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INTRODUCTION

This issue of *New Male Studies: An International Journal* offers three refereed articles on fatherhood, a topical opinion piece on DEI, and two brief articles on literature and education.

The first of the refereed articles, Nate Juda’s “Fathers and delinquency,” looks at “the relationship between delinquent activity in young adolescent males” in three different “household structures”: a traditional biological male and female family, a family with a biological mother and a stepfather, and a single-mother family. Juda’s research suggests, “the presence of a father figure during adolescence is likely to have protective effects for males in curbing delinquent behavior” and finds “single-mother households to be significantly and positively associated with delinquent behavior in adolescent males.” He suggests that “an alternative to a biological father in the home may mitigate negative consequences associated with paternal absence.”

Muzamal Rehman and Gary Lee’s “A literature review of father-specific interventions on fathering self-efficacy” investigates ways fathers might increase their “self-efficacy”: their confidence in their “fathering abilities.” On the strength of their research findings, the authors recommend “developing father-specific measures for self-efficacy” and “exploring why males are often viewed as second class parents and how our view of fathers has tended to be corrupted by ideological assumptions about males and masculinity popular in contemporary culture.”

In research that “contributes to a deeper understanding of how family dynamics, including father absenteeism, shape individuals' vulnerability to extremist ideologies and involvement in terrorism,” Shane Satterley investigates “the nuanced relationship between father absenteeism and terrorism involvement” in his article, “Broken bonds: Father absenteeism and the path to violent extremism.” His research offers “valuable insights into the potential link between father absenteeism and susceptibility to radicalisation to violent extremism.” In addition, by “examining the influence of family dynamics, particularly the absence of fathers,” it contributes to a “deeper understanding of factors shaping individuals' vulnerability to extremist ideologies.”



The issue’s analysis and opinion piece, Paul Nathanson’s “DEI must DIE: Hatred as contagion,” defines *DEI* as “a worldview that fosters the institutionalization of identity politics in general and of several closely related and politically aligned ideologies in particular.” Nathanson observes, “DEI insists on racial or sexual diversity but rejects viewpoint diversity; moreover, it excludes those who hold disfavored viewpoints, using a basic dualistic structure (which identifies innately innocent victims with “us” and innately evil victimizers with “them”).” He suggests, “to the extent that secularization has limited the influence of religion, it has removed the spiritual ballast that once discouraged the polarizing contagion of hatred that now afflicts us.”

In his brief article, “1984 in 2023,” Tim Goldich argues that “The predictions in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are unfolding in the realms of Feminism—evident in Political Correctness and the Woke.” He explains, “like Big Brother in the novel, a feminist Big Sister now defines the terms.” Goldich suggests, “perhaps Orwell is suggesting that when it comes to a certain style of controlling and suppressing both truth and sexuality, the feminine may be specially implicated.”

In this issue’s second brief article, “The miseducation of boys,” Jerome Teelucksingh describes how he “conducted a simple social experiment in five kindergartens, or preschools, in Trinidad and Tobago (in Caribbean)” and discovered the type of male hostile “gender-stereotyping that occurs in childhood is prevalent” in those environments. He notes, “in all these kindergartens there was an absence of male teachers.” Teelucksingh concludes, “If we do not embrace our boys, then the wrong persons will embrace them.”

The opinions expressed by the authors in this issue do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Team. The articles published here are offered in a spirit of open, evidence-based dialogue regarding sex, gender, relationships, and issues related to the experience of males.

We appreciate the authors’ thoughtful contributions to this issue. This journal is made possible through the generous support of our donors. If you would like to donate to *New Male Studies: An International Journal*, please contact me at dr.dennis.gouws@gmail.com.



Dennis Gouws
Editor in Chief



Photo by Kindel Media: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-scolding-his-son-8550837/>

FATHERS AND DELINQUENCY

Nate Juda



ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between delinquent activity in young adolescent male subjects living in three household structures: (1) traditional family with a biological mother and father in the home (2) a stepfamily with a biological mother and stepfather in the home, and (3) single mother households. Using data collected from Add Health's longitudinal survey W1 (n = 2,799, aged ages 11-17), findings suggests that the presence of a father figure during adolescence is likely to have protective effects for males in curbing delinquent behavior. Conversely, findings found single mother households to be significantly and positively associated with delinquent behavior in adolescent males. The presence of a stepfather was negatively associated with delinquent behavior, but not to a significant degree, suggesting an alternative to a biological father in the home may mitigate negative consequences associated with paternal absence.

Keywords: add health, adolescence, boys and men, family, fathers, single mothers



INTRODUCTION

Dramatic shifts over the past several decades have considerably altered modern U.S. families' living arrangements. Incidents of divorce have more than tripled over the past three decades (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) resulting in more children than ever residing in household structures outside of traditional married families (Nicholson, 2018). Over 50% of children will, at some point in their lives, live in a single-parent family (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994) and mothers are awarded custody of children in nearly 90% of cases (Rachlinski & Wistrich, 2021).

The absence of fathers in children's lives has been a long-standing societal concern (Mintz, 1998) dating back to the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th Century where the new economic structure brought concerns over paternal absence when men moved in massive numbers from farm to factory labor and again with the societal changes of the Great Depression in the 1930s and World War II a decade later (Duncan, 2000.). However, empirical research over the last three decades has supported the importance of paternal involvement.

A considerable body of research has shown that children raised by both original parents are advantaged in several domains of well-being when compared to children born to single mothers or whose parents have divorced (Amato & Keith, 1991; Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1989; Demo & Acock, 1988; Emery, 1988; McLanahan & Booth, 1989). Specifically, prior research has shown that paternal absence is positively associated with adolescent delinquency—particularly in boys (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Kofler-Westergren et al., 2010; Vanassche et al., 2014). Depending on the source, between 40 and 90% of incarcerated male felons grew up in homes without fathers (BJS; Texas Dept. of Corrections, 1992) and young men who grow up in homes without fathers are twice as likely to be incarcerated than those from traditional two-parent families-- even when other factors such as race, income, parent education and urban residence were controlled for (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). Research shows that when fathers are involved, their children are twice as likely to go to college, and 80% less likely to spend time in jail. Conversely, children in father-absent homes account for 71% of all high school dropouts, 90% of homeless and runaway children, 63% of youth suicides.

Using data collected from Add Health's longitudinal survey W1, this study aims to examine the relationship between delinquent activity in young adolescent male subjects living in three household structures: (1) traditional family with a biological mother and father in the home (2) a stepfamily with a biological mother and stepfather in the home, and (3) single mother households.

CURRENT FOCUS

Purpose:

The purpose of this study (using Add Health data responses made on the Delinquency Check List) is to determine the relationship between delinquent activity in young adolescent male subjects living in three household structures: (1) traditional family with a biological mother and



father in the home (2) a stepfamily with a biological mother and stepfather in the home, and (3) single mother households.

Research Question:

What differences exist in delinquent behavior between sample groups: resident biological mother and father (i.e. intact traditional families), resident alternative to biological father (i.e. stepfather), and no resident male figure (i.e. single mother households)?

Hypotheses:

H1: Young males who have a biological father living in the home will be significantly less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than their peers without a biological father in the home.

H2: Young males who have alternatives to resident biological fathers (i.e. stepfathers in their home) will be less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than their peers without any father figure in the home.

DATA AND METHODS

Data Source

This study's data was obtained from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), administered by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Add Health is the largest, most comprehensive longitudinal survey of adolescents ever undertaken collecting V waves of study data (Harris, 2019). Wave I (W1) of Add Health was administered between September 1994 and April 1995 to 20,745 nationally representative adolescents in grades 7 through 12 (ages 11-17). An in-school questionnaire was given to every student who attended one of the 132 sampled U.S. schools (N=132). A random sample of approximately 200 adolescents from each school was selected for in-home interviews (Harris, 2019). This study uses data collected from W1. The mean age of participants was 15.9 years (95% CI = 15.7 to 16.1) with a response rate of 79%.

The initial sampling frame consisted of 26,666 schools stratified by level of urbanization, school type, school size, ethnicity, and census region. Participating schools were requested to identify feeder schools that included a 7th grade to send a minimum of five students to that particular high school. The top feeder school for each high school was selected to participate in the study. Replacement schools were selected if a feeder school declined to participate in the study. Recruitment efforts yielded a total of 132 schools for the core study including 80 high schools and 52 middle schools.

The primary aims of this longitudinal study were to provide information about the health, family, social, and individual characteristics of U.S. adolescents, as well as to explore risk and protective factors for each outcome (Harris, 2019; Resnick et al., 1997). For a number of reasons, Add Health is ideal for this and future related studies. First, it was specifically designed to provide in-depth information on adolescents' health and risk behaviors. A detailed set of questions



revealing information about involvement in delinquent behaviors was asked of the respondents in each wave. Second, it is considered to be the largest and most comprehensive survey of adolescents ever conducted. Third, the longitudinal nature of the Add Health allows researchers to examine the long-term relationship between family structure and delinquent behavior. Finally, since Add Health provides information on delinquent behavior in all waves, baseline differences in these behaviors can be accounted for in empirical analyses. After excluding cases of respondents who identified as female, and cases where there were missing data, the final sample size was 2,799 respondents.

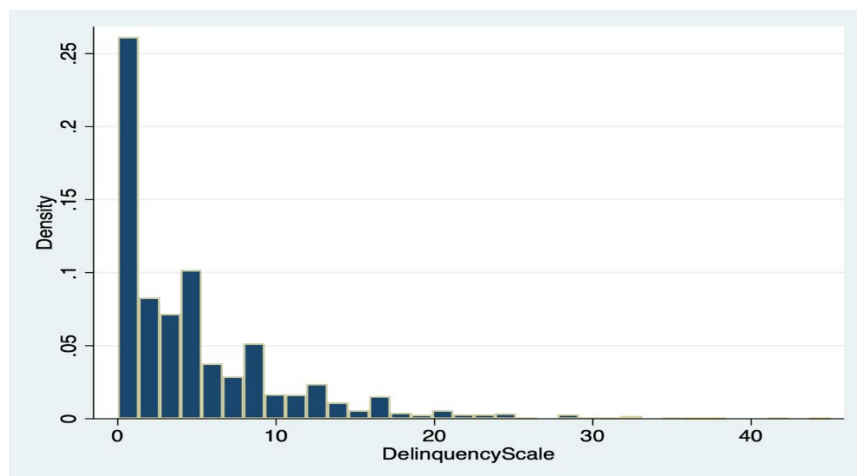
Dependent Variable

This study's dependent variable, *delinquency*, was derived from W1 Add Health's Self-Report Delinquency (AHSRD). Based on previous research (Beaver, 2010; Pechorro et al., 2019; Pechorro et al., 2019), delinquency was measured using AHSRD's 15 item scale which evaluates aggressive and violent behavior with non-violent delinquency by combining the 11 items of the nonviolent factor and the 4 items of the violent factor on a 4-point ordinal scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of delinquency. The questions are similar to those found in other surveys and comply with the official definitions of "crime" used by government sources such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS, n.d.). This study focuses on a representative set of five types of delinquent behaviors that occurred in the past 12 months in these categories: (1) property crime, (2) violent crime, (3) drug crime, (4) defiance of parental authority, (5) unruly public behavior. These comprise most of the delinquent behaviors undertaken by young people (Beaver, 2010).

Specifically, participants were asked in the past 12 months, how often have they engaged in the following activities: (1) "paint graffiti or signs on someone else's property or in a public place?"; (2) "deliberately damage property that didn't belong to you?"; (3) "lie to your parents or guardians about where you had been or whom you were with?"; (4) "take something from a store without paying for it?"; (5) "get into a serious physical fight?"; (6) "hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor or nurse?"; (7) "run away from home?"; (8) "drive a car without its owner's permission?"; (9) "steal something worth more than \$50?"; (10) "enter a house or building to steal something?"; (11) "use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone?"; (12) "sell marijuana or other drugs?"; (13) "steal something worth less than \$50?"; (14) "take part in a fight where a group of your friends was against another group?"; (15) "being loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place?" Items were coded as 0 = never, 1 = one or two times, 2 = three or four times and, 3 = five or more times. The sum of these created the delinquency scale (mean = 4.875, SD = 5.790), which has a good level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$) and positively skewed data (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Delinquency Distribution



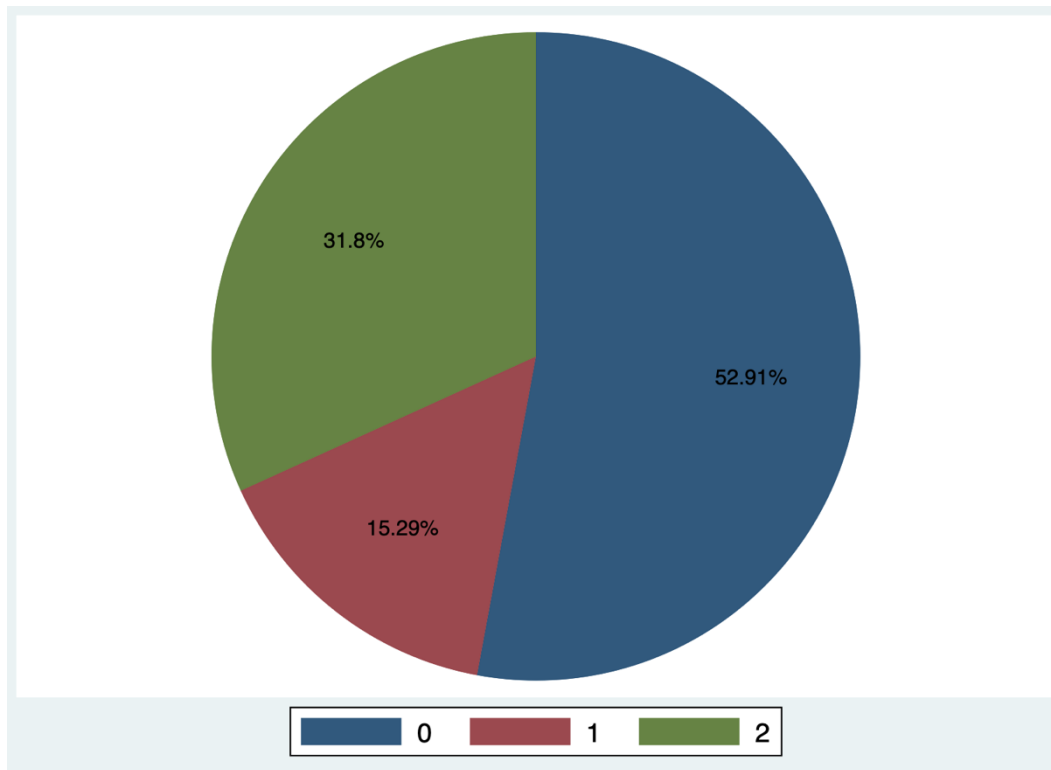
Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health

Independent Variable

This study's independent variables are three separate household structures: (1) *resident biological father*, (2) *resident stepfather*, and (3) *single mother household*. For the purposes of this study, non-resident father figures were not considered nor were resident males such as older male siblings, uncles, or grandfathers. This study only considered stepfather as an alternative to the biological father. This study restricts its estimation sample to male adolescents living with their biological mother in W1. The variation in family structure comes from the absence or presence of a resident biological father or resident stepfather residing in the home during W1. This study's three structure indicators: The analytic sample ($n = 2,799$) for this study was confined to adolescent males who reported that they were (1) living with their biological mother and biological father ($n = 1,481$)--(0,1), (2) a biological mother and resident alternative to biological father (e.g. stepfather) ($n = 428$)--(0,1), or (3) a single mother ($n = 890$)--(0,1). Information about the prevalence of specific family structures is presented in figure 2. Figure 2 shows over 50% of adolescents live in traditional families with both their biological mother and biological father. Consistent with previous literature and data (Dahl & Moretti, 2008; Pew, 2019; US Census Bureau, 2020), roughly 15% live in households with a mother and a stepfather, and roughly 30% of adolescents in our sample live with a single mother (see figure 2).



Figure 2. Family Structure



Traditional Family=0; Stepfamily=1; Single Mother=2

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health

Control Variables

In an effort to ensure validity, this study controlled for variables that could potentially confound the study's results: (1) demographic variables such as age and race and (2) socioeconomic status (household income). Previous research has indicated that *SES* is a prime mediator of the effect of family structure on behavior and outcomes of adolescents. Income and family structure have a high degree of association, and income have been shown to be negatively correlated with delinquent behavior in children (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Carlson & Corcoran, 2001; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Flewelling & Bauman, 1990). We also controlled for several demographic correlates. *Age* was measured in years at W1 ($M = 15.59$, $SD = 1.78$). A *race* variable was constructed based on responses to six questions that asked about the racial origin of the adolescent respondent (i.e. White, Black, Latino, American Indian, Asian, or other). This information was then used to create White ($n = 1,635$; $M = .584$) vs. non-white ($n = 1,164$; $M = .416$) as a dummy variable.



Socioeconomic status (SES) is among the most well-documented correlates of juvenile delinquency (Rekker et al., 2017). The literature is clear that adolescents from low-SES households are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior than adolescents from high-SES households (Archambault et al., 2017; Beyers et al., 2001; Rekker et al., 2017). Variations in SES result in disproportionate access to resources (Galobardes et al., 2007; Myers, 2009). In addition, issues related to privilege, power, and control are often measured as the sum of education, occupation (or job title), and income (Walder, 1995; Woehr, 2018). For the purposes of this study, SES will be measured solely by household income. Analysis suggests that income plays a significantly greater factor in obtaining resources, privilege, and power than education level or job title. Income (not job title or occupation) affects the type of neighborhood in which families can afford to live and in turn school systems and peer groups to a far greater extent than parents' education level or job title (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The factors that define SES such as neighborhood, power, and resources are linked overwhelmingly to income.

All incomes were based on parental reports of 1994 total pre-tax family income at W1 (in \$1000 increments, top-coded at \$999,000) ($n = 2,360$). Income was defined as all sources of income, including public assistance, based on parent report and rounded to the nearest thousand dollars and then collapsed into a six-category variable to simplify analysis and reporting and more normalize the distribution. The six SES/income categories are: families earning less than \$16,000 (coded 0)—which was roughly the federal poverty threshold in 1994–1995; income of \$16,000–\$45,000 (coded 1)—lower middle-class; \$45,000–\$100,000 (coded 2)—middle-class; \$100,000–\$250,000 (coded 3)—upper middle-class; \$250,000–\$500,000 (coded 4)—upper-class; and >\$500,000 (coded 5)—wealthy. Of the respondents, mean income was \$47.7k and median income was \$40k and was positively skewed ($SD = .821$) (see table 1).

Table 1. Income Distribution

SES	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0	405	17.16	17.16
1	1,003	42.50	59.66
2	858	36.36	96.02
3	73	3.09	99.11
4	16	0.68	99.79
5	5	0.21	100.00
Total	2,360	100.00	



ANALYTIC STRATEGY

To address the massive quantities of data and the complex nature of the Add Health sample design, the analyses for this study were conducted using STATA. The STATA computer program allows researchers to use estimation commands to incorporate large amounts of complex survey data that account for characteristics of the sample design ensuring unbiased parameter estimates and standard errors (Kreuter & Valliant, 2007; West & McCabe, 2012). The software package STATA is used for all analyses. First, a frequency distribution was used to describe the distribution of the responses among the sample. T-tests and correlation matrices were conducted to assess the relationships at the bivariate level. Due to the nature of the study's dependent variable (i.e., positively skewed over-dispersion, with no negative values, a large number of zero values, and $\sigma^2 > \mu$) (see Figure 1), negative binomial regression was determined to be the best fit. Next, a series of negative binomial regression models were estimated to examine the relationship between delinquency and household structure, net of control variables. Specifically, each of the three family types (traditional family, stepfather, and biological mother, and single mother households) was entered into the model. The final model tests to see if age, race, or SES accounts for the differences between delinquency and household structure. Because this study focuses exclusively on adolescent males, *sex* was coded M=0 and F=1 and all data =1 was dropped. Listwise any cases with missing information were deleted.

RESULTS

The aim of this study is to determine the scope and magnitude of the differences in delinquent behavior between three household structures: resident biological mother and father (i.e. intact traditional families), resident alternative to biological father (i.e. stepfather), and no resident male figure (i.e. single mother). H1: Young males who have a biological father living in their home will be significantly less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than their peers without a biological father in their home. H2: Young males who have alternatives to resident biological fathers (i.e. stepfathers in their home) will be less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than their peers without any father figure in their home. Table 2 summarizes descriptive statistics for study variables. The sample is comprised solely of male adolescents between the ages of 11 and 21. The average age is 15.59 years. Approximately 58% of the sample is white, and the remaining 42% are comprised of other races and ethnicities. Approximately 53% of the sample had a traditional family (residential biological father and mother), with roughly 15% living with a stepfamily (stepfather and biological mother), and 32% living in a single mother household.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Min Value	Max Value
<i>Dependent Variable</i>				
Delinquency	4.875	5.790	0	45
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
Trad. Family	0.529	-	0	1
Alt Family	0.153	-	0	1
Single Mother	0.318	-	0	1
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Age	15.590	1.781	11	21
Race (White)	0.584	-	0	1
SES	1.282	0.821	0	5

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health

Table 3 displays the results of a correlation matrix of the study variables. The correlation matrix shows that residing in a traditional family with a biological mother and father is statistically significant and negatively associated with an increase in delinquent behavior in adolescent males ($b = -0.727$, $p < .001$), residing in a family with a biological mother and stepfather has a negative but not statistically significant association with increased delinquent behavior in adolescent males ($b = -0.0152$), and residing in a single mother household is positive and significant ($b = 0.0639$, $p < 0.001$). Neither age, race, nor SES appeared to have a significant association with delinquent behavior in adolescent males.

Table 3. Bivariate Correlations for Study Variables (N = 2,799)

	Delinquency	Traditional Family	Stepfamily	Single Mother	Race (White)	Age (W1)	SES
Delinquency	1.00						
TraditionalFamily	-0.07*	1.00					
Stepfamily	-0.02	-0.31*	1.00				
SingleMother	0.06*	-0.72*	-0.20	1.00			
Race (White)	-0.03	0.18*	0.00	-0.21*	1.00		
Age (W1)	0.01	-0.05*	-0.02	0.04	0.01	1.00	
SES	-0.03	0.33*	-0.01	-0.33*	0.21*	0.02	1.00

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$



Using traditional family as a baseline, the negative binomial regression model shows results that are consistent with those provided by the correlation matrix (see table 3). Age, race, income (SES) and resident stepfather household structure do not have a statistically significant impact on delinquent behavior. However, residing in a single mother household is shown to be significant and positively associated with increased delinquent behavior in adolescent males. Table 4 displays the results of negative binomial regression models investigating the relationship between delinquent behavior and household structure.

Table 4. Effect of Household Structure on Delinquency

Variable	NBR Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P> z
Stepfamily	0.002	0.0911	0.02	0.981
Single mother	0.204	0.058	3.52	0.000
Race (White)	-0.504	0.052	-0.97	0.330
Age	0.002	0.015	0.13	0.896
SES (income)	0.003	0.032	0.09	0.929

LR test of $\alpha=0$: $\text{chibar2}(01) = 7225.75$ Prob >= $\text{chibar2} = 0.000$

If H01 states there is no significant difference in delinquent behavior between adolescent males living in a home with a biological and adolescent male residing in a household with an alternative to a biological father (i.e. a stepfather), we must fail to reject the null hypothesis.

If H02 states there is no significant difference in delinquent behavior between adolescent males living in a home with an alternative to a biological father (i.e. a stepfather) and adolescent males living in single mother households, we must reject the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Traditional nuclear families with two married heterosexual parents are now the minority of U.S. households. Divorces have more than tripled over since 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)—more than any time in human history. Mothers are awarded custody of children in nearly 90% of cases (Rachlinski & Wistrich, 2021), with 64% of millennial mothers having a child outside of marriage (Johns Hopkins researchers). According to U.S. census data, 25% of U.S. families are headed by a single parent--80% moms, 20% of U.S. children born to a married couple and more than 50% of those born to a cohabiting couple will experience their parents' divorce, and 40% of babies born in the United States circa 2018 were born to an unmarried mother.

Paternal absence has been a long-standing societal concern (Mintz, 1998). Research indicates that paternal absence is positively associated with adolescent delinquency—particularly in boys (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Kofler-Westergren et al., 2010; Vanassche et al., 2014). Depending on the source, between 40 and 90% of incarcerated male felons grew up in homes without fathers (BJS; Texas Dept. of Corrections, 1992) and young men who grow up in homes without fathers are twice as likely to be incarcerated than those from traditional two-parent families-- even when other factors such as race, income, parent education and urban residence were controlled for (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). A meta-analysis by Stevenson and Black



(1988) found that father absence is correlated with aggressive behavior in older boys and that disruptions in the father-son relationship may be particularly serious for adolescents, who may express their masculinity by externalizing behavior. Wallerstein (1989) emphasized the most drastic consequences of father deprivation, based on U.S. crime statistics: “more than 1/3 of children from divorced families suffer from severe psychological disorder. Almost 2/3 of all rapists, 3/4 of juveniles convicted of homicide and a similar high proportion of juvenile prisoners grew up without a father.”

Data from the W1 Add Health survey (1994-1995) was used to compare delinquent behavior among the three groups of male adolescents in: traditional two-biological-parent married families, in mother-stepfather families, and in single mother families. These data compared a wide range of delinquent acts at varying levels of severity. The large sample size yields a sizable number of male adolescents in the three family types: 1,481 in traditional families, 428 in mother-stepfather families, and 890 in single mother families. The findings of this study suggest, all things being equal, adolescent males who live in traditional household structures (i.e. with their biological mothers and fathers) are much less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than their peers who reside in households headed by single mothers. In addition, the negative effects associated with paternal absence can be partially mitigated by the presence of an alternative to a biological father (i.e. stepfather) in the home. As suspected, a boy’s race was statistically insignificant in contributing to delinquent behavior. However, surprisingly, SES (i.e. household income) was not shown to have a significant association with delinquent behavior in male adolescents (see similar results Demuth & Brown, 2004; Hoffman & Johnson, 1998).

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, roughly 25% of children are raised in single parent households. Of those, 80% reside solely with their mothers. Because the purpose of this study is to measure the effect of paternal absence on delinquency, households without biological mothers such as boys living with their father and a stepmother, grandparents, extended families, or in foster care would likely distort the results. For example, delinquent behavior exhibited by a young person solely living exclusively with his grandmother or in a foster situation may be influenced by an absent mother rather than or in addition to an absent father. Therefore, to ensure methodological rigor, resident biological mothers were controlled and only households with a resident biological mother were included in this study.

Based on the results of this study and consistent with previous research (see Gormon-Smith et al., 1996; Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Price, 2000; Wallen & Rubin, 1997) paternal presence is a critical element in the healthy development of male youth. Because of this, decades old systems that encourage procreation outside of wedlock, divorce, and paternal alienation through archaic and misguided alimony, child support, and welfare (Allen & Brinig, 2012; Carbone, 1990) should be reconsidered. These findings are particularly important in the face of the growing societal trend to glorify single mothers as heroes. The label single mother is used almost synonymously with strong and worn as a badge of honor. For example, British Vogue (2023) published an article titled, *Single Mothers Are Heroes. It’s Time We Started Treating Them As Such* and Jezebel’s (2015) article *Single Mom By Choice: A Great Option for ‘Strong-Ass Bitches’*—both pushing the



feminist narrative that “women need men like a fish needs a bicycle”. And while this narrative, that men are useless, may be true for some feminists, empirical literature finds that for children, particularly boys, a man in their life—specifically a father—is invaluable.

LIMITATIONS

Although the results suggested delinquent behavior in adolescent males is influenced by household structure, this study contained several important limitations that must be addressed. Notably, the study is cross-sectional and fails to account for possible confounders, omitted variables, and reverse-causality. Also, levels of supervision/monitoring, and parental involvement were not accounted for and have been shown to be greater in two-biological-married parent families on average than in single parent families (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Mosier, 2022). Factors such as insufficient supervision/monitoring are more likely to manifest in single mother households than in two-parent-married families or stepfamilies. In addition, stepfathers were the only alternative to a biological father accounted for in this study. Other alternative to biological fathers such as grandfathers, uncles, and coaches and other mentors could have been considered. Another notable factor that was not accounted for in this study was the possible influence the stress of divorce may play in delinquent behavior. This study’s sole measure of SES was income. While income is the predominant measure of SES, other elements such as neighborhood--which play a role were neglected. It is entirely feasible that, for a variety of reasons (e.g. remaining in a family home) that families with high incomes could live in bad neighborhoods.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research is needed to address many of the limitations listed. To help better understand the association between fathers and delinquency in adolescent males, paternal involvement in addition to paternal household presence, must be considered. Future research should also consider other alternate male figures such as athletic coaches and academic mentors’ effect on delinquent behavior on young males living in single mother households. In addition, types and severity of delinquent behavior (e.g. violence, property crime, substance abuse and the seriousness of these offenses) associated with paternal absence should be delineated and further studied. Lastly, because of the growing number of single father families (Demuth & Brown, 2004), a comparison in the effects between single father and single mother households on adolescent male delinquency would be interesting and would help control for the role divorce plays in delinquency (as opposed to paternal absence).

CONCLUSION

Using data collected from Add Health’s longitudinal survey W1, findings suggests that when SES, race, and age are accounted for, the presence of a father figure during adolescence is likely to have protective effects for males in curbing delinquent behavior. The presence of a biological father in the home is statistically significant and negatively associated with an increase in delinquent behavior. Conversely, single mother households are significantly and positively



associated with delinquent behavior in adolescent males. The presence of a stepfather was negatively associated with delinquent behavior, but not to a significant degree, suggesting an alternative to a biological father in the home may mitigate negative consequences associated with paternal absence. It must be noted that the study did not account for alternative to biological fathers other than stepfathers or the possibility that stress induced by divorce influences delinquent behavior as opposed to, or in addition to, paternal absence.

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A LITERATURE REVIEW OF FATHER-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS ON FATHERING SELF-EFFICACY

Muzamal Rehman & Gary Lee



ABSTRACT

The roles of fathers have changed over the years and fathers are now increasingly involved in caregiving for their child, it is therefore important that they are confident in their fathering role. Fathering self-efficacy refers to confidence in one's fathering abilities. This paper reviews 10 studies that have used father-specific interventions to increase self-efficacy in fathers, and their effectiveness. The review identified that father-specific interventions are nuanced and require certain aspects for effectiveness, such as a male facilitator, video-feedback, strength-based feedback, professional support, peer support, and experiential activities. Due to several methodological issues discussed in the review, the application and generalisability of the interventions should be interpreted with caution. Future research suggestions include developing father-specific measures for self-efficacy, exploring why males are often viewed as second class parents, and how our view of fathers has tended to be corrupted by ideological assumptions about males and masculinity popular in contemporary culture.

Keywords: fathers, men, parenting interventions, self-confidence, self-efficacy



INTRODUCTION

Fatherhood

The roles of fathers today are vastly different than previous generations (Yeung et al., 2001). Previously, a nuclear family consisting of a married mother and father with children was commonplace, however over the years, family structure has changed to now include same-sex couples, joint families, single mothers, and single father families amongst others (The Centre for Social Justice, 2020). Same-sex couples choose to have children via a variety of methods including adoption, surrogacy and insemination (Department for Education, 2018); family structure has been found to influence parenting practices, for example some research suggests that household chores and parenting duties are more equally shared in same-sex couples than in heterosexual couples (Biblarz et al., 2010).

Other changes in societal norms, such as one partner working outside of the home, expectations and behaviours have meant that fathers are expected to be increasingly involved in raising their children (Bianchi et al., 2006; Cornille et al., 2005). In previous generations, the main emphasis of father's contribution to the family was financial (Pleck et al., 1997), however increasingly, contemporary fatherhood focuses on caregiving and emotional labour (Pleck, 2010). Lamb et al. (1985) proposed a typology of father-involvement consisting of three parts: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Engagement involves the direct interaction of the father with the child, accessibility relates to both the physical and psychological availability of the father to his child, and responsibility refers to providing for the child.

