Can you give us a brief background of your academic career and your interests?

For the first two years of my undergraduate degree I studied Political Science and English Literature. I was very interested in politics, but what I was learning in economics and political science was just not correct. There was too much emphasis placed on the idea that economic interests were the prime motivators for human beings, and that was not obvious to me at all. I was spending a lot of time thinking about the Cold War, and the Cold War was not primarily an economic issue. So I started taking psychology, and I was interested in clinical psychology. I did my PhD under Dr. Robert Pihl, and I worked on drug abuse, alcoholism, and aggression – there was a heavy biological emphasis. I did my post-doc with Dr. Pihl, and Maurice Dongier. Then I taught at Harvard for six years, and I’ve been at the University of Toronto ever since then.
My primary interest has always been the psychology of belief. Partly religious belief, and ideology as a sub-category of religious belief. One of Jung’s propositions was that whatever a person values most highly is their god. If people think they are atheistic, it means is they are unconscious of their gods. In a sophisticated religious system, there is a positive and negative polarity. Ideologies simplify that polarity and, in doing so, demonize and oversimplify. I got interested in ideology, in a large part, because I got interested in what happened in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution in China, and equivalent occurrences in other places in the world. Mostly I concentrated on Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. I was particularly interested in what led people to commit atrocities in service of their belief. The motto of the Holocaust Museum in Washington is “we must never forget.” I’ve learned that you cannot remember what you don’t understand. People don’t understand the Holocaust, and they don’t understand what happened in Russia. I have this course called “Maps of Meaning,” which is based on a book I wrote by the same name, and it outlines these ideas. One of the things that I’m trying to convince my students of is that if they had been in Germany in the 1930s, they would have been Nazis. Everyone thinks “Not me,” and that’s not right. It was mostly ordinary people who committed the atrocities that characterized Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Part of the reason I got embroiled in this [gender identity] controversy was because of what I know about how things went wrong in the Soviet Union. Many of the doctrines that underlie the legislation that I’ve been objecting to share structural similarities with the Marxist ideas that drove Soviet Communism. The thing I object to the most was the insistence that people use these made up words like ‘xe’ and ‘xer’ that are the construction of authoritarians. There isn’t a hope in hell that I’m going to use their language, because I know where that leads.

There have been lots of cases where free speech has come under attack, why did you choose this particular issue?

This is very compelled speech. The Supreme Court in the United States has held that compelled speech is unacceptable for two reasons. One is to protect the rights of the speaker, the other is to protect the rights of the listener. The listener has the right to be informed and instructed without being unduly influenced by hidden sources. If your speech is compelled, it isn’t YOU who is talking, it’s some other entity that’s compelling your speech. So I actually think that Bill C-16 is unconstitutional. I’m using American case law, but the principles apply. It just hasn’t been pushed to our Supreme Court yet.

For me this became an issue because there is not a chance I’ll use radical, authoritarian language. I’ve studied this psychologically, and I know what it does.

I was also quite profoundly influenced by [Alexsandr] Solzhenitsyn’s book The Gulag Archipelago. People say that real Marxism has never been tried – not in the Soviet Union, in China, in Cambodia, in Korea, that wasn’t real Marxism. I find that argument specious, appalling, ignorant, and maybe also malevolent all at the same time. Specious because Solzhenisyn demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the horrors [of the Soviet system] were a logical consequence of the doctrines embedded within Marxist thinking. I think Dostoyevsky saw what was coming and Nietzsche wrote about it extensively in the 1880s, laying out the propositions that are encapsulated in Marxist doctrine, and warning that millions of people would die in the 20th century because of it.

You’ve painted a pretty bleak picture for the future.
There are bleak things going on. To start with, Bill C-16 writes social constructionism into the fabric of the law. Social constructionism is the doctrine that all human roles are socially constructed. They’re detached from the underlying biology and from the underlying objective world. So Bill C-16 contains an assault on biology and an implicit assault on the idea of objective reality. It’s also blatant in the Ontario Human Rights Commission policies and the *Ontario Human Rights Act*. It says identity is nothing but subjective. So a person can be male one day and female the next, or male one hour and female the next.

How do you see the future of public discourse in this country if we don’t reverse course on things like C-16?

I have no idea. I think that we’re in a time of chaos and anything can happen in a time of chaos. I don’t know what will happen at the university in the next week. There is a debate on Saturday at 9:30 in the morning. It’ll be live-cast on my YouTube channel. I have no idea what the consequences of the debate will be, I have no idea whether I’ll be teaching in January. The university has told me that that every time I insist that I won’t use those [gender neutral] pronouns, the probability that I’ll be teaching in January decreases.

Do you believe that you or others could be imprisoned for refusing to comply with these laws?

There’s no doubt about that. The human rights tribunals have been given the right to hold people in contempt. Well, you’re going to be in contempt if you don’t pay the fine. My opponents say ‘you’re just scare-mongering. We don’t really have that much power.’ Then why change the criminal code? Why put the hate speech amendments in there? The final word in law is incarceration. There is no question about this. When I made the video on September
27th, and I said, ‘probably making this video itself is illegal’. Not only that, the university is as responsible as I am for making it, because that’s in the human rights code. The university read the damned policies and had their lawyers scour it, and concluded exactly what I concluded. That’s why they sent me two warning letters. They’re on the hook for everything their employees say, whether or not the consequences of what they say were intentional or unintentional, regardless of whether or not there was a complaint.

**Does that include things that my employees say in their private time?**

It includes everything they say. It doesn’t matter whether people complain or not. Even if no one complains, or even if the effect is unintentional. The other thing that’s built into this law and the surrounding policies – and this is also increasingly the case in sexual harassment tribunals on university campuses which the [Ontario Premier Kathleen] Wynne government is pushing like mad – they’ve changed two legal principles. It’s not ‘innocent before being proven guilty,’ it’s ‘preponderance of evidence,’ and it’s not intent, it’s outcome. Those transformations are so far reaching, it’s almost unimaginable.

**Are you suggesting they’ve altered the rule of law as we traditionally understand it?**

They have. They say ‘what you said hurt my feelings’ – and this is part of the assault on the objective world – your intent is irrelevant. My subjective response is the determining factor. The idea that they would dare to undermine the doctrine of intent is beyond belief.

**Are you surprised that almost half of the Conservative Party of Canada caucus voted in favour of C-16?**

Not only that, isn’t there a leadership convention right now? Have any of the candidates commented on any of this? No. Why? Because they’re afraid. I think the fact that no one’s commented on it is an indication of how even for conservatives, especially in Canada, this demand for orthodoxy has gone so far that even Conservatives are afraid to be conservative. This stuff is not easy to understand. You might ask, ‘why can’t you just call people what they want to be called?’ Well, when someone questions your use of pronouns, it puts you on the spot. You don’t know why you use the pronouns you use. You use them because everyone else uses them – it’s a social convention. Then someone else says ‘it’s a mark of respect to use a pronoun, and it’s a mark of respect to use the pronoun of someone’s choice’. Those are large-scale philosophical assaults. If you’re not prepared for them, all you can do is stumble around, and your default is going to be ‘well, maybe we should be nice’.

**So maybe some of them voted for it because they don’t understand the philosophical issues and just didn’t want to offend anybody?**

That’s why I’m trying to take these arguments apart. First of all, “he” and “she” are not marks of respect. They’re the most casual terms possible. If I refer to someone as “he” or I refer to someone as “she,” it’s not a mark of respect, its just categorization of the most simple and obvious kind. There’s not anything about it that’s individual, or characteristic of respect. Second, you have no right to demand from me that I do anything with regards to you that’s respectful. The best you can hope for from me is sceptical neutrality and courageous trust. That’s it. That’s what you get from me.
Could you define those two terms?

