

Militarism and the Authoritarian Personality

Displacement, Identification, and Perceptual Control

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Abstract

This article builds on a unique data set in which self-perception and militarist ideology were operationalized using separate instruments in the same survey. An empirical foundation is presented using this research's findings on White male gender insecurity, authoritarianism, and militarism as well as findings from other survey research on the effects of punitive parenting on adult psychology. These data are interpreted in light of the psychoanalytic concepts of displacement and "identification with the aggressor." Then, pursuant to Freud's project of a brain-based science of the unconscious, the foregoing are discussed in the language of Perceptual Control Theory, which describes the general structure and dynamics of motivation, perception, and behavior, which interfaces with cognitive neuroscience. The article concludes with implications for clinical practice and social transformation.

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Militarism and the Authoritarian Personality: Displacement, Identification, and Perceptual Control

Introduction

The topic of militarism could hardly be more timely and urgent. In 2015, the international community failed to meet the Millennium Development Goals, a 15 year plan for ending extreme global poverty. Yet, in that one year alone, the world spent 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, 2010). The grotesque and tragic human suffering caused by wars in Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere is well known from television news. Militarist fantasies consume the Republican Party (D'Agostino, 2016), while corporate and political elites of both parties maintain a permanent war economy and national security state that bears no relationship to external military threats, even as millions of Americans go without adequate health care and other basic services (D'Agostino & Rynn, in press).

Notwithstanding the staggering human suffering resulting directly from wars and indirectly from the massive misuse of public revenues associated with militarism, there is much confusion in the social science literature about the psychological sources of militarism. This confusion is due to a balkanization of research in the relevant academic disciplines, including psychology itself, and the absence of an adequate scientific paradigm for integrating disparate findings and directing new research. This paper aims to help rectify that deficit.

I begin with a summary of pioneering psychology of militarism findings on White male gender insecurity, the authoritarian personality, and the effects of punitive parenting on adult psychology. I then explain militarist ideology by reinterpreting key empirical findings and the psychoanalytic concepts of displacement and "identification with the aggressor" in light of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), a more general body of knowledge that interfaces with cognitive neuroscience. I conclude with implications for clinical practice and social transformation.

Psychology of Militarism: Empirical Foundations

Like all ideologies, militarism bridges the microcosm of psychobiography, belief systems, and political behavior on the one hand and the macrocosm of history, political economy, and public affairs on the other (D'Agostino, 2019). Militarist ideologies reside only in the minds and brains of individual policy makers and citizens but would not exist except for a world organized around permanent war economies, national security states, and the frequent threat or use of force as an instrument of statecraft. Ideology legitimizes such arrangements and uses of resources, whether or not individuals are aware that their beliefs are functioning like this in the macrocosm of political economy (Skinner, 2002). Many pioneering thinkers in psychoanalysis including Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm, and Theodor Adorno understood this dialectical relationship between individual psychology and large scale political-economic systems. I take a similar approach, but in this paper focus on the microcosm of ideology and its roots in the self.

Consider an American who thinks of his or her country's military power as a benign force that upholds democracy and international security. Someone who holds such beliefs will most likely support high levels of military spending and the frequent threat or use of force, say, in Vietnam, Latin America, Iraq, and elsewhere (D'Agostino, 1995). Survey research and psychoanalysis can shed light on the inner workings of personality and psychodynamics that explain why some people ("hawks") think and feel like this person, while others ("doves") believe instead that military power is at best a necessary evil that should be kept at much lower levels except in unusual circumstances. If people who hold hawk and dove ideologies and policy preferences exhibit individual differences in personality, exactly what are these differences and what accounts for their expression as ideology?

Two empirical articles that appeared in *Political Psychology* in 1995 provide answers. The first involved a two-part survey—a "Q-sort" and a questionnaire—that operationalized separate measures of self-image and ideology (D'Agostino, 1995). The Q-sort instrument for this survey is given in Figure 2.

sorting 72 personality adjectives or phrases along a continuum from “most characteristic of you” to “least characteristic of you.” The separate ideology questionnaire consisted of 25 “hawk” and “dove” statements that respondents evaluated on a 9-point scale from “disagree very strongly” to “agree very strongly.” The resulting data set made it possible to use statistical methods to find the self system correlates of militarism. The main findings were that machismo and authoritarian personality strongly predicted hawk ideology for males ($n = 328$, $R\text{-square} = .44$, $p < .001$) and authoritarianism weakly predicted hawk ideology for females ($n = 85$; three scale items with bivariate $R\text{-squares}$ of $.15$, $p < .001$; $.14$, $p < .001$; and $.09$, $p < .01$).