Research has shown that father involvement and closeness positively contribute to the psychological well-being of their child (Van wel et al., 2000; Amato et al., 1999), independence (Rosenberg et al., 2006), cognitive development (Bronte-Tinkew., 2008) and academic success (Allen et al., 2007; Anthes., 2010). Father-involvement has also been linked to intergenerational transmission of attitudes and behaviours (Giménez-Nadal et al., 2019, Pieroni et al., 2018), such as less stereotypical views of gender roles (Allgood et al., 2012), less risky behaviours and other externalising behaviours (Anthes et al., 2010; Su et al., 2017).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy can be defined as 'a situation specific form of self-confidence' (Stevenson, 2010). Despite the increased involvement of fathers in child-rearing, fathers continue to experience low self-efficacy in their role (Ferketich et al., 1995) and are underrepresented in parenting self-efficacy literature (Sevigny et al., 2010). One such reason for this is that current fathers were brought up in an era where their fathers were not expected to be involved in child-caregiving, as such, today's fathers have little understanding or experiences to draw upon (Henwood et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2014) which can result in difficulties embodying a positive paternal role-model (Paschal et al., 2011). Adding to this, although societal expectations have changed of fathers in their care-giving role, attitudes are incongruent; Featherstone (2009) stated that social and healthcare services perceive fathers as either absent or disinterested which could influence their



treatment of fathers as secondary to mothers and therefore overlooked by the healthcare system. Recent attitudes towards fathers are consistent with the above; for example, in the recent COVID-19 pandemic, fathers in the UK were excluded from maternity care (Andrews et al., 2022), leaving them feeling insignificant, excluded, and ostracised (Nespoli et al., 2021; Stacey et al., 2021; Vasilevski et al., 2021). This highlights the need for professionals and services to actively involve fathers in child-related experiences to improve their self-efficacy, as fathers' perceptions of their self-efficacy affect not only their parenting ability and acquisition of new skills (Bandura, 1977, 1982), but also satisfaction with the parenting role and as such the degree of effort put into parenting (Reece et al., 1998; Hudson et al., 2001).

Parenting programs

Parenting programs to increase self-efficacy have been widely researched (Begle et al., 2011; Webster-Stratton et al., 1996; Sanders, 2008). In a meta-analysis by Spencer et al. (2020), it was found that parenting programs significantly increase parents' self-confidence in their parenting skills as well as parent-child relationship, positive child behaviour and satisfaction with parenting. Historically, parenting interventions have focused on mothers' needs (Panter-Brick et al., 2014) and where interventions have been targeted for both the mother and father, fathers' attendance has been low in comparison to mothers (McKee et al., 2021; Lundahl et al., 2006); this may be because fathers feel the interventions are not targeted for them (Sicouri et al., 2018) which may be a result of intervention material and recruitment strategies using general approaches, rather than father-specific. Whilst father-specific interventions exist, they are rarely reported (Havighurst et al., 2019)

CURRENT REVIEW

Objectives

This review explores the effectiveness of father-specific interventions in increasing fathering self-efficacy. Previously reported father-specific interventions have focused on a 'deficit' view, where the primary aim of the intervention has been to reduce violence, domestic abuse or substance abuse (Cowan et al., 2019; Holden et al., 2010); the current review seeks to review studies, including the methodological quality, where the primary goal of the intervention is to increase fathers' self-efficacy. Fathers have only recently started to be represented in research about parenting self-efficacy, and while studies have shown that the characteristics linked to fathers' parenting self-efficacy are like those linked to mothers' parenting self-efficacy, important differences still exist (Gross et al., 1994; Reece et al., 1998; Leerkes et al., 2007)

The question to be answered in this review is 'What father-specific interventions are available in peer-reviewed literature and how effective are they?'. Clinical implications and recommendations for future research will be discussed along with strengths and limitations of the studies.



Methods

Search Strategy

An electronic search was conducted using 5 databases including MEDLINE, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature Plus with Full Text (CINAHL), SPORTDiscus with Full Text, APA PsycInfo and APA PsycArticles on 30th January 2023.

A Boolean search was conducted using the text ‘(Father OR Dad) AND Group Intervention’ to include studies involving groups or individual interventions. The term ‘Father’ was selected to ensure there was a broad definition (e.g., biological, father figures, and father surrogates). The term ‘AND’ was used to combine relevant search terms. To match the aims of this review, only peer-reviewed articles were included in this study from 2002 – 2023. The time-period limiters were put in place due to the changes in the conceptualisation of fatherhood over the last two decades, and the growing body of literature supporting the importance of fathers’ active involvement in their children’s lives (Lamb, 2010).

Selection of studies

A total of 964 studies were identified (MEDLINE=397, CINAHL=272, APA PsychInfo=265, SPORTDiscus=18, APA PsychArticles=12). After initial scoping of study titles, it was identified that some articles included animals, children, irrelevant studies and studies in languages other than English therefore the following limiters were applied to automatically exclude such papers:

- English language
- Age: 18 years and over
- Gender: Male
- Population: Human male (other population options included animals, females and inpatients)

Following the application of the above limiters, a total of 202 articles were identified, of which 12 were duplicates; the remaining 190 were then screened by their title and abstract to identify if they met the review’s criteria. Microsoft OneNote was used to group together unsuitable articles, based on the exclusion criteria in Table 1.

The 190 paper’s title and abstract were read to identify relevant papers. Of the 190 papers, 174 were excluded due to reasons such as not being relevant to the topic e.g. encouraging dads to support in breastfeeding or reducing smoking (n=47), interventions were not specific to the father e.g. couple-based (n=55), the study reported child outcomes or family outcomes only (n=27) and studies in which there was no intervention, or in which there was no measure of parenting confidence (n=16), these studies included those in which parenting skill may have been measured, but not parenting confidence. It was important to make this distinction as the current study is interested in the appraisal of the father’s capability to engage in parenting tasks after the



intervention, rather than skill acquisition or improvement in skill only, as confidence cannot be implied through skill acquisition.

This left a total of 16 articles for full-text review. Using the Staffordshire University electronic search, the 16 full-text articles were extracted into a folder and their references were downloaded; all except 2 articles were readily available to download, Staffordshire University librarians were used for locating the remaining 2 articles. Microsoft excel was used to extract information about the interventions and measures used in the studies, during this process, a further 6 were excluded due to either no relevant information on parenting skills or measure of confidence (n=3), primary aim of the intervention was not improving parenting skills or confidence (e.g., communication about sex and vagal flexibility) (n=2) and duplicate (n=1). This left a total of 10 studies for this review.

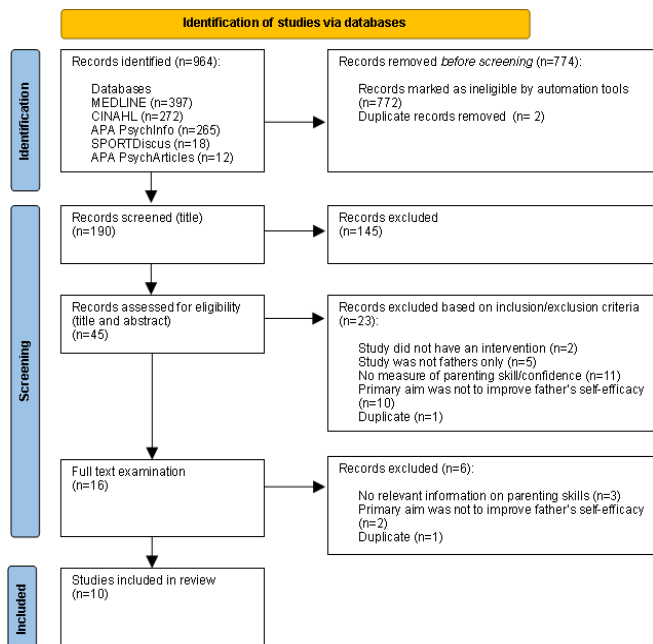
Table 1. Exclusion and inclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Must include an intervention	Grey literature and systematic reviews
Intervention must be targeted specifically for fathers	Results from intervention focus on child-outcomes or family-orientated outcomes e.g. child behaviour or relationship between father and partner
Must include a measure of parenting confidence	Primary aim of intervention is to reduce risk behaviours of father
Primary aim must be to improve fathers' confidence in parenting abilities	Couple-based interventions or interventions in which fathers and other caregivers attended the group together
Peer-reviewed articles in English language	



Figure 1 highlights the search strategy and details of excluded papers

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram



Quality Review

Consideration was given for using one quality appraisal tool across all studies in this review, however, as there is no quality assessment tool that can be applied equally well across all study types (Katrak et al., 2004), two quality appraisal tools were used, Down's and Black checklist for quantitative studies (1998) (appendix 1) and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool 'MMAT' for all other methods (Hong et al., 2018, appendix 2). Although the MMAT considers all the methodological designs in this review, it only consists of 7 questions per study type, 2 of which are screening questions. In comparison, the Down's and Black (1998) consists of 27 questions about the studies' internal and external validity, selection bias and power, offering a more thorough quality analysis. Further, 7 out of 10 of the studies in this review use quantitative methods, therefore the Down's and Black (1998) tool was used for a comprehensive analysis of these papers, and the MMAT covers all the other methodological designs (n=3) in this review.

For the current review, question 8 of the Down's and Black (1998) tool was removed across all 7 quantitative studies (appendix 1) as this is related to clinical trials which is not applicable to any of the studies in this review. For ease of interpretation, all 'yes' responses were given a score of 1, including the final question related to power which in the original checklist ranges from 0-5 depending on the sample size, therefore the maximum score was 26, instead of 32. Gearing et al (2009) and Raouna et al (2021) did not have control groups, therefore questions related to a control group were removed for these studies (Q5, Q13 and Q20-23), which gave a



total score of 20; yes (1), no (0) and unable to determine (0). The following scores have been suggested for the quality of the study: excellent (26-28); good (20-25); fair (15-19); and poor (14) (Hooper et al., 2008), however due the total score varying across all studies, a label of quality from poor to excellent has not been given, instead a percentage score has been given depending on the number of criteria met in the checklist.

For three studies (Lucas et al., 2021; Cornille et al., 2005; Gamboa et al., 2019) the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool MMAT, (appendix 2) was utilised (Hong et al., 2018). As suggested by the MMAT guidelines, relevant questions for each study were considered, giving a total score of 7. A summary of all study scores in this review can be found in table 2 and appendix 3.

RESULTS

Overview of the studies

Ten of 202 articles met the inclusion criteria. Of these, 7 were quantitative (Lee et al., 2012; Gearing et al., 2008; Raouna et al., 2021; Chacko et al., 2018; Hudson et al., 2003; Havighurst et al., 2018; Magill-Evans et al., 2007), 1 was a case study (Gamboa et al., 2005), 1 used a mixed methods approach (Cornille et al., 2005) and 1 was qualitative thematic analysis (Lucas et al., 2021).

Eight of the interventions were group based (Gearing et al., 2008; Raouna et al., 2021; Chacko et al., 2018; Havighurst et al., 2018; Lucas et al., 2021; Cornille et al., 2005., Gamboa et al., 2019), with fathers having face-to-face access to other fathers. One of the interventions was based online and included a discussion forum where fathers could interact with other fathers about the intervention material (Hudson et al., 2003) and only one did not include any access to other fathers (Lee et al., 2012). Of all interventions, only two were completely individual based (Lee et al., 2012; Magill-Evans et al., 2007), with fathers being given material to consume individually (videotape feedback or booklet), however both had access to a professional to discuss the information i.e., home visitor and a nurse.

The studies in this review focused on interventions designed to improve fathering self-efficacy, which covers fathers' confidence and fathers' parenting skills. Many of the studies utilised newly developed interventions, however Raouna et al., (2022) used a well-established program 'Mellow Babies', which had previously been used for mothers. Cornille et al. (2005) also used a well-established program, 'The Dad's Project' however it had not previously been used for fathers in a prison setting. All other interventions were newly developed for the purpose of their study; an overview of the studies can be found in appendix 4.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Design and methodology

Quality ratings of the studies ranged from 46% to 92%, with seven studies scoring 70% or above (table 2). Designs of the studies included historical comparison (Lee et al., 2012), randomised controlled trial (Chacko et al., 2018; Havighurst et al., 2019; Magill-Evans), pre-



experimental designs (Cornille et al., 2005; Gearing et al., 2008), quasi-experimental repeated measures design (Hudson et al., 2003) focus group (Lucas et al., 2021) and secondary data analysis (Gamboa et al., 2019).

Of the qualitative studies, Gamboa et al. (2019) clearly reported the procedure and attempts made to ensure internal and external validity e.g., coding and comparisons completed by two researchers and discrepancies discussed, further, this study used triangulation for increased validity, digital recordings of discussions and written reports of father's experiences. However, there was no mention of reflexivity.

In comparison, Lucas et al. (2021) reported reflexivity and focused on their gender, female, which is an important characteristic, particularly in research about fathers. In both studies, a qualitative approach was appropriate to answer the research question. In Cornille et al. (2005) mixed methods study, the authors state that the Parental Attitude Research Instrument (Schluderman et al., 1977) was used, however no descriptive statistics are reported except z scores; the authors state significant differences were found pre and post intervention, but no such evidence has been presented for readers to investigate subjectively. Furthermore, the paper does not report themes or direct quotations from the semi-structured interviews or detail where these can be found, raising questions on validity.

Participants and recruitment

Five out of ten studies recruited fathers of children aged between 0 and 5 years (Lee et al., 2012; Hudson et al., 2003; Havighurst et al., 2018; Magill-Evans et al., 2007; Gamboa et al., 2019), one stated the children were 'young' (Chacko et al., 2018), one study reported the fathers in the study had children aged between 1 and 16 years (Lucas et al., 2021), one study's fathers had children with a mean age of 8.5 years (Raouna et al., 2021) and two studies did not report on the ages of the children (Cornille et al., 2005; Gearing et al., 2008). As interventions were aimed at improving father's self-efficacy, it is perhaps not unusual that six of the studies in this review recruited fathers of young children. Gamboa et al. (2019) deliberately invited a more experienced father to the groups for father knowledge-transmission, though the age of the child of this father is not reported. Eight of the ten studies used a community sample of fathers, whereas two used more specific samples; Cornille et al (2005) study recruited incarcerated fathers as the intervention was run across prison sites and Lee et al. (2012) recruited fathers from a NICU setting, as such, most of the samples in this review are representative of the target population, except the aforementioned two studies. However, caution needs to be applied when generalising results as only two studies (Gamboa et al., 2019; Cornille et al., 2005) used a non-white population, the remaining eight studies used a majority white sample and all participants in the studies in this review, except one (Chacko et al., 2018) spoke English as their main language. In more diverse fathers, intersections of identity, such as culture, parental/gender roles and interpretations of masculinity, may affect aspects such as group engagement and relatability to facilitators, which subsequently may impact fathering self-efficacy.



Quantitative sample sizes ranged from 14 – 87; studies with larger sample sizes (Havighurst et al., 2018; Magill-Evans et al., 2007; Coornille et al., 2005) were recruited from services with access to many fathers e.g., three male prison sites, schools and links with healthcare professionals who delivered routine home visits after the birth of the child. Despite larger sample sizes in these studies, the maximum in any intervention group was 87 in an RCT (Havighurst et al., 2018). Of the eight studies delivered in a generic community setting, four used recruitment strategies which would indicate low generalisability of the sample of participants. For example, participants were recruited from an existing men's group (Gearing et al., 2008), parent support groups, prenatal classes (Magill-Evans et al., 2007), and existing family support services (Chacko et al., 2018; Lucas et al., 2021). Recruiting from these groups induces issues of selection bias; participants are not representative of 'general' fathers as they are already seeking a form of support, this indicates they may already be open and more willing to improve their fathering skills or engage in the intervention.

Four out of ten studies did not recruit a control group due to difficulties with recruitment of fathers (Gearing et al., 2008; Raouna et al., 2021; Cornille et al., 2005; Gamboa et al., 2019). Raouna et al., (2021) intended and attempted to recruit a control group, however due to a low number of participants, this was not achievable. Gearing et al (2008) reported a change in recruitment strategy from 'passive marketing' to 'active community outreach' as they too struggled with recruitment.

Lucas et al. (2021) conducted a focus group for people who attended the Dads Group. It is likely that fathers who agreed to attend the focus group already found the intervention helpful. It may have been more useful to collect quantitative responses from all participants of the group or use a combination of subjective and objective measures of self-efficacy post intervention.

In Cornille et al. (2005) study, prison officers selected participants for the intervention, no other details about the selection of participants are given such as informed consent, therefore this raises concerns about ethics and biases in responses due to potential power dynamics in a prison setting. Power dynamics may also have played a role in the responses of participants from Raouna et al. (2021) study in 'Mellow Babies'. Fathers in this study were deemed 'at risk' (low family economic and psychosocial resources, such as poor mental health and substance abuse), and recruited by healthcare professionals, indicating a likelihood of them being open to safeguarding services for their child. Subsequently, this raises questions of social desirability in engagement of the intervention and self-reporting outcomes. The remaining eight studies reported that participants provided informed consent and did not appear to have confounding factors to participation.

Measures

Measures were varied across the studies and included the following; Fathering Ability in NICU (Lee et al., 2012), Family Assessment Measure (FAM-III) (Gearing et al., 2008), The Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (Raouna et al., 2021), Dyadic Parent-child interaction



Coding System-R (Chacko et al., 2018), Infant Care Survey (Hudson et al., 2003), Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (Havighurst et al., 2018; Magill-Evans et al., 2007), Nursing Child Assessment Scale (NCATS), an observer rated questionnaire, sub-scales from Fathers' Parental Attitude Research Instrument and a semi-structured interview (Cornille et al., 2005). Lucas et al., (2021) utilised 2 focus groups for The Dad's Group and Gamboa et al. (2018) used thematic analysis to measure fathering self-efficacy after the Building Bridges to Fatherhood Program. Validated and widely used questionnaires were used across all quantitative and mixed-methods studies, except for Lee et al. (2012) who used a uniquely developed questionnaire for the purpose of their study.

Eight of the ten studies used self-report questionnaires and two used a combination of observer rated and self-report (Chacko et al., 2018; Magill-Evans et al., 2007). Self-report measures raise the question of bias, therefore potentially limiting the validity of the results. Social desirability may influence participant's responses, particularly in Magill-Evans et al. (2007), Lucas et al. (2021) and Cornille et al. (2005) in which the success of the intervention was being discussed directly with the participants and conclusions were being drawn about the fathers' confidence in their role as a father from their responses. Nonetheless, self-report measures could be seen as an integral part of father-inclusive practice and using other forms of measures, such as partners' ratings, may undo the work of validating the importance of the role of the father. Partners of fathers have previously rated father outcomes in studies (Opondo et al., 2016), one of which is from this review (Havighurst et al., 2018); this can perpetuate low self-efficacy in fathers as they may perceive their partners/mother of their child as more knowledgeable about their role as fathers than they are.

Data analysis

In quantitative studies, the statistical tests used to assess main outcomes were appropriate. All studies stated the significance level and the actual probability values, except in Hudson et al. (2003) who did not report exact probability values, highlighting lack of transparency. Of the seven quantitative and one mixed methods study, four did not report an effect size (Gearing et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2012; Hudson et al., 2003; Cornille et al., 2005) however all except one (Cornille et al., 2005) provided data on means and standard deviations from which the effect size was calculated by the author. For consistency, all studies effect sizes have been converted to Cohen's d.

In the two qualitative and one mixed method studies, only one reported reflexivity (Lucas et al., 2021). The lack of a statement of reflexivity in Gamboa et al. (2019) and Cornille et al. (2005) study raises questions about the credibility of the findings and further does not allow deeper understanding of the work (Dodgson, 2019). Cornille et al. (2005) is particularly poor in quality due to the lack of transparency in their results including themes, quotations and general lack of rigour in reporting results.

Publication Bias



Although studies from grey literature were not included in this review, a search was conducted to compare the literature to that of peer-reviewed articles. Searches indicate that a variety of father-specific interventions are being conducted, for example, digital parenting interventions for dads (Xie et al., 2023) and theses on play-based interventions, attachment-based parenting programmes, and interventions for disadvantaged fathers. When compared with studies in the current review, similar techniques are being used, such as experiential learning and video-feedback. Consistent with findings in the current review, often it can be difficult to recruit to interventions targeting fathers.

In addition to this, many programs exist in the UK for improving fathers' self-efficacy in parenting such as 'Dadventurers', 'Dads Rock', 'Leeds Dads', 'Dangerous Dads', 'This Dad Can', 'National Fatherhood Initiative' and 'The Fathers Right Movement, many of which are already using techniques employed in the studies in the current. In line with the findings of Lee et al. (2020), many father-specific interventions are being conducted but not reported, as such, there is a need for standardised evaluations and reporting of these programs.

Synthesis of Findings

The use of a narrative synthesis was deemed appropriate for this literature review as all studies entailed a varied approach to the intervention, characteristics of the fathers and outcome measures used to measure parenting skills and confidence. Father-specific interventions are still in their infancy, as such, a narrative synthesis approach allows one to focus on a wide range of questions and discussion points, not just the effectiveness of the intervention (Popay et al., 2006). Across all studies, three prominent areas were identified which will be discussed: 1) Delivery (including format) of the interventions 2) Activities within intervention to increase self-efficacy and 3) Effectiveness of the intervention.

Delivery of interventions

The studies were conducted in various countries, four of which were based in USA (New York, Nebraska, Chicago and Florida), two in the UK (Scotland and England), two in Canada, one in Australia and one in Taiwan. Although the interventions in which the countries were conducted were varied, the methods used in the interventions were similar as described in table 2.

Eight out of 10 of the interventions were delivered to fathers in 'generic' community settings, whereas two of the interventions were delivered to a specific group; one to fathers of babies in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (Lee et al., 2012) and one to prison inmates (Cornille et al., 2005).

Five of the eight group-based sessions specified the number of sessions in the intervention, which ranged from 7 sessions to 12 sessions, with each session ranging from 2-2.5 hours. All interventions were delivered by professionals such as nurses, unspecified 'clinical professionals', unspecified practitioners, teachers, social workers and assistant teachers and program-trained individuals with a master's or PhD in Psychology or Social work. Gamboa et al. (2019) used peer-



led African American fathers and Cornille et al. (2005) did not report who delivered the intervention. Eight out of ten interventions were purposefully led by male facilitators so that participants could relate to the facilitator and as such feel comfortable engaging in the intervention and disclosing personal information.

In manualised programs, facilitators received training before delivering the intervention. Father-to-father local knowledge-transmission was used as an important tool within the interventions and as such group discussions were encouraged by facilitators, even if the groups were more task-focused.

Group-based interventions with other fathers are a strength in the eight studies of this literature review. Bennett et al. (2013) found that the ‘group-based’ element played an important role in improving the psychosocial functioning of parents. This is also supported by a systematic review of qualitative studies, where it was found that feeling accepted and supported by other parents, acquiring new skills and understanding in a psychologically safe environment led to increased confidence in dealing with challenging behaviour of their child and a reduction in feelings of guilt and shame (Kane et al., 2007). Peer support is a valued aspect of parenting programs.

Activities used to increase self-efficacy.

The interventions used a variety of activities to increase fathering self-efficacy. These methods included discussions, for example about masculinity, fathers’ roles within the family, how the participants themselves were fathered, the meaning of fatherhood for them, communication, emotions and the fathers’ role in their child’s development.

Experiential exercises were used in some programs once the group participants were comfortable with each other; these exercises involved interacting with their children during the session for example reading books, completing homework together, singing songs to younger children, whereas other experiential exercises were for fathers to bond with one another through go-karting, facials and reading books. Video-feedback methods were commonly used in all except 4 studies (Lee et al., 2012; Gearing et al., 2008; Hudson et al., 2003; Lucas et al., 2021) in two ways, one where fathers were video-taped interacting with their child and strength-focused feedback was given, and second where fathers watched videos of either positive parenting or exaggerated parenting mistakes to facilitate discussion on parenting skills.

Video-feedback is a recommended approach in the NICE guidelines (NICE, 2016) and is a widely used effective strategy (Fukkink., 2008), however, with fathers already being treated ‘secondary’ to mothers, their use with fathers may feel more disciplinary than supportive. In Magill-Evan et al. (2007) study, fathers were videotaped in their home with a 5-month-old; this transition period is already known to be stressful. The ‘use-of-self’ was also encouraged in facilitators e.g., sharing their own experiences of being a father, with the aim of role-modelling to the participants and encouraging a safe-space for self-disclosure.

A detailed description of interventions for each study can be found in table 3.

**Table 3.** Detailed description of interventions to increase fathering self-efficacy.

No.	Author, country	Intervention name	Intervention description
1	Hudson et al. (2003) Nebraska, USA	New Fathers Network	<p>This was an internet-based intervention consisting of 3 sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A library of information (approximately 300 files related to infant development and concerns of new fathers) 2. Discussion forums 3. Email access to Advanced Practice Nurses. <p>This was primarily a social support intervention where new fathers could access support from other fathers and nurses, particularly to address any concerns or questions about their transition to fatherhood.</p>
2	Magill-Evans et al (2007), Canada	N/A	<p>In this intervention, the father was videotaped in his home (by a home visitor), teaching his baby to play with a toy. Immediately after, the tape was jointly reviewed by the father and home visitor, positive aspects of the interaction were praised and behaviour that needed refining was discussed.</p> <p>New information was shared in the form of a handout, followed by another scheduled visit one month later by the same home visitor. Handout one described the baby's cues and handout two was about how babies learn</p>



			(attain the baby's attention, show and explain, give time for the baby to try and then praise). Each visit took approximately one hour.
3	Gearing et al (2008). Canada	Re: Membering Fatherhood Group Program	This intervention was a manualised program consisting of eight 2-hour sessions on consecutive weeks. Topics included: introduction to fathering, how we were fathered and how we father, co-parenting and fathering, life balance and fathering, separation, divorce and blended family issues, stages of human development, gender differences and similarities and finally positive fathering and group ending'. The sessions included dyadic presentations and experiential exercises. The sessions were delivered by two men who were trained in the delivery of the program. The 'use of self' was encouraged with regards to sharing their own fathering experiences.
4	Lee et al (2012) Taiwan	N/A	The intervention comprised of 2 parts. Part 1) a 25-page booklet written in simple language and containing coloured illustrations of real NICU scenes. Content of the booklet included: 'the equipment the baby used, baby's developmental care in the NICU, baby's nutrition, baby's appearance, what your baby is doing, what you can do with your pre-term baby when you are at



			NIVU and relaxation tips for fathers’.
			Part 2) Nurse guidance. A nurse would be present at each visit from the father, encouraging implementation of the booklet and supporting the father to use relaxation skills.
5			This intervention was a group-based, interactive, father-to-father local knowledge transmission. The sessions utilised videotaped vignettes of exaggerated errors to generate group discussion and shared book reading between father-child. Of particular importance for this program was combining Dialogic Reading (DR) and Behavioural Parent Training (BPT), targeting improvements in parenting behaviour.
	Chacko et al. (2018). New York	Fathers Supporting Success in Pre-schoolers: A Community Parent Education Program (FSSP)	A strength-based approach was used for the program, focusing on meaningful father-child interactions that also address child outcomes; this was seen as an important factor to engage fathers in BPT.
6			This intervention consisted of seven weekly 2-hour sessions in the evening and a 2 hour booster session. A structured manual was used to deliver the program. Sessions included watching videos of emotion coaching vs emotion dismissing, handout materials, practice exercises such as reading story books, role-plays, and group discussions.
	Havighurst et al (2018). Australia	Dads Tuning in to Kids	



7	Raouna et al. (2021) United Kingdom	Mellow Dads Program	<p>This intervention is a 14-week early parenting, group intervention program delivered by 2-3 practitioners, of which at least one is a male. Mellow babies is for mothers and fathers 'Mellow Mums and Mellow Dads', however the programs are gender-specific and have separate groups. A week-by-week description was not available; however, the sessions include personal videotaped feedback of activities such as feeding, "hands-on" practice during mealtime and playtime, quizzes, video discussions, joint activities for parent and babies including songs, water play, mirroring and outings to libraries.</p> <p>It targets parents experiencing psychosocial difficulties with children up to 18 months old. The program provides transport, childcare, meals and free or inexpensive materials for parent-child activities to practice at home.</p>
8	Lucas et al (2021). Scotland	The Dad's Group	<p>Weekly support, each session lasting 2 hours. The number of sessions has not been reported. Structured and unstructured group-based discussion took place (topics included societal problems, crime, and mental health), the sessions also included input from practitioners and activities designed to</p>



			enhance parenting skills and support wellbeing, such as go-karting, bowls and self-care activities such as pampering; facials and making bath-bombs.
9			This intervention consisted of eight, 2.5-hour sessions. Each session had a different topic: DADS Actively Developing Self, DADS Actively Developing Safety and Sensitivity, DADS Actively Developing Play Skills, DADS Actively Developing Communication Skills, DADS Actively Developing Stress Management Skills, DADS Actively Developing Effective Discipline Skills and 2 sessions at the end of DADS Actively Developing Experiential Skills (the last consisting of a celebration of achievements throughout the program).
	Cornille et al (2005) Florida	The DADS Project (prison inmates) Number per group not reported	Facilitators encouraged group interaction, modelling by facilitators, and verbal persuasion. Facilitators are encouraged to self-disclose. Role-plays and the use of multimedia resources (e.g., popular videos) were also utilised in the sessions.
10		Building Bridges to Fatherhood Program/ Pilot Group-based	This intervention consisted of 12 sessions, split into 3 units with 3 sessions each. Unit 1 was 'Fatherhood' (sessions your children need you, a journey not a destination, know your rights) Unit 2 was 'Communication'
	Gamboa et al (2019). Chicago	Fatherhood Intervention (PGFI)	



(clear communication, keeping your cool, problem solving) and Unit 3 was 'Parenting' (understanding your children, nurturing your children, and guiding your children). Additional sessions included a closing session and feedback sessions. The sessions involved psychoeducation, discussions of parenting style, watching videos and role-playing exercise.

Effectiveness of interventions

An effect size was calculated for all seven of the quantitative studies using Cohen's d , either by the authors of the study or the author of the current review (table 2). Of the studies that did report effect sizes, all but one used Cohen's d ; Magill-Evans et al. (2007) used partial eta squared which was converted to Cohen's d through effect size automation tools.

Two reported a large effect size of $d=2.1$ (Lee et al., 2012) and $d=0.9$ (Gearing et al., 2018), three reported a medium effect size of $d=0.5$ (Raouna et al., 2021), $d=0.6$ (Chacko et al., 2018) and $d=0.5$ (Havighurst et al., 2018) and one reported a small effect size of $d=0.2$ (Magill-Evans et al., 2007). The PSOC measure is made up of two subscales, one for parenting satisfaction and one for efficacy; the effect size for the self-efficacy has been reported in this review as it related to the aims. Hudson et al. 2003 did not report an effect size, however through the current author's calculations, a Cohen's $d=-0.05$ was identified in father self-efficacy measures.

Overall, seven out of ten studies reported that the intervention was effective in increasing fathering self-efficacy, five of these studies were quantitative (Lee et al., 2012; Raouna et al., 2021; Chacko et al., 2018; Hudson et al., 2003; Havighurst et al., 2018), and two qualitative (Lucas et al., 2021; Gamboa et al., 2019). Cornille et al. (2005) did not adequately report results on parenting confidence despite it being the main aim of the intervention, suggesting publication bias and Gearing et al (2008) and Magill-Evans et al (2007) studies reported non-significant results on one or more subscales measuring parenting skills or confidence. In Magill-Evans et al (2007) study using the PSOC measure, there was no significant improvement in parenting confidence after the intervention, however on an observer-reported measure (rated by 4 observers), parenting skills significantly improved after the intervention.

In Lucas et al (2021) and Gamboa et al (2019), authors reported an increase in skills in communication styles, balancing their life while being actively involved in their child's life, confidence in how to 'be a good father' (being present, providing financially, disciplining and nurturing) and understanding how relationship dynamics between the father and mother can affect



the father-child relationship. In addition to this, the men became 'more involved' fathers with an improvement in their confidence in modern parenting culture, 'providing' and meeting expectations of fatherhood through adversity e.g., capped benefits, cost of living, political and dealing with social pressures to be an ideal father. Skills were also improved in settling child at night, reading stories and being more affectionate. Participants in these studies also felt more confident in becoming emotionally closer to their children and showing their vulnerability.

In Lee et al (2012) and Hudson et al (2003), fathers were given material to read independently. The amount of time spent engaging with the material was not recorded. Hudson et al (2003) used an internet-based approach where data on engagement with material may have been more readily available than in Lee et al (2012) NICU based study in which fathers were given physical copies of booklets. The increase in fathering self-efficacy in these studies does not specify which part of the intervention was most effective for improving father's skills and confidence, for example the increase may have been due to other factors such as discussion with other fathers, or observing other parents in the NICU setting, rather than engaging in material; this raises questions on validity. Furthermore, many of the study's participants were new fathers; an increase in confidence post intervention may have been due to maturation. As fathers' experiences in providing care for their child increases, so too does their confidence in their skills (Bianchi et al., 2006) which suggests that caution should be taken when interpreting results.

