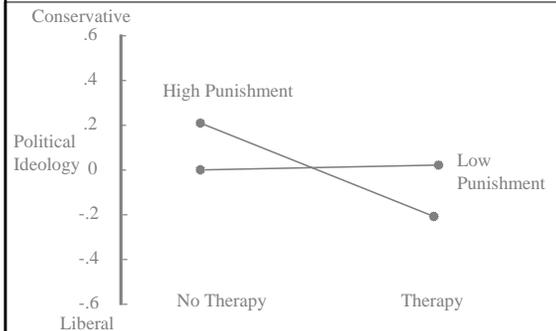
Punitive Political Attitudes

- 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.

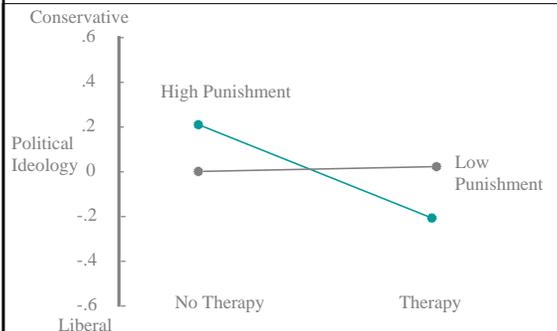
Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)

- **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

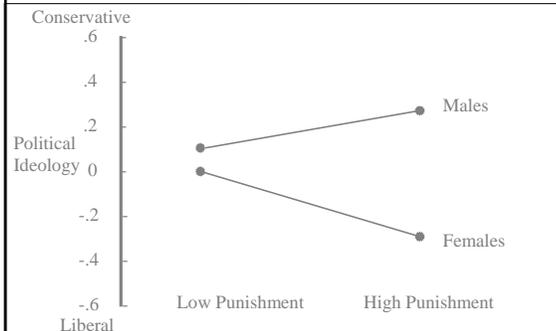
Punishment by Therapy Interaction



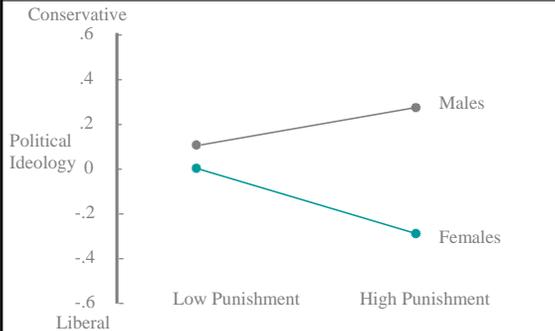
Punishment by Therapy Interaction



Punishment by Gender Interaction



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

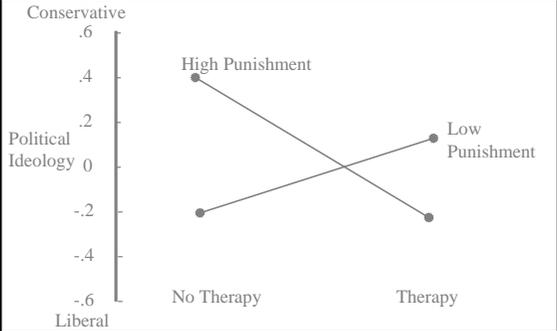
Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

- “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”

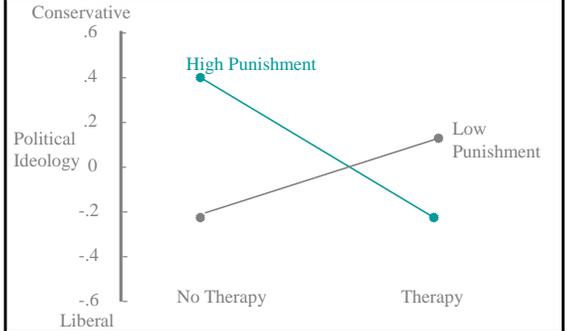
Results

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

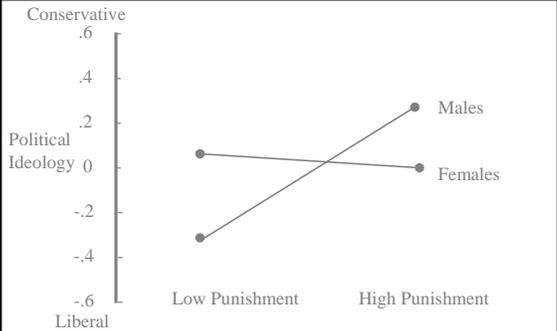
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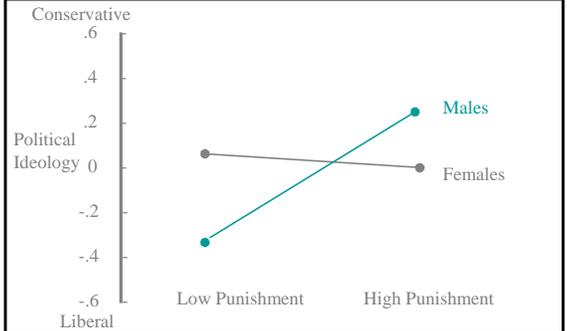
Punishment by Therapy Interaction



