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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to determine educators' attitudes toward corporal punishment and its alternatives in a variety of school settings throughout the Southwest; and (2) to explore the relationships between respondents' attitudes and such independent variables as dogmatism, sex, experience, level of education, job description, type of school, and school location. Findings reveal that: (1) Males advocated the use of corporal punishment much more frequently than did females; (2) Private school teachers are less likely than public school teachers to recommend corporal punishment; (3) High dogmatism scores were significantly related to belief in corporal punishment; (4) Teachers were found to have significantly higher dogmatism scores than principals or counselors; and (5) An educator's level of dogmatism was found to vary inversely with the level of education attained. A copy of the survey instrument is appended. (JD)

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DISCIPLINE IN THE SCHOOLS: THE RELATIONSHIP
OF EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES ABOUT CORPORAL
PUNISHMENT TO SELECTED VARIABLES

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DISCIPLINE IN THE SCHOOLS: THE RELATIONSHIP
OF EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES ABOUT CORPORAL
PUNISHMENT TO SELECTED VARIABLES

Statement of Problem

In spite of various theories of psychology which outline humane methods for modifying human behavior, and in spite of numerous studies which demonstrate the adverse effect that physical punishment has upon students' learning, corporal punishment in the schools continues to be legally and popularly sanctioned. In fact, the incidence of corporal punishment has increased over the last twenty years, and it is widely used in some local school districts (Hapkiewicz, 1975).

The efficacy of corporal punishment is currently debated from many quarters because there is widespread feeling among both educators and the public that "discipline" is the number one problem facing education. The mass media, for example, is giving increasing coverage to what it frequently terms an "epidemic" of violence, vandalism, and disrespect for authority that is currently sweeping our nation's elementary and secondary schools.

Considerable evidence, however, suggests that corporal punishment is a teacher-student interaction that is demeaning and harmful to children (Zigler and Hunsinger, 1977; Englander, 1978). Corporal punishment inhibits learning, interferes with the accomplishment of each of the important developmental tasks of children, and has the potential for physical harm to the child (Friedman, 1976). The practice has been labeled as "anachronistic" and "counter-productive" and most damaging to children who are already emotionally disturbed (Maurer, 1977). Moreover, children who witness physically

punitive adult behavior are more likely themselves to behave aggressively and anti-socially (Clarizio, 1975; Welsh, 1976; Fairchild and Erwin, 1977).

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to determine educators' attitudes toward corporal punishment and its alternatives in a variety of school settings throughout the Southwest and (2) to explore the relationships between respondents' attitudes (the dependent variable) and such independent variables as dogmatism, sex, experience, level of education, job description, type of school, and school location.

Theoretical Framework

Several hypotheses concerning the possible interplay between dependent and independent variables provided the focus for the inquiry. The investigators wished to learn whether advocacy of corporal punishment would

1. correlate negatively with level of education.
2. correlate positively with dogmatism.
3. tend to vary according to school location.
4. tend to be higher among those educators assigned to schools whose student majorities are of low academic ability.
5. tend to be higher among those educators whose racial and/or cultural background differs from the student majority.

Method

Through a regional mailing, attitudinal data were collected from administrators, teachers, and counselors at ten randomly selected elementary and secondary schools. Participating schools

were in rural as well as urban environments, and their enrollments reflected extensive racial and cultural diversity.

The 248 subjects were asked to respond to three attitudinal instruments: (1) the "SWTSU Opinionnaire on Behavior Control," (Conoley and Parkay, 1979), (2) the "Rokeach Dogmatism Scale," Form E, (Rokeach, 1960), and (3) the "Indiana University Discipline Opinionnaire," (Levine, 1977).

The "SWTSU Opinionnaire on Behavior Control" is an 18-item instrument designed to assess respondents' attitudes toward corporal punishment and their understanding of the relationships between student achievement and positive (or negative) reinforcement.

The "Rokeach Dogmatism Scale," Form E, is designed to measure whether a subject's "socio-politico-personal-philosophical" convictions are relatively closed (dogmatic) or open (undogmatic) to modification or restructuring.

The "Indiana University Discipline Opinionnaire" presents subjects with 14 disciplinary tactics along a horizontal axis and 12 offenses along the vertical axis. For each offense, the respondent is to indicate the frequency (from "never" to "always") with which he or she would utilize each of the 14 disciplinary tactics.

The treatment of data included computations of reliability and item-to-item correlations. A factor analysis was done in order to identify any independent "components" within the entire set of data. To determine the effect that variables such as race or experience had on attitudes, a one-way analysis of variance was performed.

Results

The one-way analysis of variance revealed several significant

relationships among the dependent and independent variables. First, it was found that male educators (N=91) advocate the use of corporal punishment much more frequently ($p < .001$) than do women educators (N=157). Secondly, teachers who have taught in private schools (N=23) are less likely ($p < .01$) than nonpublic school teachers (N=225) to recommend corporal punishment.