DISCUSSION

An increasing body of research proves the positive impact active fatherhood has in the development of a child. With the increased involvement of fathers in active caregiving, it is important that father's feel confident in their parenting skills as research has shown that parenting self-efficacy is closely linked to proficient parenting behaviours (Jones et al., 2005)

This review explored father-specific interventions on increasing fathering self-efficacy and identified 10 peer-reviewed articles with a mixture of individual and group-based interventions. Although interventions were varied across studies, some important similarities were identified which could shape future father-specific intervention. These include practical 'hands-on' approach in which fathers are practising skills or learning through video-feedback or role-play, experiential exercises with children involved, strength-based feedback from professionals, access available to a professional, peer-support, father-exclusive interventions, facilitator self-disclosure and being able to relate to the facilitator e.g., male and/or father. Peer-support is of particular importance to fathers, distinctly because they are often overlooked by health and social care services and seen as secondary to mothers.

Most studies in this intervention reported effective interventions, with effect sizes ranging from $d=0.2$ to $d=2.11$, however it is to be noted that only 5 out of 10 studies incorporated a comparison/control group due to issues with recruitment, therefore results should be interpreted with caution, further, sample sizes were small for most of the studies with only 5 of the 10 studies



recruiting more than 30 fathers. Issues with recruitment to interventions was a common theme throughout the studies, with larger sample sizes coming from well-established programmes for parents. Given that father-specific interventions are still new, recruitment strategies may be an important aspect to consider in the development and planning stages of further interventions, particularly consideration of funding.

Further, this review focused on fathers' self-efficacy; self-efficacy is a dynamic process shaped by various experiences (Bandura, 1997) and can increase or decrease as children grow (Jones et al., 2005). The majority of the studies in this review delivered interventions to fathers of young children, not all ages of children were represented, therefore the application of these interventions may only be relevant for fathers of young children.

Clinical Implications

There is a continued need for father-only interventions to increase fathers' confidence and skills. Mazza (2002) reports that more helpful than simply providing parenting advice is direct practice and peer support. This finding is supported by other research which has shown that parents value group-based parenting programs as they offer a sense of community and support (Mueller et al., 2009; Law et al., 2009), this is particularly important for fathers who may otherwise feel isolated. Fathers' low self-efficacy and feelings of loneliness can be reduced by group activities, which also enable participants to see themselves as role models for other, not only as fathers or males, but as individuals worthy of respect (Mazza, 2002).

To overcome the difficulty of recruiting fathers to interventions, there is a need for father-specific 'hands-on' advertising (not passive), flexible service provision, and emphasising the value of father involvement (Bayley et al., 2009; Salinas et al., 2011). It is also vital to explore fathers' preferences for parenting program content, delivery, or features. For example, fathers have reported that the most significant factors to their willingness to take part include male facilitators, face-to-face group delivery of information, details about intervention success and the use of practical skills-based activities in the intervention (Frank et al., 2015; Scourfield et al., 2016). Practical barriers to engagement in parenting interventions have also been identified, including work commitments, lack of time, and travel distance (Salinas et al., 2011), therefore these should be considered when planning the delivery of the interventions. Lee et al., (2020) conducted a systematic review of father-inclusive perinatal parent education programs and created a list of recommendations which are pertinent to this review.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this review. Firstly, only peer-reviewed articles were included in this review; studies in grey literature were not included.

Second, most of the studies in this review used general parenting self-efficacy measures; as previous research has predominantly been conducted with mothers, these measures may not be appropriate for fathers e.g. Parenting Sense of Competence includes mother-specific statements



such as ‘my mother was prepared to be a good mother than I am’ (6 out of 17 items) and may therefore not accurately capture father’s self-efficacy.

Finally, critical appraisal tools allow us to appraise the reliability, importance, and applicability of evidence, however, the appraisal interpretation of the studies was conducted by one author making the results subjective. The quality of studies varies in this review and as such the application and replication of interventions should be conducted with caution.

Future research

Searches in grey literature, e.g., google scholar and Ethos indicate that there is much interest in fatherhood for example theses exist on identifying fathers’ needs for their wellbeing during the transition to fatherhood, father’s experiences of prenatal care, father’s mental health in the transition to fatherhood and reviews on ‘promising practices’ in fatherhood programmes (Bronke-Tinkew et al., 2012). As such, it is possible that grey literature could have added more information to this review. The quantity of grey literature indicates that there is a need for more rigorous research to be conducted in father-specific interventions, and their effect on father self-efficacy. Further, within future research, there is a need for larger, more diverse samples (e.g., gay fathers, ethnic minorities) and control groups are needed to confirm the effectiveness and generalisability of interventions. This could be achieved by detailed planning for recruitment and involving fathers in materials used to advertise. In addition to this, given that there are important differences in variables associated with mothers’ self-efficacy and fathers’ self-efficacy, and the changing conceptualisation of fatherhood, it may be important to consider the development of a new measure specifically designed to measure fathers’ self-efficacy and utilise this in father-specific interventions.

Additionally, follow-up research from the current paper may focus on why males are often viewed as ‘second class’ parents, how criteria for parenting in general lack the essential gender specificity that fathering deserves, and how our view of fathers has tended to be corrupted by ideological assumptions about males and masculinity popular in contemporary culture.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the evidence base for father-specific interventions is growing. Research in this area highlights the importance of considering nuance when recruiting and delivering interventions specifically for fathers, elements such as facilitator characteristics, group size and material of intervention should be given careful consideration as well as the importance of a group-based environment for social support. The small sample sizes in this review are a limitation of the studies, however it draws important attention to the need to continue father-inclusive practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Downs and Black

Downs, Black

Appendix

Checklist for measuring study quality

Reporting

1. Is the hypothesis/aim/objective of the study clearly described?

yes	1
no	0

2. Are the main outcomes to be measured clearly described in the Introduction or Methods section?

If the main outcomes are first mentioned in the Results section, the question should be answered no.

yes	1
no	0

3. Are the characteristics of the patients included in the study clearly described?

In cohort studies and trials, inclusion and/or exclusion criteria should be given. In case-control studies, a case-definition and the source for controls should be given.

yes	1
no	0

4. Are the interventions of interest clearly described?

Treatments and placebo (where relevant) that are to be compared should be clearly described.

yes	1
no	0

5. Are the distributions of principal confounders in each group of subjects to be compared clearly described?

A list of principal confounders is provided.

yes	2
partially	1
no	0

6. Are the main findings of the study clearly described?

Simple outcome data (including denominators and numerators) should be reported for all major findings so that the reader can check the major analyses and conclusions. (This question does not cover statistical tests which are considered below).

yes	1
no	0

7. Does the study provide estimates of the random variability in the data for the main outcomes?

In non normally distributed data the inter-quartile range of results should be reported. In normally distributed data the standard error, standard deviation or confidence intervals should be reported. If the distribution of the data is not described, it must be assumed that the estimates used were appropriate and the question should be answered yes.

yes	1
no	0

8. Have all important adverse events that may be a consequence of the intervention been reported?

This should be answered yes if the study demonstrates that there was a comprehensive attempt to measure adverse events. (A list of possible adverse events is provided).

yes	1
no	0

9. Have the characteristics of patients lost to follow-up been described?

This should be answered yes where there were no losses to follow-up or where losses to follow-up were so small that findings would be unaffected by their inclusion. This should be answered no where a study does not report the number of patients lost to follow-up.

yes	1
no	0

10. Have actual probability values been reported (e.g. 0.035 rather than <0.05) for the main outcomes except where the probability value is less than 0.001?

yes	1
no	0

External validity

All the following criteria attempt to address the representativeness of the findings of the study and whether they may be generalised to the population from which the study subjects were derived.

11. Were the subjects asked to participate in the study representative of the entire population from which they were recruited?

The study must identify the source population for patients and describe how the patients were selected. Patients would be representative if they comprised the entire source population, an unselected sample of consecutive patients, or a random sample. Random sampling is only feasible where a list of all members of the relevant



population exists. Where a study does not report the proportion of the source population from which the patients are derived, the question should be answered as unable to determine.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

12. Were those subjects who were prepared to participate representative of the entire population from which they were recruited?

The proportion of those asked who agreed should be stated. Validation that the sample was representative would include demonstrating that the distribution of the main confounding factors was the same in the study sample and the source population.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

13. Were the staff, places, and facilities where the patients were treated, representative of the treatment the majority of patients receive?

For the question to be answered yes the study should demonstrate that the intervention was representative of that in use in the source population. The question should be answered no if, for example, the intervention was undertaken in a specialist centre unrepresentative of the hospitals most of the source population would attend.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

Internal validity - bias

14. Was an attempt made to blind study subjects to the intervention they have received?

For studies where the patients would have no way of knowing which intervention they received, this should be answered yes.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

15. Was an attempt made to blind those measuring the main outcomes of the intervention?

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

16. If any of the results of the study were based on "data dredging", was this made clear?

Any analyses that had not been planned at the outset of the study should be clearly indicated. If no retrospective unplanned subgroup analyses were reported, then answer yes.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

17. In trials and cohort studies, do the analyses adjust for different lengths of follow-up of patients, or in case-control studies, is the time period between the intervention and outcome the same for cases and controls?

Where follow-up was the same for all study patients the answer should be yes. If different lengths of follow-up were adjusted for by, for example, survival analysis the answer should be yes. Studies where differences in follow-up are ignored should be answered no.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

18. Were the statistical tests used to assess the main outcomes appropriate?

The statistical techniques used must be appropriate to the data. For example non-parametric methods should be used for small sample sizes. Where little statistical analysis has been undertaken but where there is no evidence of bias, the question should be answered yes. If the distribution of the data (normal or not) is not described it must be assumed that the estimates used were appropriate and the question should be answered yes.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

19. Was compliance with the intervention/s reliable?

Where there was non compliance with the allocated treatment or where there was contamination of one group, the question should be answered no. For studies where the effect of any misclassification was likely to bias any association to the null, the question should be answered yes.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

20. Were the main outcome measures used accurate (valid and reliable)?



For studies where the outcome measures are clearly described, the question should be answered yes. For studies which refer to other work or that demonstrates the outcome measures are accurate, the question should be answered as yes.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

Internal validity - confounding (selection bias)

21. *Were the patients in different intervention groups (trials and cohort studies) or were the cases and controls (case-control studies) recruited from the same population?*

For example, patients for all comparison groups should be selected from the same hospital. The question should be answered unable to determine for cohort and case-control studies where there is no information concerning the source of patients included in the study.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

22. *Were study subjects in different intervention groups (trials and cohort studies) or were the cases and controls (case-control studies) recruited over the same period of time?*

For a study which does not specify the time period over which patients were recruited, the question should be answered as unable to determine.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

23. *Were study subjects randomised to intervention groups?*

Studies which state that subjects were randomised should be answered yes except where method of randomisation would not ensure random allocation. For example alternate allocation would score no because it is predictable.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

24. *Was the randomised intervention assignment concealed from both patients and health care staff until recruitment was complete and irrevocable?*

All non-randomised studies should be answered no. If assignment was concealed from patients but not from staff, it should be answered no.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

25. *Was there adequate adjustment for confounding in the analyses from which the main findings were drawn?*

This question should be answered no for trials if: the main conclusions of the study were based on analyses of treatment rather than intention to treat; the distribution of known confounders in the different treatment groups was not described; or the distribution of known confounders differed between the treatment groups but was not taken into account in the analyses. In non-randomised studies if the effect of the main confounders was not investigated or confounding was demonstrated but no adjustment was made in the final analyses the question should be answered as no.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

26. *Were losses of patients to follow-up taken into account?*

If the numbers of patients lost to follow-up are not reported, the question should be answered as unable to determine. If the proportion lost to follow-up was too small to affect the main findings, the question should be answered yes.

yes	1
no	0
unable to determine	0

Power

27. *Did the study have sufficient power to detect a clinically important effect where the probability value for a difference being due to chance is less than 5%?*

Sample sizes have been calculated to detect a difference of x% and y%.

	Size of smallest intervention group	
A	<n ₁	0
B	n ₁ -n ₂	1
C	n ₁ -n ₃	2
D	n ₁ -n ₄	3
E	n ₁ -n ₅	4
F	n ₁ +	5



Appendix 2

Mixed Methods Assessment Tool

Part I: Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?				
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions? <i>Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.</i>				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?				
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?				
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?				
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?				
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?				
2. Quantitative randomized controlled trials	2.1. Is randomization appropriately performed?				
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?				
	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?				
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?				
	2.5. Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?				
3. Quantitative non-randomized	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?				
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?				
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?				
	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?				
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?				
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?				
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?				
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?				
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?				
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?				
5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?				
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?				
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?				
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?				
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?				



Appendix 3

Summary of quality appraisal

Downs and Black																											
No.	Question number.																									/26	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		26
1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	U	Y	N	N	U	N	N	U	U	12
2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	20	
3	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	U	-	Y	Y	U	N	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	U	13/20
4	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	U	U	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	U	Y	15
5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	24	
6	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	U	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	21
7	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	U	Y	U	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	18/20
No.	Question number.											Total (out of 7)	Comments														
	S1	S2	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	5	5			5													
8	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	6	Screening and 'Qualitative' section questions answered of MMAT (1.1 - 1.5)													
9	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	U	Y	N	5	Screening and 'Mixed Methods' section questions answered of MMAT (5.1-5.5)													
10	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	6	Screening and 'Qualitative' section questions answered of MMAT (1.1 - 1.5)													



Appendix 4

Summary of studies

Table 2. Summary of studies and findings

Authors	Age of child	Sample size (intervention = I and Control = C)	Setting	Measures for self-confidence	Effect size	Results summary	Quality score (%)
[1] Hudson et al., (2003)	4-8 weeks	I=14 C=20	Internet based (individual)	Infant Care Survey (Froman and Owen, 1989) 52 item likert scale	*Cohen's d= 0.05	Significant improvement in the intervention group for the Infant Care Survey.	12/26 (46%)
Quantitative	[2] Magill-Evans et al (2007)	5 months I=84 C=85	Home visits (individual)	Parenting sense of competence scale (PSOC; Johnston and Mash, 1989) 16 items rated on a 6-point scale and Nursing Child Assessment Teaching Scale (NCATS) 73 behaviours, measures parenting skill and scored by observers.	Cohen's d= 0.06 (satisfaction subscale) Cohen's d= 0.2 (efficacy subscale)	Only significant main effect for PSOC was the efficacy subscale but no significant interaction with time or either PSOC subscale. Significant increase in NCATS scores post intervention.	20/26 (77%)
	[3] Gearing et al., (2008)	Not reported I=29 C=0	unspecified - groups lead by 2 professionals	Subscale 'role performance' of the Family Assessment Measure and Parenting Stress Index (120 item self-report) subscale includes competence	*Cohen's d= 0.9	Significant difference in 'role performance' scale between time point 1 and time point 3. Results were not maintained at 3 months follow up.	13/20 (65%)
[4] Lee et al., (2012)	"New-born"	I=34 C=35	NICU (individual)	Fathering ability in the Neonatal ICU 18 item scale 5-point likert scale	*Cohen's d= 2.11	Fathers in intervention group scored significantly higher in fathering ability than control group.	15/26 (58%)
[5] Chacko et al., (2018)	"Young children"	I=64 C=62	Head start centres (group based, mix of small and large groups)	Dyadic Parent-child interaction Coding System-R (Robinson and Eyberg, 1981), focused on positive parenting, negative parenting and child problems both self-reported and observed	Cohen's d= 0.6	Significant improvement in parenting skills in the intervention group post intervention, with a moderate effect size.	24/26 (92%)
[6] Havighurst et al., (2018)	4-5 years	I=87 C=75	Community centre, local library, researcher's onsite training venue	Parenting sense of competence scale (PSOC; Johnston and Mash, 1989) no. of items not noted.	Cohen's d = 0.3 (satisfaction subscale) Cohen's d = 0.5 (efficacy subscale)	Significant increase in PSOC scores in the intervention group.	21/26 (81%)



	[7] Raouna et al., 2021 [3]	Mean age of 8.5 years	I=19 C=0	Group based environment	The Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (15 item self-reported)	Cohen's d= 0.5	Significantly increased parenting confidence. But no longer reached significance level during ITT analysis. (e.g., people who dropped out scored higher on pre scores for confidence than people who completed MB).	18/20 (90%)
Qualitative	[8] Lucas et al., (2021)	1-16 years	I=7 C=0	Family Centre, in the community in a deprived area	Focus group discussion	N/A	Qualitatively reported improvement in confidence in modern parenting, providing financially and meeting fatherhood expectations through adversity. Skills improvement included 'hands-on' tasks such as settling child at night, reading stories and being more affectionate	6/7 (86%)
Mixed methods	[9] Cornille et al., (2005)	Not reported	I=63 C=0	Prison (3 different facilities)	Qualitative feedback and eight subscales from the Parental Attitude Research Instrument (Schuldermann and Schuldermann, 1977)	No means, SDs or effect sizes reported.	No significant improvements in subscales related to parenting self-efficacy. Authors state there was an improvement in parenting skills however no such thing has been reported qualitatively in the study.	5/7 (71%)
Case study	[10] Gamboa et al., (2019)	Majority aged 2-5	I=4 C=0 (Pilot study)	Specific setting not reported, but participants were recruited from a large urban area.	Qualitative description from reflections during interview	N/A	Qualitatively reported improvement in parenting skills related to communication styles, balancing life with active parenting, confidence in being a 'good father' (e.g., being involved in child's day-to-day life, providing financially, disciplining and nurturing)	6/7 (86%)

* Effect size was not reported in studies therefore it has been calculated by author from reported Mean and Standard Deviation using formula $d = (M_1 - M_2) / SD_{pooled}$

Study 1 effect size has been calculated from Mean and SD of groups at 8 weeks (second time point)

Study 2 effect size was reported in partial eta squared; this has been converted to cohen's d for standardised effect size reporting using Means and SD from 8 months (second time point)

Small effect size 0.2
Medium effect size 0.5
Large effect size 0.8



AUTHOR PROFILES



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BROKEN BONDS: FATHER ABSENTEEISM AND THE PATH TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Shane Satterley



ABSTRACT

This study delves into the intricate relationship between father absenteeism, and a susceptibility to extremist ideologies leading to violent extremism. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory and strain theory, the research explores how father absence can propel individuals towards seeking identity and purpose through extremist groups. Empirical evidence and case studies are presented to support these findings, emphasising the significance of early intervention, positive parenting, and psychosocial support in mitigating radicalisation risks. The presence of strong social support networks emerges as a crucial resilience factor in reducing susceptibility to extremist influences. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how family dynamics, including father absenteeism, shape individuals' vulnerability to extremist ideologies and involvement in terrorism. The study underscores the need for further exploration to unravel the nuanced role of family dynamics in radicalisation processes.

Keywords: family dynamics, fatherlessness, radicalisation, terrorism, violent extremism



INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of radicalisation to violent extremism has garnered significant attention, with researchers and policymakers striving to understand the complex factors contributing to individuals' involvement in extremist activities. While the family unit has been recognised as a potential source of radicalisation, the specific role of father absenteeism in this process remains relatively underexplored.

This paper aims to examine the impact of father absenteeism on susceptibility to extremist ideologies and subsequent engagement in terrorism. Theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory and strain theory provide insights into how father absenteeism may contribute to feelings of alienation, disenfranchisement, and vulnerability to radical ideologies. Empirical research has further elucidated this link, with longitudinal studies identifying paternal absence as a predictor of extremist behaviour among at-risk youth, and case studies of known terrorists highlighting the prevalence of father absenteeism.

While not all individuals who experience paternal absence are susceptible to radicalisation, resilience factors such as strong social support networks and positive mentorship can mitigate this influence. By delving into the nuanced relationship between father absenteeism and terrorism involvement, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how family dynamics shape individuals' susceptibility to extremist influences.

Through a deep review of academic literature and media reports this study aims to provide valuable insights into the potential link between father absenteeism and radicalisation to violent extremism. By examining individual cases, this research endeavours to offer a nuanced perspective on the role of fathers in shaping individuals' vulnerability to extremist ideologies and involvement in terrorism. This paper is intended to be a starting point for future research and discussion on this underexplored aspect of radicalisation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between father absenteeism and criminal behaviour is well established. Research has shown that having an absent biological father at any time can impact delinquency and adult criminal behaviour (TenEyck et al., 2021). Father departure later in childhood is associated with increased delinquency in adolescence (Markowitz and Ryan, 2016). Parental absence, particularly father absence, is linked to negative pedestrian behaviours in primary school children (Meng et al., 2020). Moreover, the presence of a father figure during adolescence is likely to have protective effects, particularly for males, in both adolescence and young adulthood (Cobb-Clark and Tekin, 2014). Whilst the family unit is sometimes offered as a source of radicalisation, father absenteeism has been a topic of interest for few studies in the context of its potential link to radicalisation to violent extremism, despite more recent research focusing on the family unit. This literature review provides a concise summary of some key findings and insights from relevant research in this field.

Muna (2019) notes “that as compared to mothers, the role of father figures in countering violent extremism (CVE) has not been significantly explored. Many scholars agree that there exist many programs that empower women as agents of de-radicalization, but little attention is paid to the critical role played by father figures, or absent father figures in the radicalization



process” (p. 7). The influence of family dynamics, including father absenteeism, on the development of extremist behaviour has been examined in the context of various theoretical frameworks. According to social identity theory, individuals who lack a strong familial identity due to father absence may be more susceptible to seeking identity and purpose through extremist groups that offer a sense of belonging and purpose (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Additionally, strain theory posits that the absence of a father figure can contribute to feelings of strain and anomie (normlessness or a breakdown of moral values, standards, or guidance for an individual), which may propel individuals towards radical ideologies and behaviours (Agnew, 1992). Several articles outline how violent extremist groups operate as a support system for those affected by early life trauma (Sieckelinck et al., 2019; DeMichele et al., 2022; Mattsson & Johansson, 2020; Gould, 2021). As Lewis (2024) highlights “the coherent rules and support that appear[ed] to be much more available within extremist groups was a key pull factor in the radicalisation of young people growing up in environments where such support was *absent*. This dynamic was identified by approximately half of [Sieckelinck’s, 2019] sample of 34 former extremists and their families in the Netherlands (p. 25).

Some research has indirectly suggested that father absenteeism can have a significant impact on an individual's susceptibility to radicalisation. A study by Kruglanski et al. (2014) found that individuals who experience paternal absence may seek alternative sources of authority and belonging, making them more vulnerable to extremist ideologies. The absence of a father figure has been associated with feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement, which are factors that can contribute to the attraction of violent extremist groups (Scremin, 2023). Bjørge and Carlsson’s (2005) research highlights that adolescent individuals involved in extremist organisations frequently exhibit deficient or entirely absent connections with their fathers, and, on a broader scale, with their familial units. A longitudinal study by Jackson and Farrington (2018) found that paternal absence during childhood was a significant predictor of later engagement in violent extremism among a sample of at-risk youth, highlighting the enduring impact of father absence on the risk of radicalisation and underlines the importance of early intervention and support for individuals affected by this factor.

Other empirical studies have also provided some further insights into the possible association between father absenteeism and radicalisation. Rezaei and Goli (2010) in their sociological study of radicalised Muslims found that those leaning toward an Islamist-jihadist worldview were more likely to say that had experienced a death in the family. Similarly, the author found that Muslim Australians more likely to be support to the idea of martyrdom and killing civilians had a huge drop in connection with family, 80.1% for the whole sample of 1034 Muslim Australians down to just 47.7% for those that agree with or are warm to the idea of martyrdom (Satterley, 2024). In a unique discussion by Muna (2019) the author outlines the role of parents in radicalisation and prevention, when discussing fatherhood, the author notes how:

“the role fathers in both recruitment and prevention of violent extremism cannot be ignored or dismissed. In many cultures [all?], the father-son relationship is defining particularly when sons become of age. Empirical literature has shown that in the cases where the father figure is absent, feelings of resentment and isolation become evident. These may at times contribute to a young person’s vulnerability to recruitment into violent extremism”. In South Asia, research has been published to support this claim. In the province of Swat, Pakistan,



for example, about 65% of militant boys identified between the age of 12 and 18 had absent father figures” (p. 7).

Botha (2013) made similar finds in relation to youth susceptible to al-Shaabab in Kenya and noted how:

“the phenomenon about an absent father figure resembled those of J. Post in his study of 250 West German terrorists (from the Red Army Faction and the 2 June Movement). Results of that study indicated that 25% had lost one or both parents by age 14, whereas 79% had strained family relationships—and more intriguing was the fact that 33% had a particularly negative relationship with their fathers. She further posits that many respondents among the Allied Democratic Forces (44%), Lord’s Resistance Army (38%), al-Shabaab (18%), and Mombasa Republican Council (31%) had been raised without a father figure (Botha in Muna, 2019, p. 8).

Zych and Nasaescu (2022) conducted a systematic review of 33 studies on family-related risk and protective factors, the review included 14 family-factors for radicalisation. The authors found “that parental bias and mistrust towards other cultures, having extremist family members, and family conflicts, were related to more radicalization. [Whereas] high family socio-economic status, bigger family size and family commitment were related to less radicalization” (p. 3). The authors discuss how family can be both a source of protection and a potential risk for radicalisation. Furthermore, the authors highlight that families may provide protective factors such as positive parenting, resilience development, and resources, while also posing risk factors through poor resources, relationships, or undesirable ideological influence. Zych and Nasaescu suggest that families play a crucial role in preventing young people from radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremist groups. They also discuss the impact of radicalisation on families, including psychological, physical, and structural consequences such as victimisation, social isolation, and mental health issues. While their review does not explicitly state a correlation between father absenteeism and radicalisation, it does discuss the impact of family-related factors on radicalisation. The review mentions that parental involvement, supervision, and consistent parenting are related to the vulnerability of young people to radicalisation. It also suggests that children raised in extremist families are at a higher risk of becoming violent extremists themselves. Additionally, the paper emphasises the need for further research to confirm the role of family, including fathers, in understanding and preventing radicalisation.

More recent research has focused upon adverse childhood experiences (ACE) (Logan et al., 2024) or trauma (Lewis et al., 2024). Logan found that both left-wing extremists and right-wing extremists experienced childhood adversity, with a significant percentage experiencing four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACE) during their first eighteen years of life – 70% of their sample experienced “caregiver loss” where the caregivers were separated or divorced (p. 62). Other factors such as “physical neglect” and “caregiver incarceration” were extant, providing further evidence of parental (father) absence. Lewis (2024) highlights a study by Speckhard and Ahkmedova (2006) and their analysis of 34 Chechen suicide terrorists:

“Interviews with family members and associates highlighted that 27 of these individuals had experienced trauma prior to joining a group that advocated terrorism, and that many had



'changed dramatically first in response to the traumatic death of a loved one followed by their seeking out of their own accord a radical religious organization. In these cases it appeared that the individual was distraught following a traumatic loss and felt an overwhelming need for answers, comfort, substitute family ties, and the promise and means that were offered to him in these organizations to work toward enacting social justice (from their point of view)—albeit not through normally recognized channels—but by becoming terrorists” (p. 27).

Lewis (2024) refers to these pre-radicalisation factors as “proximal trauma” and concludes that “these proximal forms of trauma may play a role in accelerating radicalisation processes towards violent action, although it is difficult to infer causality” (p. 29).

Speckhard and Ellenberg (2020) report in their sample of 220 current or former members of ISIS, the three most prominent (of the eleven) adverse childhood experiences the individuals faced were “prior trauma”, “parental separation/divorce” and “deceased parent”. Another study by Böckler et al. (2018) highlights the family environment as a significant context for trauma emergence. Their analysis of terrorist offenders, forming the Developmental Pathway of School Attackers and Terrorist Attackers, identifies various risk factors at the family level, such as “illness and death of significant others”, divorce, and a “familial atmosphere characterized by emotional indifference and a lack of parental involvement” (Böckler et al., 2018, p. 11). These studies do not focus specifically on father absenteeism, they do however provide us some insight and highlight the broader factors that surround father absenteeism.

It is important to note that not all individuals who experience paternal/father absence are at risk of radicalisation and many or most individuals involved in terrorist groups do have a father in their lives, however, the underlying social and psychological experience is perhaps sometimes similar, as Muna (2019) outlines, “it is critical to note that these feelings [rejection and lack of belonging] can be experienced even in situations where both parents are present” (p. 8). Resilience factors, such as strong social support networks and positive mentorship, can mitigate the impact of father absenteeism on an individual's susceptibility to extremist influences (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Interventions that focus on strengthening family relationships and providing psychosocial support to individuals affected by paternal absence have shown promise in reducing the risk of radicalisation (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010).

Thus, there is little research focusing specifically on father absenteeism and its link to radicalisation to violent extremism and terrorism, this underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the role of family dynamics, particularly the role or absence of the father in shaping individuals' vulnerability to extremist influences.

METHODOLOGY

This study involves a thorough review of available sources, including academic literature and media reports. It focuses on examining the family dynamics of known terrorists, with a specific emphasis on the relationship between father absenteeism and the subsequent involvement of individuals in extremist activities. The data is gathered through an extensive analysis of the family backgrounds of numerous individuals involved in terrorist acts, encompassing a wide range of cases from different geographical locations and ideological



affiliations. This is done through search engines, academic libraries, Google Scholar, and the authors' physical book library.

The methodology employs a qualitative approach to identify and analyse the influence of father absenteeism on the radicalisation and involvement in terrorism of the individuals under study. The research involves the systematic collection and examination of information related to the family backgrounds of the subjects, with a particular emphasis on instances of parental divorce (almost always leading to less father involvement), the death of fathers, or the absence of fathers due to other reasons. This information is then analysed to draw connections between father absenteeism and the subsequent radicalisation and engagement in terrorist activities by the individuals.

By integrating individual case studies with existing literature, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the potential link between father absenteeism and its impact on individuals' susceptibility to extremist ideologies and involvement in terrorism. Additionally, the study highlights the most prominent Western terrorist attacks of this century to see if the factor of father absenteeism appears instructive.

LIMITATIONS

The approach of examining the relationship between father absenteeism and terrorism involvement has several limitations:

1. **Causality:** The study may struggle to establish a direct causal link between father absenteeism and terrorism involvement. While it can identify correlations, other factors such as socio-economic conditions, political and religious beliefs, and personal experiences may also heavily contribute to individuals' radicalisation and involvement in terrorism. We cannot overlook the influence of other significant factors, such as peer networks, online propaganda, and individual psychological vulnerabilities.
2. **Sample Bias:** The research focuses on known terrorists, which may introduce a sample bias. This approach may not capture individuals who were at risk of radicalisation but did not engage in terrorist activities. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to a broader population. Additionally, media reports or academic sources do not always include information about known terrorists' family background. However, more high-profile terrorist attacks appear to subject the perpetrators to more scrutiny, leading to an overrepresentation of high-profile, sometimes larger terrorist attacks in the sample.
3. **Ethical Considerations:** Ethical considerations regarding the privacy and dignity of individuals and their families were taken into account, and only publicly available information was used in the analysis.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the study, and future research should aim to address these challenges to provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to terrorism involvement. The methodology employed a qualitative research approach, combining an in-depth analysis of individual cases with existing scholarly sources. A thorough review of available sources, including academic literature and media reports, ensured a robust foundation for the research findings and analysis.



RESULTS

The Appendix presents a list of 90 case studies of known terrorists, examining the potential correlation between their involvement in terrorism and father absenteeism resulting from the divorce of their parents or the death of their father prior to radicalisation. It is important to note that some case studies may include multiple individuals, such as brothers.

Among the 90 case studies, 27 individuals, or 30%, experienced the death of their father, with 6 of those 27 individuals also having experienced the divorce of their parents. The remaining 63 individuals, or 70%, encountered the separation or divorce of their parents, or some form of reported father absenteeism.

Additionally, Table 1 provides a list of the 11 most prominent or high-profile Western based terrorist attacks of this century. This list includes the attack date and name, the number of reported known terrorists involved, the known number of deceased fathers of those terrorists, and the known number of instances of father absenteeism. It is important to note that if a father was reported to have died and divorced the mother or was absent for some reason, it was not counted twice; rather, it was counted as the father having died, under the assumption that this had a greater impact. It is highly anticipated that if more were known about the individuals for which no data were found, it would be likely that more father absenteeism would be found – these are marked ‘unknown’. Where the father of the terrorist was found (reported) to be alive, a ‘0’ was recorded.

