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# *Militarism, Machismo, and the Regulation of Self-Image*

**ABSTRACT:** The topic of militarism could hardly be more timely. In 2015, the world failed to meet the Millennium Development Goals while spending over 1.6 trillion dollars on war and war preparations (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2016), more than ten times what it would have cost to meet them (United Nations Development Program, 2012). Militarist fantasies consume the Republican Party (D'Agostino 2016) and President Trump proposes a massive expansion of the Department of Defense with equivalent cutbacks in the civilian agencies of government (Merica et al, 2017). Republican and Democratic politicians alike uphold a highly militarized economy and foreign policy (D'Agostino 2014). Yet the psychological sources of militarism are poorly understood, reflecting a balkanization of research in the relevant academic disciplines, including psychology itself. This paper presents a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding militarism, building on a unique survey data set (D'Agostino 1995), feminist psychoanalytic theory, research on the effects of punitive parenting, and the application of control systems theory to human psychology.

## **INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY AT AN IMPASSE**

**B**eginning with Adorno et al's pioneering 1950 study *The Authoritarian Personality*, the field of political psychology has seen a proliferation of overlapping personality and ideological constructs, including Dogmatism, Machiavellianism, Right Wing Authoritarianism, The Tompkins Polarity Scale, nPower, Tough Mindedness, Compensatory Masculinity, Warfare Personality, Social Dominance Orientation, etc. (D'Agostino, 1995; Jost et al, 2003). This has resulted in a vast accumulation of data but no coherent and agreed-upon body of theory that can guide future empirical research.

As R. G. Collingwood noted (Donagan, 1967), theory is integral to empirical research. Facts only become evidence in relation to a theory, that

is, when they are evidence *for* or *against* a theory. Theories must be compatible with known facts, but no expansion of factual knowledge, in itself, will advance the theory-building on which empirical research depends.

A coherent and compelling theory of the human mind and brain, in my view, must bring a number of disparate types of ideas and information into a unified conceptual framework. How, for example, do dispositional (or personality) factors interact with situational factors? How do human actions arise out of this interaction? Finally, if these processes occur in the human brain, how can all these factors and their interaction be conceptualized in a way that is compatible with and maps onto what is known about the brain?

While political psychologists give little attention to such questions, a great deal of work is done building statistical models by averaging the responses of many individuals. The resulting correlations among factors (say, between “right wing authoritarianism” and “social dominance orientation”) yield little or no insight into the psychological processes of individuals, much less concepts that map onto a model of the brain. (An exception to this is Amodio et al, 2007, who incorporate brain research into the study of political ideology).

I am *not* saying that such research is useless. On the contrary, statistics is an indispensable tool for identifying phenomena that are typical, and which therefore have some chance of explaining large-scale phenomena such as war and militarism. But no amount of factual information of this kind can shed light on the underlying processes in the minds and brains of individuals that give rise to these statistical patterns in the first place. Psychoanalysts and other clinicians deal with these underlying processes all the time (though without an agreed-upon theoretical framework), and through introspection, every person has direct access to them. But there remains a conceptual gulf between the world of political psychology research and this clinical and introspective knowledge.

In light of the above analysis, an adequate psychological theory must meet three criteria simultaneously: (1) it must be consistent with and account for robust statistical and other empirical findings in the diverse research traditions of personality, cognitive, and behavioral research, including those in political psychology; (2) it must be consistent with a plausible theory of how the brain works; and (3) it must be consistent with introspection and clinical experience. The only theory that meets all these criteria, to my knowledge, is Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), which applies control systems theory to human psychology and behavior (Powers 1973, 2008; Marken and Mansell 2013; McClelland, 2018, forthcoming; Yin 2013, 2016).

Important exploratory work in this area was done in the 1970s, including Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), Ragnar Granit's *The Purposive Brain* (1977), and especially William T. Powers' *Behavior: The Control of Perception* (1973). This last book was important to me as a graduate student in the 1980s in my quest for an adequate theoretical foundation for psychology. I immediately sought out Powers, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s attended a number of conferences held by his Control Systems Group. I adopted Powers' theoretical framework for my doctoral research (D'Agostino 1995). For an overview of more recent work that builds on Powers' framework, see Grawe (2007), Marken and Mansell (2013), McClelland (2018, forthcoming), Powers (2008) and Yin (2013, 2016).