These findings were based on a 1990 survey of the Council on Foreign Relations, whose members are influential policy elites from government, the corporate world, and academia, as well as two “attentive publics”—readers of the conservative magazine *National Review* and participants in City University of New York’s Socialist Scholar’s Conference (now called “Left Forum”). It is significant that this select sample of policy elites and sophisticated opinion leaders included many authoritarians, since this personality syndrome is commonly associated with mass psychology.¹

The second article probed the nexus between punitive parenting and right-wing authoritarian ideology with a sample of 158 American college students (Milburn et al., 1995). It was found that adult males who reported receiving punitive discipline as children were more likely than other males to support war and other government policies involving the use of force, such as the death penalty. The authors theorized that repressed rage from childhood punishment was being displaced onto

¹ Perhaps the main reason for this preconception is that the classic F-scale (Adorno et al., 1950) and the widely used Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale (Altemeyer, 2006) were designed for the mass public and express ideological beliefs and attitudes in the unsophisticated form commonly held by less educated, lower class authoritarians. In my research, however, I presented a group of elites with a sophisticated ideological questionnaire (assessing militarism only) and a separate personality self-assessment. Using this unique methodology, I found a variation in militarism and authoritarianism among elites similar to what had previously been found in the mass public.

scapegoats targeted for punitive government policies, such as foreign enemies and domestic criminals. This correlation was not observed for punitively parented females, which the authors suggest may result from females in patriarchal cultures being socialized to turn repressed anger on themselves rather than displace it externally onto scapegoats. It was also found that punitively parented males who participated in psychotherapy showed less support for punitive public policies than those who did not have therapy, which would be expected if conscious processing of rage in therapy reduces the need for displacement and scapegoating.²

Milburn and colleagues' 1995 findings have been replicated and extended by many subsequent studies, summarized in *Raised to Rage: The Politics of Anger and the Roots of Authoritarianism* (Milburn and Conrad, 2016). Most recently, in a May 2018 online survey, O'Keefe (2018a) replicated Milburn and Conrad's Affect Displacement Theory using the Child Adversity Scale (CAT), Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), and the Negative Attitude Towards Immigrants Scale (NATIS). He found that for White males ($n = 107$) childhood punishment, as measured by CAT, moderated by participation in psychotherapy, predicts authoritarianism ($R\text{-square} = .36, p < .001$) and both these variables strongly predict negative attitudes toward immigrants ($R\text{-square} = .73, p < .001$).³ These findings, and related studies by O'Keefe (2018b, 2019), help make sense of the anti-immigrant group fantasy that is so salient in the age of Donald Trump, where a host of unsubstantiated stereotypes of immigrants are proclaimed as "facts."

² In this summary, I have highlighted the most important of Milburn et al.'s findings for the psychology of militarism; the authors originally reported their results and accompanying statistical tests in the context of data analyses involving many indicators and various interactions among variables.

³ In O'Keefe's model, CAT predicts RWA ($b = 1.23, se = .14, p < .001$) and therapy predicts RWA ($b = -7.95, se = 2.59, p < .01$); the interaction between CAT and therapy was not significant. The Index of moderated mediation ($b = .02, se = .047, boot\ ci = -.078, .112$) was significant, supporting the assertions that the effect of CAT on NATIS is partially explained by RWA and that the mediating effect of RWA on CAT is conditional on the amount of psychotherapy experienced by participants.

Scapegoating and Identification with the Aggressor

These statistical findings are consistent with the causal nexus between punitive parenting and authoritarianism theorized by many psychohistorians, including Alice Miller (1983/2002) and Philip Greven (1990). In the psychodynamics of such childhood trauma, it would appear that two forms of displacement operate in tandem—scapegoating (Adorno et al., 1950; Milburn and Conrad, 2016) and the displacement of feelings of power involving “identification with the aggressor” (Freud, 1936/1993), to be explained below. While the details of these psychodynamics vary with individual cases, the statistical patterns found in the psychology of militarism research merit a discussion of what Max Weber called an “ideal type,” a kind of common denominator that all such cases share. In this paper, I will limit myself to the ideal type of the White male hawk personality, based on data from the above-mentioned studies.

Although I found a weak correlation between authoritarianism and militarism for females (D’Agostino, 1995), as indicated above, my sub-sample of female hawks was small.⁴ Moreover, this correlation was not replicated by Milburn et al., who theorize that authoritarian females are typically socialized to internalize rage resulting from childhood punishment, rather than displace it onto political scapegoats. For males, I also found machismo to be a significant predictor of militarism, but in this paper, I will only address this construct to a limited extent because I examined machismo and militarism in a previous article (D’Agostino, 2018a). The main focus of the current paper will be White male authoritarianism and the mechanisms through which its personality dynamics account for militarist ideology and policy preferences.

Let us turn, then, to the psychodynamics of scapegoating and identification with the aggressor using an ideal type assembled from the statistical evidence summarized above and depicted in Figure 2. Both defense mechanisms appear to serve the same function—to provide re-

⁴ The exact number depends on the militarism score chosen as a cutoff to define “hawk,” but by any reasonable definition, there were fewer than 30 female hawks in my sub-sample.

lief from the painful traumatic memories of the original childhood punishment (typically involving, but not limited to, corporal punishment). Milburn et al.'s research has documented that punitively parented White males who do not process their rage consciously in psychotherapy tend to displace it onto political scapegoats. Reasoning backwards from this finding, psychoanalysts can plausibly infer that the source of this rage was the childhood punishment itself, which lives on in the unconscious of adults as repressed traumatic memories. According to this view, the displacement of the rage from these memories onto political scapegoats would be one of the mechanisms that maintains the repression, thereby keeping the painful memories out of consciousness.

A second defense mechanism appears to be "identification with the aggressor," as described by Anna Freud (Freud, 1936/1993). Here the adult male re-experiences feelings of power that he first associated with his punitive parent, but which have been introjected and are now experienced as his own feelings. Identifying with these feelings of power is a way of keeping the frightened, powerless, and humiliated inner child out of consciousness. Thus, the adult survivor selectively accesses the parental introject portion of the traumatic memories and dissociates the portion carrying the intense pain, anger, and distress he experienced as a child.