Skeptical neutrality is ‘you’re a bucket of snakes, just like me. However, if you’re willing to abide by your word, and I’m willing to abide by my word, then we’re able to engage in mutually beneficial interactions, so that’s what we’re going to do’. The reason I said courageous trust is to distinguish it from naivety. Naive people think that everybody’s good. That’s false, everybody’s not good. But acting in a manner that’s hostile and sceptical and anti-social is completely counter-productive. So what you do if you’re a mature person is you say ‘well, yeah, you’ve got a dark side, so do I. That doesn’t mean we can’t engage in productive interactions’. We do that by sticking to our damned word. Honesty simplifies us to the point where we can engage in mutually beneficial interactions. But you certainly don’t get my respect by demanding it. You have no right whatsoever to ask me to mark you out as special in any way whatsoever.

So we shouldn’t call someone ‘your majesty’ just because they ask for it?

Well that’s another problem that’s lurking under the subjectivity argument, once you divorce identity from an objective underpinning. These people [advocates for multiple gender identities and laws to protect them] claim that identity is a social construct, but even though that’s their fundamental philosophical claim, and they’ve built it into the law, they don’t abide by those principles. Instead, they go right to subjectivity. They say that your identity is nothing more than your subjective feeling of what you are. Well, that’s also a staggeringly impoverished idea of what constitutes identity. It’s like the claim of an egocentric two-year old, and I mean that technically. Your identity isn’t just how you feel about yourself. It’s also how you think about yourself, it’s what you know about yourself, it’s your educated judgement about yourself. It’s negotiated with other people if you’re even vaguely civilized because otherwise no one can stand you. If your identity isn’t a hybrid of what you are and what other people expect, then you’re like the kid on the playground with whom no one can play.

Plus, your identity is a practical vehicle that you use to manoeuvre yourself through life. In your real identity, you’re a lawyer, you’re a doctor, you’re a mother, you’re a father, you have a role that has value to you and others. None of that’s subjectively defined. So that’s completely absurd, and philosophically primitive, and psychologically wrong. Yet it’s built into the law. I think the law makes discussions of biology and gender illegal. I think we got a taste of that in the TVO Agenda interview I had where [U of T transgender studies professor] Nicholas Mack said ‘well, the scientific consensus in the last four decades is that there’s no biological difference between men and women’. It’s an absurd proposition. There are sex differences at every level of analysis. There are masculinity/femininity scales that have been derived; they’re basically secondary derivations of personality descriptors. There are huge personality differences between men and women. There’s literature looking at differences of men and women in personality in many, many societies throughout the world. I think the biggest paper examined 55 different societies. And they rank societies by sociological and political equality. The hypothesis was that if you equalize the environment between men and women, you eradicate the differences between them. In other words, if you treat boys and girls the same, the differences between them will disappear. But that’s not what the studies showed. In reality, they get bigger. Those are studies of tens of thousands of people. The social constructionist theory was tested. It failed. Gender identity is very much biologically determined.
Do you see any parallels between this issue and some of the other ‘social justice’ causes that have come up in the past few years, like Black Lives Matter or IdleNoMore?

It’s all part and parcel of the same thing. There’s a war going on at the heart of our culture. Lots of people have talked about political correctness, and the fact that its pernicious. Often, that just disappears into the ether. I think what I did was different because there was something I said I wouldn’t do. That took the general and made it specific.

In Christianity, there’s the idea of the general Christ, that’s the “Word” that God used to speak chaos into order. Then there’s the specific Christ, a carpenter in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. So there’s this weird notion in Christianity between this general principle, which is the logos roughly speaking; the logos is the thing that mediates between order and chaos and is very abstract principle; and the specific human being who had a specific identity tied to a specific time and place, making the archetypal individual, and that makes an unbelievably compelling story. The archetypal is too abstract. It’s like saying ‘the good guys won’ – there’s no story there. I think that what I did was make the general concrete and specific, and drew a line. Now the price you pay for drawing a line – especially with the politically correct material – is that you’re going to get tarred and feathered for bigotry. The social justice people are always on the side of compassion and ‘victim’s rights,’ so objecting to anything they do makes you instantly a perpetrator. There’s no place you can stand without being vilified, and that’s why it keeps creeping forward.

(Is Image: Marta Iwanek)

Isn’t that the logical outcome of the tactical application of Saul Alinsky?
That’s exactly right. The thing is if you replace compassion with resentment, then you understand the authoritarian left. They don’t have compassion, there is no compassion there. There’s no compassion at all. There is resentment, fundamentally.

In a National Post op-ed you wrote that ‘words like zhe/zher are the vanguards of a radical left wing ideology that’s frighteningly similar to Marxism’. Can you elaborate?

Assigned identity is oppression. Assigned identity is the identity that’s assigned to you by the power structure – the patriarchy. The only reason the patriarchy assigns you a status is to oppress you. And so the language that frees you from that status is revolutionary language. So, as an example of revolutionary language, we’re going to blow out the gender identity categories, because the concept of woman is oppressive. The anti-patriarchy philosophy is predicated on the idea that all social structures are oppressive, and not much more than that. Then to assault the structure is to question its categorical schemes at every possible level of analysis. And the most fundamental one that the anti-patriarchy radicals have come up with is gender. It’s a piece of identity that children usually pick up on around two – it’s pretty fundamental. You could argue that there isn’t anything more fundamental. Though, I don’t know of anything that’s more fundamental, more basic, and that would have been regarded as more unquestionable, even five years ago.

Do you believe that society should draw the line at all when it comes to limitations on hate speech?

No. Hate speech laws are wrong. The question – not a question, but THE question – is ‘who gets to define hate?’” That’s not to say there’s no such thing as hate speech – clearly there is. Hate speech laws repress, and I mean that in the psycho-analytical sense. They drive [hate speech] underground. It’s not a good idea, because things get ugly when you drive them underground. They don’t disappear, they just fester, and they’re not subject to correction. I made these videos, and they have been subject to a tremendous amount of correction over the last six weeks. I don’t just mean from my public response, but also partly from the university’s response, partly from a group of friends who have been reviewing my videos and criticizing them to death. This is why free speech is so important. You can struggle to formulate some argument, but when you throw it out into the public, there’s a collective attempt to modify and improve that. So with the hate speech issue – say someone’s a Holocaust denier, because that’s the standard routine – we want those people out there in the public so you can tell them why they’re historically ignorant, and why their views are unfounded and dangerous. If you drive them underground, it’s not like they stop talking to each other, they just don’t talk to anyone who disagrees with them. That’s a really bad idea and that’s what’s happening in the United States right now. Half of the country doesn’t talk to the other half. Do you know what you call people you don’t talk to? Enemies.

If you have enemies, you have war.

If you stop talking to people, you either submit to them, or you go to war with them. Those are your options and those aren’t good options. It’s better to have a talk. If you put restrictions on speech, then you can’t actually talk about the difficult things that need to be talked about. I have about 20,000 hours of clinical practice and all I do for 20 hours a week is talk to people about difficult things – the worst things that are going on in their lives. These are hard conversations all the time. The conversations that are the most curative are simultaneously the ones that are most difficult and most dangerous. Most normal people will not have those conversations. That’s why so many marriages dissolve. People don’t like to have those
conversations. Part of that too, is because – let’s say you have a little tiff with your wife, and you know there’s more to it than the little thing that’s bothering her, and you ask ‘what are you REALLY upset about?’ Try peeling that back. You might find she’s upset about something her grandfather did to her grandmother two generations ago that hasn’t yet been resolved within the family, and that’s the determining element of her attitude at the present moment. If you unpack it though, then you don’t have to live it over and over again.