### **PERCEPTUAL CONTROL THEORY: UNIFYING MOTIVATION, PERCEPTION, AND BEHAVIOR**

To appreciate the unifying power of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), it is best to begin with a most elementary example of an inanimate control system—the common thermostat—and explain its essential structure and dynamics in a way that makes its relevance to human psychology apparent.

The four essential elements of a thermostat embody, in crude form, the same essential elements found at a vastly higher level of complexity in the human mind and brain—motivation, perception, behavior, and the feedback loop linking behavioral output with perceptual input. The thermostat's "motivation" is its setting, or "reference perception" in Powers' PCT parlance. Its "perception" is the reading on its thermometer, which registers the relevant variable in the environment, that is, temperature. The thermostat's "behavior" (more precisely, its behavioral output) is the heating or air conditioning that is triggered when the room temperature (perception) deviates from the setting (reference perception).

At the core of any control system's structure and dynamics is its comparator function, which continuously compares perceptual input with a reference perception and computes the difference between the two. This difference, or error signal, drives the behavioral output function, which ultimately acts on the environment. Because of the feedback loop connecting behavioral output with perceptual input, what the system perceives is not the environment separate from the system but precisely the effects of the system's action on the environment. In the thermostat example, if the room becomes too hot with respect to the reference perception, this discrepancy activates an air conditioner, which lowers the room temperature until the thermostat's perception matches its reference perception, turning off the air conditioner.

*All* self-regulation in non-living and living systems at whatever level of complexity make use of such feedback loops. This is called a “negative feedback” system because its action is driven by a discrepancy (or error signal) and is automatically shut off when it brings perception into line with the reference perception, thus correcting the error. (Positive feedback occurs in systems that spiral out of control, such as the exponential growth of an epidemic).

So how can PCT explain human psychology and behavior? The human mind and brain can be conceived as a vast, multi-leveled, intertangled aggregate of interacting control systems. We know that the neurons of the brain are interconnected and continually interact; PCT provides a general theory of the structure and dynamics of these connections and interactions (Powers, 1973, 2008; Grawe, 2007; Yin 2013, 2016). At the lowest levels—which can be viewed as the base of a loosely organized hierarchy—are sensory-motor processes that interact with the physical environment. At the highest level, in my psychoanalytically informed version of PCT, is the self system. Figure 1, discussed below (p 183), illustrates a small section of such a control hierarchy.

Consider the example of a person typing a letter. This behavior requires a number of higher order and lower order control systems. At the lower levels, the person knows the words he or she wants to appear on the screen and moves their fingers in order to reduce the discrepancy between what they want to see (reference perceptions) and the blank space or incorrect words that they actually see (perception).

The reference perceptions of every level come from one or more higher levels, and constitute a hierarchy of purposes. For example, if the letter is written to a member of Congress, this intent provides the reference perceptions at lower levels for the words and letters that must appear on the screen. At higher levels, the person is controlling increasingly abstract perceptions. For example, he or she may be concerned about global warming and is writing to protest the repeal of environmental regulations.

If we ask why the person is protesting, we eventually get to personality considerations that reside at the level of the self, the apex of the person's control hierarchy. For example, the person may be regulating an image of herself as civically engaged. By “image of herself” in this context I do not mean the image she presents to others, but her self-image. She is disturbed by global warming, and feels that she has to do something. She experiences a discrepancy between the kind of person she imagines herself to be (reference perception) and her inaction in the face of environmental threat (perception). This error signal drives the behavioral output of political protest, which entails a chain of lower level behaviors from writing a

letter, down to generating words and moving her fingers in a certain way to produce the desired results on a computer screen.

### **MILITARISM, INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC SYSTEM**

“Militarism” on the one hand refers to an ideology held by individuals and on the other hand to the large-scale diversion of societal resources from productive uses that would meet the needs of the many into a permanent war economy and national security state that serves the perceived interests of the few. Militarism only exists in relation to states and large-scale political-economic processes, and cannot be reduced to the psychology of individuals and their psychobiographies in families and small groups.