As with the repressed rage, feelings of inner power resulting from "identification with the aggressor" are also displaced onto political symbolic objects. Since the repressed rage originally belonged to the punished child, it is displaced onto weaker people or vulnerable outgroups who serve as suitable symbolic surrogates for the child. Since the introjected feelings of power originally belonged to the almighty parent, they are displaced onto symbolic objects whose power makes them suitable surrogates, such as political leaders, big corporations, and the military aspect of the state. Because the focus of this paper is militarism, I will limit myself to the displacement of these feelings onto the state in its war-making capacity.

An adequate discussion of how these adult defense mechanisms first came into existence in childhood is beyond the scope of this paper, but a few words about this are in order. Sándor Ferenczi (1933; Frankel, 2002)

viewed "identification with the aggressor" as a protective strategy by which a child facing the immediate threat of parental abuse seeks to appease the parent by abandoning his or her own subjectivity and merging with the subjectivity of the parent. Although Ferenczi's focus in his paper was the sexual abuse of children by adults, he described a more general protective strategy that any person threatened by a more powerful attacker may adopt, as Frankel (2002) notes. In this article, I will apply his concept of identification with the aggressor to the case of corporal and other punishment of children.

Ferenczi's analysis explains two key features of the adult self system of the survivors of childhood punishment. First, it explains why rage, which may be an instinctive response to abuse, came to be repressed and displaced in the first place. The answer is that directing the rage at the parent responsible for the abuse would have likely jeopardized the child's safety even more. Second, it explains the child's introjection of the parents' feelings as another aspect of the same protective mechanism, though here Ferenczi looks at the introjection from the opposite perspective from Anna Freud. By imaginatively placing himself into the abusive parent's state of mind, Ferenczi notes, the child learns exactly the submissive role that is expected of him to best manage and minimize the danger posed by the parent.

In this early and incomplete stage of the introjection, the boy takes the parent's feelings of power into himself, but only to learn the submissive role expected of him, which serves him well in the immediate situation of abuse. It is only afterwards, sometimes long after the abuse has passed, that the child and later the adult adopts the aggressive "identification with the aggressor" posture described by Anna Freud. In this final and complete form of the introjection, the survivor of abuse experiences the internalized parent's power as his own. Here the introjection is no longer a protective strategy in the actual situation of abuse, but a defense mechanism against painful traumatic memories of the abuse.

Gender of Punitive Parent, Race, and Authoritarianism

In discussing punishment of children, I have been referring to a gender-neutral "parent," because the person administering the punishment can be the mother, father, and/or a guardian of either sex. One random sample study of

two parent families in the United States ($n = 1298$) found, contrary to the widespread belief about fathers being the primary disciplinarians, that both mothers and fathers spanked children between the ages of one and five, and that mothers spanked more frequently, probably because they spent much more time with the children (Lee, Altschul, and Gershoff, 2015). Reviewing the literature, the authors note that most American parents practice at least some corporal punishment of children. Their data modeling shows that for all racial and ethnic groups, only spanking by mothers is predictive of subsequent child aggression. This statistical generalization is not to endorse corporal punishment by fathers, whose role in the etiology of Hitler's psychopathology, for example, was explored by Alice Miller (1983/2002). Rather it may indicate that corporal punishment in childhood by the primary attachment figure is especially traumatic.

In a chapter entitled "Denial, Racism, and Slavery in America," Milburn and Conrad (2016) discuss the special case of African American families. Here the intergenerational trauma of punitive parenting interacts in complex ways with the intergenerational trauma of slavery, an institution that was itself maintained by brutal corporal punishment. This topic is well beyond the scope of this paper, as are issues around punitive parenting that arise in other cultures, such as the role of "tiger moms" in Asian-American and Asian families, as described in several psychobiographies.

Suffice it to say that whether punitive discipline is administered by the mother and/or the father, it is the threat to the child's safety and not the threatening agent's identity that elicits "identification with the aggressor" as a protective strategy. This is not to say that childhood punishment as such necessarily results in right wing authoritarianism. As discussed previously, most punitively parented women appear to be socialized to turn their anger on themselves, or at least displace it through forms other than political scapegoating. Similarly, punitively parented African American males apparently turn their rage on themselves and one another rather than on scapegoats who are "other" than themselves.⁵

⁵ Taylor (2011) explains the self-destructive focus of African American rage using a Kleinian framework and psychohistorical analysis, but does not deal with the sources of

Psychoanalysis, the Brain, and Perceptual Control Theory

So far, I have built up a picture of authoritarian White male psychodynamics and ideology using the findings of survey research and the psychoanalytic concepts of displacement and identification with the aggressor. While this picture is valid as far as it goes, we live in a time of great advances in neuroscience and one might legitimately ask whether and how the evidence and concepts presented here relate to what is known about the human brain.