Six of the eleven terrorist attacks involved some sort of father absenteeism. For instance, the September 11, 2001, attacks consisted of two sets of brothers, both of which had experienced the death of their father. A similar case was observed in the 2015 Paris attacks and the Charlie Hebdo shooting of the same year, where a set of brothers involved in each, had also experienced the death of their father. In contrast, the Boston Marathon brothers did not experience the death of their father but encountered his absence as he was reportedly in and out of the United States due to being in prison.

**Table 1. Most Prominent Western Terrorist Attacks of this Century**

Date	Attack Name	Known Number of Terrorists	Known Number of Terrorists Father Died	Known Number of Terrorists Father Absent
2001	September 11 Attacks	19	5	2
2004	Madrid Train Bombings	12+	Unknown	Unknown
2005	London 7/7 Bombings	4	2	1
2015	Paris Attacks	9	3	2
2016	Brussels Bombings	3	0	Unknown
2017	Manchester Arena Bombing	1	0	Unknown
2016	Nice Truck Attack*	1	0*	0*
2017	Stockholm Truck Attack	1	Unknown	Unknown
2017	Westminster Bridge Attack	1	1	N/A
2015	Charlie Hebdo Shooting	3	3	1
2013	Boston Marathon	2	0	2

*Experienced his own divorce and family issues before the attack.

DISCUSSION

This paper sheds light on the intricate relationship between family dynamics, particularly father absenteeism, and susceptibility to extremist ideologies leading to violent extremism. These initial findings underscore the critical role of early intervention, positive parenting, and psychosocial support in mitigating the risk of radicalisation. While not all



individuals with absent fathers are prone to radicalisation, resilience factors like robust social support networks play a pivotal role in reducing susceptibility to extremist influences.

Theoretical Frameworks and Implications

According to social identity theory, individuals derive a sense of identity and belonging from their social groups. In the case of father absenteeism, individuals may lack a strong familial identity, leading them to seek identity and purpose through extremist groups that offer a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Extremist groups may provide an alternative source of identity for individuals who feel disconnected due to the absence of a father figure. Moreover, strain theory posits that individuals experience strain when they are unable to achieve socially valued goals through legitimate means. The absence of a father figure can contribute to feelings of strain and alienation, pushing individuals towards seeking alternative sources of authority and belonging, such as extremist ideologies. Father absenteeism may exacerbate feelings of disenfranchisement, making individuals more vulnerable to radicalisation.

The relationship between father absenteeism and criminal behaviour is of course well established, this paper provides some initial findings that indicate this may also extend to violent extremism. An interesting question that arises in relation to religiously motivated terrorism is, are the individuals seeking their father figure in the form of the god of Abraham? Does this alleviate feelings of strain and anomie whilst providing moral and behavioural authority often delivered by a father? This, however, may be a sociological factor relating to religion more generally and out of the scope of this paper. More research is needed, and it also appears that this trend of father absenteeism is prevalent among non-religiously motivated terrorism also, as highlighted in the literature above and many case studies below.

Policy and Intervention Strategies

Understanding the link between father absenteeism and radicalisation is crucial for developing effective prevention strategies. Interventions focusing on strengthening family relationships, providing psychosocial support, and fostering positive male mentorship can help reduce the risk of radicalisation. Policymakers should consider the role of family dynamics in counterterrorism efforts and prioritise initiatives that address familial vulnerabilities associated with radicalisation.

Future Research Directions

What is out of the scope of this paper is the literature that focuses upon what fathers provide in the family unit, particularly in relation to young boys and men that cannot be easily replicated when absent (Farrell and Gray, 2018; Reeves, 2022). This is a useful impetus for future research that should delve deeper into the mechanisms through which father absenteeism influences susceptibility to extremist ideologies. Qualitative insights from in-depth interviews or deeper case studies could provide a more nuanced understanding of this relationship. Longitudinal studies tracking individuals' trajectories from childhood experiences of father absence to involvement in extremist activities would offer valuable insights into the long-term impact of family dynamics on radicalisation risk.



CONCLUSION

This paper provides valuable insights into the potential link between father absenteeism and susceptibility to radicalisation to violent extremism. By examining the influence of family dynamics, particularly the absence of fathers, it contributes to a deeper understanding of factors shaping individuals' vulnerability to extremist ideologies.

The integration of theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory and strain theory offers a nuanced perspective on how father absenteeism may contribute to feelings of alienation and vulnerability to radical ideologies. Empirical research, including longitudinal studies and case studies of known terrorists, has further elucidated this link, suggesting a significant association between paternal absence during childhood and later engagement in violent extremism.

While not all individuals who experience paternal absence are susceptible to radicalisation, resilience factors such as strong social support networks and positive mentorship can mitigate this influence. This highlights the importance of interventions focused on strengthening family relationships and providing psychosocial support to individuals affected by paternal absence.

By examining individual cases and empirical research findings, this research offers insights into the potential role of father absenteeism in shaping vulnerability to extremist influences. However, further research is needed to confirm and expand upon these findings. The study raises important questions about the nuanced interplay between family dynamics, including the role or absence of fathers, and susceptibility to radicalisation.

While this paper contributes to our understanding of this underexplored aspect of radicalisation, it is intended as a starting point for future research and discussion. Additional studies, particularly longitudinal and cross-cultural investigations, are necessary to establish causal relationships and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the complex factors contributing to radicalisation processes. This research highlights the need for continued exploration of family dynamics, including the impact of father absenteeism, in shaping vulnerability to extremist ideologies and involvement in terrorism.



APPENDIX

Terrorists who have experienced father absenteeism

1. **Osama bin Laden:** The divorce of his parents and the death of his father, Mohammed bin Laden, were influential factors in Osama bin Laden's life and may have contributed to his later involvement in terrorism.
2. **The Boston Marathon Brothers (Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev):** The Tsarnaev brothers experienced the absence of their father, who was reportedly in and out of the United States due to being in prison.
3. **Timothy McVeigh:** Oklahoma City bomber, his parents divorced at age 10.
4. **Mohamed Merah:** The perpetrator of the 2012 Toulouse and Montauban shootings in France, Merah's radicalisation was influenced by his fractured family background, including his parents divorced when he was five years old.
5. **Anders Behring Breivik:** The perpetrator of the 2011 Norway attacks, Breivik's parents' divorce when he was a child has been cited as a factor that contributed to his radicalisation and extremist actions.
6. **Brenton Tarrant:** The perpetrator of the Christchurch Mosque shootings, Tarrant experienced the suicide death of his father, his background also includes: his parents' separation and an abusive stepfather.
7. **The Train brothers'** complex relationship with their father, Ronald Train, and their troubled family dynamics, as well as their involvement in the Wieambilla shootings, 2022. The brothers cut ties with their father in their early 20s.
8. **Abdul Lathief Jameel Mohamed:** One of the suicide bombers in the 2019 Sri Lanka Easter bombings, Abdul Lathief Jameel Mohamed experienced the death of his father 10 years before the attacks.
9. **Tashfeen Malik:** The female perpetrator in the 2015 San Bernardino attack had a strained relationship with her father, who was reportedly estranged from the family.
10. **Rizwan Farook:** Male perpetrator of the 2015 San Bernardino attack, parents reportedly divorced when he was a child. The divorce occurred in 2006, and Rizwan Farook was around 14 years old at the time.
11. **Aafia Siddiqui:** Aafia Siddiqui, an MIT-educated Pakistani neuroscientist, became increasingly radicalised and allegedly involved with al-Qaeda after the death of her father.
12. **Dylann Roof:** The Charleston church shooter who carried out a racially motivated attack. Roof's parents divorced when he was around five years old, and he subsequently lived with his mother.
13. **John Allen Muhammad:** one of the perpetrators of the 2002 Beltway sniper attacks in the Washington, D.C. area. Reports indicate that Muhammad had a strained relationship with his father and experienced his absence during his formative years.



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14. **John Walker Lindh:** Known as the "American Taliban," Lindh converted to Islam in his teenage years. His parents divorced when he was young, and he struggled with the subsequent family dynamics.
 15. **Richard Reid (Shoe Bomber):** Richard Reid, who attempted to detonate explosives in his shoes on a flight in 2001, had a difficult childhood marked by his parents' divorce. Richard had become estranged and angry at age 11 after his parents' divorce.
 16. **Amedy Coulibaly:** Involved in the Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris in 2015, Coulibaly had a troubled childhood with his parents divorcing when he was young, and his father died.
 17. **Michael Adebolajo:** One of the perpetrators of the 2013 murder of British soldier Lee Rigby, Adebolajo had a tumultuous family history. His parents divorced, and he converted to Islam in his teenage years.
 18. **Zacarias Moussaoui: Moussaoui,** involved in the 9/11 attacks, experienced family turmoil, including his parents' divorce.
 19. **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed:** As the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had a complex family background. His father passed away when he was young, and his mother remarried multiple times.
 20. **Nidal Hasan:** Nidal Hasan, the perpetrator of the Fort Hood shooting in 2009, faced family challenges, including his parents' divorce.
 21. **Aafia Siddiqui:** Aafia Siddiqui, convicted for attempting to murder U.S. servicemen, experienced a turbulent family life. Her parents divorced, and she faced personal struggles, including mental health issues.
 22. **Bilal Hadfi:** One of the suicide bombers involved in the 2015 Paris attacks. His parents divorced, and his father died. "Hadfi suffered from the loss of his father which changed him completely, leading him to become outspoken in expressing his radical views".
 23. **Akhmed Chatayev:** Chatayev, involved in the 2016 Istanbul airport attack, had a troubled family history with his parents divorcing when he was young.
 24. **Mohammed Bouyeri:** Responsible for the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, Bouyeri came from a broken family background. His parents divorced, and he grappled with identity issues as a second-generation immigrant in the Netherlands.
 25. **Mehdi Nemmouche:** Nemmouche, responsible for the 2014 Brussels Jewish Museum shooting, had a difficult upbringing marked by family troubles, including his parents' divorce.
 26. **Omar Mateen:** The perpetrator of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Omar Mateen had a tumultuous family life. His parents divorced, and he struggled with his own relationships.



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27. **Omar Khadr:** A Canadian citizen, and Guantanamo Bay detainee, faced family disruptions, including his parents' divorce. He was captured as a teenager in Afghanistan and accused of participating in terrorism.
 28. **Aqsa Mahmood:** Aqsa Mahmood, a Scottish woman who joined ISIS, experienced her parents' divorce, and struggled with the cultural clash between her Scottish identity and her Pakistani heritage.
 29. **Sharif Mobley:** Mobley, an American involved in terrorism activities, faced family challenges, including his parents' divorce.
 30. **Ziad Jarrah:** 9/11 attacker. Parents divorced, experienced family disruption.
 31. **Ahmed al-Ghamdi:** 9/11 attacker. Father died when he was young.
 32. **Hamza al-Ghamdi:** 9/11 attacker. Father died when he was young.
 33. **Mevlut Mert Altintas:** Altintas, who assassinated the Russian ambassador to Turkey, experienced family issues, including the death of his father.
 34. **David Coleman Headley:** Involved in the planning of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, Headley's family life was marked by his parents' divorce.
 35. **Zachary Adam Chesser:** Chesser, known for attempting to join Al-Shabaab and for threatening the creators of "South Park," experienced family disruptions due to his parents' divorce.
 36. **Talha Asmal:** Talha Asmal, a British teenager who became the UK's youngest suicide bomber in Syria, had a family background marked by divorce.
 37. **Mohammad Sidique Khan (7/7 London bomber):** One of the perpetrators of the 7/7 London bombings, Khan's family life was affected by his parents' divorce and death of their father.
 38. **Rizwan Khan:** Brother of Mohammad Sidique Khan. Rizwan and Sadiq Khan, involved in the 7/7 London bombings, experienced family disruptions, including the death of their father.
 39. **Naser Jason Abdo:** Abdo, who planned an attack on Fort Hood in 2011, faced family disruptions, including his parents' divorce.
 40. **Naveed Haq:** Perpetrator of the Seattle Jewish Federation shooting in 2006, Haq experienced family disruptions due to his parents' divorce.
 41. **James Elshafay and Shahawar Matin Siraj :** Plotters of a foiled bombing plot in New York in 2004, both Elshafay and Siraj faced family challenges, including the death of Elshafay's father and Siraj's parents' divorce.
 42. **Shahawar Matin Siraj:** as above.
 43. **Ismail Haniyeh:** A prominent figure in Hamas, Haniyeh experienced family challenges, including the death of his father.



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44. **Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh:** Involved in the kidnapping and murder of journalist Daniel Pearl, Sheikh had a complex family background, including his parents' divorce.
 45. **Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (Underwear Bomber):** Attempted to detonate explosives on a flight in 2009, Abdulmutallab's family faced disruptions, including his parents' divorce.
 46. **Amine El Khalifi:** Planned to carry out a suicide bombing at the U.S. Capitol, El Khalifi faced family difficulties, including his parents' divorce.
 47. **Omar Ismail Mostefai:** One of the attackers in the 2015 Paris Bataclan theater massacre, Mostefai faced family challenges, including his parents' divorce.
 48. **Ahmad Khan Rahimi:** Convicted for the Chelsea bombing in 2016, Rahimi faced family disruptions, including his parents' divorce.
 49. **Yassin Salhi:** Perpetrator of the 2015 Saint-Quentin-Fallavier attack, Salhi's parents divorced, contributing to his troubled family life.
 50. **Reda Hame:** Involved in the 2015 Thalys train attack, Hame faced family challenges, including the death of his father.
 51. **Ayoub El Khazzani:** Attempted to carry out an attack on a Thalys train in 2015, El Khazzani faced family difficulties, including his parents' divorce.
 52. **Bilal Abdullah (Glasgow Airport attack):** Involved in the attempted 2007 Glasgow Airport attack, Abdullah faced family challenges, including his parents' divorce.
 53. **Mikael Davud:** Part of a group planning a terrorist attack in Denmark, Davud experienced family disruptions, including his parents' divorce.
 54. **Hasan Karim Akbar:** Perpetrator of the 2003 Camp Pennsylvania attack during the Iraq War, Akbar faced family challenges, including his parents' divorce.
 55. **Mohamed Osman Mohamud:** Attempted to detonate a bomb at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony in 2010, Mohamud faced family challenges, including his parents' divorce.
 56. **Said and Cherif Kouachi (Charlie Hebdo attackers):** The Kouachi brothers, involved in the Charlie Hebdo shooting in 2015, faced family challenges, including the death of their father. Their radicalisation was influenced by extremist ideologies.
 57. **Brahim Abdeslam:** One of the perpetrators of the 2015 Paris attacks, Abdeslam faced family challenges, including the death of his father.
 58. **Salah Abdeslam:** Brother of Brahim. One of the perpetrators of the 2015 Paris attacks, Abdeslam faced family challenges, including the death of his father.
 59. **Harun Causevic:** Arrested in 2015 for plotting a terrorist attack in Melbourne, Causevic's family background reportedly included issues related to parental divorce.



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60. **Sevdet Ramadan Besim:** Involved in a planned terrorist attack in Melbourne, Besim's family life included his parents' divorce. He was convicted for planning a terrorist act.
 61. **Wail al-Shehri and Waleed al-Shehri:** 9/11 hijackers, the brothers Wail and Waleed al-Shehri came from a large family. Their father died when they were young.
 62. **David Hicks:** Australian Taliban fighter. Father left him at age 10.
 63. **Ajmal Kasab:** Involved in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, father died when he was young.
 64. **Alexander Ciccolo:** Ciccolo was arrested on weapons charges and was reportedly planning to attack students in a university and live stream the executions. Contentious divorce at age five; mother had full custody.
 65. **Eric Harroun:** Parents divorced when he was nine; troubled U.S. military career; fought with rebel groups in Syria; faced legal consequences upon return.
 66. **Colleen LaRose (Jihad Jane):** Parents divorced when she was three; involved in a terrorist plot; arrested and faced legal consequences.
 67. **Emanuel Lutchman:** Father was not involved in his life; arrested for planning a terrorist attack and expressing support for ISIS.
 68. **Antonio Martinez (Muhammad Hussain):** Lived with only his mother; attempted to bomb a military recruitment centre in Catonsville, Maryland.
 69. **José Padilla (Abdullah al-Muhajir):** Father did not play an active role in his life; convicted on charges related to plotting a "dirty bomb" attack and providing support to Al-Qaeda.
 70. **Jamie Paulin-Ramirez:** Parents divorced; faced legal consequences for providing material support to terrorists.
 71. **Derrick Shareef:** Parents divorced; a male role model was absent in Shareef's life according to his mother; he was arrested for planning a grenade attack on a shopping mall in Illinois.
 72. **Bryant Neal Vinas:** Parents divorced; convicted for providing material support to Al-Qaeda and participating in a rocket attack on U.S. forces in Afghanistan.
 73. **Germaine Lindsay:** Badly affected by parents' divorce in 1994; participated as one of the suicide bombers in the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005.
 74. **Nadir Soofi:** Parents divorced; involved in the attempted attack on the "Draw Muhammad" cartoon contest in Garland, Texas, in 2015.
 75. **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi:** Father died when he was a boy; prominent figure in militant activities and founder of Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, later becoming associated with Al-Qaeda in Iraq.
 76. **Ayman al-Zawahiri:** An Egyptian physician and longtime deputy of Osama bin Laden, later becoming the leader of Al-Qaeda. His father died when he was a young man.
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77. **Khalid Masood (Adrian Russell Elms):** Perpetrator of the 2017 Westminster Bridge attack in London. His father died when he was a child.
 78. **Ilich Ramírez Sánchez (Carlos the Jackal):** A Venezuelan terrorist and convicted murderer. His father died when he was young.
 79. **Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari:** Attempted to carry out terrorist attacks in the United States. His father passed away while he was young.
 80. **Hafiz Saeed:** A Pakistani militant and founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba. His father passed away when he was young.
 81. **Safaa Boular:** Safaa Boular was found guilty of plotting an attack as part of the UK's first all-female terror cell. Her family was dysfunctional, and her parents divorced when she was six.
 82. **Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez:** Was responsible for the 2015 Chattanooga shootings, which killed five people. His parents divorced.
 83. **David Courtailler** and his brother...
 84. **Jermone Courtailler** were convicted in the Netherlands in 2004 for involvement in the 2001 plot to bomb the US Embassy in Paris. Both experience the divorce of their parents.
 85. **Foued Mohamed-Aggad:** Participation in the attack in Bataclan 2015 Paris attacks. His parents got divorced, he got alienated particularly from his father.
 86. **Rashid Mberesero:** Tanzanian national and a terror convict, who was sentenced to a life imprisonment by a Kenyan court in July 2019, grew without a father for 20 years, after his parents separated following persistent marital misunderstandings.

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DEI MUST DIE: HATRED AS CONTAGION

Paul Nathanson



ABSTRACT

DEI is a worldview that fosters the institutionalization of identity politics in general and of several closely related and politically aligned ideologies in particular. One central premise of DEI and related ideologies is that no other factors—not personal animosity, for instance, or even personal awareness—can explain systemic racism or sexism. DEI insists on racial or sexual diversity but rejects viewpoint diversity; moreover, it excludes those who hold disfavored viewpoints, using a basic dualistic structure (which identifies innately innocent victims with “us” and innately evil victimizers with “them”). Collective guilt lies at the very heart not only of “critical gender theory” and “critical race theory,” but also of every other form of identity politics on both the Left and the Right.

Keywords: antisemitism, DEI, feminism, gynocentrism, male, masculine identity, misandry



PROLOGUE

It has taken me a lifetime to write this essay. After a childhood of being bullied mercilessly by both boys and girls for being a sissy—that is, for what we all eventually understood as being gay—I became deeply troubled by the meaning of manhood, masculinity and even maleness (and, indirectly, of womanhood, femininity and femaleness). My problem was identity, first, personal identity and then collective identity. But my life and research has not led me to embrace the identity politics of our time. On the contrary, it has led me to *reject all* of the movements, or political ideologies, that now form the alphabet soup of identity politics on the Left and others on the Right. Before discussing a notorious case study of what can happen when identity politics trumps the *raison d'être* of a supremely prestigious institution, however, I must offer a summary of my research on identity in general and sexual identity in particular.

Everyone needs a *healthy* identity, both personal and collective (without which the result is personal or collective pathology in one form or another.) To attain a healthy identity, every person and every community must be able to make at least one *contribution* to the larger world (family, community or society) that is (a) *distinctive*; (b) *necessary to society*; and (c) *publicly valued*. As far as anyone knows, this has been a feature of human existence *ab initio*.

We know almost nothing about our remote ancestors, but we have no reason to believe that they sat around all day and pondered any of this. They simply did whatever they had to do, or could do, in the urgent need for collective survival. Men and women made comparable contributions. And both sexes paid high prices for doing so. Men were often killed by predators. Women often died in childbirth.

This *de facto* “egalitarianism” began to change in the late Neolithic period due to the rise of horticulture and then agriculture (or pastoralism), which eventually led to urbanization and specialization—which led in turn to trade, raiding or warfare, the rise of states or empires, increasingly complex organized religions and increasingly arbitrary social hierarchies. These hierarchies entailed adjustments in relations between men and women, for example, and in cultural perceptions of both men and women.

Of particular interest here is the gradually changing relation between maleness (the male body) and masculinity (its cultural interpretation). Most men (and women) were serfs. They did backbreaking work in the fields. Elite men (and women) did no menial work at all. Although chiefs or kings and their male courtiers hunted occasionally, it was to assert their status symbolically, no longer to provide food. Although they led armies into battle occasionally, moreover, they relied on conscript armies to do much of the dirty work (except when conscripts were urgently needed to produce food). Middle-class men—even ten thousand years ago, there was a small middle class of shopkeepers, traders, artisans, scribes and so on—relied even less often on their male bodies as venues of masculine identity. Rather, they were masculine because they did things that culture either prescribed or proscribed for men, sometimes but not always arbitrarily. Eventually, men with highest status became precisely those who did *not* perform manual labor (or even earn money). Athletic prowess is a ceremonial or vestigial form of masculinity. In some circles, even military prowess is a vestigial form of masculinity (although I won’t complain about that, because it’s also a lethal one).



This *separation of masculinity from maleness* continued gradually for many centuries but increased suddenly now and then due to a series of technological and therefore cultural revolutions. Among these were the Industrial Revolution (which eventually separated fathers from their families and replaced male muscles with machines in the factories and mines), the “Military Revolution” (during which modern states adopted a new social contract that turned all men, per se, into citizens but at the cost of becoming cannon fodder to serve the state), the Sexual Revolution (which “freed” both men and women, for the first time in human history, from the biological consequences and cultural responsibilities of sexual behavior but with disastrous consequences for marriage and especially for children), along with the more recent Reproductive Revolution (which, among other things, has reduced the male contribution to a “teaspoon” of sperm at the cost of trivializing the function of fathers within family life and thus expanding the ranks of fatherless children).

By now, women can do (almost) everything that men can do (although men can still *not* do at least one thing that women can do), which is fine in theory for supporting egalitarianism. Women can provide resources for themselves, for instance, and protect themselves and their children—if not on their own, then with help from state agencies (which have replaced men, per se, in the family).

Only one contribution of men, per se, remains both distinctive and necessary. And even fatherhood has been either trivialized or attacked relentlessly for decades in order to assert the “autonomy” of women (and, of course, to attract votes for politicians). The fragile position of fathers might gain strength in view of many “studies” that indicate great advantages for children with live-in fathers.ⁱ (So far, however, calls for re-evaluation of fatherhood are often ignored or even attacked as threats to the primacy of motherhood.) Fathers *are not assistant mothers*. Human fathers, unlike those of most other species, have evolved with a *distinctive and necessary function* in family life (as distinct from providing sperm). Unlike motherhood, fatherhood doesn’t begin when children are infants. Rather, it begins as children move in the larger world. Unlike mothers, fathers don’t necessarily provide their children with unconditional love, although many do, but do provide them with *earned respect*. I doubt that most mothers or fathers, let alone academics and politicians, understand this crucial distinction. Maybe it would require another cultural revolution to turn things around at this point.

Meanwhile, consider what happens to the increasing number of boys and young men who must now try to grow up *without a healthy identity* (that is, with nothing distinctive, necessary or publicly valued to contribute). Even though feminists did not invent or directly cause this problem, the fallout from feminist ideology has greatly *exacerbated* it. Some boys and young men abandon schools that either explicitly or implicitly treat them with contempt, ignorance and suspicion. Others abandon a society with no room for them *as men* by resorting to drugs and antisocial behavior such as crime. Still others abandon life itself. Say what you will about anxiety or depression among young women, the *suicide* rate for young men is much higher than for young women (who often attempt suicide as a way of crying for help).

Greatly *exacerbating* this identity problem is the relentlessly and pervasively hostile rhetoric of misandry, which is the fallout from ideological forms of feminism (as distinct from the gynocentric but still egalitarian rhetoric of early “second wave” feminism). From this point of view, men are the archetypal “others,” the origin of all evil and suffering. Worse, this “patriarchal” theory relies on a conspiracy theory of history. If women suffer in relation to men,



it must be because the remote ancestors of men *planned* it that way and because men today continue to benefit from this arrangement—even if they are not conscious of doing so. The problem is not this or that man but the society that men have created and sustained (presumably without any cooperation from women). In short, the problem is *systemic*. And if this or that innocent man suffers as a result of attempts to correct the system, then so be it. This notion of *collective guilt* lies at the very heart and is therefore the sine qua non not only of both “critical gender theory” and “critical race theory” but also of every other form of identity politics on both the Left and the Right. Consequently, my argument in this essay is implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) a *moral* one.

This is the *larger context* of identity politics. I argue here that one source of identity—not misandry (and not misogyny) per se—*underlies* and therefore *unites all* of these dualistic movements.

INTRODUCTION

Last night, I watched *Nazi Town, U.S.A.*,ⁱⁱ a documentary on the rise of American Nazi movements during the 1930s, notably the German-American Bund of Fritz Kuhn and the America First Committee of Charles Lindbergh. This is a useful production, because not many people remember these movements. After all, they ended suddenly when Nazi Germany declared war on the United States. But the show’s underlying point was more political than historical. More specifically, it was about the possibility of similar political movements emerging today. The show concluded with the repetition, in various words, of “It can happen here again.” This is self-evidently true. And why study history at all, in fact, if doing so amounts to nothing of more urgent importance than archeological digging at the remote site of some ancient community? Even though not one of the talking heads warned specifically of any contemporary American movement, many viewers must have linked American Nazis of the 1930s with those of today. And there are some today, but the analogy is very deceptive for three reasons.

For one thing, those talking heads concluded by making the point, not once but several times, that American Nazism did *not necessarily* disappear at the outbreak of war. Their institutions did, because these became illegal, but did their ideas disappear? Maybe not, viewers are told. I think that this point of view was deliberately tendentious and manipulative. Even so, it disregarded a striking historical discrepancy. The *very next* American generation, after all, produced the Civil Rights movement and the general rise of political *liberalism*.

Moreover, the Nazis (or “fascists”) of our time are far from influential. On the contrary, they are very marginal and easily dismissed as “deplorables.” They are angry about being left out of the middle-class mainstream, to be sure, but that makes any tendency toward “insurrection” a self-fulfilling prophecy of their adversaries.

More important for my purpose in this essay, however, is that the most significant historical analogy is not between Right-wing ideologues of the 1930s and Right-wingers of today but, on the contrary, between Right-wing ideologues of the 1930s and *Left*-wing ideologues of today. And this should surprise no one, because all political ideologies have much in common.ⁱⁱⁱ



That brings me, at last, to the topic of this essay. Like many other people, I have been following the story of Claudine Gay's fall from power at Harvard with its tumultuous cultural and political fallout. The uproar over this story has made it emblematic of the current zeitgeist. Beginning within a day of her resignation, countless journalists, pundits, politicians began to write about it.^{iv}

Gay was among three university presidents to be investigated by a congressional committee on the shocking outbreak, after the Hamas pogrom on 7 October 2023, of anti-Zionist or even anti-Semitic bullying of Jewish students. This included calling for "genocide" against Jews. The other two presidents were Liz Magill from University of Pennsylvania and Sally Kornbluth from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Not one of these leaders was willing to answer Elise Stefanik's question about her university's policy on free speech without revealing a double standard. Each of the three presidents insisted that (a) her university's policy strongly supported free speech; (b) her policy relied on censorship, however, to protect students from harmful speech; but also (c) her policy protected Jewish students from threats of genocide only on a "contextual" basis.

Public controversy did not end with that revelation of hypocrisy at these prestigious institutions. Kornbluth did not resign. Magill did resign within a week of the hearing. Gay resigned, too, after several weeks (remaining as a tenured professor on a very generous salary), but not entirely because of her policy on free speech.

The first problem for Harvard's board, which had initially supported her vigorously and defiantly, was an accusation of plagiarism. This brought attention not only to her academic publishing record (which was very weak) but also to her managerial ability (which was obviously very weak) and especially to her political support for DEI^v (which was very strong).

DEI remained in the background during the hearing itself, which was explicitly about university policies on anti-Semitic speech. Almost immediately after the hearing went viral, however, DEI entered the foreground in public discourse, which was partly about the double standard that DEI fosters (protecting some minorities from hate speech but not necessarily Jews) and partly about why Gay was hired in the first place and why she had to resign.

All of these factors added up to the likelihood that Gay had been promoted to her job as president not on merit (which DEI opposes as the main criterion of selection) but on her *identity* as both black and female (which DEI does promote). And all of this, in turn, led to public controversy over the prevalence of DEI at American universities (along with other institutions) and its consequences for free speech.

To the very end of Gay's status as president, moreover, Harvard's board (along with countless political and journalistic pundits) insisted that her resignation was the result of "systemic racism." But this reaction, many others argued, amounted to cognitive dissonance: an expedient excuse for refusing to accept reality. For the first time in decades, the prevailing ideology in academic and political circles—this has become known in various contexts as "progressivism," "intersectionalism," "postcolonialism," "anti-racism," "transgenderism," "Social Justice" and "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (but as "wokism" to its adversaries)—was widely ridiculed in the public square even by many of its former supporters among liberals and Democrats. Consequently, some major donors to Harvard and eventually some members of the board itself demanded Gay's resignation.



In her letter of resignation,^{vi} Gay acknowledged fumbling at the congressional hearing but did not apologize for any policy that relied on a double standard. She admitted to a euphemism for plagiarism, moreover, but did not apologize for that mistake. On the contrary, she argued to widespread acclaim that this charge indicated that she was the victim of a conservative and racist conspiracy to undermine DEI. That might or might not have been true—mudslinging is a common political strategy at all times and in all places—but the mistake was, by her own admission, not a fabrication by her ideological foes.

Bill Ackman, known for his generosity to Harvard (his alma mater) but also for his liberal point of view, was among the rebellious donors. He cited Gay’s willingness to trivialize anti-Semitism and her admitted plagiarism. His brief publications on DEI are not academic treatises, but they do indicate a sound understanding of it as an astonishingly primitive but remarkably deceptive ideology that is prevalent in the academic world

“I came to learn that the root cause of antisemitism at Harvard was an ideology that had been promulgated on campus, an oppressor/oppressed framework, that provided the intellectual bulwark behind the protests, helping to generate anti-Israel and anti-Jewish hate speech and harassment. Then I did more research. The more I learned, the more concerned I became, and the more ignorant I realized I had been about DEI, a powerful movement that has not only pervaded Harvard but the educational system at large. I came to understand that diversity, equity, and inclusion was not what I had naively thought these words meant.”^{vii}

In 2024, naïve is right.

The counterattack came almost immediately. It took the form of a conspiracy theory, one that Gay herself launched.^{viii} Was it merely coincidental that Gay, being a black woman, belonged to **not** one but two “oppressed” groups? If not, then her downfall must have been due to *systemic* racism, sexism, or both.^{ix} One central premise of DEI and related ideologies, after all, is that *no other factors*—not personal animosity, for instance, or even personal awareness—can explain systemic racism or sexism. Therefore, *no other* factor needs to be taken seriously as a possible cause of any statistical disparities between people by race, sex, sexual orientation and so on—let alone open conflicts. This point of view gave new meaning to “reductionism.”

Besides, why was plagiarism such a big deal at all? Was it not merely, as Harvard’s board put it euphemistically, “duplicative language”?^x Never mind that any Harvard student would be expelled, according to the university’s own policy, for doing the same thing. But wait. Someone then accused Ackman’s own wife, Neri Oxman, of indulging in plagiarism.^{xi} (It might or might not be coincidental, that she is an Israeli.). By defending her,^{xii} was Ackman succumbing to an expedient double standard of his own? For many academics and pundits, in other words, it seemed fitting to shoot the messenger (Ackman) in order to deny the message (about what happens when DEI takes over an institution).