Many pioneering thinkers in political psychology including Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm and Theodor Adorno, understood this larger social and political context of individual psychology. They combined psychoanalytic psychology with a democratic Marxist analysis of class dynamics and the larger political-economic system including the state. I take a similar approach. This raises the question of whether and how the psychology of individuals can be brought into a common conceptual framework with the structure and dynamics of large-scale political-economic systems.

In my thinking, there are three concepts that link these micro and macro levels of analysis—(1) political symbolic objects, (2) ideologies, and (3) policy preferences. As I will discuss at greater length below, individuals displace unconscious complexes onto political symbolic objects such as national groups, corporations, and the state in its violent (military and police) and nurturing (social welfare and regulatory) aspects. Some of the ideas associated with these displacements, such as “American military power is used to promote freedom in the world,” are ideologies that legitimize the large-scale control of resources by the few at the expense of the many. And finally, policy preferences, held both by political elites and the public, shape the actual allocation of resources.

In this paper, I focus primarily on the psychology of individuals, but by organizing my analysis around political symbolic objects, ideologies, and policy preferences, I am implicitly addressing some key determinants of the political-economic macrosystem.

### **PERCEPTUAL CONTROL THEORY, MACHISMO, AND MILITARISM**

In the introduction to PCT presented above, I referred to a human control hierarchy with sensory-motor processes at its base and the self at its

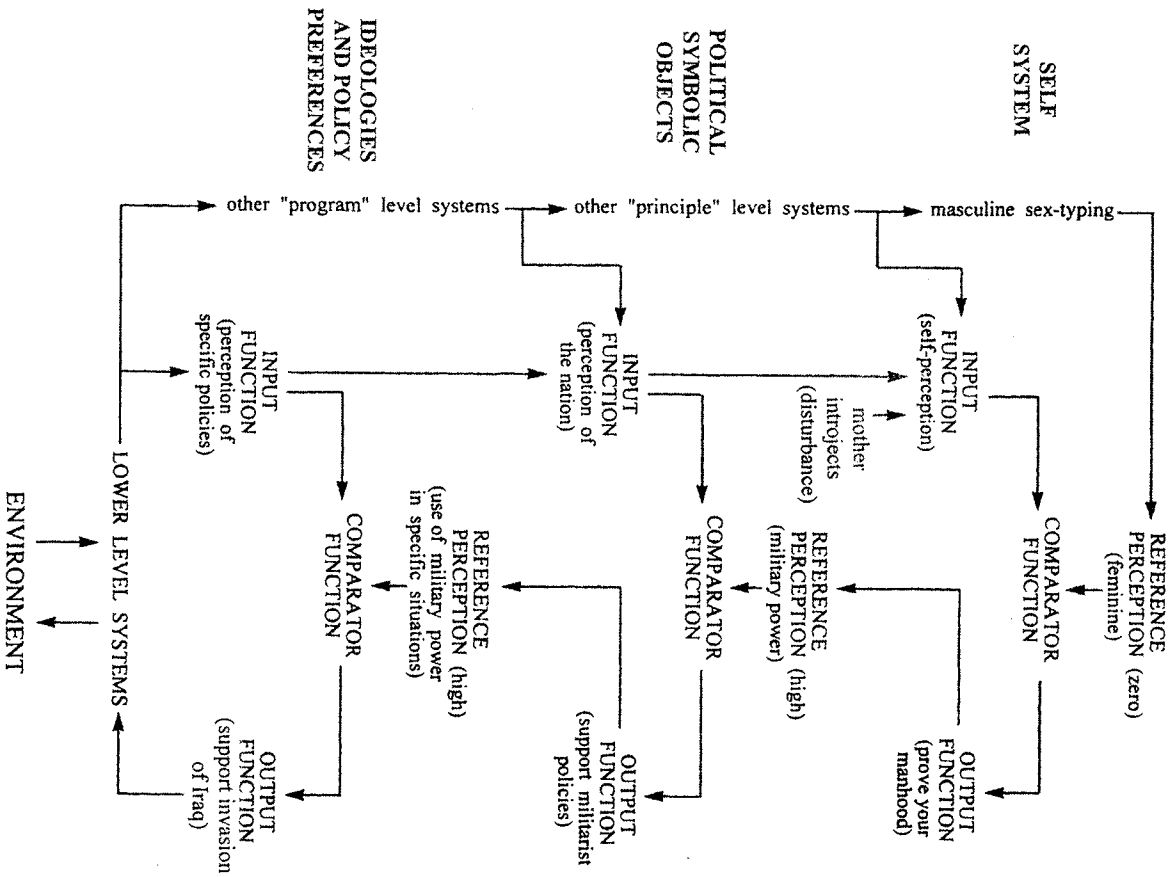
apex. More specifically, Powers (1973) proposed a model with 11 levels, each having distinctive characteristics. Neither the number of levels nor the characteristics of each level are settled science. The lowest levels are better understood than the higher levels.