In this regard, it is worth recalling Freud's vision of an integrated science of the unconscious and the human brain (Seitler, 2017). Unfortunately, while psychoanalysis and neuroscience have both come a long way in the last hundred years, the consulting room and the laboratory have remained essentially parallel universes. To be sure, brave souls such as Eric Kandel have made forays into the no-man's land between these domains, but the two remain separated by a conceptual chasm. On one side of this chasm, many theorists and clinicians define psychoanalysis as a kind of post-modern art (Seitler, 2017), while on the other side psychopharmacology dominates psychiatric research and practice, as if it is possible to treat the brain without treating the whole person (Whitaker, 2011). Does this mean that Freud's original vision for a brain-based psychoanalysis is dead? No, I would argue; but to bridge the chasm between psychoanalysis and neuroscience will require a fundamentally new way of thinking.

Fortunately, the foundations of just such a revolutionary paradigm have already been laid under the rubrics of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) and one of its offshoots, Neuropsychotherapy. PCT has its origins in William T. Powers 1973 classic, *Behavior: The Control of Perception*, and has spawned some promising programs of research (Bell, 2014; D'Agostino, 1995, 2018; Mansell, 2005; Marken and Mansell, 2013; McClelland, 2014; McClelland and Fararo, 2006; Powers, 2008; Yin, 2013, 2016; see also Warren Mansell's PCT website at www.pctweb.org). Klaus Grawe, also building on PCT, provided deep conceptual founda-

rage in parental punishment.

tions for an integration of psychotherapy and neuroscience in his pioneering book *Neuropsychotherapy: How the Neurosciences Inform Effective Psychotherapy*, first published in German in 2004 (see also *The Neuropsychotherapist* at www.neuropsychotherapist.com/).

Perceptual Control Theory holds great potential for advancing Freud's project of explaining unconscious processes in terms of underlying brain mechanisms, which has otherwise made very little progress, notwithstanding the explosion of knowledge in neuroscience in recent decades. First, PCT describes the structure and dynamics of motivation, perception, and behavior⁶ 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 self-regulating (negative feedback) systems, explained below.

In the penultimate section of this article, I will use Perceptual Control Theory to shed light on displacement and identification with the aggressor as these mechanisms operate in the psychology of militarism. First, however, some introductory comments are in order for readers unfamiliar with this body of research.

PCT: A Unified Theory of Motivation, Perception, and Behavior

To appreciate the unifying power of Perceptual Control Theory, 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 components of a thermostat embody, in crude form, the same 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 "motiva-

⁶ In this paper, I use the word "behavior" in the conventional sense of observable actions. In the PCT literature, the term is generally used in the more precise sense of actions that keep certain perceptions of the organism constant in a changing environment.

tion” 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 perception (the room temperature) deviates from reference perception (the setting).

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, 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/brain can be conceived as a vast, multi-leveled, inter-tangled aggregate of interacting control systems. We know that the neurons of the brain are connected 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, illustrates a

small section of such a control hierarchy; this figure is taken from my article (D'Agostino, 2018⁷).

To get an intuitive grasp of PCT's concept of the human control hierarchy, consider the example of a woman walking to a public event. This behavior requires a number of higher order and lower order control systems. At the lower levels, the woman knows her destination and has a mental map of how she is going to get there. The steps she takes (behavior) reduce the discrepancy between the mental image of where she is currently (perception) and her destination (reference perception). At still lower levels in the control hierarchy, this involves such actions as avoiding obstacles on the sidewalk, maintaining her balance, shifting her weight from one leg to the other, and moving specific sets of muscles in specific ways at each moment in order to accomplish each of these higher order goals.

As seen in Figure 1, the reference perceptions of every level (except the top level) come from the one above it, and constitute a hierarchy of purposes.⁷ For example, if the woman is going to an anti-war rally, her purpose may be to demonstrate opposition to a public policy that she regards as unjust and immoral. If we ask why she views the policy this way, we are led one level up to the control of her perception of her nation. If we ask why it matters to her what her government is doing, we get to personality considerations at the level of the self, the apex of the woman's control hierarchy. For example, she may be regulating an image of herself as a responsible citizen. By "image of herself" in this context, I do not mean the image she presents to others, but her private self-image. As a citizen, she is disturbed by a war being conducted in her name and feels that she has to do something. She experiences a discrepancy between the kind of person she imagines herself to be and her inaction in the face of this unjust and immoral conduct of her government. This error signal drives the behavioral output of political protest, which entails a chain of lower level behaviors from going to a rally, to navigating

⁷ Unlike the fixed reference perception of the person's destination, all the lower level reference perceptions will continually change. These continual changes keep the destination constant by compensating for the continual changes in the person's current location and other variables.

along a sidewalk, to moving her muscles in a certain way to produce the desired outcomes at multiple levels.