There’s also this idea that you shouldn’t say things that hurt people’s feelings – that’s the philosophy of the compassionate left. It’s so childish it’s beyond comprehension. What did Nietzsche say: ‘you can judge a man’s spirit by the amount of truth he can tolerate.’ I tell my students this too, you can tell when you’re being educated because you’re horrified. So if it’s pleasant and safe, it’s like you’re not learning anything. People learn things the hard way.

*What happens when that truth actually does contribute to violence against groups?*

You pick your poison, and free speech is the right poison. There are groups that advocate for hate, but that’s not the issue. The issue is whether repressing them makes it better or worse. I would say that [repressing them] just makes it worse. There’s lots of times when you don’t have a good option. People think that if we just don’t let them talk, it’ll go away. It doesn’t work that way at all. In fact, if they’re paranoid, you just justify their paranoia. By pushing them underground, you don’t weaken them. You just give them something compelling to fight against. You make them into heroes in their own eyes.

*Can you comment on the U of T’s specific response, the letter you received from Arts Faculty Dean David Cameron?*

They talked to their lawyers, and they’re doing exactly what HR people always do. If you want to get rid of someone, you write them a letter. Tell them what they’re doing wrong, tell them to stop, and you tell them nicely. Then you write a second letter, and you tell them the same thing except not so nicely. Then you give them a third letter, and after you give them a third letter, if they don’t comply, then you can do whatever you want, you’ve put your paper trail together. The lawyers looked at the policies on the OHRC website, and they’ve concluded that my interpretation of the law is absolutely correct. It’s worse than that however. It’s like ‘okay, that’s against the law, the university is supposed to abide by the law, and I’m not doing that, at least in principle.’ So they have a legal and ethical obligation to do what they did, but they did it in a deceitful way. In the first letter, they misquoted me. So I told them ‘you guys should take this letter back and rewrite it because it’s not accurate, and if you want to hand me a warning letter, it’s in your best interests to get it right.’ The second letter was far worse. It said that I contributed to this climate of fear and danger on campus, which I thought was a specious and unfounded claim to begin with, but when they mentioned that they had received many letters from groups on the university campus, they didn’t mention the 500 letters they received from supporters of mine, which I know about because I was CC’ed on them. They didn’t mention the petition with 10,000 signatures which I also received. That’s the lie. They didn’t have to omit that. They could have said ‘we understand there are a variety of opinions on this, and you have substantial public support. But the truth of the matter is, as far as we can tell this is illegal, and its our obligation to tell you to, you have to comply with university policies and the law.’ They could have done that, but they didn’t.

Then, when we started talking about the debate after the second letter, I went to talk to David Cameron. I thought that since this is an issue of great public interest here, maybe we should have a debate about it. That’s what a university would do, if it was a civilized place, so that’s
what I recommended to Cameron. He took it to the university administration, and they agreed. But they put a restriction on me: at the debate, I’m not allowed to repeat the statement that I won’t use these preferred pronouns. It’s a little absurd that we’re going to go forward with a debate about freedom of speech, and I can’t repeat the central claim that initiated the debate. So I wrote to them and I said, ‘look, you guys are doing this wrong. Instead of telling me “look, you can’t say this,” what you SHOULD be doing is saying “you might be wrong, but you should be allowed to say this, and we’ll support you all the way to the Supreme Court. We’ll take our legal resources and we’ll throw them behind you, and we’ll fight them through the courts.”’ Cameron said categorically that they wouldn’t do that. They had to choose between social justice or freedom of expression. They chose social justice – which is equity, or equality of outcome – because that’s what they’re teaching. I decided that I would go forward with the debate anyways because all things considered you don’t always have a good option. I decided to take the lesser of two evils and go ahead with the debate.

So, just to clarify your thoughts on C-16. Do you think your YouTube video definitely violates it?

The university thinks so. I thought so. I read the damned policies. I looked at the policies on the Ontario Human Rights website because I think those are the people that are behind all this. The writing on that website is appalling from a technical perspective – it’s incoherent. They’re the semi-literate, philosophically ignorant, malevolent little coterie who are behind it. You would expect better than that from quasi-judiciaries.

What do you hope to achieve coming out of this?

I hope that I can continue to educate people, both at the university and, if not at the university, then on YouTube. For the first time in human history, the spoken word has the same reach and longevity as the written word. Not only that, the space between the utterance and the publication is zero. Three months ago, I had some research assistants writing out the transcripts of my lectures so people could watch my lectures with the subtitles because it’s easier for people to follow and I was looking at my growth in terms of subscribers, and I half-jokingly thought I could soon have more subscribers to my YouTube channel than U of T has students. I don’t know what the significance of that is. It might be that the university is already dying. It wouldn’t surprise me. I mean, I think huge swaths of the university are irrevocably corrupted: sociology, gone; anthropology, gone; history, big chunks of it are gone, the classics, literature, social work, political science in many places, and that doesn’t cover women’s studies, ethnic studies. They probably started lost, and it’s gotten far worse. I believe now, with the exception of the science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) branch, that universities do more harm than good. I think they produce indentured servants in the United States because tuition fees have gone up so much and you can’t declare bankruptcy on your student loans. We’re teaching university students lies, and pandering to them, and I see that as counterproductive.

There’s even an anti-psychology program at OISE [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education]. It started when they got rid of [Ken] Zucker, and you don’t stop with one person. Zucker was a more than credible psychologist. He ran a very good program for people who had gender dysphoria, and he was conservative. Zucker’s attitude was that if you’ve got a kid who is complaining about their gender, you follow them up, and you see what happens, and you derive your conclusions from the research. Eighty percent of them declare themselves as homosexual, ninety percent settle into their biological identity as adults. His logical conclusion is to keep the goddamned surgical knife sheathed, and don’t bring out the
hormones too soon. Well that’s all gone – it’s illegal now for doctors to question the decision of a three-year old child that he is a she. And if the parents want to start biological transformation, it is illegal for the doctor to reject that.

Did you see that Lauren Southern got identity as a man from the Ontario government? That shows you what the law has done to the physicians. That physician couldn’t question her because it’s illegal. So now Lauren Southern has government identification as a man. She went to the Service Ontario kiosk in high heels and makeup. She didn’t expect to get the god damned ID. That also means that the government is so tangled up in this mess that they’ll actually sacrifice their own ID. Think about that – think about what will happen to our society if people’s identification became unstable.

*You said in your interview with Gad Saad that free speech is – “The right and maybe the obligation to conduct discourse that is aimed at solving serious problems.” What happens when the discourse itself becomes weaponized?*

Errors accumulate, and chaos ensues. I’ve studied mythology for a long time. The flood story means that if you warp things badly enough, everything falls apart. If you interfere with the mechanism by which people formulate problems, solve them, and negotiate their implementation, then problems accrue and multiply. That’s what a hydra is – cut off one head, seven grow back. These things can multiply out of control far faster than people think.