Before his death in 2013, Powers built a virtual robot using his PCT model that reproduces some essential human sensory-motor capabilities, and does so with a vastly simpler internal structure than robots based on other theories (Powers 2008). While this provides one kind of evidence to confirm the lower levels of his proposed hierarchy, the higher levels are necessarily more speculative. The three highest levels proposed by Powers are the ones I appropriated in my own research. The highest level—the self—is no doubt what distinguishes humans from robots.

In the description that follows, please refer to Figure 1 (p. 183), which applies PCT to the phenomenon of machismo, probably one of a number of control systems associated with militarism. In this figure and the following discussion, I attempt to conceptualize the psychological processes that may underlie some of the data I collected in a survey of the Council on Foreign Relations and two attentive publics. This research, including an earlier version of Figure 1, was summarized in my peer-reviewed article “Self-Images of Hawks and Doves” (D’Agostino 1995).

Using statistical averages, I produced a composite personality profile of the typical male hawk. This is what Max Weber called an “ideal type,” in this case one based on a substantial amount of data. As with any ideal type, some individuals approximate this profile (to be described below) much better than others; every individual is unique. However, the data indicate that there are probably many male hawks in the general population with essentially this profile.

In the two-part survey I created and administered, one part was a militarism scale consisting of 25 statements expressing hawk and dove policy preferences and related ideological beliefs. 413 subjects were asked to evaluate each statement by indicating a score on a 9-point Likert scale from -4 (most strongly disagree) through 0 (no opinion) to +4 (most strongly agree). This produced a dove-hawk continuum, which I arbitrarily partitioned by defining a dove as anyone with a militarism score of -20 or less and a hawk as someone with a score of 20 or greater. I called people with scores between -20 and 20 “intermediates,” that is, people with a nearly equal mixture of hawk and dove beliefs and policy preferences. By this definition, about 40% of the male sample were hawks, 32% were intermediates, and 28% were doves. (Findings for the female sample will be discussed in the next section.)



[The three levels in this figure, beginning at the top, correspond to Powers' (1973) "system," "principle," and "program" levels.]

Fig. 1. A hierarchical control systems model of male militarism.

The second part of the survey involved 72 adjectives descriptive of personality, drawn mostly from a list compiled by psychologist Jack Block (1978). Subjects were asked to rank these from most characteristic of yourself to least characteristic. Of these items, eleven that strongly predicted hawk beliefs and policy preferences for males turned out to be stereotypically masculine and feminine traits; most of them also appear in the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem 1974). The correlation between militarism and machismo,  $r = .49$  ( $p < .001$ ), was quite strong by the standards of social science research.



The “masculine” traits were competitive, aggressive, ambitious, masculine, assertive, bossy, and tough, while the “feminine” traits were feminine, sympathetic, feel vulnerable and tender. Male hawks exhibited a macho profile (very high rankings on the masculine and very low rankings on the feminine traits), and male doves a relatively androgynous profile. It is not assumed that these words represent *only* gender stereotypic traits, but research by Bem (1974) and others shows that whatever else they represent, they are also multiple indicators of a single, sex stereotype factor.

What underlying psychodynamic processes could account for these data? The theory I propose, though consistent with these data, is only one of a number of possible explanations. To test my theory would require additional research on male hawks who exhibit the typical “macho” profile, using a different method called the Test for the Controlled Variable (Marken and Mansell, 2013). My theory seeks to make sense of the available survey data in terms of the top three levels of Power’s control hierarchy, which in my view is the most compelling general model of the human mind and brain available.