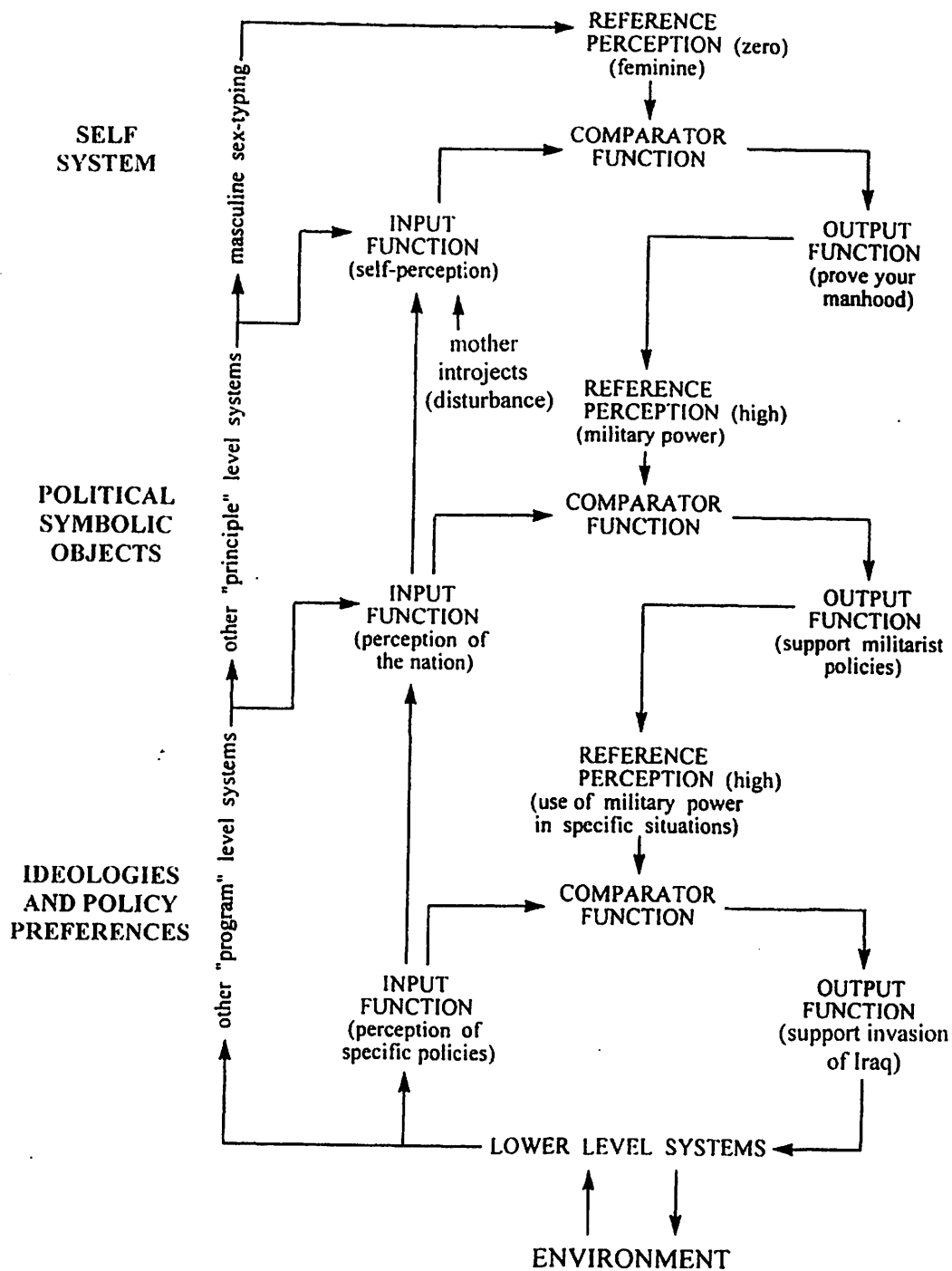


Fig. 1 PCT Model of White Male Machismo and Militarism

From D'Agostino (2018), p. 183

Displacement and Identification as Perceptual Control

How, then, can PCT advance our understanding of the psychodynamics of authoritarianism and militarism? I begin by noting that “the self” in a broad sense is identical with a person’s entire hierarchy of control systems. Strictly speaking, however, I use this term to designate the control network’s apex, which is where characteristic images of oneself as a unique person presumably reside. Similarly, by “self system” I mean the specific set of negative feedback systems, with their reference perceptions (e.g. ego ideals), perceptual inputs (self-images), and behavioral outputs (e.g. strivings to actualize ego ideals). The first insight of PCT is that some aspects of self-image are more actively controlled than others. When individuals are confronted with a list of personality traits and asked to describe him or herself using a Q-sort, the items they place in the tails of the distribution indicate the most actively controlled self-variables, which are the pivots around which their personality dynamics revolve. Of these, some variables may be relevant to the phenomenon under investigation—in this case militarism—and others not.

Figure 2 presents the Q-sort instrument used in my 1990 survey, filled in with a composite profile of the typical White male hawk, based on data from members of the Council on Foreign Relations and readers of *National Review*. This research was confirmatory in predicting a correlation between self-image and ideology, but exploratory as to which trait items, exactly, would predict hawk ideology and policy preferences. For this purpose, I used a diverse list of personality traits drawn mostly from a self-assessment version of Jack Block’s theoretically eclectic California Q-set (Block, 1978). This was not a confirmatory test of whether machismo and authoritarianism would predict militarist ideology. Rather, after the data ^{were} ~~was~~ collected, bivariate correlations were run between the militarism scores—the response variable, measured with the hawk-dove questionnaire—and rankings of each of the 72 personality trait items. Only then did it become apparent that the statistically significant predictors could be sorted roughly into two theoretically meaningful personality constructs.

Use the following list of adjectives to describe yourself as honestly as possible. Record the numbers of the adjectives in the bell-shaped set of columns below.

First, check off the *two* adjectives that are *most characteristic* of you, record them in column 14, and cross them off the list. Of the remaining adjectives, check off the next two that are most characteristic, record them in column 13, and cross them off. Follow this procedure until column 8 has been completed. Note that the columns closer to the middle contain an increasing number of items, as indicated above the columns.