*Is that part of what explains the results of the United States’ election?*
The Democrats decided in the 1970s that they were going to abandon the working class and play identity politics, and the working class bit them. [Hillary Clinton] lost all the rust belt states. You really have to work pretty hard to lose the rust belt states if you’re a Democrat. So, they got exactly what was coming to them. And all the lefties are worried that Trump is a right-wing demagogue. It’s insane – he’s a liberal. He was a Clinton supporter. I mean, you could say he’s opportunistic, he’s narcissistic, but he’s no right wing demagogue. I don’t think he’s any more narcissistic or opportunistic than Newt Gingrich, I don’t think he’s any more narcissistic or opportunistic than Hillary Clinton. I don’t think what happened in the U.S. is a surprise at all. I think the left is saying “My god, this is a catastrophe.” It’s no more a catastrophe than Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan as far as right-wing demagoguery goes.

I don’t think it’s any different than the Reagan revolution, or what happened with Thatcher in terms of seriousness. Trump’s a moderate. He’s a noisy moderate, and he’s a bit of a populist, but fundamentally he’s still a moderate – and people are reacting as if he’s Hitler. You could get Hitler – and it certainly isn’t Trump. Was he a qualified candidate? No, I don’t think so, but he did a lot of things right, and one of those was he didn’t give the same canned speech all the time, and he wasn’t handled to death. People saw that and thought “he’s not crafting every utterance. He’s kind of jerk, but at least we know what he thinks.” Then people went into the ballot room, and they thought “fuck it, I’m voting for Trump” and that’s what they did. It was just like Brexit. The left pushed too hard, mucked about too much, and people thought “we’re not doing this anymore,” and then Democrats abandoned the working class. I’m not a Sanders admirer because I don’t think the kind of socialism he promotes is a tenable solution, but I certainly understand the working class in the United States has been screwed since 1975. Their social institutions are falling apart, their wages have been flat, the advances of India and China have all been on the backs of the American working class. Then the intellectuals think ‘oh, those rednecks, they’re stupid.’ Trades people are NOT stupid. In fact, they tend to have a lot more sense than most of the intellectuals that I know, even though they’re not as good at articulating their arguments.

**How do you define social justice warriors?**

They’re the ones who weaponize compassion.

**Do you view social justice culture as a threat to democracy, and why?**

Absolutely. There’s nothing about the PC authoritarian types that has any gratitude for any institutions. They have a term – patriarchy. It’s all-encompassing. It means that everything our society is, is corrupt. There’s no line, they mean everything. Go online, go look at ten women’s studies websites. Pick them at random. Read them. They say ‘western civilization is a corrupt patriarchy right down to the goddamned core. We have to overthrow it.’

**Which means democracy, which means liberalism, which means human rights.**

It means the whole thing. The whole edifice. And what do they compare it to? Utopia. Why do you think the feminists would go after Ayaan Hirsi Ali? She’s a hero, that woman. She’s from Somalia. She grew up in a very oppressive patriarchy – a real one. She escaped from an arranged marriage, and moved to Holland and she fell in love with Holland. Two things really struck her initially before she went to university and become a student of the Enlightenment. Number one – she would stand where there was public transport, and a digital sign would say when the public transport was going to arrive, and it would arrive exactly when it said it was going to. It was unbelievable to her. And the other thing she couldn’t believe was that police
would help you. You know you’re in a civilized country when the police don’t just rape you and steal everything you have. The radical left people don’t give a damn about any of that.

**Is there anything else you’d like to add?**

You asked what people can do. They can refuse. They can refuse to be pushed in this direction any further. Anything that’s predicated upon group identity, we need to get rid of. Albertans were very sceptical of Pierre Trudeau and all his changes, especially with the introduction of the Charter and they were right about that too. We should never have had a bill of human rights in Canada. That was an import of French Civil Law over top of English Common Law, and it was a mistake. In English Common Law, you have all the rights there are except those that are expressly forbidden by law. In the French system, you enumerate people’s rights – that makes it look like rights are granted to you by the government, and that’s not true. Then we started talking more about identity in Canada, and that was a deviation from the tradition of enlightenment individualism.

**Are you denying the existence of discrimination based on sexuality or race?**

I don’t think women were discriminated against, I think that’s an appalling argument. First of all, do you know how much money people lived on in 1885 in 2010 dollars? One dollar a day. The first thing we’ll establish is that life sucked for everyone. You didn’t live very long. If you were female you were pregnant almost all the time, and you were worn out and half dead by the time you were 45. Men worked under abysmal conditions that we can’t even imagine. When George Orwell wrote *The Road to Wigan Pier*, the coal miners he studied walked to work for two miles underground hunched over before they started their shift. Then they walked back. [Orwell] said he couldn’t walk 200 yards in one of those tunnels without cramping up so bad he couldn’t even stand up. Those guys were toothless by 25, and done by 45. Life before the 20th century for most people was brutal beyond comparison. The idea that women were an oppressed minority under those conditions is insane. People worked 16 hours a day hand to mouth. My grandmother was a farmer’s wife in Saskatchewan. She showed me a picture of the firewood she chopped before winter. They lived in a log cabin that was not quite as big as the first floor of this house. And the woodpile that she chopped was three times as long, and just as high. And that’s what she did in her spare time because she was also cooking for a threshing crew, taking care of her four kids, working on other people’s farms as a maid, and taking care of the animals. Then in the 20th century, people got rich enough that some women were able to work outside the home. That started in the 1920s, and really accelerated up through World War II because women were pulled into factories while the men went off to war. The men fought, and died, and that’s pretty much the history of humanity. And then in the 50s, when Betty Friedan started to whine about the plight of women, it’s like, the soldiers came home from the war, everyone started a family, the women pulled in from the factories because they wanted to have kids, and that’s when they got all oppressed. There was no equality for women before the birth control pill. It’s completely insane to assume that anything like that could’ve possibly occurred. And the feminists think they produced a revolution in the 1960s that freed women. What freed women was the pill, and we’ll see how that works out. There’s some evidence that women on the pill don’t like masculine men because of changes in hormonal balance. You can test a woman’s preference in men. You can show them pictures of men and change the jaw width, and what you find is that women who aren’t on the pill like wide-jawed men when they’re ovulating, and they like narrow-jawed men when they’re not, and the narrow-jawed men are less aggressive. Well all women on the pill are as if they’re not ovulating, so it’s possible that a lot of the antipathy that exists right
now between women and men exists because of the birth control pill. The idea that women were discriminated against across the course of history is appalling.

Now groups that were discriminated against. What are you going to do about it? The only societies that are not slave societies are western enlightenment democracies. That’s it. Compared to utopia, it sucks. But compared to everywhere else – people don’t emigrate to the Middle East to live there, and there’s good reason for that.