Could these improbable events amount to a turning point in the relentless “culture wars” over identity politics and the role of ideology in politicizing the university? If so,^{xiii} it would take not days or months but years or even generations to undo the intellectual and moral corruption of an institution that has abandoned even the *search* for objective truth by giving priority to “our” truth over “their truth and by replacing the importance of personal merit with that of group identity. But even now, after only a few weeks, countless articles and blogs have



covered the story and its implications not only for the university—some are openly calling for *viewpoint diversity*^{xiv} in addition to racial or sexual diversity—but also for the nation.

In this essay, I examine several distinct but related strands in the fabric of l'affaire Gay. By “strands,” I mean conflicts, some of them longstanding, over (1) identity politics and DEI; (2) personal free speech or censorship; (3) institutional free speech or institutional censorship; (4) the double standard of identity politics; (5) collective guilt: justice or revenge, reconciliation or self-defense; (6) promoting social change or seeking truth; (7) personal merit or collective identity; (8) anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism; (9) anti-Westernism; and (10) hatred as contagion.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND DEI

The academic context of this essay, as I say, is a *mélange* of closely related and even allied ideologies, which are known collectively as “identity politics.” Of primary importance here, though, is that each ideology relies explicitly on an inherent, even innate, *dichotomy* between two classes.^{xv} Although this worldview has now polarized our society, it originated not yesterday or even the day before yesterday but in ancient times.^{xvi} And although it is characteristic of political ideologies on both the Left and the Right, its most influential, most institutionalized and therefore most powerful venues right now are on the Left—which is to say, in ideologies that derive from Marxism. For Marx, the class struggle was economic and therefore political: the proletarians and peasants versus the bourgeoisie.

Marxism was successful, at least politically, in parts of Europe during the early twentieth century. It was less successful in America, largely because American capitalism generated enough wealth at all levels of society to discourage revolution. By the 1920s, more and more people were migrating from their farms to the cities. Even later, during the Great Depression, most Americans—not all by any means but most—were unwilling to risk destroying the entire structure of society, economically and politically, in a cataclysmic revolution.

By the 1960s, more and more proletarians were entering the middle class, and American society was changing in ways that no one could have predicted.^{xvii} But Marxist academics, many of them refugees from Nazi Europe, began to argue that a new *kind* of revolution, a *cultural* revolution, would eventually succeed. This revolution would bring about a *utopian* society, not merely a reformed one. And it could do that only by *destroying* the old society in order to build a new one on the ruins.

That was the task of academic postmodernists. Instead of sending out military cadres into the streets, they would infiltrate universities and indoctrinate students by analyzing, “deconstructing,” “subverting,” “interrogating” or “exposing” the oppressive features of society. They believed that *all* features of it were “hegemonic,” “toxic,” and therefore “oppressive.” These included not only the factories, mines and other means of production but also the novels, movies, radio shows, newspapers, advertisements, churches, laws, games, words—especially marriage and the family. All of these cultural productions amounted to what Marx had called “false consciousness,” which prevented people from seeing their true condition as oppressed victims.

Influenced by Herbert Marcuse, Rudi Dutschke, a student radical in Germany, called this process “the long march through the institutions.” It would not complete the work



overnight. It would take time to gain power in universities and other institutions, transforming them by converting people, but the result would be less violent and more effective than causing blood to flow in the streets. Many of these cultural revolutionaries, or their students, eventually became “tenured radicals.” Meanwhile, Americans in general and American parents of college students in particular, were changing their naïve and complacent attitudes toward higher education.

By the 1970s, postmodernism was de rigueur in the academic world (but ignored elsewhere). It was no longer enough to challenge academic methods such as structuralism, which claimed to discern patterns and underlying truths. Postmodernists challenged the whole notion of objective truth (or even the goal of *seeking* it despite human limitations) and replaced it with the *subjective* truths of groups. In accordance with Marxist tradition, therefore, they distinguished between “our truth” (that of the “oppressed” or “marginalized”) and “their truth” (mere “narratives” of the “oppressors” or “privileged”). After that, it was easy to fragment society by demanding adherence to an increasingly wide array of competing and sometimes conflicting—but nonetheless closely related and often politically allied—ideologies of identity politics.

After half a century, nothing much has changed except that postmodernism is no longer contained in any academic ivory tower. Its ideological fallout has become conventional wisdom in the public square—which is to say, among elite segments of it.^{xviii} The verbal tags keep changing, it’s true, but the basic *dualistic structure* (which identifies innately innocent victims with “us” and innately evil victimizers with “them”) remains. This pattern occurs in postcolonial ideology (“us” versus the West) and “critical race theory” or “anti-racist” ideology (“us” versus white people) along with “critical gender theories” such as feminist ideology (“us” versus men), transgender ideology (“us” versus “cis” people) and even some forms of gay ideology (“us” versus anyone who opposes gay marriage) despite the painfully obvious fact that gay relationships are actively and viciously persecuted in non-Western countries.^{xix}

To complicate this terminology, some words find application in *more than one* ideology (although, as I say, they are all one ideology just below the surface). “Intersectionalism,” for instance, allows *competitive* suffering among those who claim to be oppressed in two or more ways, thus giving priority to lesbians over other women, black lesbians over other lesbians, “neurodivergent” black lesbians over other black lesbians and so on). “Social Justice” refers to a specifically Marxist notion of social justice. In the corporate world, ESG refers to “environmental, social and governance” policies that are supposed to make even capitalism not only profitable but also virtuous. DEI, which dominated the public square after l’affaire Gay refers to any point of view that relies heavily on the words “diversity,” “equity” (instead of “equality”)^{xx} and “inclusion.” Whether any of these theories actually work as intended is another matter.

To complicate this terminology even more, the word “wokism” is another synonym for identity politics in all of its Marxist-derived ideological forms. Although it has become a pejorative word, which is why I try to use its many alternatives, the word remains both simple and useful. Unlike some academic alternatives, such as “critical race theory” or “intersectionalism,” this word is by now familiar to almost everyone.



Advocates of these ideologies promote the uplift of “marginalized” racial and sexual minorities at the expense of “privileged” ones. In the context of this congressional hearing, that goal affects not only the selecting of students and the hiring of faculty (through some version of affirmative action) but also, perhaps ultimately, the ideological slanting of courses and research projects.

These ideologies add up to a pervasive worldview, but DEI is probably the most familiar to many people, because it has been *institutionalized* by government officials and either government or corporate bureaucrats in countless schools, colleges, universities and research institutes, professional associations, businesses, news outlets and so on. In this essay, I refer primarily to DEI as a general worldview that fosters the institutionalization of identity politics in general and of several closely related and politically aligned ideologies in particular.

PERSONAL FREE SPEECH OR CENSORSHIP

Back now to my case study. What were the policies of Harvard (along with University of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts Institute of Technology) on free speech (or, depending on your point of view, on censorship and even “cancel culture”)? What should they be? There are three basic positions on free speech and censorship: (a) “absolutely” free speech; (b) totally censored speech; and (c) relatively free speech. All three present moral or philosophical problems.

Very few people would prefer total censorship, which would in turn mean direct government intervention in every form of communication and therefore a hallmark of totalitarianism. But few people would prefer absolutely free speech, either, because that would include not only freedom to express unpopular ideas or feelings but also freedom to incite violence. One solution is *relatively* free speech: placing freedom to incite violence in a separate category, presumably to avoid compromising the purity of freedom. This was the solution that Gay and her colleagues at the hearing had established or maintained at their universities.

But one favored strategy of all identitarian ideologies is what I call “linguistic inflation.” This means redefining words with political expediency in mind. They have redefined “violence,” for example, to include emotional *discomfort* (hurt feelings, anxiety when confronted with threatening ideas, fear of “micro-aggressions” and so on). One president after another could tell Congresswoman Stefanik (and the nation) that their students and staff were free to say anything that they want to say *unless their words amounted to “violence”* and were therefore not in the same category as free speech. And they could say so with the support of *American law*,^{xxi} which does not recognize (emotional) “*violence*” as a crime but does recognize incitement to (physical) *violence* as a crime.

INSTITUTIONAL FREE SPEECH OR INSTITUTIONAL CENSORSHIP

Consider now the equally ferocious and equally enduring controversy over institutional free speech and institutional censorship. At issue here is not the free speech of students and teachers but that of universities as *institutions* (most of which receive funding from tax dollars).^{xxii}

At issue in l’affaire Gay was not only what Harvard students or teachers may or may not say *individually* about social problems *but also* about what Harvard may or may not say



collectively about social problems through its *policy* on free speech or censorship. Every university in our time must make one of two possible choices: (a) that it is obliged by policy to promote justice (that is, to shape society by issuing proclamations on various cultural problems); or (b) that it is obliged by policy *not* to do so. Both kinds of policy build on definitions of the university that I have already discussed.

Institutional censorship makes sense if the university's ultimate function is to promote justice *directly as a collective* project^{xxiii} Therefore, it *not only* promotes (or denounces) some ideological program *but also* hires (or fires) teachers, researchers and administrators with its ideology in mind. Consider the congeries of allied ideologies that now prevail in universities. Reduced to its ubiquitous slogan of "diversity, equity and inclusion," for instance, this policy *publicly advocates* racial or sexual diversity and inclusion by *publicly denouncing* anything that compromises ideologies such as feminism, transgenderism, and "anti-racism"). But that slogan is deceptive. It insists on racial or sexual diversity but rejects *viewpoint* diversity. Moreover, it *excludes* those who hold disfavored viewpoints.^{xxiv} Consequently, the university becomes an intellectual echo chamber, which defeats the historic definition of a university. Even in the Middle Ages, after all, universities permitted some degree of theological and philosophical debate without necessarily resorting to charges of heresy.^{xxv}

Institutional free speech, however, makes sense if the university's function is to seek *justice indirectly as an individual* project. This is impossible without *independent thinking*—the underlying assumption being that there can be no justice without truth and no truth without the free exploration of ideas.

This second policy does *not* promise numerical "equity" (based on demographic factors such as race and sex). Instead, it promises *equality of opportunity* for every *individual*, based on personal *merit*.^{xxvi}

THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF IDENTITY POLITICS

But the problem of free speech versus censorship is complicated even further by a *double standard* that is characteristic of identity politics: some rules for "us" and other rules for "them."^{xxvii} And this *hypocrisy* is ultimately what led to Gay's downfall. These universities, including Harvard, are much more zealous in protecting some identity groups from either violence or "violence" than they are in protecting other identity groups.

According to intersectional ideology, the individual is of no importance. What matters is that all people belong innately to either a "marginalized" *class* (sometimes more than one) of victims or to a "privileged" *class* (sometimes more than one) of victimizers. The former are not only innately innocent but also perpetually in need of collective protection; the latter are not only innately evil but also perpetually liable for collective punishment.^{xxviii} Even though Jews have been classified for centuries as sinister aliens and even murdered en masse for being religiously or racially contaminated, DEI classifies Jews as "white-adjacent" and therefore "privileged." Not only are they unworthy of protection, therefore, but need no protection in the first place. This is why not one of the three university presidents (one of whom is herself Jewish) could tell Stefanik honestly and willingly that threats against *Jews* were automatically forbidden by policy. The policy would apply to Jews, sure, but only in some "contexts." For Jews, that context was not (emotional) "violence" but (physical) violence. And even though the hearing did not explore which other groups, if any, would be excluded from protection



against “violence,” it should have been clear to everyone that the “intersectional” hierarchy would exclude all white and “white-adjacent” people, all heterosexual people, all “cis” people and all male people (except, sometimes, for those of “marginalized” racial or sexual groups).

This double standard, more than anything else, caused public outrage. There are three possible ways of avoiding this particular double standard: (a) eliminate it by applying the same standard of protection—that is, censorship—to all groups, (b) eliminate it by applying the same standard of freedom to all groups (except for prohibiting groups to advocate violence, which is a matter of law, in any case, not policy); and (c) dismantle DEI itself (all programs, offices, courses, preferences) and return to the standard of *personal* need, *personal* responsibility and *personal* merit.^{xxix}

Few people today would want to increase censorship, and many worry about new digital forms of surveillance (although many or even more people would indeed approve of the censorship and surveillance of their *adversaries*). But even fewer people, perhaps, would want to eliminate censorship entirely. Many or most parents, for instance, would place their own children in a separate category: *in need* of protection by virtue of *age*, not race, sex or class. But the population remains hopelessly polarized between advocates of *collectivism* (such as DEI) as the only way to achieve social justice (a.k.a. Social Justice, with its roots in Marxism) and advocates of *individualism* (with its roots in both the biblical tradition^{xxx} and the Enlightenment).

COLLECTIVE GUILT: JUSTICE OR REVENGE, RECONCILIATION OR SELF-DEFENSE

Underlying this double standard is not stupidity or incompetence. It is intellectual delusion and moral confusion. Everyone agrees that some people have more advantages than others do. Everyone agrees that some of these advantages are culturally inherited. And everyone agrees that society should not allow poverty or “marginalization” to prevent anyone from the realization of potential. The only question is *how* to achieve that noble goal, justice, not only within the context of a democratic society and its legal tradition but also within that of its moral tradition. This means examining justice in relation to (a) revenge; (b) reconciliation and (c) self-defense.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, *reconciliation*, not revenge, is both a defining feature and the ultimate goal of justice. On the foundation of that moral premise lies my critique of DEI in any of its current versions. And I can’t think of a worldview that is *less likely* to generate racial or sexual reconciliation than this one. After all, it’s about genetically transmitted and therefore immutable guilt. Unlike the Christian notion of Original Sin,^{xxxi} however, this ideological worldview offers no hope at all of redemption, or salvation—that is, of *reconciliation* with other people (and therefore with God). So far, in fact, it has led in precisely the *opposite* direction—toward increasing *polarization* of every kind—racial, sexual, religious, linguistic or political—in our society. Is that any improvement over the cross-generational blood feuding of tribal societies?

In this age of sentimentality, neo-romanticism, gynocentrism and pop psychology, it might be easier than ever before to confuse *revenge* with justice. Revenge can be a very satisfying emotion. The moral difference is, as I say, that justice is about *reconciliation*, not merely feeling satisfied due to recovery from loss or restitution for damage and certainly not



merely for feeling self-righteous. Reconciliation takes much more time and effort than feeling *anything* and is ultimately a moral choice, not an emotional state. But reconciliation does not necessarily entail pacifism. It can entail fighting—that is, acknowledging and engaging actively in an adversarial contest—in order to establish the justice on which reconciliation depends.

But wait. Here's one more complication. To one or both groups in conflict, the conflict itself can amount not to aggression but to *self-defense*. Does the end always, or ever, justify the means? Can we say reasonably that “anything goes” in the struggle for self-defense? Although it usually does not, it does in self-defense. Killing in self-defense, after all, is not murder. Even so, the end of self-defense justifies anything that is necessary to achieve it—but *nothing more*. This—not an equal or nearly equal number of bodies on both sides—is what international law, based on centuries of just-war theory, calls “proportionality.”^{xxxii}

An intriguing discussion of this very topic in relation to l'affaire Gay emerged in (at least) one blog. The featured essay, by Lee Fang,^{xxxiii} accuses the political Right of doing precisely what they accuse the political Left of doing: advocating censorship or punishment by university authorities for those who say what is doctrinally unacceptable or “politically incorrect.” Fang is not referring specifically to *schadenfreude* on the Right. He's referring to conservatives who fight fire with fire, in effect, and therefore adopt a reversed double standard. If it's bad for Left-wingers to “cancel” or slander Right-wingers, after all, how could it be good for Right-wingers to “cancel” or slander Left-wingers in return?

One of the 83 bloggers (and counting), Julian Farrow, notes the following in his comment on Fang's article “This debate about free speech is similar to the tactics used against Christians. They get endlessly attacked and ridiculed, but when they finally do stand up for themselves, they're condemned for not turning the other cheek. This article is pure gaslighting.” Likewise, Jews, especially Israeli Jews, often say that *only Jews* are expected to follow the guidance of Jesus and be good Christian pacifists. Avoiding hypocrisy is surely desirable. But so is self-defense, I suggest, in the name of justice and therefore of eventual reconciliation. In *this context*, therefore, the *victims* of DEI would surely be morally justified in fighting fire with fire—but without, of course, resorting to lies of their own. If Gay really did succumb to plagiarism—and she admits being guilty of what amounts to carelessness (which she does not consider a serious offense)—then accusing her of plagiarism can hardly be explained effectively as a “racist,” “sexist” or political conspiracy against her.

PROMOTING SOCIAL CHANGE OR SEEKING TRUTH

Much of the fuss over l'affaire Gay was about her plagiarism. But the main cause was institutional hypocrisy, not personal plagiarism. This is what galvanized both sides, because each had a competing notion of what the university is or should be.^{xxxiv} How we define any institution, in fact, affects what does or does not go on there. Some forms of behavior underline its function, and others *undermine* it. This means that some forms of behavior are inherently honorable and others inherently dishonorable. These two definitions of the university now contend in the public square: the university as (a) an institution that encourages the search for truth or (b) an institution that promotes social change.

The first definition is, of course, much older than the second. Universities had long taught technical skills to students who would become professional lawyers, physicians, architects, engineers and so on. In addition, however, they taught other students to think



carefully about the meaning of life and to perpetuate their civilization. This was where the kulturkampf began. By the 1980s, it was becoming increasingly difficult for many people—that is, for the tiny minority of people who either studied or taught at universities—to think clearly about what had been known traditionally as the “liberal arts.” By the 2010s, it was becoming increasingly difficult to think clearly about even professional skills. In the end, not one but *both* of these historic functions of the university had begun to atrophy—and for the same reason.^{xxxv}

For decades, the “tenured radicals”^{xxxvi} at universities have been busy transforming their departments in the humanities (such as history, philosophy and literature) into propaganda mills for postmodernist ideologies (at first various forms of Marxism, then various forms of feminism). Their basic goal is *not* merely “social change” or “reform.” It is revolution, albeit *cultural revolution* rather than military revolution. They expect this process to occur in three stages. First, they use techniques such as “deconstruction” and linguistic theories to undermine the very foundations of their own disciplines (let alone everything else about Western civilization). After all, a fundamental and profoundly cynical doctrine of postmodernism is that there is *no such thing as truth*, only “our truth” versus “their truth” (which therefore amount to competing “narratives.”) Second, they deny dissenters, both students and teachers, any protection at all from the *weaponization* of these ideologies—that is, from forms of intimidation that are known collectively as “cancel culture.” Finally, having emptied the public square of dissent and destroyed every institution, they can build their ideological *utopia* on the ruins.

Many parents (and at least some of their children) find this state of affairs bewildering, alienating and even polarizing. Until very recently, however, they have found reasons to ignore the danger signs in these fields and therefore to abandon one of the university’s two historic functions: encouraging the search for truth.

After the Great Depression and the Second World War, Americans were more ambitious, materialistic and upwardly mobile than they had been for decades. They placed increasing importance not only on science and technology (encouraged financially by the government) but also on law, commerce and the social sciences instead of philosophy, history and the **arts**. They wanted their children to learn practical skills, get good jobs after graduation and therefore *maintain* the society that would bring them prosperity.

For a while, both students and teachers in the sciences thought that they were immune to ideological attacks. But they were wrong.^{xxxvii} In the end, their complacency did not protect even them from “woke science.”^{xxxviii} By 2022, Ketanji Brown Jackson, nominated to sit on the Supreme Court of the United States, found it politically necessary to answer one interrogator that she could not define “woman.”^{xxxix}

PERSONAL MERIT OR COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

In this context, consider the controversy over plagiarism, which erupted merely as a *byproduct* of l’affaire Gay. In fact, plagiarism was a *proxy* controversy. Everyone understood that her resignation from the presidency of Harvard (though not from the faculty) had nothing to do with either her job performance in general or her plagiarism in particular. But many people understood also that she might never have been hired in the first place had she not been a *black woman*. At issue, therefore, was the efficacy of DEI.



Plagiarism involves not only stealing ideas from other people but also *lying* about them—that is, passing these ideas off as the products of her own *merit*. Even now, Gay could not get away with that in the public square, so she^{xi} and some of her colleagues did their best to trivialize the charge, excuse it, or even “racialize” it. She and her defenders had to play the *victim* card. Gay was not a cheat. On the contrary, she was the victim of a racist (and sexist) attack on her *identity*—which is the foundation of intersectionalist (and feminist) ideology. Worse, she was the victim of a *proxy* campaign of “conservatives” against DEI. Almost everyone understood, correctly, that this conflict over plagiarism was really over ideology. She and her defenders insisted that plagiarism is not only trivial but common. The public outcry, they added, amounted to nothing more—and nothing less—than the sinister prevalence of “white” values. They understood that if Gay—and Harvard—were to lose *this* battle would mean the end of DEI.

Like the replacement of viewpoint diversity with racial or sexual diversity, in short, the replacement of merit with identity is *inherently alien* to the function and even to the definition of a university. These points of view cannot support healthy academic institutions, only corrode them.^{xli} That it took *outsiders* to reject what should have been obvious—including the many non-academics who watched the spectacle with a mixture of shock and *schadenfreude*—indicates how deeply the intellectual, moral and political corruption has set in.^{xlii}

ANTI-SEMITISM OR ANTI-ZIONISM

Although I would like to discuss DEI without referring to Jews in particular—full disclosure: I am a Jew—I can hardly do so in the context of what goes on now at universities such as Harvard. The congressional hearing that involved Gay and her colleagues at two other prestigious universities, after all, was provoked directly by a sudden and dramatic rise in anti-Jewish activities on campuses all over the country. But this does not mean that Jews have been passive witnesses to history. My point in what follows is that some Jews are not only passive victims of anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism but also active or at least unwitting participants in the culture of DEI (or wokism or whatever label it has taken on over the past fifty or sixty years).

Bill Ackman is, or at least was, a liberal or progressive Jew and staunch Democrat. He must have been shocked to realize (“naively,” as he puts it) how thoroughly DEI advocates had infiltrated Harvard, his own alma mater. If so, he probably represents many other Jews in his circle. Not all Jews fit this description, certainly not Orthodox ones, but many do. The reason for this irony has nothing to do with Judaism. By the mid-nineteenth century, European Jews saw that conservatives in the larger world were allying themselves with ecclesiastical, monarchist and nationalistic movements, ones that had no room for Jews at best and were anti-Semitic at worst. To the extent that Jews were integrated in European societies, or hoped to be in the near future, they turned to the liberal movements that had emerged from the French Revolution and emancipated Jews. They had no way of anticipating *l’affaire Dreyfus*. Nonetheless, many brought this liberalism, along with either Reform Judaism or Marxism, to America. But that kind of liberalism, or even that kind of Marxism, has been swept away by the tide of recent ideologies: first neo-Marxism (postmodernism and postcolonialism) and now identity politics (such as wokism or DEI).

That’s the irony for Jews. Most forms of identity politics (except, of course, for most Jewish ones) are overtly hostile not only to Zionist Jews in particular (classified as the avant-



garde of “settler colonialism”^{xliii} but also to Jews in general (classified as an oppressor class that benefits from “white privilege”).

In the next section, I will argue that DEI, like its allied ideologies, is profoundly *anti-Western*. Here, I argue that this is evident even in its hostility toward Jews. Its advocates are hostile not only toward Ashkenazi Jews (mainly from Europe), for example, but also toward Sephardi Jews (mainly from North Africa and the Middle East and yet *originally* from Spain and Portugal). In fact, the same anti-Western hostility applies also to Christians, the targets of active persecution in many Islamic countries. (Their plight is ignored by anti-Western ideologues in order to support Muslims, who produce some of the most virulent anti-Westerners of all).

This is why words such as “anti-Semitic” and “anti-Zionist” are now either confusing or beside the point—and trivialized by overuse. Worse, they allow Jews to play the political game of victimology. Anti-Zionists insist that they are not anti-Semites. This presumably gives them permission to criticize Israeli policies without being accused of anti-Semitism. But Jews sometimes play the same game by insisting that there is *no* difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. By conflating the two phenomena, they make it very hard for anyone to criticize Israeli policies. Even fellow Jews who do so can find themselves accused of “self-hatred” or “Jewish anti-Semitism”.

Similarly, many Jews have tried to silence or punish “holocaust deniers” and therefore have either directly or indirectly colluded in the creation of “cancel culture” (quite apart from their support for some causes that cross the border from liberal or progressive ones to woke ones). There is indeed something very disturbing and dangerous about attempts to deny or trivialize the sho’ah, but there is something equally or even more disturbing and dangerous, at least in democratic societies, about punishing historical “thought crimes.” How different is that from the theological thought-crimes of not believing in Christian or Islamic doctrines? Punishing people for speaking incorrectly is bad enough but punishing them for even *thinking* incorrectly is even worse. It is an open door to totalitarianism.

This phenomenon, whether you call it anti-Semitism^{xliv} or anti-Zionism,^{xlv} is not one more version of either religious hatred^{xlvi} or racial hatred^{xlvii} toward Jews (although it often looks that way from the Jewish perspective). “Jews are seen as symbols of *modernity* and therefore of *the West*.”

ANTI-WESTERNISM

This leaves two^{xlviii} anti-Western groups as unlikely but effective *allies*: (a) Muslims either in or from Islamic countries and (b) advocates of identity politics *in Western* countries. These two groups have almost nothing in common except their profound hostility toward the West (albeit for different reasons).

For many Muslims in our time, the West represents not only Judaism and Christianity, old rivals, but also secularism, a new rival. And secularism, due to its origin as a key feature of the Enlightenment, remains a hallmark of modernity. But remember that traditional religions are not the only anomalies in Western countries. Another anomaly, albeit a recent one, is rationalism itself and therefore modernity.



The various Western ideologies that are now often known collectively “as identity politics” or “wokism,” are just as eager as any traditional religion—arguably more eager—to oppose modernity. Not surprisingly, therefore, they oppose not one but two characteristic features of modernity: (a) reason and (b) secularity.

The first, opposition to reason, is *explicit* in the rhetoric of transgenderism and postcolonialism (the alleged universality of reason being understood as a Western conspiracy to deny the unique and implicitly superior “indigenous ways of knowing”) but also some forms of feminism (reason being understood as a patriarchal conspiracy to deny the unique and implicitly superior, “women’s ways of knowing.”).

The second, opposition to religion, is *implicit* in all of these ideologies. This is why I find it useful to discuss them as “secular religions.” On the surface, they attack traditional religions (although Islam sometimes gets a free pass due to political expediency) for having (allegedly) invented and institutionalized whatever they describe as “patriarchal, “ “hetero-normative” “cis-normative,” “hegemonic” and so on. With the exception of feminist groups that worship a Great Goddess, they seldom refer at all to either supernatural beings or the dimension of holiness or the sacred.

Below the surface, however, these secular ideologies function in ways that are familiar to students of traditional religions. They establish formal or informal communities, for example, tell their own myths (a.k.a. “narratives”) about how things once were, how or why things went wrong (oppressors, victims or martyrs) and how things will be again. They perform their own liturgies or other rituals (such as protest rallies). They gather at special times or in special places (such as memorials to the fallen). They study and comment on their own canonical texts. In short, they try to see meaning and purpose in what would otherwise be a chaotic world and, in doing so, create their own definitions of virtue and vice.

Of interest here, though, is that these secular religions are not merely secular versions of religion in general. They are in some ways secular versions of *fundamentalist* religion. For my purpose here, it is enough to explain that they are profoundly *dualistic*. They are communities that emphasize both inclusion (“we,” who proclaim “our truth,” are victims and therefore innately good) but also exclusion (“they,” who proclaim “their truth,” are victimizers and therefore innately or irremediably evil).

These ideologies oppose the *historic* West and plan for its replacement by an alien but utopian society. Ironically, even anti-Western schools of identity politics in the West—that is, anti-Western ideologies—have *roots* in historic Western schools of thought, mainly in Marxism and neo-Marxism (postmodernism and postcolonialism). Their hostility toward Jews has nothing much to do with Judaism, Jews or even Israelis *per se*, therefore, and everything to do with them as symbols of *modernity* and therefore of *the West*.^{xlix}

The word that best describes identity politics in all of its forms, including DEI, is probably “anti-Westernism.” One thing (among others) that all of these ideologies have in common is relentless and implacable hostility toward anything that they associate (correctly or incorrectly) with the West.¹ The targets include not only Jews but *all* people who represent Western civilization (although Jews are often more visible than other Westerners because of their general support for Israel and dependence on the United States).



But wait. Many wokers—okay, all of them—are busy “interrogating” or “problematizing” even the *words* “Western civilization.” Taking deconstruction to a new level, Josephine Quinn *denies that it even exists*. In this new book,^{li} she denies that *any* civilization exists or ever has existed. I have not yet seen the book, but, I can hardly ignore it in this context. Judging from the subtitle itself, let alone the many reviews, I suspect that she devotes most of her book to denying the existence of *Western* civilization.

There is some truth, obvious truth, in her argument about civilizations *in general*. After all, *every* so-called civilization is the product of countless others through trade, warfare, exploration, inter-marriage and other venues of “cultural appropriation” (which is a good thing, in my opinion, not a bad thing). It’s true, therefore, that there’s no such thing as a *pure* civilization or even a pure culture of any kind. No historian and no anthropologist would disagree with that much. But a few more comments are in order.

Some ideas go back to our remotest human ancestors and are therefore universal: art, music, religion, custom or law, marriage and so on. Other ideas begin somewhere and somewhen but then find their way far beyond due to cultural diffusion. Much of what we now consider Western actually *originated* among people *other* than the Greeks, Romans and Israelites: biblical stories (the Sumerians and Babylonians), mathematics (the Indians and Arabs), writing (the Phoenicians) and so on. The Japanese and Muslims have long been proud of the ability to absorb good ideas from outsiders, integrating them with earlier local ideas and borrowed ones and thus creating their own distinctive cultural blends. Some learn from the mistakes of other and earlier cultures, moreover, after those either fade or implode. Why should we be any different in that respect?

But I suspect that Quinn’s *underlying* target is the very idea of *civilization itself*. If so, then she would be taking woke doctrine—the “social construction” of everything, including both scientific and historical truth, let alone moral insight—to its ultimate conclusion. This troubles me for at least two reasons.

First, the word “civilization” usually refers among scholars to cultures that are (a) very complex, (b) widespread, (c) cohesive, (d) somewhat enduring and (e) psychologically centered on distinct ethnic or linguistic founders. The word has been misused, lamentably, with the connotation of a culture that is *morally superior* to other cultures. This has not necessarily been true, however, not even in our own allegedly benighted society. Consider the early modern European merchants and traders in places such as India. They found there a literate and very sophisticated culture, whether Hindu or Islamic, which is why they often intermarried with the locals and settled down there (glad to escape from the filth and disease of their own cities at the time). What changed in the mid-nineteenth century was the rise of Western *industrial and technological* superiority, which suggested (for no obvious reason) moral superiority as well. But this claim of moral superiority has not by any means been confined to Europeans of the recent past. To the Chinese, all outsiders (that is, those who lived beyond the Chinese “Middle Kingdom”) were by definition uncivilized barbarians. The Japanese were no different in this respect until the mid-nineteenth century. Neither were the Romans, although they at least acknowledged their own cultural inferiority, in some ways, to the Greeks. And as for the Greeks themselves, they admired the Egyptians. Nonetheless, I suspect that *every* society has *always* made this claim either explicitly or implicitly (at least since the Neolithic period) even if only because of the obvious fact that outsiders were unfamiliar and therefore potentially threatening.



Second, I doubt that linguistic cleverness will take us very far. I worry, in fact, that we cannot do without words such as “civilization” (and even “culture” or “society”). Like them or not, these words can be useful in describing where we live and who we are in a very complex world—that is, to account for how things actually are, how they came to be this way and therefore how they could yet come to be. The function of every culture, after all, is to create *order* and meaning within what would otherwise be *not utopia* but meaningless chaos. It would be ludicrous to pretend that living in New York City or Kansas City is not different in any significant way from living in Tehran or Shanghai. Maybe it shouldn’t be, but it is. And it would be just as ludicrous to pretend that the history of Europe is not different in any significant way from that of Russia, China or Papua-New Guinea. Whatever the hideous crimes of our ancestors, we can, and should, accept their splendid and distinctive achievements with profound gratitude. Whatever we call it—“Western civilization,” “the social construct formerly known as Western civilization,” “the patriarchy” or whatever—we cannot usefully ignore, and should not want to ignore, the obvious continuities—societal, political, religious, even aesthetic—that link us with earlier times in whatever place we call “home.” And I suggest on both philosophical and evolutionary grounds, that to be *human* is, somewhere and somehow, to be *at home* or at least in search of it.