Rokeach dogmatism scores were found to be significantly related to belief in corporal punishment ($p < .001$) and suspension ($p < .001$); they were not, however, related to belief in conference methods of dealing with behavior problems. Additional significant relationships were found between dogmatism and position in school and level of education. Teachers (N=198) were found to have significantly higher ($p < .001$) dogmatism scores than either principals (N=21) or counselors (N=9). Finally, an educator's dogmatism was found to vary inversely with the level of education attained ($p < .001$).

Educational Importance of the Study

The findings of this study are of importance to teachers, administrators, and other educational policy-makers who are presently working to help schools develop more humanitarian, rehabilitative approaches to school discipline. Aware of the sociological and psychological characteristics of those who tend to advocate corporal punishment, these educators can begin to develop more persuasive techniques for demonstrating the efficacy of non-punitive modes of behavior control in school settings. They can convince other educators that "discipline" need not be synonymous with "corporal punishment."

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Dear Educator:

The following survey is designed to help us determine the needs of principals, administrators, and counselors across the country, school improvement, teacher-student relations, and about a number of important educational and social questions.

To insure that your responses are lost in the shuffle, please mark out your name on this form. The school number on the cover of this survey is used only to identify information from various sources and is not to be used for any school. No names of schools, districts, or states will be made available to anyone. Please try to complete the survey as soon as possible and return it to the location indicated by your school principal.

We know firsthand that the demands on today's educators are great and that often it is hard to find the time to complete surveys such as this. However, we hope each of you will realize that our primary goal is to understand better how we as educators can best meet the needs of our students. We need to gain this understanding, so need your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Therese W. Parker
Colleen Conoley
Department of Education
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas 78686

Part I

Male _____
Female _____
Age _____

1. Check the category that best describes you.

American Indian or Alaskan Native _____
Asian-American or Pacific Islander _____
Hispanic _____
Black _____
White _____
Other (specify) _____

2. What is your position at your school?

Principal, Assistant Principal, or Supervisor _____
Teacher _____
Counselor _____
Other (specify) _____

3. If you are a teacher, what subject(s) and what grade(s) do you teach?

6. How many years have you worked in education?

7. Indicate the number of years each level of education is fulfilled by all of your students. Do not include years of non-credit education.

	Elementary	High School
Rural School	_____	_____
Private or Parochial School	_____	_____
Public Inner-City School	_____	_____
Public School in Urban Area (over 200,000)	_____	_____
Public School in City of 100,000 to 200,000	_____	_____
Public School in City of less than 100,000	_____	_____
Other (specify) _____	_____	_____

8. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

Some college	_____
Bachelor's degree	_____
Some graduate courses	_____
Master's degree	_____
30-36 hours beyond Master's	_____
Doctor's degree	_____

9. Of the students you work with, about what percent are:

American Indian or Alaskan Native	_____
Asian-American or Pacific Islander	_____
Hispanic	_____
Black	_____
White	_____
Other (specify) _____	_____

TOTAL 100%

10. Of the students you teach, what percentage would you say are:

High ability	_____
Average ability	_____
Low ability	_____

TOTAL 100%

Part III

This section surveys a number of important social and political questions. The best answer to each statement below is your own opinion. We have tried to cover many different opinions. You may find yourself agreeing strongly with some of the statements disagreeing just as strongly with others, and perhaps upset by others. Whether you agree or disagree with any statement, we would like to know how many people feel the same as you do.

Instructions.

Mark each statement in the left margin with a number from 1 to 5, indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Please mark every statement, whether you agree or disagree, depending on how you feel in each case.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I AM COMPLETELY AGAINST | 5. I AM COMPLETELY FOR |
| 2. I AM AGAINST ON THE WHOLE | 4. I AM FOR ON THE WHOLE |
| 3. I AM AGAINST VERY MUCH | 3. I AM FOR VERY MUCH |

1. The United States and Russia have lost almost nothing in common.
2. The highest form of government is a democracy and the highest form of democracy is a government run by those who are most intelligent.
3. Even though freedom of speech for all groups is a worthwhile goal, it is unfortunately necessary to restrict the freedom of certain political groups.
4. It is only natural that a person would have a much better acquaintance with ideas he believes in than with ideas he opposes.