The other thing is to do a multi-variate analysis. For example, if we wanted to predict long-term life success in western countries the two best predictors are intelligence and conscientiousness. Intelligent people get there first, and conscientious people work hard. It accounts for about 30 percent of the variance in long-term life success. There’s no discrimination there, it’s just competence. What about women and the glass ceiling? That’s a lot more complicated than it looks. For example, I’ve dealt with big law firms for years. They can’t keep their women. All the big law firms lose all their women in their thirties. Do you know why? It’s easy. Women mate across and up the dominance hierarchy, so women in big law firms who are over 30 who are married, maybe they’re making $300,000 per year. So are their partners. They don’t need to make $600,000 per year. If you want to make $300,000 per year as a lawyer, here’s your life: you work 60-80 hours a week flat out, and you’re on-call. If your Japanese client calls you at 3:00 on a Sunday morning, your answer is ‘yes, I’ll do that right now’ because they’re paying you $750 an hour. These women are high in conscientiousness, great students, brilliant in law school, and stellar in their articling. Then they make partner, and they think ‘what the fuck am I working 80 hours a week for?’ because that’s what sane people think. So it’s all men who are at the absolute pinnacle of professions. But it’s not all men, it’s this tiny percentage of weird men. They’ve got IQs of 145 or higher, and they’re insanely competitive and hard-working. It doesn’t matter where you put someone like that, they’ll work 80 hours a week. The reason men do that more than women, is that status makes men sexually attractive. Men are driven by status – both biologically and culturally – in a way that women aren’t. So the real issue, when you look at these positions and thinking ‘oh, these are wonderful, luxurious positions of plenitude and relaxation’. That’s rubbish. Those people work so hard that it’s almost unimaginable. Most people not only can’t do that, but there isn’t even a chance that they’d want to. Most women hit partner in their 30s. The funny thing is when you’re in your thirties is that that’s when you really start to have to have your own life. When you’re 18, you’re just like every other knob-headed eighteen-year old, you’re all the same. By the time you’re thirty, you have enough idiosyncratic experience to sort of carve your own life, and most people realize ‘well, I don’t want to work 80 hours a week.’ They want to have a family, and they’re out of time. And then when they have a family, they discover that to have a child – it’s not a generic baby, it’s a new person in your family. That new person is THE most important thing to you. Period. So women they hit that, they get two kids and they think ‘I’m only going to have little kids for five years, you think I’m going to go work for eighty hours a week? To make money I don’t need? Doing something I don’t like? Or am I going to spend time with my kids?’ They can’t keep women in law – there’s no goddamned glass ceiling. The legal profession is desperate to keep qualified people because they don’t have enough. They haul them in from anywhere – especially the women who are not only good lawyers, but who can also generate business. That’s just one dirty little secret about the difference in power structures between men and women. Men do almost all the dangerous jobs, men work outside, men are far more likely to move than women are. So, if you look, if you break down the statistics in terms of wage differential, if you equate for the other factors, young women make more money than young men. The whole “women make $0.70 for every dollar a man makes” is such a lie. Men-run small businesses make way more money than female-run small businesses. Why? Because
females start small businesses when they have kids, when they’re at home, so the business is just part time. So that’s why they don’t make as much money. It’s got nothing to do with prejudice, it’s got everything to do with choice. So these arguments that people make about prejudice are not even out of tribal psychology yet.

We’ve made unbelievable advances in terms of levelling the playing field, and a lot of that was due to pure capitalist greed. In capitalist societies, people are desperate for talent. If they have to put up with women and minorities, generally they will. Transformations are happening so fast that there’s nothing you can do to make them go faster. Everybody’s yelling ‘prejudice’ – it’s a one-stop shop for every explanation. Why is society like this? Prejudice. Why is it like that? Prejudice. There’s no thinking involved at all, no multi-variate analysis. It’s reprehensible. Warren Farrell wrote the book Why Men Earn More. He was a worker for the National Organization of Women in New York before he wrote the book. He actually wrote the book, at least in principle, for his daughters, because he wanted to help guide them to higher status. He did a multi-variate analysis. He went and looked, and learned more. He found that men do the high paying trades jobs, they’re dangerous, they’re outside, they’re doing hard, physical work. Then there’s the other reasons as well. There’s discrimination for sure, but it counts for maybe ten percent of the variance in success.

For more on this subject, see Jason VandenBeukel’s article about Jordan Peterson, which also in this edition of C2C Journal: Jordan Peterson: The man who reignedited Canada’s culture war.

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About Jason Tucker

Jason Tucker is a recent political science graduate specializing in international relations and public policy.

About Jason VandenBeukel

Jason VandenBeukel is a PhD student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto.
Jordan Peterson: The right to be politically incorrect

A month ago, I posted three videos to my YouTube channel, as a means of speaking out against our culture’s politically correct insanity. I specifically objected to Bill C-16, a bill that has now passed second reading in the House of Commons, which adds “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the list of attributes protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, and to similar legislation already in place in Ontario and other provinces.

To say that the videos attracted a lot of attention is to say almost nothing. They produced two demonstrations at the University of Toronto, where I teach psychology, including a free-speech rally where the misbehaviour of social justice warrior counter-demonstrators was caught on cellphone videos that have now been watched by millions of people. They have been the subject of articles written by Canada’s most famous journalists. They have been covered extensively by CBC, CTV and TVO, as well as internationally. My story has been making headlines for more than a month, and the furor is not dying down. After writing me two cautionary letters, and then requesting my silence, the University of Toronto has agreed to host a public debate about the issues I raised.

One of the more controversial things I said in the videos was that I would not use what have come to be known as “preferred pronouns” to refer to people who believe that their gender does not fit neatly into the traditional categories of male and female. The gist of the counter-argument was: “Why won’t the mean professor change the way he speaks, if doing so would spare some vulnerable peoples’ feelings?” (A National Post columnist described me as a “jerk.”) There are a few reasons why I took this stand.

First, I will never use words I hate, like the trendy and artificially constructed words “zhe” and “zher.” These words are at the vanguard of a post-modern, radical leftist ideology that I detest, and which is, in my professional opinion, frighteningly similar to the Marxist doctrines that killed at least 100 million people in the 20th century.

These words are at the vanguard of a radical leftist ideology that is frighteningly similar to Marxism.

I have been studying authoritarianism on the right and the left for 35 years. I wrote a book, Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief, on the topic, which explores how ideologies hijack language and belief. As a result of my studies, I have come to believe that Marxism is a murderous ideology. I believe its practitioners in modern universities should be ashamed of themselves for continuing to promote such vicious, untenable and anti-human ideas, and for indoctrinating their students with these beliefs. I am therefore not going to mouth Marxist words. That would make me a puppet of the radical left, and that is not going to happen. Period.

Second, I am not happy with what is happening in this country in regards to gender — even to discussions about gender. Bill C-16 is predicated on absolute nonsense: sex is a biological fact that is determined by anatomy and chromosomes. Independent of biological sex, there is gender identity (which, according to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, is the personal sense of being “a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum”). Independent of that, there is gender expression (how a person “publicly expresses their
gender,” including their fashion choices, such as “dress, hair (and) makeup”). These exist and manifest themselves purely as subjective choices. This is an axiomatic part of the new legislation, by the way, mandating social constructionism as the legally sanctioned scientific doctrine of the land. Look out, evolutionary biologists. The PC police are coming your way.

Let’s examine these claims. First, more than 99 per cent of the population has a gender identity that’s identical to their biological sex. So much for independent variation. Second, there is overwhelming evidence indicating that men and women differ greatly, for biological reasons, in their gender identity, defined most accurately as their personality and interests. Biological sex and gender identity are therefore strongly and causally linked, and no legislation is going to change that. In fact, the differences between men and women are so great, that if you add them up, there is almost no overlap: you can almost completely differentiate (biological) men from (biological) women on the basis of their hypothetically independent gender identities.

Are these just differences in socialization? Well, no, they’re not. The differences are largest in the Scandinavian societies where the most extreme efforts have been made over the last three decades to remove the legal, social and economic distinctions between the sexes. Technically, this is because men and women differ in their psychology for social and biological reasons and, if you remove the social influence, the biological influence becomes stronger. Thus, not only have the attempts made in Scandinavia to eradicate the differences between men and women failed, they’ve backfired. And these aren’t studies of a few hundred people, either: tens of thousands of participants provided personality information and descriptions of their personal interests. But who cares what the science has to say, when there’s ideology at stake?