Punishment by Gender Interaction



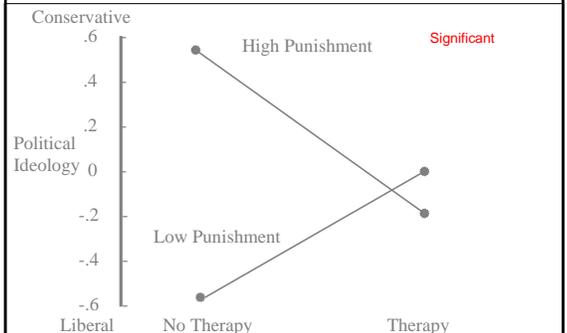
Punishment by Gender Interaction



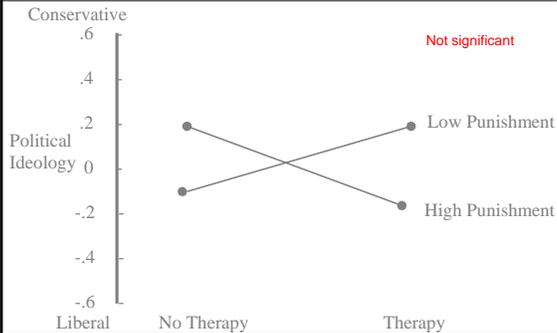
Results

- Significant two-way interactions reflected in pattern of significant three-way interaction:
- Punishment by Gender by Therapy

Punishment by Therapy Interaction (MALES)



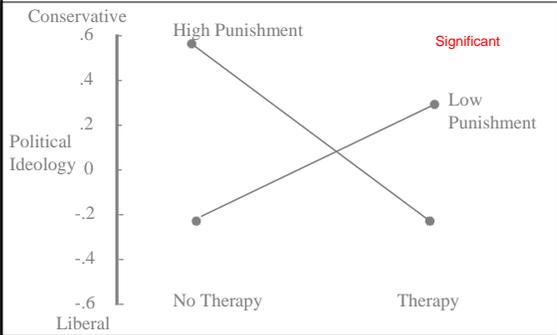
Punishment by Therapy Interaction (FEMALES)



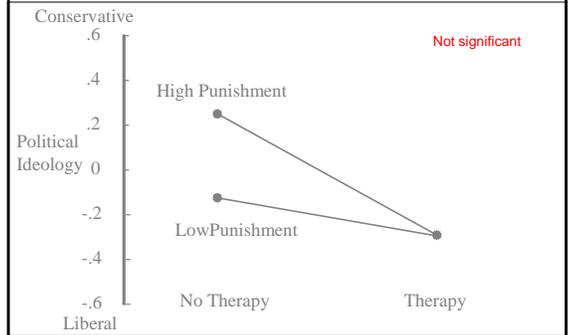
Milburn, Conrad, Sala, & Carberry (1995)

- **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

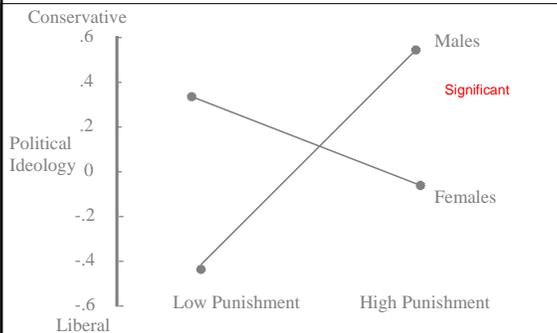
Condition by Punishment by Therapy Interaction--CONTROL



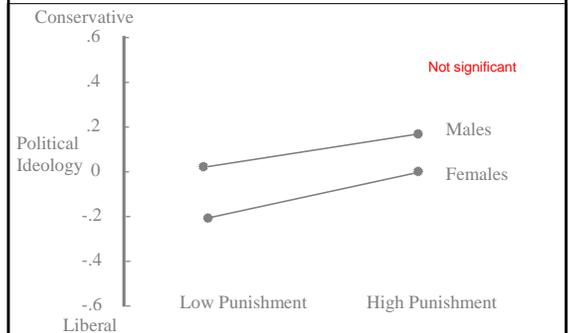
Condition by Punishment by Therapy Interaction--TREATMENT



Condition by Punishment by Gender Interaction--CONTROL



Condition by Punishment by Gender Interaction--TREATMENT



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

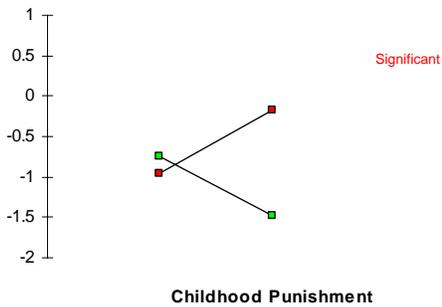
Emotion, Self-awareness, and Authoritarianism

Coefficients^a

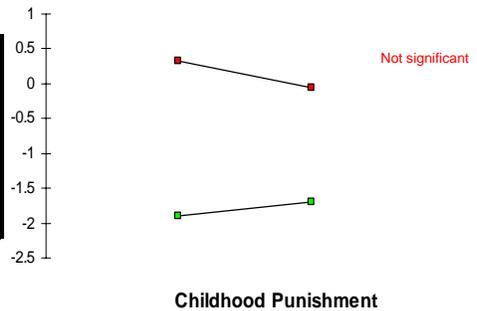
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.416	1.361		-1.775	.079
	Anger now	.676	.302	.189	2.235	.028
	Anger reactions	.546	.317	.142	1.720	.088
	Anxiety	-1.454	.686	-.198	-2.120	.036
	Introspection	-.625	.255	-.246	-2.451	.016
	Public presentation	.626	.169	.339	3.711	.000
	MC	1.942	.797	.213	2.436	.017
	Ever had therapy	-.660	.266	-.214	-2.480	.015
	Father's education	-.198	.132	-.124	-1.502	.136
	Gender	.269	.248	.092	1.083	.281

a. Dependent Variable: RWA

Punishment by Therapy (Males)



Punishment by Therapy (Females)



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