When you finish column 8, record the items that are *least characteristic* of you, beginning with column 1 and working toward the middle.

You must remember to cross off each item after you record it in order to avoid recording the same item more than once.

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. absent-minded | 19. dull | 37. persevering | 55. strict |
| 2. affected | 20. easily embarrassed | 38. personally charming | 56. stubborn |
| 3. aggressive | 21. energetic | 39. feel powerless | 57. submissive |
| 4. ambitious | 22. envious | 40. reasonable | 58. sympathetic |
| 5. assertive | 23. erotic | 41. rebellious | 59. tender |
| 6. bossy | 24. extroverted | 42. resentful | 60. timid |
| 7. calm | 25. feminine | 43. reserved, dignified | 61. touchy, irritable |
| 8. cautious | 26. frank | 44. restless | 62. tough |
| 9. competitive | 27. grandiose | 45. sarcastic | 63. unconventional |
| 10. confident | 28. guileful | 46. selfish | 64. undecided, confused |
| 11. considerate | 29. hostile | 47. self-controlled | 65. unhappy |
| 12. contemptuous | 30. idealistic | 48. self-indulgent | 66. uninterested, indifferent |
| 13. cruel, mean | 31. imaginative | 49. self-pitying | 67. feel unworthy, inadequate |
| 14. cynical | 32. impulsive | 50. sense of humor | 68. versatile |
| 15. defensive | 33. intelligent | 51. sentimental | 69. feel vulnerable |
| 16. dependent | 34. introspective | 52. shrewd, clever | 70. warm |
| 17. disorderly | 35. jealous | 53. sincere | 71. withdrawn |
| 18. dissatisfied | 36. masculine | 54. sophisticated | 72. worried and anxious |

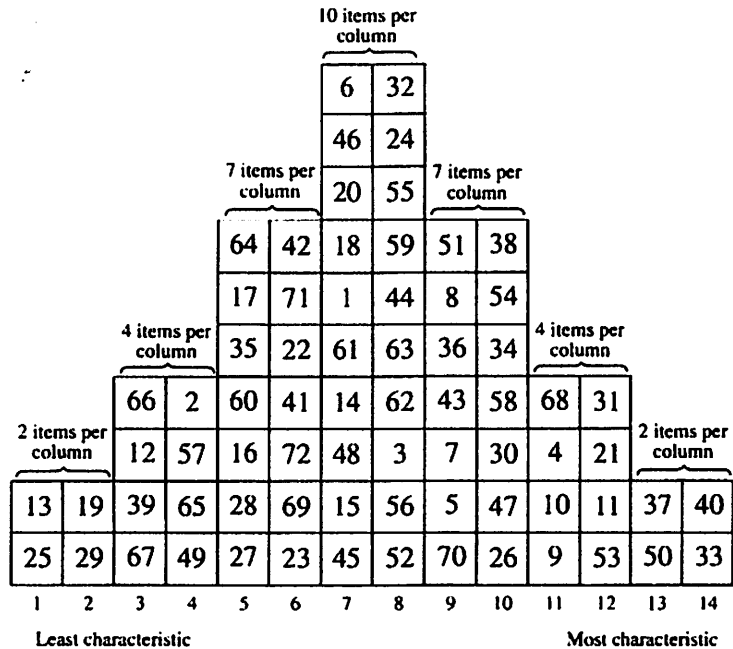


Fig. 2 Q-sort Instrument Showing White Male Hawk Personality Profile from D'Agostino (1995), p. 270

Eleven of these traits, which turned out to be identical or similar to items in the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), were classified as negative and positive measures of machismo. Five appeared to tap the authoritarian personality—"strict" and "dignified" (positive measures), and "rebellious," "unconventional," and "erotic" (negative measures). Traits that were significant predictors of militarism for White males were accounted for almost entirely by these two constructs,⁸ and all the predictors explained nearly half the variance in hawk-dove beliefs and policy preferences ($n = 328$, $R\text{-square} = .44$, $p < .001$), an unusually strong effect size for social science research (D'Agostino, 1995).

From a PCT perspective, the most striking finding about the profile in Figure 2 is that machismo appears to be a controlled variable, while authoritarianism does not. Specifically, White male hawks appear to be controlling an image of themselves as "not feminine," since they tend to rank the word "feminine" in the most extreme possible negative position, second only to "cruel, mean." Interestingly, while they rank the word "masculine" in the positive half of the distribution, they rank it closer to the center, not near the positive pole. Here PCT, in conjunction with Q-sort methodology, yields a psychoanalytically interesting result—the typical White male hawk in this study appears to be negating his mother introjects rather than actively emulating his father as a positive gender model.