Finally, it is absurd to insist that each person should have the right to, or could practically, choose their own pronouns. Those who have been complaining about my rigid and parochial viewpoint argue that the word “they” (a possible alternative to he or she) has been used in a singular sense in the English language for centuries. So, the argument goes, why can’t everyone just use “they,” like Shakespeare did? Well, “they” has never been used in the manner indicated by those who advocate for its revised use. It’s been used to indicate the singular in very restricted cases, and certainly not as a simple replacement for “he” or “she.” But let’s give the devil his due, and imagine that I agreed to that. Would the demands stop there? Absolutely not.

Consider the case of New York, which now protects 31 genders, including “gender gifted” (look it up) and “gender fluid” (a boy one day and a girl the next). The Big Apple is prepared to fine businesses up to US$250 million ($335 million) if owners or employees refuse to speak to each other properly. And New York’s list of 31 genders is just a drop in the bucket compared to the number some would like us to use — I found lists online that contain more than 70. And the fact is that for every person whose feelings are respected and whose identity is somehow validated because of the use of such pronouns, there are going to be 20 already mixed-up and unhappy adolescents whose chaos will be multiplied 10-fold because of all these new choices.

Bill C-16 is dangerous legislation. Those who formulated it and who are pushing it and its sister legislation are dangerous people. I’m not going to use their words. Read the Ontario Human Rights Commission website dealing with such things. Formulate your own opinions. Decide for yourself — while you still can.
At a private Toronto gathering to honour psychologist Ken Zucker last December, days after he was dismissed from his job at Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, colleagues stood to give warm tributes. Some of them had come with prepared speeches, expressing shock over the closing of the Gender Identity Clinic, which Dr. Zucker had run for more than 30 years.

The decision was made under a cloud; Dr. Zucker was called in, given the news by an HR staffer and escorted out the door. Officials at CAMH, one of Canada’s leading mental-health hospitals, apologized publicly that the clinic’s therapy was not “in step with the latest thinking” and released an external review that was critical of the way the clinic treated children and youth struggling with issues relating to their gender identity. By closing the clinic, CAMH also walked away from a $1-million grant that had been awarded to Dr. Zucker and his team to study the effect of hormone blockers on teenagers. Those grants, in a country stingy with research dollars, are not easy to get.

In the transgender community, Dr. Zucker’s dismissal was celebrated – he had long been controversial for research suggesting children should be steered away from becoming transgender adults.

But under his leadership, the Gender Identity Clinic built an international research reputation and became the largest of its kind in Canada, treating more than 650 children. The sentiment among the 60 people gathered in the Toronto living room on that December evening was that its closing was a deplorable end to a fine career, wrought by political correctness and a misguided, but vocal, band of protesters with a flawed understanding of science.

When it came his turn to speak, Dr. Zucker, 65, was composed, according to several people at the gathering. “There’s no crying in baseball,” the avid Blue Jays fan reportedly said, in his deep, gruff voice. He was quoting Tom Hanks from the movie A League of Their Own, which, as it happens, portrays a women’s team temporarily gender-swapping the role of male baseball players during the Second World War.

Dr. Zucker went on to share a story about his Jewish father, a graduate student of history in New York City in the 1950s, who had found himself out of work and blacklisted for his socialist views. Dr. Zucker’s family left New York, settling into a Chicago suburb, where his father was an editor for the Encyclopedia Britannica and his mother was the director of a nursery school. In a 2013 interview with the left-leaning magazine The American Prospect, Dr. Zucker explained his parents’ decision to “disappear from the scene” and take up a mainstream middle-class existence. “For the sake of their children,” he is quoted saying, “they needed to become conformist.”

It’s a telling anecdote, an obvious comparison to Dr. Zucker’s current status, banished from the clinic he helped build. An external report that contributed to his dismissal has since been
revealed to contain errors, including a false allegation that Dr. Zucker insulted a patient. CAMH yanked it from the hospital’s website and apologized for the mistake, but its decision stands.

In a statement to The Globe and Mail, CAMH said the review was not the only factor behind the closing and that “We are moving forward to engage with the community to determine the future of our service.”

Dr. Zucker and his lawyer declined comment and have filed an intent to sue, according to CAMH.

In the meantime, many researchers and clinicians have rallied to his defence, signing a petition now more 500 names long. Others contend the closing of the clinic was the right call. The Globe and Mail spoke with some two dozens people – supporters, detractors, families and past patients – to understand the nature of the debate.

The story Dr. Zucker told at the party is revealing on another level: The notion that conformity brings safety and clarity, and that difference is a risk, is a regular theme in his research. If one can find a way to live happily inside the boy-girl boxes that biology and culture have designed, wouldn’t that be better? Dr. Zucker believed this – he advised parents, for instance, to limit how much their sons played with dolls and dresses, and to hold off when their daughters wanted to change their names in elementary school.

Dr. Zucker’s approach made him a polarizing figure in an emotional debate about how to best treat children and teenagers not so easily pushed back into one box or the other. It put him at odds with a society increasingly willing to allow children to take the lead on how they define their gender. The other side of therapy says: Who cares, in the end, if a boy wants to wear a princess dress, or Martha wants to be called Martin?

“Let science do the talking,” Dr. Zucker would say, when friends urged him to address his critics more directly.

But science isn’t immune to human bias, as any student of history knows. It can dawdle too long on old questions and move too slowly to tackle the new ones. It treats the pursuit of knowledge like a marathon and, sometimes, society sprints ahead. This isn’t a simple fight pitting fringe activists in one corner and scientists in the other. It is a legitimate debate about how to treat a complicated issue when science doesn’t yet know what works best, when culture’s view of gender identity is shifting quickly, and when behind all the politicking, infighting and duelling scientific papers, parents are just trying to raise their children to be happy.

**Gender neutral toys**

When Carol’s eldest son was four years old, he would dream he was a girl and sob when he woke up as a boy. Around the same time, two ten-year-old kids threw him off the monkey bars when they saw him playing with a Barbie. He was still bleeding when his mom picked him up. Carol, a Toronto woman who works in education, says she and her husband had always honoured his preferences, for stereotypically “girl” movies, toys and clothes. They had three sons, and they were all different. But the bullying worried them, and school was proving tricky.
So, in late 2007, they went to see Dr. Zucker. After lengthy family interviews and tests, he laid out his recommended treatment. “It was not offensive or cruel to us,” recalls Carol, who detailed the family’s experience to The Globe and Mail, but asked their identity be protected. “It seemed pretty flexible.” As Dr. Zucker explained it to Carol, his theory was to help kids value the “body they have.” In that case, it meant helping her son see that “you may want to be a girl, but it’s okay to be a boy.” Carol says she and her husband had only one agenda for their son: “It was 100 per cent about his happiness.”

For the next year, they visited the clinic twice a week, and then roughly once a week for nearly three years after that. Their son would have play therapy while Carol and her husband would meet with Dr. Zucker. At home, they slowly took away the dolls and pink toys, with their son choosing which ones. “He would be upset,” Carol admits, “and ask for them the next day.” But his favourites remained, and the missing toys were replaced with “gender neutral” options, such as Lego and toy animals. “Her son,” Carol insists, “never touched at truck unless he tripped over it.”