My survey findings indicate that most male hawks are controlling an image of themselves as emphatically “not feminine.” Out of 72 personality adjectives, they typically ranked “feminine” at the “uncharacteristic” pole of the continuum, second only to “cruel and mean.” This is by contrast with most male doves, who also exhibit sex-stereotyped self-images but who are more nearly androgynous. It is worth noting that while typical male hawks rank the word “feminine” at the “uncharacteristic” pole of their self description, they do not rank “masculine” at the “characteristic” pole. This may suggest that pre-oedipal dynamics are at the core of the militarism-machismo syndrome.

Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977) have provided a psychoanalytic conceptual framework that sheds light on these data. In societies that assign infant and baby care almost exclusively to females, such as our own, the earliest attachment figure for both boys and girls is a female. By virtue of such infant care arrangements, these societies by definition practice sex stereotyping, and the infant and baby care providers are thus typically “feminine” females. Having all internalized these feminine objects, boys and girls are then subjected to differential gender socialization. Here the developmental trajectory of the sexes diverges, with the “feminine” self-ideal taught to girls and the “masculine” ideal taught to boys.

For boys, the combination of feminine object identification and anti-feminine socialization sets up a potentially life-long experience of gender

insecurity. Such a male, to the extent that he identifies consciously or unconsciously with his mother, feels himself to be “feminine” even as his socialization tells him that he *should not* be feminine. Many males manage to escape the distress created by this “double bind” by learning to disregard their sex typed socialization and embrace an androgynous self-ideal. This kind of personality development can be facilitated by psychotherapy and is increasingly supported by subcultures that value androgyny and by the gradual movement of the dominant culture in the direction of androgyny.

For females, by contrast, there is synergy rather than conflict between gender of the internalized object and gender socialization. Sex typed females suffer not from gender insecurity but from sex-role confinement, that is, social pressure to reproduce the feminine gender identity rather than incorporate “masculine” personality elements that would result in an androgynous personality. One school of psychotherapy, Jungian analytical psychology, is committed to an explicitly androgynous ideal of wholeness for both sexes (Franz, 1964; Rowland, 2002).

As for males who remain in the above-mentioned double-bind, PCT provides new insight into their psychological condition. As shown in Fig. 1, the masculine socialization of such males creates a zero reference perception for “feminine” while identification with their mother introjects creates a self-perception of “feminine.” The behavioral output of such a man’s self system is incessant efforts to “prove your masculinity,” efforts that can never succeed permanently because nothing the man can do will change the chronic discrepancy between reference perception and perception.

This chronic gender insecurity is like a thermostat that remains frequently in an error state and is unable to shut off the air conditioner, because hot air entering the room from an open window counteracts the effects of the air conditioner. Here the hot air is the nearly constant perception of being feminine (which may be unconscious), inherited from the man’s mother identification, which creates a chronic error signal when compared with the zero reference perception for “feminine,” resulting from his gender socialization. Since the mother introjects cannot be banished from a man’s psyche, the only way to escape this double bind is to reset the reference perception to an androgynous self-ideal.

Meanwhile, what happens to the macho man’s incessant efforts to prove his masculinity? PCT tells us that the behavioral output from a higher order control system does not immediately produce sensory-motor behavior but does so through the mediation of other control systems. This analysis may shed light on the psychoanalytic phenomenon

of displacement. What, exactly, is occurring in the mind and brain of a gender insecure man when he displaces his insecurity onto a political symbolic object, such as the nation's military power?

Although Freud believed that such unconscious processes would eventually be understood in terms of underlying brain mechanisms, little progress along these lines has occurred, notwithstanding the explosion of knowledge in neuroscience in recent decades. PCT holds great potential in this area for two reasons. First, it describes the structure and dynamics of motivation, perception and behavior in ways that map onto a model of the brain. Second, it provides a conceptual bridge between the self and lower-level sensory and motor processes whose neural substrata are currently better understood. This bridge is the concept of a hierarchically organized network of control systems.

At the base of such a hierarchical network are sensory and motor processes that interact with the environment on the one hand and with higher level systems on the other. PCT researchers have modeled these sensory and motor processes with considerable rigor and in ways that are consistent with and shed light on what is known about the brain (Marken and Mansell, 2013; Powers, 1973, 2008; Yin, 2013, 2016). As illustrated in Figure 1, each control module in such a network typically sends perceptual inputs to and receives reference perceptions from higher level modules, enabling the mind and brain to conceptualize and manipulate increasingly abstract objects. At the apex of this hierarchy is the self or the personality, which depends upon inputs from the lower level systems even as it sets the reference perceptions that ultimately govern them, through conscious as well as unconscious processes.