Some classic feminist psychoanalytic literature (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977), in conjunction with PCT, sheds light on these non-Oedipal dynamics. As shown in Figure 1, machismo can be understood as an "error signal" in a control system whose reference perception is set by masculine sex role socialization but which receives perceptual input for gendered self traits from mother introjects, which constitute a deeper stra-

⁸ The only other significant predictors were "cautious" and "reserved," which can be interpreted as positive measures of Machiavellianism and "idealistic," a negative measure of that construct (Christie and Geis, 1970). Actually, in the trait list used for the survey, based on the California Q-set (Block, 1978), "reserved" and "dignified" were combined into a single item, which unfortunately conflates elements of the Machiavellian and authoritarian constructs.

tum of the self than a boy's later identification with his father (D'Agostino, 1995, 2018a). We are now in a position to answer an important question—what, exactly, is going on in the mind and brain of a man when he displaces his gender insecurity onto political symbolic objects, in this case the nation and its military power? This displacement is essentially a linkage between control systems such that the “prove your manhood” error signal at the self level sets a high reference perception for military power one level down in the system that perceives the nation, as shown in Figure 1. This PCT way of thinking explains the psychoanalytic process of displacement using a conceptualization that can also explain how systems of neurons interact, a model of the brain first articulated by Powers (1973) and currently showing promise in neuroscience research (Yin, 2013, 2016).

This brings us to the second half of the above-mentioned finding, that the authoritarian personality items do not turn up as controlled variables in the Q-sort in Figure 2. This is a striking fact considering that in a statistical sense, these items are strong predictors of militarist ideology for White males. This paradox merits discussion. In light of Milburn's findings about the role of punitive parenting in the etiology of authoritarianism, a clue to this puzzle becomes immediately apparent from the personality profile in Figure 2—the personality item ranked most negatively by male hawks, even more than “feminine,” is “cruel, mean.” A plausible interpretation of this datum is that people subjected to corporal and other traumatizing punishment as children are deeply repulsed as adults by the personality traits they associate with that experience.⁹

This statement requires two qualifications. First, it does not mean that people who were beaten as children are necessarily loathe to beat their own children; in fact, Milburn and Conrad (2016) cite evidence to the contrary. The sadistic nature of corporal punishment is typically concealed beneath a sugar coating of rationalization about its salutary effects. “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” the proverb says. “I'm doing this for your own good,” punitive parents often say before spanking their child. Alice Miller (1983/2002) drew the title of her classic book from

⁹ I am indebted to Kent McClelland for suggesting this interpretation.

this common saying and labelled such rationalizations “poisonous pedagogy.” To the extent that the trauma associated with childhood punishment remains unconscious, survivors of abuse are strongly at risk of becoming perpetrators of abuse. Even when unconscious of the trauma, however, abuse survivors who place “cruel, mean” in the most negative possible ranking in their Q-sort may be saying that on some level they understand the true meaning of what happened to them and reject it in the strongest possible terms.

Second, it needs to be emphasized that nearly everyone in the sample—not just authoritarian White males—ranked “cruel, mean” near the negative pole of their Q-sorts. The reasons for this can only be discovered by interviews with the respondents. Items that exhibit little statistical variance in the data set, such as “cruel, mean,” may mean different things to different people. Based on Milburn et al.’s research, however, it is probably safe to say that the experience of corporal punishment in childhood is widespread,¹⁰ but the degree of consciousness of such trauma varies considerably.

Punitively parented males who participate in psychotherapy, for example, are less likely to displace anger onto political scapegoats and thus less likely to harbor right wing authoritarian ideologies, as discussed above. This is true for all kinds of therapy, not only those oriented to working with unconscious complexes. This would be expected if anger issues are salient for persons subjected to childhood punishment; whatever the school of therapy, these issues are likely to be dealt with in one way or another, and this conscious processing is enough to mitigate displacement of the anger.

This analysis suggests that authoritarians and non-authoritarians alike control an image of themselves as not “cruel, mean,” but the way this system operates and connects to other control systems may vary

¹⁰ I refer here to most families in the United States at the present time. Noted anthropologist/psychoanalyst George Devereaux quotes a Mohave elder who said about being mean to a child or using corporal punishment: “if you strap your child, the older people say you must be crazy. They say that they themselves never strapped their own children, and merely talked to them and tried to set them a good example” (1950, p. 97).

greatly. Non-authoritarians, for example, having consciously processed at least their anger and possibly even its sources in childhood punishment, may become aware of when they are acting in an ugly manner toward others. In PCT terms, this may be equivalent to a “not cruel, mean” control system within the self that is capable of processing negative self-perceptions from lower level systems and taking corrective action. For example, such a person might catch himself losing his temper with his child and give himself a cooling off period instead of giving his child a beating.

In the case of authoritarians, by contrast, maintaining a self-image of “not cruel, mean” coexists with unconscious displacement of anger. The rage that originated in childhood punishment is disconnected from the traumatic memories and “goes rogue,” most notably motivating a system that perceives outgroups. The person thus perceives himself as “not cruel, mean” while his displaced rage enables him to simultaneously perceive weaker others as worthy of punishment, much as his punitive parent once treated him. Further down in the control hierarchy, this sets reference perceptions for supporting manifestly cruel and mean public policies, such as separation of immigrant children from their parents and the torture of prisoners of war.

As suggested above, whether and how people differ in their control of the self-perception “not cruel, mean” is a topic for another study using interview methods. One technique in the PCT repertoire, “the test for the controlled variable” (Marken and Mansell, 2013), can be employed in such studies. This kind of research, which probes the control hierarchies of individuals in an interview setting, can shed light on a major question raised by my statistical findings (D’Agostino, 1995), such as why some people idealize their own nation or identity group while others are capable of processing critical information about their group (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 2006). For example, American hawks generally agree with the statement, “Compared with most of the great powers, the United States has been fair and humane in its foreign policy,” and disagree with, “The United States has a history of imperialist violence—against Native Americans, Latin Americans, Vietnamese,” while the opposite is true for American doves.