Over time, says Carol, he found common ground with his brothers. He was diagnosed as gifted and received help for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, after the clinic’s assessment diagnosed it. His school situation improved and he made friends. But always, Dr. Zucker cautioned them to resist too much accommodation from his teachers: “Don’t let the school make him a poster child,” Carol recalls him saying. “Don’t let them parade him around for pink assemblies. This is his personal journey and we don’t know where he is going to end up.”

As Carol saw it, no direction was being prescribed – if her son still wanted to be a girl as he got older, Dr. Zucker said, hormone therapy was an option. “The work we did was centred around the whole idea that they are kind of young to make a decision, and if they are going to want to transition, we will know.”

Carol previously spoke about her son’s experience for a story on National Public Radio in 2008. The documentary was part of the case submitted to CAMH in January, 2015, by Rainbow Health Ontario, a province-wide organization that advocates on behalf of the LGBT community. Back then, only a few months into therapy, Carol detailed her son’s distress, how he tried to hide his toys and soberly drew pictures of girls for hours. “I think he was really lost …” she told the radio program.

Rainbow Health’s package to CAMH also included grim suicide rates among transgender teenagers, though not much from patients themselves. In a statement, the group said it had been getting complaints about the clinic from parents and clinicians working in other settings since the organization was created in 2008.

Much of this material later made it into the external review that officials at CAMH ordered in February. But, by then, CAMH had already started making changes. In June, 2014, the centre stopped adding names to the clinic’s waiting list – officially because it was getting too long. A month later, Dr. Zucker stepped down as chief psychologist at the hospital – a position he’d held for 13 years. In a statement to The Globe, CAMH explained the decision was “to make way for new leadership.”

The review criticized the clinic on several fronts: the use of a two-way mirror during patient interviews; lengthy and intrusive assessments and tests; and for being slow in referring teenaged patients to hormone therapy. According to the reviewers, two Canadian child and
adolescent psychiatrists, the clinic’s focus on “understanding why” a patient is “the way they are,” and attempting “to make a child comfortable in their biological sex” was not following the most up-to-date practices.

Critics argued that by directing children off the transgender path, the clinic’s approach was a form of conversion therapy, an argument strongly denied by former staff. In interviews with The Globe and Mail, they point out that Dr. Zucker would tell parents that research showed their children were most likely to be gay, and that therapy was not working to change sexual orientation but to create a more “fluid” understanding of gender. As well, they say, teenaged patients at the clinic were regularly referred to hormone therapy, pointing to the clinic’s own research showing that by adolescence, gender identity is usually fixed. The external review reached a non-conclusion: “We cannot state that the clinic does not practice reparative approaches (if outright therapies) with respect to influencing gender identity development.”

To further complicate matters, the review contained a glaring error. It cited a specific report from one patient, saying that Dr. Zucker had told him to strip to his waist in front of other staff, and called him a “hairly little vermin.” But the reviewers had not bothered to confirm this account; the patient has since said he made a mistake and CAMH has acknowledged it didn’t happen.

The reviewers called for changes to the clinic’s practice, not its outright closing. A month after receiving their findings, however, CAMH announced the clinic “would be winding down,” and Dr. Zucker was no longer an employee.

**Many supporters**

Dr. Zucker has many supporters – more than a dozen who talked to The Globe on the record extensively about his work and termination – who describe him as a top-notch scientist, a demanding but supportive mentor and a compassionate psychologist who answered phone calls from his patients late at night, and worked at the clinic six days a week. He has written more than a hundred papers, and has been editor of the academic journal Archives of Sexual Behaviour for 15 years. His friends describe his “encyclopedic knowledge” of research. At conferences, he would often sit in the back row, wearing his trademark ball cap and sunglasses, raising his hand at the end of presentations to make an illuminating – or challenging – comment.

His stature placed him centre stage of a shift happening in the treatment of transgender children. Two other approaches had gained ground: a “wait-and-see” approach developed by respected gender identity researchers in the Netherlands that doesn’t try to direct cross-gender expression, but also doesn’t encourage early transitioning in most cases; and the “affirming” approach, which prioritizes a child’s right to define his or her own gender identity.

Dr. Zucker argued in published research and previous interviews that his therapy should be guided by the age of the patient and based on best evidence, particularly longitudinal studies that showed that gender identity is “malleable” in young children, and that the majority will outgrow their cross-gender identity by the time they are teenagers, and most often grow up to be gay adults. “If a five-year-old black kid came into the clinic and said he wanted to be white, would we endorse that?” Dr. Zucker said in 2008 interview in Atlantic Monthly. “I don’t think so. What we want to do is say, ‘What’s going on with this kid that’s making him feel that it would be better to be white?’”
In the case of their patients with “gender identity dysphoria,” the clinic’s staff might uncover mental health or family issues. Parents, as Dr. Zucker’s research suggested, often contributed to the problem. But they also had a role in deciding the goal of the therapy – including, as a 2012 paper on the clinic’s therapy noted, wanting to “reduce their child’s desire to be of the other gender.” This is a reasonable goal, Dr. Zucker would often point out in his research, given society’s attitudes and the difficulty of hormone therapy and surgery. (On the other hand, one mom who first brought her child to the clinic, having already socially transitioned to a boy at age 5, described Dr. Zucker as “non-judgmental and supportive.”)

As part of the therapy, children were directed to more gender-typical activities and toys, even haircuts. Sometimes, that meant taking a toy away: One mother interviewed for the story described burying a favourite Barbie in a shoebox in the backyard, while her son watched. But clinicians who worked at the Gender Identity Clinic in the past 10 years insist it was not all or nothing. “It was never do this, do that, play with this, play with that,” says Devita Singh, a psychologist at the Children’s Hospital of Western Ontario in London, Ont., and a former student of Dr. Zucker’s. It wasn’t that kids were told not to play with their friends, she says, but it might be suggested parents look for same-sex peers with similar interests. Patients would say, “If I like Barbies and I don’t like rough-and-tumble play, than I must be a girl,” Dr. Singh says. “Our approach was to increase flexibility” around how children viewed their gender.

Carol believes that Dr. Zucker’s advice worked for her son, who is now a popular gay 13-year-old. He doesn’t talk about wanting to be a girl any more, though Carol says they are careful not assume his path is set. “The biggest and most important thing I hold on to as a mother, was that when he was young, he would never talk about his future, never talk about himself as an adult.” Now, she says, he is making plans. “This was a healthy outcome for us.” She gives Dr. Zucker the credit: “I know the positive impact his therapy had on the culture of our family.”

Not every family feels the same way about this approach.

Years of pain

When Trish’s son was seven years old, he declared that God had made a mistake and he was meant to be a girl. He had always liked to dress up like his sisters in princess costumes and not shown much interest in traditional boy activities. “God doesn’t make mistakes,” his mom told him. “You are perfect.”

But his parents, who lived in Toronto, were worried about him, and after doing some research, they were referred to Dr. Zucker. They met with him four times, but never brought their son. They felt it wouldn’t be a good match, but they were reassured by what Dr. Zucker was telling them: Their son would likely grow up to be gay. Trish, who asked that her family not be identified, says Dr. Zucker told them “it was important to encourage our child to feel more comfortable with the gender matching their biology.” At the same time, Trish recalls, “we wanted our son to be a boy. So we jumped at any suggestion. … When we heard he is probably gay, you can’t imagine the relief we felt.”

By age 10, however, he was still struggling, so they returned to CAMH; this time, they didn’t see Dr. Zucker at the clinic, but went to see another clinician about their son’s anxiety. That clinician, they recall, consulted with Dr. Zucker. The advice they received was to normalize
male behaviour and reduce female diversions. So they went home and removed the princess costumes and his father tried to interest him in karate.