One thing is already clear. The revival of universities, let alone of other institutions that have succumbed over more than half a century to postmodernist nihilism and cynical identity politics, will take a long time—even generations—if it were to begin right now. DEI is already deeply embedded *as a vested interest* of those who lead almost every institution. Advocates of anti-Westernism are not going to roll over and play dead, not even after the exposure of their linguistic techniques and double standards—*not even* after the exposure of their implicit or explicit support for terrorist organizations such as Hamas.^{lii}

HATRED AS CONTAGION

So far, I have focused attention on a few specific forms of hatred. I began by research career by examining the man-hating fallout from ideological forms of feminism, but I have since expanded my focus to include the hate-filled fallout from other ideologies. I wrote this paper, in fact, to include the outbreak of hate-filled anti-Western ideology and of hate-filled anti-Zionism as one of its direct heirs. But hatred is by now in the air that we all breathe, carried by a *manufactured virus* that is the cultural equivalent of Covid 19 (which is why Lloyd Robertson explains wokism as a “mind virus”).^{liii}

It is surely no accident that every form of identity politics has generated heated debates between those who argue for ways to discourage or even to criminalize “hate speech” (let alone hate-behaviors such as violence) and those who argue that cures such as censorship might be worse than the disease itself. No news cycle lacks some conflict over that topic. This is true not only in the context of universities but also in the context of journalism, law, entertainment, party politics and so forth.

Consider a recent expansion of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “hate map.” The latter includes not only the Ku Klux Klan but also innocuous organizations such as Moms for Liberty^{liv} along with an extensive list of conservative and religious organizations. Its goal is to discourage potential donations and to encourage “debanking” supporters.^{lv} The FBI targets allegedly hateful conservative Catholics (but not avowedly hateful groups such as Antifa or



Black Lives Matter) as likely sources of domestic terrorism.^{lvi} And many other Western countries, such as Canada, are even more eager than the United States to classify *hate speech* as a crime.^{lvii}

Google uses artificial intelligence to counter historic threats (hatred from the Right) by using algorithms that distort historical truth (hatred from the Left) and discourage users from finding or even seeking disfavored points of view.^{lviii} Moreover, linguistic inflation (a.k.a. concept creep) keeps expanding the boundaries of hate-speech to include “micro-aggressions,” mere utterance of “the f-word” in appropriate teaching contexts and even “silence” itself in political contexts.

And yet there is no consensus on the *definition* of “hatred.” It often means nothing more, therefore, than whatever “we” don’t like or whatever “we” find threatening. Psychologists and psychotherapists have long tried to define “emotion” and to classify “emotions.” Recently, they have tried to identify levels of “emotional intelligence” (the ability to perceive, evaluate and modify emotions, one’s own or those of others, depending on social context). The word “hate” appears in this literature and refers, along with “anger” and “rage,” to a degree of repulsion, but it does so in what I consider a surprisingly imprecise way. Sue Parker Hall distinguishes between “anger” and “rage,” the former being healthy and the latter unhealthy.^{lix} The same imprecision, at least for my purpose here, is true of “hate” in popular parlance, so this word refers generally to intensely disliking something or someone. It has an *emotional* connotation, sometimes a trivial one and always an ephemeral one (because emotions are transient).^{lx}

What does it mean to say, “I hate” this or that person, this or that group? It often means that my *personal* reaction (such as avoidance or anger) has been conditioned by unpleasant experiences but could possibly change due to happier ones (such as apologies that lead to reconciliation) or to the learning of new skills.

For strictly *moral* or philosophical purposes, though, I suggest that we urgently need a word^{lxi} that carries *collective and enduring* connotations. Instead of inventing a new word, I propose the following as a working definition of this one: *Hatred is not an emotion but a culturally propagated worldview that fosters the institutionalization of collective malice.* And malice, in turn, means (even in popular parlance) *malevolence*, the urge or intention to *harm* or afflict even if only by deliberately excusing and condoning it in others. Absent that ingredient, we are talking about some phenomenon other than hatred. In this context, it is not merely snobbery, ignorance or stupidity—all of which are lamentable, to be sure, but not *evil*.

Among the obvious forms of hatred in this sense are racism and sexism. But would “systemic hatred” not be exactly what advocates of “critical theory” in its many forms now call “systemic racism,” “systemic sexism,” “systemic heteronormativity” and so on? Not quite. Not, as I say, if your definition of “hatred” relies on moral philosophy and therefore *includes moral agents who choose to act out of malice.*

The moral or philosophical keystone of “anti-racist” theory (and its many equivalents in other versions of identity politics) is the Marxist-derived notion of people as representatives of *classes*—either victim classes or oppressor classes—not as individuals. Closely related to that notion is one that eluded Marx himself but not his heirs. This notion is *implicit bias* (or



unconscious bias), a recent notion that has supported “critical race theory” (and therefore closely related ideologies) and therefore condoned a wide array of DEI measures.

Implicit bias is not, however, without critics such as Heather Mac Donald.^{lxii} For ideologues, this notion has become what amounts to a doctrine of involuntary hatred. The latter would make no sense morally or philosophically, after all, if we assume—as I do—that there can be no such thing as a moral agent without freely and therefore consciously *choosing* to be one. For racial theorists, even the most well-meaning white people must be racist whether they *know* that they are racist or not and even whether they *want* to be racist or not. They are *innately, irremediably and irredeemably racist oppressors*. Feminist ideologues apply the same doctrine to men. From their perspective, men must be *innately, irremediably and irredeemably sexist oppressors*.^{lxiii} As representatives of alleged oppressor classes, they can have no legitimate claim to a single standard of moral or legal justice and no claim to equality, let alone to forgiveness or compassion. Justice amounts to revenge, therefore, not reconciliation.

Current legal and other systems *are* remediable, however, so alleged victim classes can (should) “interrogate,” “problematize,” “subvert” and “dismantle” them as “transformative” measures. And if the end justifies the means, which it does from an ideological and thus revolutionary perspective, then the cost to society as a whole makes no moral difference. (Never mind that minorities pay a very heavy price for measures such as lowering academic standards for them instead of forcing them to “act white” in a meritocracy^{lxiv}, for example, or refusing to arrest them for crimes that they commit in their own communities with profoundly destructive results).^{lxv}

My point here is that hatred, within the worldview that shapes identity politics in our time—morally, legally, psychologically and even spiritually—is highly *contagious*. It seldom stops at this group or that one. Those who hate black people, for instance, usually hate Jews and other outsiders as well. Even Christians are not exempt. Long before the conflict over abortion, for example, the Ku Klux Klan made a point of attacking not only black people but also Jews and Catholics. Now, the resistance of Catholics to abortion has left them exposed once again to intimidation.^{lxvi} I find it hard to see how any society that relies so heavily on dualistic ideologies can avoid the *proliferation* of hatred. New forms keep appearing, just as the Covid 19 virus keeps mutating or cancer cells keep metastasizing. The names of victim and oppressor classes keep changing or multiplying, to be sure, but the disease itself remains: hatred. You might ask: who could have predicted the rise of transgender ideology (as distinct from gender dysphoria per se). A better question, however, would be: who could have predicted the clash between transgenderism and feminism? The answer is simple: anyone who understands the power of a dualistic framework—that is, of *organized hatred*—to achieve political goals.

The Golden Rule notwithstanding, religious people have always and everywhere found ways of hating each other. Dualism has a very long history in the West (but not only in the West) and even found its way into some sacred texts of Western religions. But it has always, until now, had to compete vigorously with *non-dualistic texts* such as passages from the Hebrew prophets and the Christian gospels. Western religious traditions have insisted, albeit inconsistently,^{lxvii} that the ultimate source of evil is not “out there” (in “them”) but “in here” (within “us”). To the extent that secularization has limited the influence of religion, it has



removed the spiritual *ballast* that once discouraged the polarizing contagion of hatred that now afflicts us.

EPILOGUE

This completes the circle that introduced this rambling essay. When I began my study of misandry, I assumed, or at least intuited, that it was only one form of hatred, that it co-existed not only with misogyny but also with many other forms of hatred. I soon learned to recognize a common morphology, defined that as ideology and identified it on both the Left and the Right of a political continuum. Moreover, because my field is comparative religion, I found the same morphology not only in secular ideologies but also in religious ideologies. For practical purposes, I spent most of my professional life on one case study: feminist ideology. But I see now that we cannot learn effectively about one ideology in isolation from other ideologies. This coincides with one of the founding principles of comparative religion. Following Goethe (To know one language is to know none), Max Müller said, “To know one religion [that is, one’s own] is to know none.”^{lxviii} In other words, to know one religion is to know how it is *both like and unlike other* religions. Each is distinctive for historical, geographical and cultural reasons, but all are alike enough to be identified as religions. The current cultural landscape makes it an ideal laboratory, as it were, for the study of comparative ideology—or, to put it more bluntly, comparative hatred.

NOTES

ⁱ I am not a social scientist, but I know that more and more scholarly articles and books about fatherhood are coming out (partly, but not only, due to the growing need for research on fatherless children due to the high rate of divorce or separation and to the political importance of single mothers both by default and by design). Until very recently, research on parenting focused almost exclusively on mothers except for countless references to fathers in connection with either “deadbeat dads” with their alleged indifference to family life or to the monsters who rape or otherwise abuse their children (which eventually led to brief but destructive moral panic over “repressed memory syndrome”). For several decades, public discourse focused heavily on what was wrong with fathers. In short, the literature was heavily influenced by current ideologies that glorified motherhood (which was itself a departure from earlier feminist ideology with its emphasis on “empowering” women to leave the home and build careers).

Even now, I read books on fatherhood with suspicion. I still expect to find either feminist or woke slants. The following book on fatherhood is helpful, I think, because it accounts for (a) the biological evolution of fatherhood, (b) the historical and cross-cultural variations of fatherhood and (c) the various ways in which fathers are not merely assistant mothers or providers of material resources but also parents with distinctive and necessary functions in family life. Following that book, I have listed a few articles on fatherlessness, which I found useful in my own research on men, maleness, masculinity and misandry.

Peter B. Gray and Kermyt G. Anderson, *Fatherhood: Evolution and Human Paternal Behavior* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).



T.W. Miller, “Paternal Absence and Its Effect on Adolescent Self-Esteem.,” *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 30.4 (Winter 1984): 293-296; doi: 10.1177/002076408403000406.PMID: 6511219

C.B. McCormick and J.N. Kennedy, “Father-Child Separation, Retrospective and Current Views of Attachment Relationship with Father, and Self-Esteem in Late Adolescence.,” *Psychological Reports*, 86.3 (June 2000): 827-834; doi: 10.2466/pr0.2000.86.3.827.PMID: 10876330

Herman Goodden, “What Are Dads Good For?” *Quillette*, 18 June 2021; <https://quillette.com/2021/06/18/what-are-dads-good-for/>

Katie Bohn, “Closeness with Dads May Play Special Role in How Kids Weather Adolescence,” *Penn State News*, 6 August 2021; <https://news.psu.edu/story/664558/2021/08/02/research/closeness-dads-may-play-special-role-how-kids-weather-adolescence>

B.L. Volling and R. Palkovitz “Fathering: New Perspectives, Paradigms, and Possibilities,” *Psychology of Men and Masculinities, Special issue on Fathering*, 22.3 (2021): 427-432; doi.org/10.1037/men0000354

David C. Geary, “The Rise of Father Absence and Its Attendant Social Ills,” *Quillette*, 7 March 2023; <https://quillette.com/2023/03/07/the-rise-of-father-absence/>

ⁱⁱ Peter Yost, “Nazi Town, U.S.A.: The Untold Story of Nazi Sympathizers on American Soil,” (American Experience), *PBS*, 23 January 2024; <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/nazi-town-usa/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Spreading Misandry: Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001): pp. 194-233. Originally the introductory chapter of one volume on misandry, this explores the depiction of men in American popular culture during the 1980s and 1990s. Of great importance in this volume, though, is its chapter on “Making the World Safe for Ideology,” which carefully defines “ideology” as a worldview that has all or most of nine characteristic features (the most important of which is dualism), applies that definition to ideologies on both the Left and the Right, and discusses the danger that any ideology presents to liberal democracy. Three additional volumes complete the series.

-----Legalizing Misandry: From *Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006). The second volume is about sensational events or infamous trials that journalists have turned into high-profile venues for ideological feminism; the second part is a comparative study of legal changes that have directly or indirectly rigged the system against men in connection with divorce, custody, sexual harassment and so on. Legislators now express every law in gender-neutral language (except for the law that requires young men in the United States, but not young women, to register for military service). Nonetheless, the interpretation and implementation of some laws by



bureaucrats behind the scenes (notably the laws of child custody) can sometimes be anything but gender-neutral.

----- *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Man* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). The third volume is about the use of organized religion to give ideological feminism metaphysical legitimation and, in some cases, to replace or fundamentally alter historic religions such as Christianity and Judaism by introducing goddess worship.

----- *Replacing Misandry: A Revolutionary Theory* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015). The fourth volume shifts attention from women and their theories about men to the historic and current facts of life for men. It does so by examining the history of men—which is to say, perceptions of the male body—over approximately ten thousand years. This is a history of cultural and technological revolutions—that is, the horticultural, agricultural, industrial, military, sexual and reproductive revolutions—and the resulting need for men to establish a collective identity specifically as men. This is the project's intellectual foundation. Nathanson and Young define a healthy identity, whether collective or personal, as one that allows people to make at least one contribution to society that is (a) distinctive, (b) necessary and (c) publicly valued. Without that—and we live in a society that has ceased to value even fathers except as wallets or assistant mothers—men cannot have a healthy identity. Some respond by dropping out of school or even out of life itself and others by turning against a society that has no room for them specifically as men.

^{iv} For general summaries of the story, see the following sources:

Jonah Goldberg, “Know When to Fold ‘Em,” *Dispatch*, 3 January 2024; https://thedispatch.com/newsletter/gfile/know-when-to-fold-em/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Know+When+to+Fold++Em&utm_campaign=Know+When+to+Fold++Em

Michael Higgins, “For Harvard President Claudine Gay, Resigning Was the Only Appropriate Action; Moral Responsibility Shouldn't Take a Back Seat to a Poisonous, Divisive Ideology,” *National Post*, 4 January 2024; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/for-harvard-president-claudine-gay-resigning-was-the-only-appropriate-action?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202024-01-04&utm_term=NP_Comments

^v DEI is a slogan: diversity, equity, inclusion. But these words vary in sequence from one place to another: DEI in the United States, for instance, and EDI in Canada. I prefer DIE. But the *goal* does not vary.

^{vi} Claudine Gay, “What Just Happened at Harvard Is Bigger Than Me.” *New York Times*, 3 January 2024; <https://nytimes.com/2024/01/03/opinion/clauidine-gay-harvard-president.html>

^{vii} Bill Ackman, “How to Fix Harvard,” *Free Press*, 3 January 2024; <https://thefp.com/p/bill-ackman-how-to-fix-harvard>



Bill Ackman, “Claudine Gay Resignation Was a Good First Step, but More Needs to Be Done to Fix Harvard,” *National Post*, 5 January 2024; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/bill-ackman-claudine-gay-resignation-was-a-good-first-step-but-more-needs-to-be-done-to-fix-harvard?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202024-01-08&utm_term=NP_Comments

Tunku Varadaraian, “Harvard, Claudine Gay and the Education of Bill Ackman.” *Wall Street Journal*, 7 July 2024; https://wsj.com/articles/harvard-claudine-gay-and-the-education-of-bill-ackman-plagiarism-fa0aef3b?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

^{viii}Mike Gonzalez, “The Left Feels Threatened by Those Who Tell the Truth,” *Daily Signal*, 17 January 2024; https://www.dailysignal.com/2024/01/17/the-left-feels-threatened-by-those-who-tell-the-truth/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_to_k=ODI0LU1IVC0zMDQAAAGQ1Qmu72ikRXUaL59-b3TNb4ThRM-RJq511fzQzaGO8chpFMznCK3bMU3wgX9q_YgXp6KIv0upCuU6e9SBbfypE3wjr0DFvueYnldMiiyXWBvgqrvNhQ

“This contention is at first blush paradoxical. Many people, especially those in the center and the center-left, are belatedly coming around to agree that our cultural institutions have made a gigantic mistake in enforcing the view that all of life must be seen through the power dynamic of the ‘oppressed vs. the oppressor.’

“But those of us who have been writing about this for years have made the case that to get power over these institutions, the Left first had to undermine American norms and institutions.

“This is the heart of what is known as “cultural Marxism.” It is not always possible to settle economic scores and overthrow regimes through violent and bloody revolutions ... so a better approach is to infiltrate the institutions and indoctrinate the population, especially the young.

“In the lingo of the cultural revolutionaries, this is called replacing the existing ‘cultural hegemony’ with a ‘counterhegemony,’ or engaging in ‘consciousness raising’ with those who have ‘false consciousness’ because they, wrongly in this view, identify with the oppressor class.

“Your average woke professor may call false consciousness being ‘white adjacent’ because our present-day cultural Marxists have racialized cultural Marxism ...

“But what is known as the Left’s “March Through the Institutions” (their term) has been so successful that Gay and the rest of the cultural Marxist Left are now putting us on notice that they are the new hegemony and we unwashed are running a subversion that wants to impose a counterhegemony.”

^{ix} Benjamin Weingarten, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Regime Remains Unbowed,” *Epoch Times*, 10 January 2024; https://theepochtimes.com/opinion/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-regime-remains-unbowed-5559427?utm_source=opinionnoe&src_src=opinionnoe&utm_campaign=opinion-2024-01-10&src_cmp=opinion-2024-01-10&utm_medium=email&est=e5F1bT%2BUYCYOwPkjEI3LugWL8kHI1ndbtyPfXvy9p6s0dhstnZuDkQ9iHFh27VlpmHhYlg%3D%3D



“Ms. Gay again notes that she’s had bigoted invective hurled at her. But the legitimate criticism on the merits is what forced her to step down. Not crazies sending emails or making phone calls. In her piece, Ms. Gay again elides all this. She laments only that she had ‘neglected to clearly articulate’ what she really believed about calls for Jewish genocide on campus in falling into a ‘well-laid trap’ by Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. It was Republican pouncing and seizing that was at issue, apparently. Further, despite ‘duplicat[ing] other scholars’ language’ in her thin paper-writing record, Ms. Gay writes that “I proudly stand by my work and its impact on the field.” ...

“Harvard has shown no contrition for the failures culminating in Ms. Gay’s resignation, nor willingness to otherwise hold itself accountable or change ...

“Could the criticism have had anything to do with her own words and actions?”

^x Yaron Steinbuch, “Harvard Finds More ‘Duplicative Language’ in President Claudine Gay’s Work as Congress Investigates Plagiarism,” *New York Post*, 21 December 2023; <https://nypost.com/2023/12/21/news/harvard-finds-more-duplicative-language-in-presidents-work/>

^{xi} Tom Ravenscroft, “Neri Oxman Caught up in Academic Plagiarism Row,” *Dezeen*, 11 January 2024; https://dezeen.com/2024/01/11/neri-oxman-academic-plagiarism-row/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Dezeen&utm_content=Daily%20Dezeen+CID_8768ac418f33cc24f1ed40f01b7addaa&utm_source=Dezeen%20Mail&utm_term=Neri%20Oxman%20caught%20up%20in%20academic%20plagiarism%20row

^{xii} Bill Ackman, “Post [on his wife, Neri Oxman], X, [January 2024]; <https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175>

^{xiii} Some observers are already indulging in wish-fulfillment fantasies. Cf. Andy Kessler, “Pop Goes the DEI Bubble,” *Wall Street Journal*, 21 January 2024; https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175wsj.com/articles/pop-goes-the-dei-bubble-affirmative-action-claudine-gay-harvard-esg-blackrock-39c77d13?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

“I, like most Americans, am for diversity, but not when it’s forced or mandated. In a 2017 interview, Mr. [Larry] Fink admitted BlackRock would use DEI tactics to “force behaviors” of corporations on “gender or race,” including via management compensation. Now that’s power.

“This power inevitably leads to a march of intellectual corruption through institutions, which we’ve seen at Harvard, the Biden administration and elsewhere. Does national security adviser Jake Sullivan really care about equity or climate change? It polled well and put him back in power to implement his own societal design via ‘industrial strategy.’

“The good news is that economics eventually outlasts the control freaks. Central planning loses. Real life is about markets that every day transmit trillions of price signals of human desires. Those prices inform production much better than any government bureaucrat or Harvard professor. Societal design—remember Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society?—requires government control. I’ll take freedom.



“Preferred pronouns are fading. College admissions, and maybe hiring based on race is illegal. DEI departments are being deconstructed. But while the DEI movement may have peaked, like that Monty Python character, it’s not dead yet. The feverish whining of those grasping for the last reins of power will probably get worse before DEI eventually dies with a whimper.”

^{xiv} One example would be the University of Michigan. See Editor, “The Week,” *National Review*, 19 January 2024; <https://www.nationalreview.com/2024/01/the-week-trumps-iowa-romp/>

“With diversity, equity, and inclusion coming under renewed scrutiny following the resignation of Harvard president Claudine Gay, the University of Michigan has adopted what it calls ‘principles on diversity of thought and freedom of expression.’ The university’s president, Santa Ono, said this: ‘Open inquiry and spirited debate are critical for promoting discovery and creativity’ and for ‘preparing our students to be informed and actively engaged in our democracy.’ He further said, ‘At this time of great division, it is more important than ever that we come together in a shared commitment to pluralism, to mutual respect, and to freedom of speech and diversity of thought at this great public university.’ On the same page as the university’s president are its regents, one of whom said, ‘Every member of our academic community should expect to confront ideas that differ from their own, however uncomfortable these encounters may be. This can only occur when diversity of viewpoints exists and freedom of expression flourishes.’ The University of Chicago pioneered these principles years ago. It is cheering to see another major university catching up with its good sense.”

^{xv} Every political movement involves identity, because every political movement is also a community and therefore provides a sense of belonging. Some people are always insiders, therefore, and other people are always outsiders. But *not* every political movement organizes itself primarily or even entirely on the basis of *innate and unchangeable* characteristics such as race or sex.

^{xvi} Suspicion of “others” probably dates back at least as far as the rise of settled communities, agriculture and raiding. But dualism, *hatred* toward others, is probably somewhat more recent. An early source of that in the West was a religion that Jews encountered during their exile in Babylon and Christians, a few centuries later, in the Greco-Roman mystery religions. Apart from anything else, dualistic theologies feature a *metaphysical war* between two gods: a good one and an evil one. Of importance here is that people who worship the good one (identified with “us”) will eventually triumph over those who worship the evil one (identified with “them”). This kind of theology provided a satisfying answer to the problem of why the good or innocent often suffer (as victims) and the evil often prosper (as oppressors). Monotheists, however, could not easily abandon monotheism. Instead, they sometimes did so implicitly by acknowledging the source of evil as a demonic or satanic, but *not quite divine*, being.

^{xvii} The New Left soon looked a lot more promising than the Stalinist Old Left. It called for “change” and “liberation,” not obedience to authority or compliance with doctrine. In one form or another, it prevailed among students, eager to rebel against their complacent and



materialistic parents, their threatening draft boards and so on. The Civil Rights movement taught a generation of both black and white students to challenge a way of life that included racial segregation. The advent of reliable contraception and legalized abortion, moreover, convinced many young women to postpone liberate themselves from marriage and family life—and, in one way or another, from men—so that they could become “independent,” build exciting careers or at least have fun sexually.

My point here, though, is that *group identity*—first as women and black people, then as gay people and eventually as disembodied “gender identities”—replaced economic class as the venue of meaning, purpose and community.

^{xviii} Rob Henderson, “‘Luxury Beliefs’ That Only the Privileged Can Afford,” *Wall Street Journal*, 9 February 2024;

https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175wsj.com/us-news/education/luxury-beliefs-that-only-the-privileged-can-afford-7f6b8a16?mod=itp_wsj,djemITP_h

^{xix} Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer, “What Are We to Make of ‘Queers for Palestine’?” *Reality’s Last Stand*, 12 February 2024;

https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175realityslaststand.com/p/what-are-we-to-make-of-queers-for?utm_campaign=email-post&r=rw6n&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

To the extent that we see every conflict as a battle between innocent victims and cruel victimizers, we will gloss over the moral complexities of reality.

^{xx} “Equality” and “equity” are not synonymous. “Equality” refers to equality of *opportunity*, (sometimes known, usually with a pejorative connotation, as “formal equality.”) It assumes the value of competition, self-reliance, earned merit—but also laws that prevent discrimination against whole classes. “Equity” refers to equality of *result*, (sometimes known as “substantive equality”) and requires government intervention in forms such as affirmative action to help whole classes.

^{xxi} This distinction is not universal. In Canada and some European countries, “hate speech” (including “holocaust denial”) is indeed a criminal offense.

^{xxii} According to conventional wisdom, any institution that relies on tax dollars should represent the *demographic* sources of those tax dollars. But this is a specious argument, because society is always much more than the sum of its parts. Not everyone has children, for example, but everyone pays for schools. Not everyone has a car, but everyone pays for the maintenance of streets, highways and bridges. Universities, too, are intrinsically valuable. They benefit society as a whole, though not every individual directly, and are therefore justly supported by tax dollars *without* reference to demographic statistics.

^{xxiii} Michael Brendan Dougherty, “Why the Harvard Plagiarism Scandal Is So Irresistible,” *National Review*, 3 January 2024;

<https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175nationalreview.com/corner/why-the-harvard-plagiarism-scandal-is-so-irresistible/>



“Upon the surfacing of so much borrowed work in her meager academic product, President Gay should have been quietly let go, immediately. The reason this is a drawn-out story is that she wasn’t, which means something is going on at Harvard besides upholding the high academic standards on which its reputation depends.

“Instead, we witnessed something like a core implosion of the liberal elite. Hundreds of liberal-minded academics took the opportunity to downplay or dismiss real instances of plagiarism, because the accusations came from conservative journalists and staffers at a conservative think tank. That is, they were willing to surrender the most basic academic standards the minute doing so became politically embarrassing.

“The horror expressed at her resignation, I take to be genuine. Academics exist in a highly politicized profession of favor-trading, one in which conservatives have been almost entirely excluded. The opaque and never-quite-specified-in-writing (outside the guidance for admissions officers) hierarchies of race, gender, star power, publishing history, and social pedigree are understood by members of academia, and ultimately accepted by them. Everyone pays tribute to this system in some way by existing in it, until they get tenure, and often well beyond that point. The reality is that this system is designed to perpetrate fraud. There are entire fields that depend upon fraud of one kind or another. Making the replicability crisis in social sciences worse, day by day, is really just part of the academic mandate at this point. Whole departments depend upon continuing this project.

“The accusation of simple plagiarism, made by outsiders—really, outlaws—such as Aaron Sibarium of the Washington Free Beacon and Christopher Rufo of the Manhattan institute, hits academics like a splash of acid in the face. It can only be received as a life-altering, society-threatening act of terror. It exposes what’s just underneath the skin of modern academia.”

^{xxiv} Heather Mac Donald, “Onward with Inclusiveness,” *City Journal*, 2 January 2024; <https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175city-journal.org/article/harvard-presses-on-with-inclusiveness>

“But the Corporation’s reassertion of its commitment to ‘inclusiveness’ is an important marker of the future. The term is particularly charged following the Supreme Court’s ruling this summer invalidating racial preferences in college admissions. When the decision came down, then-president Lawrence Bacow signaled that Harvard would do everything it could to retain its regime of ‘inclusiveness.’ Its subsequent actions have only confirmed that intent. At present, ‘excellence’ and ‘inclusiveness’ (as the latter is currently defined) are mutually exclusive. Thanks to the academic skills gap, a university can be meritocratically excellent or it can be demographically inclusive. It cannot be both. That is why inclusiveness must be affirmed as a separate value from excellence. In a meritocratic world, the only values a university would care about including are those pertaining to academic achievement.”

^{xxv} James Hankins, “Intellectual Freedom in Medieval Universities,” *First Things*, 2.4 (15 November 2023): 22.

“You would have thought that so strict a regime, which we moderns would surely experience as highly repressive, would have stifled intellectual curiosity and debate. Instead, the opposite happened. Over the next hundred years, European universities fostered the most



creative period of philosophical speculation in the West since the Hellenistic era 1500 years before. The universities produced major philosophers like St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. The focus of debate, even more surprisingly, was the thought of a pagan Greek philosopher, Aristotle, whose writings were by no means easy to harmonize with revealed truth. Thus, while their brothers were off smiting the paynim in the Holy Land, back home in Western Europe university masters were studying their Aristotle with the aid of Muslim philosophers like Avicenna and Averroës. While King Louis IX was burning thousands of copies of the Talmud and expelling the Jews from France, theologians like Aquinas were reading Maimonides.”

^{xxvi} James Freeman, “Merit Is No Longer Evil,” *National Review*, 5 January 2024; https://x.com/BillAckman/status/1745251911471612175wsj.com/articles/merit-is-no-longer-evil-8df27d4e?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

^{xxvii} The technical word for this kind of hypocrisy is “dualism,” as I say, a worldview that divides humanity between “us” and “them.” “We” are innately good, and “they” are innately evil. Or, to use modern lingo, “we” are innately innocent and marginalized victims, and “they” are innately guilty and privileged oppressors. Never mind that good and evil *cannot* be innate, because there can be no such thing as good or evil without *moral agency*. An innately good being would be not a human but some kind of divine or angelic figure. An innately evil being, on the other hand, would not be human but some kind of divine or demonic figure. My co-author and I discussed dualism extensively, as a characteristic feature of all political ideologies. See Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *op. cit.*

^{xxviii} The morally defective notion of “collective guilt” can be traced back to biblical and other ancient traditions. It became institutionalized most dramatically in sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Spain, however, when Jewish *conversos* were suspected of heresy many *generations after* their conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Not even the sacrament of baptism, in other words, could counteract the innate pollution of what we would now call “race.” The Church suspected them of secretly remaining Jewish infidels (which was true in many cases) but collaborated with the state to persecute them as Christian heretics.

^{xxix} So far, only a few see the need to eliminate DEI rather than to expand it. See Heather Mac Donald, “Academy at the Crossroads, Part Two,” *City Journal*, 14 December 2023; <https://city-journal.org/article/the-academy-at-the-crossroads-part-two>

^{xxx} The ancient Israelites were not individualists in any modern sense. But both of the traditions that emerged from theirs, rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, evolved in ways that placed high value on the individual and therefore on independent thinking. The latter is a hallmark of rabbinic debate, for instance, which is one explanation for the fact that talmudic tradition preserves the names not only of those rabbis who won debates (and therefore established points of Jewish law) but also those who lost debates (but nonetheless reinforced the sanctity of Torah study). Individualism became even more deeply embedded in Protestantism, which emphasized the personal encounter with Christ and broke away from the Catholic focus on ecclesiastical institutions and monastic communities).



^{xxx}i Rabbinic Jews have never formalized as a doctrine, let alone as a binding one, any interpretation of the story about Adam and Eve. But their interpretation of “the Fall,” in Genesis 3, amounts to much the same thing.

For Christians, thanks partly to the teaching of St. Augustine, the state of Sin (estrangement from God) is an ontological state. It is conveyed from one generation to the next as an innate and defining feature of the human condition. Nonetheless, Christians *can return* to a state of Grace (reconciliation with God) due to the mission of Christ. (The state of Sin is not to be confused with guilt for personal “sins,” which are specific behaviors that exemplify and reinforce the status quo in this mortal world).

Jews have interpreted the same story as a description of what is self-evident to everyone in daily life: that we are all born into a flawed world and therefore very likely to stray from the path of wisdom as described in the Torah tradition. No one, not even Moses, has ever yet attained a state of perfect wisdom. That remains a goal to be realized partially in the present but fully only in the Messianic Age. Meanwhile, the tradition focuses attention on freedom of choice. Though very unlikely to make wise choices consistently throughout life, everyone is *free at any moment* to choose wisely and avoid folly.