One theory about this difference that can be explored in future research is as follows. Assuming that the adult authoritarian has introjected his parent's abusiveness, controlling an image of himself as "not cruel, mean" may, at least in part, be a way of denying the cruel and sadistic content of these introjects. Such a control system, related to idealization of the abusive parent, may have served the person well as a child dependent on the parent for his survival, but at a cost for later development. This view is consistent with Milburn and Conrad's (2016) observation that many authoritarians who were beaten as children say that they benefited from the punitive discipline and that their parent acted out of love, not cruelty.

In any case, as in the "not feminine" control system described above, the statistical evidence suggests that White males who "identify with the aggressor" tend to be hawks. When identifying with the abusive introjects, the person feels powerful and has the urge to act the way his parent originally acted. The behavioral output of this control system would thus be something like "assert your power," which supplies a high reference perception for military power to the system that controls perception of the nation at the next level down. It would be a short step from identifying with the power of the abusive parent and displacing these feelings onto the nation, to simultaneously displacing one's idealization of the abusive parent onto the militarized state.

Healing and Transformation

What can the foregoing tell us that can facilitate healing and transformation in the consulting room and the "outside world?" Different clinical conclusions should be drawn regarding the two main personality constructs associated with militarist ideology—machismo and authoritarianism. As I have explained elsewhere (D'Agostino, 2018⁴), the machismo complex indicates a control system that is in a frequent error state. The discrepancy between a man's masculine socialization and his feminine (mother) introjects is experienced as chronic gender insecurity, an aversive experience like pain and similar error states in living control systems. This suffering presents an opening and an opportunity for personal transformation. Male clients get closer to such transformation whenever they reflect on the sources of their macho ego ideals, which

originate in the arbitrary dictates of gender typing and socialization. This process ideally results in adoption of a more androgynous ego ideal, which is compatible with the mother introjects.

While this approaches the machismo complex from the side of consciousness, clinicians can also work with unconscious material as it presents itself in therapy. Here, it should be remembered that mother introjects can be experienced as threatening for two separate reasons. First, even in cases where the quality of mothering was good, mother introjects can threaten the macho ego ideal of a conventionally socialized male. Second, if the mother participated in punitive discipline or failed in other ways to relate appropriately to the child, the introjects can be even more menacing. In both cases, learning to understand what dreams and other symbolic expressions of the unconscious have to say about the man's conflicts around gender issues can facilitate transformation. In this regard, Freudian and Jungian approaches to androgyny, illustrated respectively by Pederson (2015) and Tacey (1997), are helpful in different ways.

The second and main personality construct discussed in this paper, authoritarianism, poses a more complex clinical challenge. Unlike masculine socialization, which conflicts with the mother introjects and produces an aversive state of gender insecurity, punitive parenting frequently gives rise to a protective mechanism—identification with the aggressor—that *alleviates* an aversive state, albeit with problematic long-term consequences for both individuals and society. In its final form as a defense against traumatic memories, identification with the aggressor constitutes a kind of hedonic trap—the punitively parented adult feels a lot better identifying with his inner aggressor than with his traumatized inner child.

To facilitate personal transformation under such circumstances, I would argue clinicians need to step back and view their clients' lives from the broad perspective of total need fulfillment (Grawe, 2007). The client caught in the hedonic trap of identification with the aggressor lives in two worlds: a fantasy world where he is merged with the all-powerful parent and symbolic surrogates like the militarized state, and the real world in which he continually sacrifices his authentic needs to a

life of subservience and conformity in the hopes of appeasing authority figures. The key to transformation and personal growth for such people may be recovery of their displaced anger, which can support healthy self-assertion in the face of obstacles and oppressive circumstances.

Fortunately, Milburn's research suggests that a variety of therapeutic approaches to working with anger facilitate withdrawal of its displacement and a reduction of political scapegoating. Going more deeply into the sources of the anger leads back to the traumatic childhood memories. Ideally, this process enables clients to retroactively redirect their anger in their imaginations at the perpetrators of their abuse. This is precisely the appropriate response that the child would have enacted outwardly in the original situation of abuse but had to suppress, repress, dissociate, or split off in the interests of his physical safety. Now, in the safety of the consulting room, the survivor can finally dismantle the once adaptive identification with the aggressor mechanism and recover his split off rage, empowering him to meet his real needs and live a more abundant life.

As for healing the "outside world," the main conclusion of this paper is that parenting education programs are needed to interrupt the transgenerational cycle of punitive parenting. Fortunately, a movement to accomplish this is underway and such programs are being incorporated into educational curricula. Given that young children play at parenting with dolls, such instruction can and should begin in primary school, and a number of age-appropriate parenting curricula for children and teens have been developed and are being successfully implemented (e.g., Prepare Tomorrow's Parents, 2018). Mandating such programs for all children may also help dismantle the gender caste system that assigns child care disproportionately to females while scripting males for macho roles (Miedzian, 2002).

Further research on the psychology of militarism is of course needed and this paper suggests a theoretical framework and research methods that can be fruitful. It is safe to say, however, based on the current state of knowledge presented here, that the educational programs and clinical approaches indicated above can make the world and its human inhabitants more peaceful and humane.

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