Given the rudimentary state of control theory research on the self, political symbolic objects, and ideologies, it may seem that there is little advantage to bringing PCT concepts to bear on these topics. I would argue, however, that this is precisely what is needed to put psychoanalysis and psychohistory on the "hard science" foundation that Freud was looking for but which was not available to him in his own time. Powers (1973) broke new ground by providing tentative but rigorous descriptions of the three highest levels of the human control hierarchy, which he called the "system" (highest), "principle," and "program" levels. I presented a data-based, psychoanalytically informed theory of militarism in terms of these levels (D'Agostino 1995), and build upon that work here. The main new development of my thinking since that article is to articulate the concept of "political symbolic objects" in relation to Powers' principle level.

In the case of many of the gender insecure males who I surveyed, it is plausible that the behavioral output "prove your manhood" sets the ref-

erence perception of a control system one level down from the self, as shown in Figure 1. Specifically, it sets a high reference perception for military power in the “principle level” system that controls perception of the nation. Some such control mechanism, I argue, underlies the psychoanalytic process of displacement and explains it in a way that can advance a unified theory of the mind and brain, as well as of motivation, perception, and behavior. Here displacement is explained as a linkage between control systems at the self and principle levels, in which behavioral output from the self system becomes input (specifically, reference perceptions) for a system one level down that controls perception of a symbolic object, in this case the nation and its military power.

At the principle level, a person’s reference perception for military power is compared to their perception of the nation and its security needs, which comes from lower order control systems, for example, the ones that process information absorbed from the mass media about specific policies and current events. A hawk compares his high reference perception for military power with his perception of the nation’s security needs, and the discrepancy between the two drives behavioral outputs such as support for particular wars, increases in military spending, hawkish political candidates, etc. which set the reference perceptions for the control systems that perceive such objects at the program level, the one immediately below the principle level.

While this PCT description is admittedly cumbersome, it provides a way of understanding how motivation and perception interact and drive behavioral output, on multiple levels from the self to elementary sensory and motor processes—a breadth of understanding not available from any other theory, to my knowledge.

### **AUTHORITARIANISM, CHILDHOOD PUNISHMENT, AND POLITICAL CONSERVATISM**

The above discussion of machismo pertains to the male sample (n=328) in my 1995 study. I also drew a sample of 85 females from the same populations—the Council on Foreign Relations, readers of *National Review*, and participants in The Socialist Scholars Conference. Out of the 72 personality adjectives in my survey, only one gender stereotypic trait, “sympathetic,” predicted (negatively) hawk policy preferences for females. However, other personality items, especially those associated with authoritarianism, were strongly associated with hawk policy preferences for both females and males.

In *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno et al (1950) concluded from survey and interview data that authoritarianism results from punitive

parenting. More recent research by Milburn and others (Milburn et al 1995; Milburn and Conrad 2016) found that males who experienced punitive discipline as children were more likely to be politically conservative than those who experienced humane discipline, except for punitively disciplined males who had been in psychotherapy. The authors did not find these correlations for females, suggesting perhaps that it is socially acceptable for males but not for females to direct repressed rage at scapegoats, a core feature of conservative political behavior. In my 1995 data, however, authoritarian females were nearly as likely to be hawks as authoritarian males.

This difference between my findings and Milburn et al's may stem from the specificity of militarist ideology, which is only one component of the political conservatism they studied. To the extent that punitive parenting is based on the use or threat of force, it would be expected that unconscious complexes created by it are likely to be displaced onto political symbolic objects such as military power, which involve the use of force. My data suggest that this occurs irrespective of a person's sex, an effect that may not have been significant in Milburn et al's research because their dependent variable was political conservatism, a more general construct than militarism. However, further research is needed for an adequate understanding of the relationships between punitive child rearing, authoritarianism and political ideologies.