- ___ 5. Man on his own is a helpless and miserable creature.
- ___ 6. Fundamentally, the world we live in is a pretty lonesome place.
- ___ 7. Most people just don't give a "damn" for others.
- ___ 8. I'd like it if I could find someone who would tell me how to solve my personal problems.
- ___ 9. It is only natural for a person to be rather fearful of the future.
- ___ 10. There is so much to be done and so little time to do it in.
- ___ 11. Once I get wound up in a heated discussion I just can't stop.
- ___ 12. In a discussion I often find it necessary to repeat myself several times to make sure I am being understood.
- ___ 13. In a heated discussion I generally become so absorbed in what I am going to say that I forget to listen to what the others are saying.
- ___ 14. It is better to be a dead hero than to be a live coward.
- ___ 15. While I don't like to admit this even to myself, my secret ambition is to become a great man, like Einstein, or Beethoven, or Shakespeare.
- ___ 16. The main thing in life is for a person to want to do something important.
- ___ 17. If given the chance I would do something of great benefit to the world.
- ___ 18. In the history of mankind there have probably been just a handful of really great thinkers.
- ___ 19. There are a number of people I have come to hate because of the things they stand for.
- ___ 20. A man who does not believe in some great cause has not really lived.
- ___ 21. It is only when a person devotes himself to an ideal or cause that life becomes meaningful.
- ___ 22. Of all the different philosophies which exist in this world there is probably only one which is correct.

- _____ 23. A person who gets enthusiastic about too many causes is likely to be a pretty "wishy-washy" sort of person.
- _____ 24. To compromise with our political opponents is dangerous because it usually leads to the betrayal of our own side.
- _____ 25. When it comes to differences of opinion in religion we must be careful not to compromise with those who believe differently from the way we do.
- _____ 26. In times like these, a person must be pretty selfish if he considers primarily his own happiness.
- _____ 27. The worst crime a person could commit is to attack publicly the people who believe in the same thing he does.
- _____ 28. In times like these it is often necessary to be more on guard against ideas put out by people or groups in one's own camp than by those in the opposing camp.
- _____ 29. A group which tolerates too much differences of opinion among its own members cannot exist for long.
- _____ 30. There are two kinds of people in this world: those who are for the truth and those who are against the truth.
- _____ 31. My blood boils whenever a person stubbornly refuses to admit he's wrong.
- _____ 32. A person who thinks primarily of his own happiness is beneath contempt.
- _____ 33. Most of the ideas which get printed nowadays aren't worth the paper they are printed on.
- _____ 34. In this complicated world of ours the only way we can know what's going on is to rely on leaders or experts who can be trusted.
- _____ 35. It is often desirable to reserve judgment about what's going on until one has had a chance to hear the opinions of those one respects.
- _____ 36. In the long run the best way to live is to pick friends and associates whose tastes and beliefs are the same as one's own.
- _____ 37. The present is all too often full of unhappiness. It is only the future that counts.
- _____ 38. If a man is to accomplish his mission in life it is sometimes necessary to gamble "all or nothing at all."

39. Unfortunately, a good many people with whom I have discussed important social and moral problems don't really understand what's going on.

40. Most people just don't know what's good for them.

Part IV

Discipline Survey*

Instructions

The survey consists of 27 blocks or cells, each of which permits the correlation of a school offense with some procedure or tactic related to school discipline. Please match the "Offenses" listed on the left side of the page with the "Tactics Used."

When you have selected a response, please circle the appropriate code letter or letters as illustrated below:

N = NEVER

AA = ALMOST ALWAYS

AN = ALMOST NEVER

A = ALWAYS

S = SOMETIMES

Example: "Habitual Tardiness" is the first offense listed in the survey. If you "never" would suspend a student, draw a circle around the "N" thus:

HABITUAL TARDINESS	SUSPENSION S <input checked="" type="radio"/> N AN AA /
-----------------------	---

Please circle one symbol in each of the 27 blocks.

"Discipline" is defined as "subjection to authority especially the training of mental, moral, or physical powers by instruction and exercise." The Britannica World Language Dictionary, 1965.

"Corporal Punishment" is defined as "chastisement inflicted on the body in order to cause physical pain or suffering, usually with the professed purpose of modifying behavior." Paul Nash, "Corporal Punishment in an Age of Violence," Educational Theory, October, 1963.

PLEASE INDICATE THE DISCIPLINARY TACTICS OR PROCEDURES YOU PREFER EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED WHERE YOU WORK.

*Adapted from Mary Ann Levine. "The Indiana University Discipline Opinionnaire," 1977.

Discipline SurveyTACTICS USED

<u>OFFENSES</u>	Suspension			Corporal Punishment			Conference with Pupil		
Habitual Tardiness	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Cheating	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Repeated and Disruptive Talking	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Repeated Inattention in Discussion	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Rowdiness: Out of Seat	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Persistent "Silent Contempt"	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Sneering, Swearing	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Unacceptable Sexual Behavior	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A
Vandalism	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A	S	N AA	AN A

N = NEVER
 AN = ALMOST NEVER
 S = SOMETIMES
 AA = ALMOST ALWAYS
 A = ALWAYS

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE SYMBOL IN EACH OF THE 27 CELLS. YOU SHOULD MARK ONE RESPONSE PER CELL.