^{xxxii} Proportionality in the context of self-defense is not a new topic of philosophical debate. At the moment, many discussions of it are about the war between Israel and Hamas. I have provided the following references to support my point of view about self-defense *in general*. Whether they would provide adequate support for Israel’s self-defense after the attack of Hamas on 7 October 2023 is, of course, a matter of opinion—and of no importance in this essay. See also:

David J. Bercuson, “‘Are We Beasts?’ War, Civilian Casualties and Hamas,” *National Post*, 2 January 2024; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/are-we-beasts-war-civilian-casualties-and-hamas?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202024-01-02&utm_term=NP_Comments

Cully Stimson, “How Israel Defense Forces Strive to Exceed Requirements of Law of Armed Conflict,” *Daily Signal*, 31 October 2023; https://dailysignal.com/2023/10/31/how-israel-defense-forces-strive-to-exceed-requirements-of-law-of-armed-conflict/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU11VC0zMDQAAAGPKWGZdrUbgrTQY-XtcbtLOG0V1mGDOa1veUXwYeHpXL7cxHsZr0fIPcBv1X0rhomlpdL6qwigE3IpqAA8mVxz9vGGwvXpCnaWQEQP4pXslkJMb9jT4Q

Richard Marceau and Emmanuelle Amar, “Opinion: Hamas Has Committed War Crimes, but Israel Is Complying with International Law,” *National Post*, 7 November 2023; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/hamas-has-committed-war-crimes-but-israel-is-complying-with-international-law?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202023-11-07&utm_term=NP_Comments

“Proportionality does not require that the damage caused to legitimate military targets be the same on both sides. It simply requires that the damage caused to civilians should not be



excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage that's reasonably anticipated from an action."

Shlomo Brody, "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished," *Law and Liberty*, 16 November 2023; https://lawliberty.org/no-good-deed-goes-unpunished/?mod=djemMER_h

"This critique of Israel's forewarning attempts is a distortion of international law, and it's critical to understand why. The Additional Protocols I (AP/I) to the Geneva Conventions, initially promulgated in 1977, declare the following requirement:

"Effective advance warning shall be given of attacks which may affect the civilian population, unless circumstances do not permit. (Article 57(2)c).

"The notion of "effective warning" helps minimize collateral damage by separating non-combatants from fighters (discrimination) and preventing disproportionate deaths of non-combatants (proportionality). Note, however, that forewarning is not required if "circumstances do not permit." It's understood that such measures are not always feasible. It's further understood that "effective warning" will not always actually succeed in clearing the area of non-combatants. After all, the attacking party doesn't have control over the area; the defending party (in this case, Hamas) controls the scene.

Victor Davis Hanson, "When Has War Ever Been 'Proportional'?" *Daily Signal*, 17 November 2023; https://dailysignal.com/2023/11/17/when-has-war-ever-been-proportional/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU1IVC0zMDQAAAGP1b-OrrU0X8HGcUzkyWi1vSPLc6-mAZE-KMorapnwQgqxWhPALYQ118_LIhf0_K19qEgyHANPvWThxdYwY5SuNdeEqr-KbEzyRIX_y9tZ1wai2fbe1A

"Proportionality in war is a synonym for lethal stalemate, if not defeat. When two sides go at it with roughly equal forces, weapons, and strategies, the result is often a horrific deadlock—like the four years of toxic trench warfare on the Western Front of World War I that resulted in 12 million fatalities.

The purpose of war is to defeat the enemy as quickly as possible with the fewest number of casualties—and thereby achieve political ends.

So, every side aims to find superior strategies, tactics, weapons, and manpower to ensure as great a disproportionate advantage as possible.

Hamas is no exception.

"Its savage pre-civilizational strategy to defeat Israel hinged on doing disproportionate things Israel either cannot or will not do ...

"Fourth, Israel understands that a country of 9 million to 10 million is facing a virulently hostile 500 million-person Arab Middle East. The United Nations is on the side of Hamas. A now antisemitic Europe has been hijacked by immigrants from the Middle East. Israel's sole patron, the United States, is buffeted by a hard-left new Democratic Party that is not a reliable partner.

"The result is that Israel still cannot conduct a fully disproportionate war without endangering its source of military resupply in the United States, and a wider conflict with the Islamic world.

And so, the war continues.



“ Hamas strives for a more disproportionate terrorist agenda to prolong the war. And Israel strives for a more disproportionate retaliation to end it.”

Barbara Krasij-Maisonneuve, “The West and Its Allies Once Ruled the World. What Happened?” *National Post*, 22 November 2023; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/the-west-and-its-allies-once-ruled-the-world-what-happened?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202023-11-22&utm_term=NP_Comments

“Total war, the only strategy that succeeded in victory over true evil, has been replaced by the virtue-signalling of proportionate response. The last war that ended with total victory was the Second World War. Our enemies in WWII, Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, were brought to their knees through total war, and their capitulation resulted in decades of peace. Of course, the means of achieving that capitulation were brutal; the bombardment did not stop until the enemy’s will was destroyed. Germany and Japan surrendered unconditionally; anything less was unacceptable. Post war, both received significant aid from the West and rebuilt. Today they are successful economic and democratic nations and staunch allies of the West.

“Since then, we have engaged in proportionate response, and pat ourselves on the back for avoiding the devastation wrought during the Second World War. But what have we achieved? In Afghanistan, 20 years of Operation Enduring Freedom caused thousands of allied casualties and ended in a disastrous withdrawal. The Taliban quickly regained control of the country and its citizens are now living in abject poverty, with a sickening assault on women’s rights in the name of Shariah Law.”

Dan Gardner, “Justice and Wisdom: Israel's Response to the Crimes of Hamas May Be Lawful. But Is It Wise?” *PastPresentFuture*, 26 November 2023; https://dgardner.substack.com/p/justice-and-wisdom?utm_campaign=email-post&r=rw6n&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=

Joe Oliver, “No, Israel's Military Response Does Not Need to Be 'Proportionate,’” *National Post*, 18 October 2023; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/no-israels-military-response-does-not-need-to-be-proportionate?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202023-10-18&utm_term=NP_Comments

“The proportionality rule requires that when an attack is expected to cause collateral damage that is excessive when compared with the military advantage to be gained, the attack must not be carried out. That’s the most difficult rule to carry out in the context of warfare against Hamas and Hezbollah. [Col. Eli] Bar-On said, ‘Proportionality is not a comparison about the body counts on each side.’”

Kevin D. Williamson, “On Morality and Restraint,” *Dispatch*, 20 November 2023; https://thedispatch.com/newsletter/wanderland/on-morality-and-restraint/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=On+Morality+and+Restraint&utm_campaign=On+Morality+and+Restraint



David B. Rivkin and Peter Berkowitz, “The Primitive Pacifism of Pope Francis’ Lecture to Israel,” *Wall Street Journal*, 13 December 2023; https://wsj.com/articles/the-primitive-pacifism-of-pope-francis-lecture-to-israel-augustine-just-war-fa9c66ba?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

“Just-war doctrine, while refined over the centuries, was largely developed within the Christian tradition by St. Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century. Augustine rejected primitive Christian pacifism and argued that war, waged in compliance with proper rules, is a necessary tool of ethical statecraft. Acknowledging the sanctity of human life and expressing concern about the harm inevitably caused by a clash of arms, just war’s principal role is to protect the innocent to the extent possible, a task that pacifism can’t accomplish.

*“Just-war precepts, as incorporated into the traditional laws of war, have two distinct components. The first, *jus ad bellum*, comprises the rules governing when force may be rightly used. These include just cause, legitimate authority, public declaration, proper intent, proportionality, use of arms as the last resort, and reasonable hope for success. Given Hamas’s longstanding resolve to destroy the Jewish state, the failure of several Israeli military campaigns over the years to deter the terror group, and the Oct. 7 massacre, Israel unquestionably meets these criteria.*

*“The second component, *jus in bello*, encompasses the rules governing how force may be lawfully used, including at whom it may be directed. This component underwent considerable doctrinal refinement between the 17th and 19th centuries. On April 24, 1863, the U.S. became the first military power to promulgate a comprehensive *jus in bello* manual, known as the Lieber Code.*

*“Combatants must comply with both *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum*, and violations by one side don’t justify violations by the other. Yet defining a war crime isn’t a simple matter of counting bodies. The weighing of conflicting imperatives permeates every facet of just-war theory. Guiding this balancing is the principle of double effect, which holds that it is morally permissible to act in pursuit of a good goal even if doing so would produce unintended but foreseeable harm. This principle is undergirded by a broad proportionality requirement, which measures the totality of positive and negative consequences of prosecuting a given war.*

*“*Jus in bello* law contains two basic principles. The principle of discrimination forbids deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. It is absolute and brooks no departures. The principle of proportionality holds that in attacking legitimate military targets—which include military facilities that Hamas has integrated into civilian infrastructure—combatants are permitted to cause unavoidable collateral damage to civilians and civilian infrastructure, provided the harm is proportional to the value of the legitimate military objectives being sought. Destroying Hamas qualifies as a paramount military objective.*

“The principle of proportionality has been traditionally applied with considerable flexibility, in part because balancing its imperatives depends on combat circumstances that involve complex technical matters that are inherently difficult to gauge.

“The laws of war used to play no favorites. Since World War II, however, humanitarian organizations, led by the International Committee of the Red Cross, have sought to provide special privileges for national liberation movements, an imprecise term that could include Hamas. These organizations have also tried to dilute rules that classify as unlawful enemy combatants fighters who don’t bear arms openly, don’t wear distinctive uniforms, and don’t



operate in military organizations that feature well-defined command structures. Those efforts have constrained the military flexibility of law-abiding powers.

Equating unintended and proportional collateral damage with terrorism, as Pope Francis apparently did, goes further. It undermines the right to self-defense, the cornerstone of the laws of war. If the characterization of Israel's exercise of its right of self-defense as terrorism were to prevail, the laws of war, instead of reflecting the military imperatives of law-abiding powers, would give a decisive advantage to terrorists and rogue states.

"This is particularly dangerous at a time when Hamas jihadists commit horrific war crimes and Russia attacks, tortures and rapes civilians and brutalizes prisoners of war. For rogue entities like these, war crimes aren't a cruel aberration but an integral part of their battle plans.

"The pope's comments to Mr. Herzog amount to a rejection of just-war theory and an embrace of primitive pacifism. They fail to understand that what happens in Gaza won't stay in Gaza. If the laws of war were rewritten to preclude law-abiding powers like Israel and the U.S. from defending themselves against lawless combatants like Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, lawlessness would inevitably prevail."

Conrad Black, "High Death Toll Does Not Mean Israel's Violating International Law," *National Post*, 15 December 2023; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/high-death-toll-does-not-mean-israels-violating-international-law?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20newsletter%202023-12-18&utm_term=NP_Comments

"Many critics of Israel seem to be operating under a misunderstanding of the law of armed conflict. As summarized by Charles Kels, senior attorney for the United States Department of Homeland Security and a judge advocate in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, there is a disturbing trend wherein academics and others conflate jus ad bellum and jus in bello.

"What those who make this mistake are saying, writes Kels, "is that even if a state is acting in self-defence with a lawful objective, and even if their forces abide by (the laws of war) in military operations, they still have a legal obligation to stop fighting if civilian casualties are too high." This is not the law, nor should it be.

"The death toll in Gaza cannot be taken lightly. However, the magnitude of civilian harm alone is not a reliable indicator of compliance with international law. The fact that Hamas embeds itself within civilian populations, and actively prevents civilians from, likely needlessly heightens the death toll."

^{xxxiii} Lee Fang, "Lee Fang, "The Right Has Embraced Cancel Culture," *UnHerd*, 11 January 2024; [https://unherd.com/2024/01/the-right-has-embraced-cancel-culture/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups\[0\]=18743&tl_period_type=3](https://unherd.com/2024/01/the-right-has-embraced-cancel-culture/?tl_inbound=1&tl_groups[0]=18743&tl_period_type=3)

^{xxxiv} Douglas Belkin, "Harvard Crisis Signals Broader Fight Over What a University Should Be," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2024; https://wsj.com/us-news/education/harvard-president-claudine-gay-university-b911ca7e?mod=itp_wsj,djemITP_h

^{xxxv} James Taranto, "The Harvard of the Unwoke," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 January 2024; https://wsj.com/articles/the-harvard-of-the-unwoke-university-of-florida-is-fixing-higher-education-13f22b77?mod=itp_wsj&mod=djemITP_h



“But the idea that the purpose of education was, as Mr. Sasse puts it, “to prepare for life and thoughtful citizenship and engagement and caring about the good, the true and the beautiful” also held a good deal of sway. “I think people kind of intuitively understood in the late ’40s and early ’50s that you needed more of both.

“Then came the political convulsions of the ’60s and the “curricular wrestling” in the aftermath of the civil-rights movement and amid protests over the Vietnam War. “By the end of the 1960s, people are so exhausted that the general public decided, ‘I don’t know about all that stuff. I believe in the practical parts ... I don’t know about all those curricular debates.’

“As a result, public engagement with curriculum questions “starts to atrophy.” By the late ’80s, “you end up with more and more culture-war skirmishes happening on campus, but that are supposedly only the domain of the experts,” Mr. Sasse says. “The public saw it happening but stopped engaging and stopped paying attention.” Still, young people needed education to succeed, so their parents (and the government) kept supporting the system by sending them off to college.”

^{xxxvi} Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1990; 2008).

^{xxxvii} Lawrence Krauss, “Alan Sokal’s Joke Is on Us as Postmodernism Comes to Science,” *National Review*, 5 January 2024; https://wsj.com/articles/alan-sokals-joke-is-on-us-as-postmodernism-comes-to-science-23a9383c?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

Yakov Joshua Gizersky, “Train Physicians, Not Activists, at Med School,” letters, *Wall Street Journal*, 16 January 2024; https://wsj.com/articles/med-school-application-dei-woke-political-2481073d?mod=itp_wsj&mod=djemITP_h

^{xxxviii} I use that term, because it evokes the historical parallel of “Aryan science,” which the Nazis hoped would replace “Jewish science.”

^{xxxix} Mark Moore and Samuel Chamberlain, “Judge Jackson Declines to Define ‘Woman,’ Says She’s ‘Not a Biologist,’” *New York Post*, 23 March 2022; <https://nypost.com/2022/03/23/sen-blackburn-slams-judge-jackson-on-definition-of-woman/>

^{xl} Luther Ray Abel, “Claudine Gay’s Implosive *New York Times* Op-Ed,” *National Review*, 3 January 2024; https://nationalreview.com/corner/claudine-gays-implosive-new-york-times-op-ed/?utm_source=recirc-desktop&utm_medium=article&utm_campaign=river&utm_content=in-response&utm_term=first

^{xli} Editorial Board, “Claudine Gay and America’s Institutions,” *Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2024; https://wsj.com/articles/harvard-president-claudine-gay-resignation-higher-education-ec838e3d?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

“Former *New York Times* editorial page editor James Bennet wrote in the *Economist* last month that his former newspaper ‘is becoming the publication through which America’s



progressive elite talks to itself about an America that does not really exist.’ The same is true of other once-respected institutions ...

“Like Ms. Gay, they’ve done so by impugning as deplorables half of the country that doesn’t share their views. If you support voter ID laws, you’re a racist. If you oppose modern progressive cultural orthodoxy about gender identity or pronoun use, you’re a bigot. If you question the left’s climate policies, you’re anti-science.

“They have sought to shut down intellectual debate on everything from the Palestinian-Israel question to race and Covid lockdowns. The campaign by the press and public-health experts to discredit the authors of the Great Barrington Declaration—which called for focusing Covid protections on the elderly and those at high-risk—was a shocking case in point ...

“Ms. Gay writes that campaigns against institutions “often start with attacks on education and expertise, because these are the tools that best equip communities to see through propaganda.” Yet elites invoke their education and expertise to enforce ideological conformity. Today’s illiberal progressives vilify and misrepresent their critics’ arguments rather than engage with them, which fuels the public backlash.”

^{xlii} Charles C.W. Cooke, “Claudine Gay’s Defenders Have It All Backwards,” *National Review*, 5 January 2024; https://nationalreview.com/corner/claudine-gays-defenders-have-it-all-backwards/?bypass_key=Zllhdys4TDdQcWJUdU5sd244MmczUT09Oj pia3RyUmxCNldGUldaV3RoYlc0dmFFaEzAV0ZPZHowOQ%3D%3D

^{xliii} Not all Zionists, however, are Jews. Millions are Christians, especially evangelical Protestants. But this distinction is irrelevant here.

^{xliv} Jay Nordlinger, “Lipstadt vs. Jew-Hatred,” *National Review*, 26 February 2024; <https://www.nationalreview.com/2024/02/lipstadt-vs-jew-hatred/>

“Day after day, people say, ‘I’m not antisemitic, I’m anti-Zionist.’ I once brought up this issue with Paul Johnson, the late British historian and journalist. He said, ‘Scratch someone who says he is anti-Zionist, and it won’t be long before you reach the antisemite within’ ... If anti-Zionism and antisemitism are separate, says Lipstadt, ‘then why the hell—excuse my language—why are you attacking girls on a basketball team or firebombing a synagogue,’ etc.? Bad actors blur the line.

Lipstadt hastens to say what should not have to be said—but she says it in light of the diplomatic position she holds: Criticism of Israel is hardly the equivalent of antisemitism. ‘Yes,’ I interject. ‘Otherwise, every Israeli would be guilty.’ No doubt, Lipstadt says—‘because the national sport of Israel is not soccer but criticism of the government.’

Deborah Lipstadt’s definition of anti-Semitism includes anti-Zionism. And this is often—but not always—correct. Eliding any distinction can be a serious rhetorical disadvantage, because doing so defames not only gentiles but also Jews who make rational arguments against Israeli policies. Worse, from my point of view in this essay, doing so *hides an underlying cause of anti-Zionism in the current context, which is not anti-Semitism but anti-Westernism.*



^{xlv} The debate over how to define anti-Semitism will go on for a long time. I disagree with those who collapse several phenomena into that one category. For them, snobbery, ignorance, envy and so on are all versions of the same phenomenon. Now, so is hostility toward Israel. See the following:

Gary Saul Morson, “To Combat Antisemitism, Understand Its Variety,” *Wall Street Journal*, 16 January 2024; https://wsj.com/articles/to-combat-antisemitism-understand-its-variety-hatred-intersectionality-ignorance-0b2c92f0?mod=MorningEditorialReport&mod=djemMER_h

^{xlvi} By “religious hatred,” I refer here to a byproduct of Christianity. But religious hatred could refer also to a byproduct of *Islam*, which opposed, from the beginning, both Judaism and Christianity.

No one can say that all or even most Muslims today want to wage jihad against Jews or Christians, although sociologists and psychologists do study popular opinion with varying degrees of accuracy. But my point here is that the Quran itself commands and therefore legitimates jihad (in the sense of spreading Islam by conquest). This might not matter if it were not for the current state of Islam. Westerners sometimes wish for an Islamic reformation, hoping that it would lead to an Islamic counterpart of the liberal, tolerant (and largely secular) worldview of *modern* Protestantism—forgetting that the *early* Protestants were, on the contrary, very intolerant and iconoclastic fundamentalists. Their goal was to recapture the original and therefore pristine *purity* of early Christianity by eliminating the encrusted follies of later (medieval) Catholic teachings and practices. More recently, some Protestants adopted various forms of fundamentalism, which is by definition a reaction *against modernity*. (Ironically, therefore, Protestantism has not only fostered modernity unintentionally but some Protestants have also reacted against it intentionally.)

My own theory is that Islam has *already had* (or at least begun) a reformation of its own. And the goal of this reformation *eventually* included attacks on the alien and threatening worldview of modern Europe. Their goal, like that of the Protestant reformers, was returning to some lost golden age—that of the founding hero and his early followers. This accounts not only for the fundamentalist Wahhabi (or Salafi) movement but also for renewed attempts to wage jihad against the West—not only against Jewish and Christian infidels (along with liberal Muslim heretics) but also against modern and secular ideologies from the West.

Consequently, I disagree with those who trivialize the religious depth of Hamas and other jihadi movements.

Noah Feldman, “The New Antisemitism,” *Time*, 27 February 2024; time.com/6763293/antisemitism/

Even the prevalence of antisemitism among Islamist groups like Hamas isn't primarily driven by religion. Rather, it is part of their politically motivated effort to turn a struggle between two national groups for the same piece of land into a holy war.

But if their main motive for war against Israel were primarily political, they could have had a state of their own long ago. Moreover, they would have had no reason to seek and even glorify martyrdom, let alone to use their own civilians as human shields. Instead, Hamas and



other jihadi movements have refused for many decades even to negotiate over boundaries and other practical matters.

^{xlvii} By “racial hatred,” I refer to the nineteenth-century translation of Christian anti-Judaism to racist anti-Semitism—due partly to the rise of nationalism as a byproduct of romanticism. But racist ideologies targeted not only Jews but also many other peoples, all of whom ended up in the Nazi death camps.

^{xlviii} Actually, the list could include more than two. Both China and Russia are anti-Western, for example, but the topic of this essay is *hatred*. And I doubt that anti-Western hatred, ideological pathology, is what actually motivates the foreign policies of either China or Russia (let alone the behavior of Chinese and Russian people in their millions). What does motivate those countries, or at least their ruling classes, is a combination of nationalism, ambition and opportunism.

Another source of anti-Westernism might be North Korea. See Jeremy Black, “Conflict to Come,” review of *The Return of Great Powers*, by Jim Sciutto, *Cold War 2.0*, by George S. Takach, in *Wall Street Journal*, 11 March 2024; https://www.wsj.com/arts-culture/books/the-return-of-great-powers-and-cold-war-2-0-review-conflict-to-come-3db85100?mod=MorningEditorialReport,djemMER_h

Messrs. Sciutto and Takach are also aware that the actions of smaller states may influence the international system, but both authors seem inclined to underestimate these countries’ effect. Indeed, Messrs. Sciutto and Takach appear to share the widespread tendency to assume that the major powers are the driver of the system when in fact they, too, are greatly affected by the actions of smaller participants. North Korea, for example, should have received more attention in both books. If there was a lesson to be learned from the two world wars, it is that global conflict can be sparked by the actions of those on a front line, actions that, intentionally or not, propel great powers from confrontation to conflict.

Maybe so, but I see no evidence that *hatred* motivates Kim Jong Un any more than it does Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin (let alone millions of their citizens).

^{xlix} This perspective, which seems counter-intuitive and even offense to many Jews, occurred to me even before reading the following:

Bill Jacobson, “What’s Behind Antisemitic Protests on College Campuses,” podcast, *Daily Signal*, 25 April 2024; https://dailysignal.com/2024/04/25/anti-semitic-protests-college-campuses-represent-anti-western-anti-american-movement-professor-says/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_to_k=ODI0LU11VC0zMDQAAAGSs8HnuhJreYHnRyHXDJ_QL3yRyryHPk9KyXnx6xvB_kbVVnPAFw0EFPoc0ap6bz3tIsLGxLHpQ9-0Lnq_hyH1cZx154WuW5GDIEMoGx1ZjaTNSy9bow



Heather Mac Donald, “Biden Can’t Be Trusted to Take on Anti-Semitism,” *Spiked*, 15 May 2024; <https://www.spiked-online.com/2024/05/15/biden-cant-be-trusted-to-take-on-anti-semitism/>

^l Western societies did allow slavery, for instance, but so did most or all other societies both historically and cross-culturally. Moreover, Western societies were among the very few to *abolish* slavery (at great economic and human cost). But the ideologues of our time don’t care about historical facts. They do not acknowledge facts per se, only facts that serve their own interests. They rely instead on the postmodernist notion that there is no such thing as truth, only “our truth” versus “their truth.” And “our truth” is that the West is *inherently, uniquely and irredeemably* evil.

^{li} Josephine Quinn, *How the World Made the West: A 4,000-Year History* (New York: Random House, 2024).

^{lii} Ironically, progressivism or even wokism might have a built-in expiry date due to historical and psychological factors that advocates have ignored. This would surely not surprise Jordan Peterson, who has recognized the *profound need of young men*, in particular, for a healthy collective identity. By now, he is well on the way to becoming a topic of research in his own right.

Jordan Peterson, “The Awe-Inspiring Conservative Counter-Offensive against Woke Nonsense,” *Winnipeg Sun*, 29 February, 2024; <https://winnipeg.sun.com/opinion/jordan-peterson-the-awe-inspiring-conservative-counter-offensive-against-woke-nonsense/wcm/453b9f36-86d6-4591-b36d-7efa88454c2a>

First, we see a worldwide phenomena, which is an increasingly conservative stance adopted by young men. This will happen among young women too, although there will be a lag, because young women need young men, and will eventually turn in their direction. This is not happening precisely because the young men are genuinely becoming more conservative, but because they are sick to the soul of the demoralization foisted on them from toddlerhood through maturity: sick of their innate play preferences being demonized (“we should socialize little boys to be more like little girls,” as the demented social and developmental psychologists have continually brayed); sick of their ambition and proclivity for competition and victory being deemed toxic; sick of being portrayed as oppressors on the political and economic front and as pillagers and rapists on the sexual and environmental side; sick of facing redistributive discrimination in the marketplace; sick of the constant accusations flung at them by the increasingly mentally-unstable radicals of the feminist left.

See also Michael Brendan Dougherty, “Progressive Sons Sliding to the Right,” *National Review*, 29 February 2024; <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/progressive-sons-sliding-to-the-right/>



^{liii} Lloyd Hawkey Robertson, “The Infected Self: Revisiting the Metaphor of the Mind Virus,” *Theory and Psychology*, 27.3 (2017): 354–368. Here is the abstract:

The idea that units of culture may act as a virus controlling some of the perceptions and actions of individuals has been the subject of considerable controversy since proposed by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins. This debate has occurred in the absence of a defined mental viral structure or a target body upon which such viral structures may act. This article develops a paradigm in which the self is understood as such a body upon which future research into “mind viruses” may be undertaken. Possible mechanisms for mind-viral transmission are discussed. Criteria for defining a mental virus are used to examine evidence of possible mind-virus contagion in suicides, suicide cults, terrorism, and religion.

^{liv} Tyler O’Neil, “Collusion: Rhode Island School District Sends 8,800 Pages of Emails to SPLC, Docs Show,” *Daily Signal*, 5 March 2024; https://dailysignal.com/2024/03/05/is-your-kids-school-taking-tips-hate-splc-group-demonizes-response-border-crisis/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU11VC0zMDQAAAGRsnZrguO4BxBVq3814tTUmih2O2k5gjW1-wPPjQgo2yChi1_D_igAPfOwZ8_wYTFQcBbOIMZWT9HM9uUDi92StM0g1sqE2nt8Ht3NEcndBi4zCxUQVA

Moms for Liberty (which excludes dads from its title for some reason) is indeed among the groups that endorse censoring school libraries, the main targets being books that function as primers on “critical race theory” or “critical gender theory” for young children; these books disappear from the open stacks but are available by request (and in any bookstore). The SPLC has no problem at all with other groups, however, for doing precisely that but from the opposing point of view, the main targets in these cases being books that promote what they consider “racist” (such as Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*) or insufficiently “diverse” or “inclusive” notions of the family. In short, schools and libraries have become battlegrounds over hatred.

^{lv} Tyler O’Neil, “Financial Crimes Agency Suggests Banks Close Accounts of Conservative ‘Hate Groups,’” *Daily Signal*, 12 March 2024; https://dailysignal.com/2024/03/12/financial-crime-federal-agency-tells-banks-they-should-crack-christian-hate-groups/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU11VC0zMDQAAAGR11I9TSti6aOLX23aPchN4D49ro14L7KXnzO9WohYwMilN6ucNcWct5vII1O88BZyVUq9skX11zv-PYb0zGnj1tDE8ibT8KRB6ABRyLLPRKhLpVHwtA

The very idea sounds absurd, but in the wake of Jan. 6, 2021, the federal agency tasked with protecting the financial system from illicit use endorsed a list of “hate groups” that includes mainstream conservative Christian organizations like Alliance Defending Freedom and the Family Research Council.

The Treasury Department’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network sent an email to leadership at major banks, highlighting a report from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and Global Disinformation Index titled “Bankrolling Bigotry: An Overview of the Online Funding Strategies of American Hate Groups.”



When Americans think of “hate groups,” images of burning crosses come to mind. The U.S. does have a troubling history with racist hatred from the Ku Klux Klan, but the report wasn’t talking about racist thugs who string up innocent black men ...

Take Alliance Defending Freedom, for example. “Bankrolling Bigotry” mentions ADF as a “hate group,” but ADF has won multiple cases at the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing for the free speech and religious freedom of Christians and non-Christians to live out their faith. ADF represents Jack Phillips, who won at the Supreme Court because Colorado had targeted him for his faith, accusing him of discrimination because he wouldn’t use his artistic skills to craft a custom cake to celebrate a same-sex wedding.

Then there’s Liberty Counsel, the Christian law firm that represents former Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis in her legal appeal after a judge allowed a same-sex couple to exclude religious believers from a jury, which ordered Davis to pay more than \$300,000 in damages and legal fees. (She is refusing to pay until the appeal is resolved.)

The Ruth Institute aims to help survivors of the sexual revolution, while the Family Research Council supports pro-family policy in Washington, D.C. The American College of Pediatricians represents pediatricians across the U.S. who disagree with the American Academy of Pediatrics’ stance on abortion and transgender activism. Not all of these groups are explicitly Christian, but they represent conservative Christians who find themselves increasingly alienated from corporate America’s stifling “woke” orthodoxy.

*The “Bankrolling Bigotry” report included all these organizations and more on a list alongside white nationalist, white supremacist, black supremacist, and Holocaust denial groups. Readers of *The Daily Signal* may not be surprised to hear that the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and the Global Disinformation Index took the idea from the Southern Poverty Law Center.*

As I wrote in my book “Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center,” the SPLC took the program it used to monitor the Ku Klux Klan and weaponized it against mainstream conservative and Christian organizations, putting them on a “hate map” with Klan chapters. The SPLC “hate map” brands conservative Christian groups “anti-LGBTQ,” and it also smears immigration reform organizations like the Federation for American Immigration Reform, the Center for Immigration Studies, and the Dustin Inman Society, all of which also appear in the “Bankrolling Bigotry” report.

The SPLC aggressively advocates for left-wing policies on immigration, LGBTQ issues, and other topics, so its “hate map” serves both as a fundraising tool to scare donors and as a political weapon to silence opponents.

^{lvi} Ewan Palmer, “FBI Under Pressure for Targeting Catholics in Leaked Document,” *Newsweek*, 10 February 2023; <https://www.newsweek.com/fbi-memo-catholics-radical-traditional-leaked-1780379>

See also Terry Glavin, “Under Hate Speech bill, Wouldn't Trudeau Be Guilty of Vilifying Catholics?” *National Post*, 28 February 2024; https://nationalpost.com/opinion/terry-glavin-under-liberal-hate-speech-bill-trudeau-would-be-guilty-of-vilifying-catholics?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NP%20Platformed%20Newsletter%202024-02-29&utm_term=NP_Comments

Among other things, Bill C-63 proposes to target “online harms,” including hate speech, with the establishment of a “digital safety” commission, a digital safety ombudsperson, and a



digital safety office. The commission would be vested with the authority to investigate social media platforms that allegedly aren't compliant with the law, levy fines and carry out their proceedings in closed hearings. All these officials will be appointed by the federal cabinet.

Under the proposed act, hate speech complaints against individuals would be directed to the Canadian Human Rights Commission which, unlike the courts, would be exempt from the ordinary rules of evidence. No proof beyond a reasonable doubt will be required for a tribunal to find that the subject of a complaint before them constitutes "hate." All that's necessary is the "balance of probabilities" that a violation of the law has occurred. Bill C-63 would also establish new Criminal Code penalties: to advocate or promote genocide is to be liable for imprisonment for life.

Michael Geist, the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-Commerce Law at the University of Ottawa, anticipates "a tidal wave of hate speech related complaints" will surely follow the implementation of the bill, and the record of the Trudeau government on this front raises a disturbing question. Just who is going to be vested with these extraordinary powers? What does the Trudeau government really mean when it refers to "hate"? ...

You could say Trudeau played a leading role in a mass social panic without precedent in the history of religious bigotry in Canada: dozens of churches across the country were desecrated, vandalized or burned to the ground. The wave of arson was "understandable," Trudeau infamously insisted, adding the caveat that of course he wasn't endorsing these crimes.

It's not like he was to blame, we were all meant to understand. And after all, it's not like Catholics comprise what the Trudeau Liberals would call an "equity-deserving group," so no big deal. Meanwhile, the current Liberal justice minister and his immediate predecessor have both openly expressed an openness to criminalizing any public notice of the absence of an archipelago of secret graves adjacent to residential schools across Canada. "Residential schools denialism" would be equivalent to Holocaust denial, which was specifically criminalized in 2022.