In "Psychology of the Radical Right," the appendix to my book *The Middle Class Fights Back* (D'Agostino 2012), I discussed the possible origins of political conservatism in punitive parenting and the central role of political symbolic objects. I wrote:

A person raised in a punitive manner—the defining characteristic of the "strict father" psychoclass—carries around within them a traumatized child seething with rage and resentment. When identifying with this inner child, he or she experiences the father as a tyrant that must be eliminated or broken free from—the psychological template of conservative attitudes toward government. This same person also has an internalized image of the father they experienced as a small child—awesome and all powerful, always right, free to do whatever he wants, and getting what he wants by threatening to use force or actually using it. Identifying with this inner father may be the psychological basis for sacralizing both military power and the freedom of big corporations to do what they want—"the free market." In this parent-identified state of mind, the typical feeling is not rage and resentment but contempt for anyone who is weak or dependent.

The inner emotional life of a right-wing authoritarian thus oscillates between the two poles of enraged child and punitive parent. When identi-

fyng with the traumatized inner child, the person perceives “government” as an out-of-control tyrant that robs them, renders them powerless, and takes away their freedom. Since this painful material is repressed and unconscious, however, it is not associated with the parental punishment—physical or emotional—that gave rise to it. The material is not displaced onto the violent arm of government—the national security state—but onto the nurturing arm—the so-called nanny state. This displacement may account for the fury with which right-wing authoritarians attack liberal politicians and the leaders of teachers’ and other public service unions, who are perceived as protecting the bad government officials and teachers.

At other times, when identifying with the inner father, this same person idealizes the national security state and big corporations, which must not be restricted in any way. Escaping from the pain, humiliation, and powerlessness of the child, the person now becomes all-powerful and free. Any limits on military power or free markets—say international law or environmental regulations—are perceived as a threat to this inner power and freedom. Spending constraints that apply to every other government program, even Medicare, cannot be applied to military spending. For the right-wing authoritarian, military power must be amassed without limit.

While in this father-identified mode, the person feels contempt for the weak, the same contempt the person’s father felt for him or her in childhood. This contempt is displaced onto the weak and vulnerable in society—children and those dependent on public services—and onto those who care for them and provide these services, such as public school teachers. This is entirely compatible with idealization of the unusually tough teacher or government official—like the authoritarian math teacher in the movie *Stand and Deliver* or the all-powerful leader needed to remake public education envisioned in *Waiting for Superman*. (D’Agostino 2012, pp. 172-173)

As with the displacement of gender insecurity discussed in the previous section, this identification of parental introjects with the state in its violent and nurturing aspects can be understood in PCT terms, though that is a topic for another article.

## SUMMARY

In this paper, I have aimed to bring disparate ideas and information into a coherent conceptual framework drawn from Perceptual Control Theory (PCT). Motivation, perceptual input, and behavioral output have been shown to be interacting elements in the process of self-regulation. It is plausible that self-regulating systems are the basic structural units of the brain, and link a person’s sensory-motor systems—through perhaps a total of 11 levels of self-regulation—to the personality and associated regulation of self-image at the apex of the human control hierarchy

(D'Agostino, 1995; Grawe 2007; Marken and Mansell, 2013; McClelland, 2018, forthcoming; Powers 1973, 2008; Yin 2013, 2016).

I have discussed the etiology of male gender insecurity and the double bind created for sex typed men by having both feminine object identification and gender socialization that negates the feminine. This internal conflict is viewed as a control system in a chronic error state producing a behavioral disposition to "prove his masculinity." The displacement of this gender insecurity onto the nation as a political symbolic object may be understood as the linkage of the self-image control system with another system one level down that regulates perception of the nation. This system, in turn, is linked to lower order systems that regulate ideologies and policy preferences. Other psychodynamics of militarism for both sexes may result from punitive child rearing, including identification of a person's abusive parental introjects with the military arm of the state, where the latter functions as a symbolic political object.

This PCT model aims to explain the psychology and behavior of individuals, which, in turn, shape the political macrocosm through the intermediaries of symbolic political objects, ideologies, and policy preferences. People for whom military power is a symbolic political object hold ideologies that legitimize the control of resources by the military-industrial complex and hold policy preferences that actually bring about that allocation of resources. Given this dependence of the macrocosm on the psychology of individuals, the reform of gender arrangements and childrearing practices (Kind 2014) can eventually undermine the legitimacy of a political-economic system based on war and predation.

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