^{lvii} David Krayden, "Trudeau's Online Harms Act Includes Life Imprisonment for 'Hate Crime Offense,' Creates Censorship Czar," *Post Millennial*, 27 February 2024; https://thepostmillennial.com/trudeaus-online-harms-act-includes-life-imprisonment-for-hate-crime-offense-creates-censorship-czar?utm_source=deployer&utm_medium=email&utm_content=&utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_term=15303

One big problem, of course, is punishing people for distributing politically incorrect "misinformation" or "disinformation" even if it happens to be either true or possibly true. Consider dissenting opinions on Covid, for example, which led to the Freedom (or Trucker's) Convoy of 2022. The federal government decided that following orders was necessary in a national "emergency" and therefore that those refused to follow orders (vaccine mandates) were menaces to society. In the resulting hysteria, it was easy for a journalist to spot *one* Nazi flag and jump to the conclusion that these peaceful dissenters had allied themselves with the forces of evil and deserved to be treated with contempt—that is, to be ridiculed, isolated or even persecuted as "haters." The Liberal government invoked Canada's Emergency Act, arresting more than a few truckers and "debanking" others. Given doubt over the constitutional legality of its behavior, the government is now trying out a new measure.



The legislation [Bill C-63] would create a definition of “hatred,” increase existing penalties for “hate propaganda offenses” and promulgate a unique Criminal Code entry for a “hate crime offense” while offering new “remedies” for violating online hate speech within the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The “new standalone hate crime offense ... would apply to every offense in the Criminal Code and in any other Act of Parliament allowing penalties up to life imprisonment to denounce and deter this hateful conduct as a crime in itself,” according to a technical briefing that preceded the news conference.

A human rights tribunal could also impose fines of up to \$70,000 for posting “hate speech,” according to the bill.

The legislation would include an online censorship czar, dubbed a “digital safety ombudsperson,” within a new government agency called the Digital Safety Commission of Canada. This bureaucracy would be given the authority to target anyone seen to be violating the Online Harms Act and to “enforce legislative and regulatory obligations and hold online services accountable for their responsibilities through auditing for compliance, issuing compliance orders and penalizing services that fail to comply.”

Social media, live-streaming and adult content services are all targets of the potential law.

^{lviii} Nico Grant, “Google Chatbot’s A.I. Images Put People of Color in Nazi-Era Uniforms,” *New York Times*, 22 February 2024; <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/22/technology/google-gemini-german-uniforms.html>

^{lix} Sue Parker Hall, “A Radical ReVision of Domestic Abuse: Making the Case for a Non-Gendered, Empathic Approach,” *Psychotherapist Journal*, 50 (2012): 18 – 21; https://www.academia.edu/33406176/A_Radical_ReVision_of_Domestic_Abuse1_Making_the_Case_for_a_Non_Gendered_Empathic_Approach?auto=download&email_work_card=download-paper

^{lx} John D. Mayer, David R. Caruso and Peter Salovey, “What Is Emotional Intelligence?” in Peter Salovey and D.J. Sluyter, eds., *Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence: Educational Implications*: 3-34 (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

For a more accessible source, see Marc Brackett, Sarah Delaney and Peter Salovey, “Emotional Intelligence,” in R. Biswas-Diener and E. Diener, eds., *Noba Textbook Series: Psychology* (Champaign, Ill., DEF, 2024); <http://noba.to/xzvpfun7>

This model proposes that four fundamental emotion-related abilities comprise EI: (1) perception/expression of emotion, (2) use of emotion to facilitate thinking, (3) understanding of emotion, and (4) management of emotion in oneself and others.

^{lxi} Several synonyms convey the same personal and emotional connotations. These include “despise,” “detest,” “abhor” and “loathe” (although the latter, like “disgust,” can have a physiological connotations).

^{lxii} Heather Mac Donald, interviewed by Seth Barron, “Are We All Unconscious Racists?” *City Journal*, 18 October 2017; <https://www.city-journal.org/article/are-we-all-unconscious-racists>



Barron: What is the connection between this implicit bias, these unconscious reflections we have that operate below the level of awareness and actual discrimination? I mean, how does this manifest itself?

Mac Donald: There is no connection. That is the problem. Since this test was announced, there has been a handful of courageous social psychologists that have pushed back against the methodology, and they have found that there's not a single aspect of the test that is not vulnerable to rigorous methodological critique. A: Any individual test-taker's scores on the implicit bias test can vary wildly from one taking to the next, so the test fails what is known in the social psychology literature as the measure of reliability. It is not reliable from one test. But it also fails what is known in the literature as validity in that it does not predict what it purports to predict. It turns out when they try to measure whether your score on the implicit association test relates to discriminatory behavior. What counts as discriminatory behavior is completely artificial and trivial. It is how, whether you make eye contact or the placement of your chair in a mock interview in a college psych lab, or whether you decide to donate in a hypothetical charity experiment whether you donate to children in Columbia slums, versus ... South African slums. That's the extent of what they call discriminatory behavior. In other words, this is not about a black candidate walking into an accounting firm and getting turned down because he is black. It's these artificial constructs. But even if we accept that those artificial lab constructs count as discriminatory behavior [that] we should care about, it turns out there is no relationship between your score on the implicit association test and these artificial discriminatory behaviors. So, the IAT [Implicit Association Test] and its social and political significance is falling apart as we speak, and yet it continues to have enormous effect on the corporate world, on the policing world, on the foundation world, and on the educational world.

^{lxiii} See, for example, one popularization of this notion: Berit Brogaard, "[The Mysteries of Love; 12 Ways to Spot a Misogynist](https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-mysteries-love/201502/12-ways-spot-misogynist)," *Psychology Today*, 18 February 2015; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-mysteries-love/201502/12-ways-spot-misogynist>

Brogaard blames the early psychological conditioning of individual men, not hatred as I define it. Her list of symptoms includes controlling and selfish behaviors, to be sure, but not some profound urge to *harm women as a class* (or even as individuals) *and not as an end in itself*. Consequently, I would *not* classify this lamentable psychological profile as misogyny. There are men who do hate women in that way, to be sure, but Brogaard does not discuss them in this article. Nor does she discuss women who have a profound urge to *harm men as a class* (not merely individuals) *and as an end in itself*. This urge sometimes originates not in personal pathology but in feminist ideology, which means that these women are indeed indulging in misandry—that is, *hatred* toward men as a class and as an *ideological or political end in itself*.

In short, Brogaard describes a *psychological* problem, but hatred, as I define it, is a *moral* problem.

^{lxiv} Heather Mac Donald, "Merit over Identity," *City Journal*, 11 April 2023; <https://www.city-journal.org/article/higher-ed-must-choose-merit-over-identity>



^{lxv} Heather Mac Donald, “On Race and Crime, a Counterfactual Narrative,” *City Journal*, 25 April 2023; <https://www.city-journal.org/article/on-race-and-crime-a-counterfactual-narrative>

On this topic, race and crime, see also Heather Mac Donald, *The War on Cops: How the New Attack on Law and Order Makes Everyone Less Safe* (New York: Encounter Books, 2016).

^{lxvi} Mary Margaret Olohan, “Catholic Churches Attacked 400 Times Since 2020, Tracker Finds,” *Daily Signal*, 27 February 2024; https://www.city-journal.org/article/are-we-all-unconscious-racistsdailyjournal.com/2024/02/27/exclusive-catholic-churches-attacked-400-times-since-2020-tracker-finds/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU1IVC0zMDQAAAGRjmnCokibLluyouLL5Y35W8PKLf4ja4OJ4AEN7TPqeIUNeYZYLdJvbpJb6rS81akG_onsP2OseXCleVa7CzaS3LEbW7Ll5xv3CR-ahtVAr6PgaEGCg

Catholic churches in the United States have been attacked at least 400 times over the past four years, according to data compiled by the Catholic advocacy organization CatholicVote.

The hundreds of attacks across the nation began in connection with widespread civil unrest in May 2020, CatholicVote said. Examples include church burnings, beheadings of statues of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary, swastikas painted on grave stones, satanic and blasphemous statements graffitied on walls, windows smashed, Masses disrupted, and even the murder of a Catholic priest ...

CatholicVote has only found evidence of an arrest in about 25% of the cases it tracked and estimates that the attacks have caused around \$25 million in physical damages to churches.

Many of these attacks are abortion-related and include graffiti such as “Jane’s Revenge” (a reference to Jane Roe of Roe v. Wade) or “If abortions aren’t safe, then neither are you,” indicating that the attackers could potentially be charged with violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, a law protecting churches, pro-life pregnancy centers, and abortion clinics that the Department of Justice has used to charge dozens of pro-lifers praying outside of abortion clinics over the past few years.

President Joe Biden’s DOJ has not charged any vandals with FACE Act violations in connection to attacks on churches, however.

“Catholics across America are effectively under siege while the Biden administration’s reckless refusal to enforce the law continues to allow anti-Catholic extremists to endanger law-abiding citizens of faith and destroy their places of worship,” said Tommy Valentine, director of the CatholicVote’s Catholic Accountability Project.

“These unacceptable acts of bigotry against Catholics, and really all Americans of faith, cannot be tolerated,” he added. “It’s time for every elected official to take seriously their solemn duty to protect all citizens, including religious Americans.”

^{lxvii} No tradition is “pure.” Each incorporates ideas and tendencies from a larger cultural environment. In late antiquity (during and after the exile of Jews to Babylonia) and in Roman times (when the early Christian Church competed with imported “mystery cults” such as Manichaeism), dualism was a very tempting mentality.



lxviii Lourens Van Den Bosch, "Friedrich Max Müller and the Science of Religion," 69-76; in *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches and Methodologies*, ed. by Richard King, (New York Columbia University Press, 2017); <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7312/king14542-007/html>

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1984 IN 2024

Tim Goldich



ABSTRACT

The predictions in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four are unfolding in the realms of Feminism—evident in Political Correctness and the Woke. Like Big Brother in the novel, a feminist Big Sister now defines the terms. Perhaps Orwell is suggesting that when it comes to a certain style of controlling and suppressing both truth and sexuality, the feminine may be specially implicated.

Keywords: feminism, gynocentrism, male, misandry, nineteen eighty-four



INTRODUCTION

I've just finished reading the 75th anniversary edition of George Orwell's classic novel 1984—featuring a new afterword by Sandra Newman and a new introduction by Dolen Perkins-Valdez¹. As is the case with dystopian futures in general, Orwell's dystopian future forbids erotic sexual polarity, enforcing a sexless androgyny (not altogether dissimilar to the “genderless society” we're becoming?). It's ironic then that neither Dolen's name nor her biographical blurb reveals her sex. By the time I've finished reading her intro I'm wondering how much of 1984 there is right here in 2024.

Writes Perkins-Valdez, “I am a Black, female reader, and these identifiers are primary points of entry into any text for me.” I'm a White male and these identifiers are important for me as well; but “*primary* points of entry into any text”? “I have learned to do what many readers on the margins have learned to do: *read around the margins*.” Well, okay, I get it. *And*, your task is to introduce a classic piece of literature, yet this task takes second place to your identity politics? I'm already dubious of a 2024 interpretation of 1984.

Dolen enjoys the book until she gets to Orwell's description of his main character, Winston Smith: “He disliked nearly all women, and especially the young and pretty ones.” Whoa, wait a minute, Orwell,” writes Perkins-Valdez, “Winston's views on women are, at first, despicable to the contemporary reader. He is the kind of character who can make me put a book down.” And maybe seek to cancel it?

Many see 1984's prescience in the current surveillance technology (“Big Brother Is Watching”). In addition, I see 1984's predictions unfolding in the realms of Feminism—including Political Correctness and Woke. In 1984 we have “The Thought Police.” In 2024 we have Political Correctness. In 1984 there are mind-control slogans: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH. In 2024 we have: GENDER IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT, #BELIEVEWOMEN, THE FUTURE IS FEMALE. In 1984 books are burned and/or “modified” so as never to contradict Big Brother. In 2024 books are “cancelled” and/or modified to appease Big Sister. In 1984 history is “modified” to be consistent with dogma; in 2024 we have “The brave men *and women* who fought and died in Vietnam.” In 1984, the inquisitor holds up four fingers and demands that you see five. In 2024 men suffer comparison with women in virtually every measure of wellbeing, yet Big Sister demands that we see only MalePower and FemaleVictimization *everywhere* we look. It seems to me that in place of Big Brother, in 2024 we have Big Sister.

¹ Orwell, G. (with Perkins-Valdez, D. and Newman, S.). (2024) *1984* (75th anniversary ed.) Signet. (Original work published 1949)



Like Big Brother, Big Sister defines the terms. Both Dolen Perkins-Valdez and Sandra Newman proclaim Winston Smith guilty of MISOGYNY! The term is feminist defined as a stand-alone (few have ever even heard of the word misandry) hostility toward a faction of humanity so flawless that negative judgments of them could only be the product of a kind of mental illness called MISOGYNY. Hmm. Let's take a quick look at Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Color Purple*, a book written by a Black woman in which all prominent characters are Black and all noble characters are Black females.

Commenting on the film version, professors Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young² summarize their issue with *The Color Purple*: "In a nutshell, it was that every male character, without exception, is either a hopelessly stupid buffoon, a fiendishly evil tyrant, or both. And every female character, without exception, is a purely innocent victim, a quietly enduring hero, or both" (p. 13). I very much doubt its extreme misandry would cause Dolen to "put the book down." If I put down every book with a female character who "disliked nearly all *men*," my reading choices would be cut in half.

She's prepared to forgive Winston, concluding that, "Orwell is suggesting misogyny is likely in a totalitarian society." Or, perhaps Orwell is frankly suggesting that when it comes to a certain style of controlling and suppressing both truth and sexuality, the feminine may be specially implicated? Feminism may judge it a mental illness, but I believe it's possible to hold a fair judgment of women even if that judgment isn't flattering. After all, we don't cry misandry every time men are held accountable for their male traits and tendencies. The specific target of Winston's ire is a young woman we will come to know as Julia. She wears a scarlet sash, "emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League." "It was always the women," says Winston, "and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted adherents of the Party, the swallowers of slogans, the amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy" (p. 10).

He may have a point. Political Correctness, Safe Spaces, Trigger Warnings, people disgraced and fired for speaking truths Big Sister doesn't want to hear. Just look at what female ideological dominance has done to intellectual freedom on campuses all over the feminist world. I was teaching high school when the false "Gender is purely a social construct" was first taught—as *fact*, not feminist *theory*. In the realms of gender conflict and complaint, gender activism and advocacy, gender ideology, gender defining, gender issues, gender studies, gender politics, gender **anything**, there is feminism on the one hand and on the other hand there is . . . nothing. In 1984, "At all times the Party is in possession of absolute truth" (p. 213). In 2024, at all times, the feminist ideological dictatorship dictates what is "true" and what is "not true" in *all* matters gender related



² Nathanson, P. and K. K. Young (2001). *Spreading misandry. The teaching of contempt for men in popular culture*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

To his horror, Winston becomes aware that Julia is following him, especially wherever his activities are “suspicious.” Upon leaving an antique shop (where he oughtn't to be), “She looked him straight in the face . . . For a few seconds Winston was too paralyzed to move” (p.100). Julia is acting exactly as a member of the Thought Police would act. As the last chapters of the book makes plain, the consequences of being in the hands of the Thought Police are horrific almost beyond imagining (“the groveling on the floor and screaming for mercy, the crack of broken bones, the smashed teeth and bloody clots of hair”) (p. 103). That she was spying on him was clear. So, Winston was *terrified*. “The worst thing was the pain in his belly. For a couple of minutes, he had the feeling that he would die” (p. 101). In his terror and desperation, it occurred to him, “He could keep on her track till they were in some quiet place, and then smash her skull in with a cobblestone” (p. 100). In the moment, it seemed his only hope; but of course, he doesn't do it.

Later, a cast on one arm, Julia falls and hurts herself. Despite his intense fear of her, he's compelled to come to her aid. She offers her free hand; he helps her up; she slips a piece of paper into his palm. The message reads: “I love you.” Julia had indeed been noting his every defiant act, but only to determine if Winston might be de-indoctrinated enough to be trustworthy. So, what does the “MISOGYNIST” Winston Smith do? Being such a “woman-hater” does he throw the paper away with a derisive laugh? Hardly . . . from the moment he reads her note, Julia becomes his primary reason for living. “At the sight of the words ‘I love you’ the desire to stay alive had welled up in him.” Despite the baleful consequences should they be caught, “the thought of refusing her advances never crossed his mind” (p. 109).

Finally, they are alone together. “He did not feel any temptation to tell lies to her. It was even a sort of love offering to start off by telling the worst” (p. 120). Sandra Newman comments: “Winston confesses to Julia that he once thought of raping and murdering her, thinking she was a member of the Thought Police. Julia is not at all alarmed or offended by this news” (p. 317). For Newman, Winston's confession confirms his misogyny and Julia's cavalier reaction confirms her female subjugation within a misogynist world. Early on in the book, “The girl with dark hair [Julia] was coming toward him across the field. With what seemed a single movement she tore off her clothes and flung them disdainfully aside” (p. 31). Well, sorry Sandra, but if a beautiful young woman suddenly drops her clothes and stands naked in front of a man, that man is apt to have impure thoughts (especially if he assumes that this member of the “Anti-Sex League” is only teasing him). In 1984, even a “thoughtcrime” is punishable by death. At its darkest, feminism can seem nearly as ruthless. Of course I get why Newman takes offense. But it should be noted how strange Winston's confession is. There she stands stark naked, “Her body was white and smooth, but it aroused no desire in him; indeed, he barely looked at it.” Is Winston SO determined to confess his sins that he confesses to thoughts he never had? Given that Julia has had her eyes on Winston from the beginning, I think it safe to assume that her striptease was intended to provoke him. So, Julia reacts to Winston's confession with a laugh. Unlike the feminist, Julia can empathize. If Julia believed some unknown man was gathering incriminating evidence, would her mere *thought* of killing him to save herself be misconstrued as MISANDRY?



We read that “Violence against women was often treated lightly in the literature of Orwell’s time, and Orwell was certainly not immune to misogyny himself” (p. 317). Feminists keep the word MISOGYNY in a holster at the hip. Violence against *women* treated lightly? — compared to what? Let’s take a quick trip to the movies in 1948. Westerns, war, noir, gangster movies, we see men shot, stabbed, drown, lynched, beaten, killed by the dozen, but we’re unlikely to see any violence upon a woman. The Truth is, violence against women has always been met with *outrage*, whether in reality or in literature. The Truth is, we never witness Julia harmed in any way, we only witness Winston being tortured (ad nauseam). Remember the feminist thumb screws pressuring tennis great John McEnroe to “admit” that Serena Williams was the best tennis player in the world? Did you know that Political Correctness demands that we replace “pregnant women” with “pregnant *people*”? Archetypally, Love is feminine and Truth is masculine. You know that “war on truth” we’ve been hearing about? It’s the feminine archetype that’s waging it.

Despite the risks, Winston rents a room above the antique store and, finally, Winston and Julia have real privacy. Julia tries on the cosmetics she managed to scrounge. “The improvement in her appearance was startling. With just a few dabs of color in the right places, she had become not only very much prettier, but, above all, far more feminine” (p. 142). Along with perfume, “I’ll wear silk stockings and high-heeled shoes!” says Julia. “In this room I’m going to be a woman, not a Party comrade.” In 1984 gender polarity is disallowed. In 2024 defending the “Binary” (humanity divided into male and female) is a “hate crime” (ask J. K. Rowling).

Says Dolen Perkins-Valdez, “By reconnecting him to his suppressed emotions, Julia teaches him there is a part of himself that the party cannot reach” (p. ix). “In some ways she was far more acute than Winston, and far less susceptible to Party propaganda,” (p. 153) writes Orwell. Moreover, Orwell grants Julia the experience and expertise in these clandestine matters and Winston places himself in her capable hands. Sandra Newman judges Orwell’s characters as mere representations “With the (debatable) exception of Julia, none are portrayed as three-dimensional human beings with an inner life” (p. 316). Both Perkins-Valdez and Newman slap the MISOGYNIST label on him, but Orwell is actually quite generous toward his female lead. Is Alice Walker as generous toward her opposite-sex characters?

After months of unspeakable torture, Winston is broken in every way imaginable. He even sees five fingers when his torturer holds up four. Nothing remains, no will, no free thought, no cling to objective reality. Yet through it all *one* thing perseveres. Isolated in a room, but *always* under surveillance, “Suddenly he started up with a shock of horror. The sweat broke out on his backbone. He had heard himself cry aloud: ‘Julia! Julia! Julia my love! Julia!’” (p. 280). Yes, “woman hating” Winston’s last bit of humanity remains his love for Julia—a love that months of beatings, torture, sleep deprivation, starvation, knocking all his teeth out, and endless psychological cruelty cannot drive out of him. Both Winston and his torturer acknowledge it and both know that even this one bit of defiance Big Brother will *not* allow. For this reason, Winston is taken to “Room 101.”

In Room 101 prisoners are broken by whatever it is they fear most. “There are occasions when a human being will stand out against pain,” says Winston’s torturer. “But for everyone



there is something unendurable—something that cannot be contemplated.” Owing to childhood trauma, for Winston, that something is rats. And it’s a cage of rats that is strapped to Winston’s face. “When I press the lever, the door of the cage will slide up. These starving brutes will shoot out of it like bullets. They will leap onto your face and bore straight into it. Sometimes they attack the eyes first. Sometimes they burrow through the cheeks and devour the tongue.” Well, that’s it for Winston. Finally, knowing what he must do to escape this hideous fate, Winston betrays his love for Julia and thus the last holdout of his humanity is destroyed.

Newman comments, “the climactic screams of ‘Do it to Julia! Not me!’ is not only heartbreaking but savagely comic. All it took was two rats in a cage and a moustache-twirling speech to make Winston Smith, last man in Europe, beg that his one true love be put to torture in his place” (p. 318). Feminists, so quick to see MISOGYNY, are blind to their own misandry. Here Newman displays a woman’s feminist-indoctrinated zero-empathy toward men. Really, is that all it took, two rats in a cage? If the feminist cannot empathize with a tortured man just one lever-pull away from having his face eaten by starving rats, the feminist cannot empathize with any man for ANY reason. Perhaps she missed the part where Winston, a bruised, scarred skeleton of a man with four teeth left in his mouth is forced to look at himself in a full-length mirror.

In the end, Julia confesses she was likewise forced to betray her love. Yet Newman laughs and scoffs at the “farce” of a man’s love, even while admitting in the previous paragraph that, “while Winston’s feelings for Julia develop with psychological realism, Julia’s feelings for Winston feel increasingly implausible” (p. 318). Notes Newman, “when Winston first attempts to have sex with Julia, he fails to get an erection, and needs to be reassured and praised by her at length before he can perform; also that it never crosses his mind that she might find this tedious” (p. 318). Yeah, misogynist male who FAILS to get an erection, doesn’t it cross your mind that your need for sensitivity and reassurance is a tedious *burden* to place on a woman? While the feminist obligates the Real Man’s love to be infinite and indomitable regardless of torture, the least feminine obligation is decried as MISOGYNY.

It is ironic that two representatives of the current ideological dictatorship are chosen to critique Orwell’s cautionary tale warning us of the perils of an ideological dictatorship. Though these two feminine-ists go out of their way to condemn *1984*, its main character, and its author for MISOGYNY, it’s painfully clear to me that whatever misogyny the book’s guilty of; it’s dwarfed by its Woke critics’ boundless MISANDRY.

One last point, though men are the targets, they are not the only victims. It’s also sad for the Kool-Aid guzzling feminist. Her indoctrinated self-righteousness, victim mentality, hostile judgment, vengeance seeking, zero-empathy bitterness all leave her spiritually bankrupt. And that’s no way to live.



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AUTHOR PROFILE



Tim Goldich is the president of the Chicago chapter of the National Coalition for Men and an avid member of the ManKind Project, two organizations that variously support men politically and emotionally. He is also an educator and mentor to boys on their way to becoming men. Goldich facilitates the personal growth work of men on New Warrior Training Adventure weekends and of men and women on personal growth weekends called Path to Spirit. He is the author of four books, including *Loving Men, Respecting Women: The Future of Gender Politics*.

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THE MISEDUCATION OF BOYS

Jerome Teelucksingh



ABSTRACT

In the Caribbean, young boys are not receiving a wholesome education that is beneficial for their psychological, social and emotional development. Their freedom to choose, to speak and play are restricted. These statements are based on my observations during 2018-2020 in selected preschools and kindergartens in Trinidad & Tobago. Teachers with distorted beliefs and skewed views on masculinity are playing a crucial role in influencing the masculinity of boys.

Keywords: boys, brain development, early childhood, kindergartens, nurseries





What are little boys made of?
What are little boys made of?
Frogs and snails
And puppy dogs' tails
That's what little boys are made of

What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice
And all that's nice,
That's what little girls are made of.

Some readers might remember this children's nursery rhyme. It seems simple and harmless, but it also sends a subliminal message that boys and girls are markedly different. We do not need reminders that good boys are fast becoming an endangered species.

The gender-stereotyping that occurs in childhood is prevalent. I conducted a simple social experiment in five kindergartens, or preschools, in Trinidad and Tobago (in Caribbean). There were certain discrepancies. Not surprisingly, in all these kindergartens there was an absence of male teachers. Probably there was the belief that men did not have patience with children or even worse, that men could not be trusted and would sexually and physically abuse these children. This belief persists despite the reality female preschool teachers have been found guilty of abusing their students (Harris; Xuan). Maybe this field of teaching has gradually become feminized and this proved to be a deterrent for some males who enjoy teaching. Additionally, the relatively low salary or no room for advancement could be factors contributing to the male absence in this crucial learning environment.

There is a paucity of research on brain development and its impact on behaviour among boys in the Caribbean. In 2016, I was surprised to read an article, by a teacher, of a kindergarten class in the United States, who claimed, "Boys' impulsivity and poor self-regulation are directly tied to their immature brain development" ("The Challenge of Boys in Early Childhood Education"). Possibly this was applicable to American boys, but it certainly seemed an unfair assessment and inaccurate generalization.

During the past thirty years there have been studies, outside the Caribbean, on sex differences in brain structure. Some of these studies have provided inconclusive evidence but there are noteworthy findings that could help kindergarten teachers to better understand the educational development of their young male students. [Ai-Min Bao](#) and [Dick F Swaab](#) contend that sex differences in neuropsychizophrenia) and such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder and schizophrenia) and behaviour are influenced by structural and functional sex differences in parts of the brain and fluctuating sex hormone levels (Bao and Swaab). New findings, in 2018, reinforced early findings of the differences between the brains of both sexes ([Wierenga](#), [Sexton](#), [Laake](#), [Giedd](#), Tamnes). These publications made me acutely aware that there was a need for research, statistics and data regarding boys in preschools in Trinidad and Tobago. And even more unfortunate is that Latin American and



other Caribbean countries have not been collecting this data that would be vital in assisting the early developmental phases of boys.

In 2018, I spent two weeks observing young children in a learning environment. During both days, I observed 8 boys and 8 girls in two private and public kindergartens in Trinidad. Boys and girls (between 3 and 4 years old) were given dolls, pink and blue Play-Doh (putty), toy soldiers and cars. The children neither differentiated among the toys nor attached any colour codes to their toys. Girls were eager to play with the cars and soldiers. Some of the teachers gave dolls and plastic kitchenware to the girls and the boys received cars and soldiers. Five of the boys were willing to share their toys with their female classmates who accepted the cars and soldiers, but this was discouraged by the teachers. Not surprisingly, girls were also willing to play with blue toys and building blocks. And boys had no inhibitions playing with pink building blocks. The teachers at the kindergarten displayed displeasure that the boys were playing with pink toys or pink Play-Doh. At home, the message would have been reinforced as some of these children would have been told that boys should play with toy guns, soldiers and cars whilst girls comfortably played with dolls, kitchen sets or toy cosmetics.

In 2019 and 2020, I spent similar short spells in two preschools. I also noticed that the teachers and assistants in the preschools were females. Additionally, I did not intend to investigate parental attachment but witnessed that 8 of the 11 boys, in one preschool, were reluctant to leave their parents and stay in the nursery. On mornings, when boys were dropped off by a parent or parents there was occasional distress. There were repeated incidents and a daily average of 4 to 5 boys clinging to a parent and crying. The administrators ignored the harmful effects of separation anxiety, and they saw it as being a normal reaction of the boys. The girls who were in similar distress were three times more likely than the boys to be hugged and comforted by the teachers.

Some of the preschools were overcrowded which meant less individual attention to the students. This overcrowding was largely due to these administrators seeking to maximize profits. Most of the schools were overcrowded as children were packed like baby chickens in a cage. It seems that some of those involved in nurseries are more focused on money rather than providing a comfortable environment that would be appealing for boys.

The skewed learning within the classroom also has a gender dimension which should not be overlooked. Maybe some boys might like to read rather than write or prefer to colour rather than read or write. Discipline and order are important in society. However, often the preschools have a strict regimen that restricts the movement and creativity of boys.

One of the experiments I conducted also revealed the hidden distortions that are occurring at these learning centres. I instructed the woman teacher to give the six children (ages 4 to 5) coloured buttons and to allow them 15 to 20 minutes to arrange the buttons in patterns and shapes. I gave her two boxes with fifteen pink buttons and thirty blue buttons. There were 19 children, 11 boys and eight girls. I stood watching as she gave the pink buttons to four girls and the blue buttons to two boys.



I was not interested in the shapes being made by the children. As expected, certain gender roles were reinforced as the girls received the pink buttons. I also wanted to see if the teacher would select an equal number of boys and girls, and if the boys would receive any pink buttons. In this instance, her decision to choose two boys reinforced my view that even at this young age the boys are not treated equally and given that equal chance to participate. After I collected the buttons, I noticed there was a girl with a plastic hammer hitting blocks, but she was scolded by one of the teachers. However, when a boy performed the action, he was not interrupted.

Furthermore, during the exercise the teacher was constantly telling the boys to “be quiet.” This selection and display within that one classroom could be due to a biased or improperly trained teacher and does not necessarily mean it is occurring in all kindergartens. We need to be more aware that there were subtle divisions in this kindergarten classroom that would also be continued at home and the community.

The state of education is only one aspect in a multidimensional world that seems unsuitable for the holistic development of boys. We also need to be aware of other institutions and factors such as the exposure to certain cartoons or children’s shows, ethnicity, culture and religious doctrines also impinge on the boys’ psychological progress.

It seems that sometimes an unhealthy atmosphere, such as an abusive or lonely home, will make boys and girls more willing to be in school which provides that safe zone, that elusive peace space. If parents argue and quarrel at home or abuse a child, it is only natural that a child will feel more inclined to behave similarly at school. Likewise, if the child is being verbally abused or bullied in school, there would be an attachment to home and reluctance to attend school. The urgent question to be addressed would be this: could we ensure both school and home are safe zones and peaceful spaces?

The recipe to create mature, diligent, trustworthy boys in our world is a difficult one. The reason being is that there is considerable inequality, and our boys are not all on the same playing field. The differences in culture, literacy, religion and geographical location have all posed problems for moving boys to a higher educational and developmental level. However, I want to suggest four steps needed to occur which will help boys in the preschools.

1. Identifying accurately the early onset of male-biased disorders as autism
2. Ensuring peaceful and happy surroundings.
3. Creating a safe environment to encourage creativity, questioning and thinking.
4. Developing channels of communication to freely voice concerns.

These four steps could be cornerstones in the preschool curricula and would ultimately result in a better generation of male teenagers and men. It is difficult to disagree when I write that many of our boys are misunderstood, and the result is that the adolescent journey is a nightmare. There is an urgent need to ensure that our boys can envision a society where they are treated equally. It is crucial to work with our boys to let them fulfill their dreams and goals.



Our society cannot believe that hugging and displaying affection will make our boys soft or effeminate. If we do not embrace our boys, then the wrong persons will embrace them and then it will be too late. Do we want our boys to find role models among criminal gangs? Certainly not. Some researchers such as [Mary Cobbett](#) and [Mike Younger](#) have identified underachievement as a problem among Caribbean boys. But the origin of this crisis can be found in the preschools or kindergartens (Cobbett and Younger).

If there is miseducation in the preschools, then it is difficult to observe progress among boys. Every boy (including slow learners and with disabilities) should be given access to a preschool with an education that is not biased. This could be achieved if practitioners, policymakers and stakeholders involved in early childhood programs in the Caribbean are genuinely interested in addressing the learning challenges facing boys.

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the assignment is to please us.

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