Their son didn’t say much – he didn’t forcefully insist he was a girl – and his parents didn’t talk to him about it. Based on how they’d interpreted the advice at CAMH, they were worried about putting the idea in his head. But Trish would continue to find clothes hidden away. At night, her son would pull his hair out while he slept. Trish and her husband knew this couldn’t go on. At 13, when their son came out as gay, they thought, thankfully, that Dr. Zucker had been right.

A year later, their child told them what she had been feeling for years: She was transgender. This time, her parents took her to Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children, where the truth spilled out and she was given hormone blockers to slow puberty.

She finally told them: “Every birthday, every time I blew out the candles, I wished to be a girl.” She admitted to hiding costumes and wigs so she wouldn’t get in “trouble,” and expressed anger that her parents had not asked her more about how she was feeling, and that they had waited so long to start the hormone treatment.

When at 15, she wanted to start taking estrogen, her mother sat her down. “I said, ‘How can I give a 15-year-old, who is not responsible, who doesn’t clean their room, who doesn’t always tell the truth – how can we give you this power to change your body in an irreversible way for the rest of your life?’”

She recalls her daughter answering back: “This is my entire existence. I can’t live this way any more.”

Her parents deeply regret that they didn’t see this sooner; if they had gone to a psychologist who encouraged them to accept their daughter as she was and follow her lead, Trish believes they could have spared her years of pain.

Her husband agrees: “Every step we make that affirms her femininity, it just gets better and better.”

This is what advocates of the “affirming” approach argue: Children who insist they don’t fit a stereotypical gender role already know that they are being judged. While most may grow up to identify with a gender that matches their biological sex, getting the message, even indirectly, from the adults they trust, that their behaviour is wrong and needs fixing, only creates stress and despair along the way – and doesn’t change the child’s path.

Today, when Trish’s daughter looks back on her childhood, she says: “I just feel angry. I feel like why didn’t they ask me sooner, why didn’t they protect me? But they are loving parents and they are really working on being supportive. They were just really confused for a lot of years.”

**Science doesn’t know**

The problem is this: Science simply doesn’t know which method produces the best outcome – and scientists can’t say which children who experiment with gender expression will grow up to be transgendered. Neuroscience is just starting to weigh in, but the nature-nurture debate about gender identity continues.
Still, plenty has changed since a young Ken Zucker first arrived at what was then the Clarke Institute as a curious grad student in 1975. One year later, Bruce Jenner – now trans icon Caitlyn Jenner – would be celebrated as a male hero for winning the decathlon at the Olympic Games in Montreal. And it was only two years before that homosexuality had been removed as a mental illness from the DSM, the diagnostic manual for psychiatrists. “Gender dysphoria,” previously called “gender identity disorder,” is expected to make it way out of the DSM as well. Indeed, one of the issues for CAMH has been whether there should even be a gender identity clinic at a mental-health hospital.

If, in the future, more children grow up to be transgender, will that be because a too-accommodating society pushed them in that direction? Or because a less-judging society allowed those already destined for that path the freedom to choose?

The rapidly shrinking newspaper business raises all kinds of questions. What will we wrap fish guts in? How will we light backyard fires? And where will we get reasonably accurate and important stories about what’s going on in our community, our country, and the world? The internet? Where global editor-bots decide what’s news? Where politicians can lie with impunity? Where fake news outsells real news? The short answer is yes. The longer and more encouraging answer is in the Spring edition of C2C Journal, which launches today with editor Paul Bunner’s lead editorial and career newspaperman Paul Stanway’s lament for the ink-stained wretches of yesterday’s news.
Jordan Peterson knows what he believes, and he’s not afraid to tell you. What does he think about gender-neutral pronouns, such as “ze” or “zhe”, preferred by many transgender people? Those are the “vanguard of a post-modern, radical leftist ideology.” How about Bill C-16, the federal legislation that proposes to amend “the Canadian Human Rights Act to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination”? It’s an “assault on biology and an implicit assault on the idea of the objective world.” And what about the Ontario Human Rights Commission? According to Peterson, it’s the “most dangerous organization in Canada.”

For some, Jordan Peterson is a brave defender of the traditional values and moral certitude of Western civilization, standing up to those who would sacrifice them on the altar of political correctness and hurt feelings. For others, he is a villain, whose opposition to further government protection of transgender people threatens one of society’s most marginalized groups. Whatever the case, Peterson, the University of Toronto psychology professor who shot to fame this fall after giving public notice via YouTube of his refusal to use gender neutral pronouns for transgender students, is now at the heart of a revived Canadian culture war.
The great debates over abortion, divorce, gay rights, aboriginal entitlement and the environment that erupted in the mid-20th century have waxed and waned ever since, but rarely have they burned with the intensity evident today. And Jordan Peterson is doing a singularly impressive job of stoking the fire. His vocal resistance to the progression of transgender recognition and rights in Canadian society is, according to him, rooted in a firm belief in the importance of freedom of speech to democracy. He passionately opposes the idea that gender is a social construct unrelated to biological sex, arguing that the connection between the two is clear and universal, and that the widespread acceptance of transgender and gender fluid people is simply ignorant kowtowing to political correctness and bogus relativism. The endorsement of gender neutral pronouns by Canadian governments and the idea that refusing to use those pronouns constitutes discrimination against transgender people that is punishable under the law is something that Peterson vehemently rejects as a left-wing attack on free speech. When Bill C-16 was introduced in Parliament, therefore, he decided to publicize his opposition to the proposed legislation as widely as possible.

It’s safe to say he succeeded. In the two months since posting the first of a series of controversial videos attacking Bill C-16 and the Ontario Human Rights Code, Peterson has given dozens of interviews, been the subject of hundreds of news stories, and collected millions of views on his YouTube channel. In the process, he sparked a furious debate on the University of Toronto campus and across the country about the role of government in restricting and compelling speech.

Professor Jordan Peterson refuses to use gender neutral pronouns during a heated discussion with some students in the downtown campus, Toronto. (Image: Eduardo Lima / Metro News)

Peterson’s criticism of Bill C-16 and the Ontario Human Rights Code have not gone unchallenged. In a recent debate at the university, U of T law professor Brenda Cossman argued that Bill C-16 would not come close to criminalizing Peterson’s refusal to use gender neutral pronouns, and that the bill was simply designed to ensure that violence and overt acts
of hatred directed at transgender people based on their gender identity and expression are not permitted in Canada. And while Cossman conceded that Peterson, as a professor at a public university, would likely be found guilty of violating human rights codes for refusing to use students’ preferred pronouns, she argued that he could avoid this by simply addressing transgender students by name rather than using pronouns. Needless to say, Peterson, who has received a series of letters from the university administration advising him to end his opposition to Bill C-16 and who has been the focus of a number of protests against and for him on the university campus, disagrees.

Regardless of whether Peterson’s refusal to use gender neutral pronouns will actually land him in legal trouble, it seems he has tapped into something much bigger. At first glance, his fight with his employer and his animus towards Bill C-16 and the Ontario Human Rights Code seems just another skirmish in a decades’ long war over free speech on campus. He’s unusual, though not unique, as a tenured academic challenging progressive orthodoxy, although he’s more passionate and persistent than most. But that doesn’t explain the extraordinary national and even international interest in his arguments and his manifestly unprofessional YouTube videos – which he himself describes as having “no production quality”.

His fight against Bill C-16 and his refusal to use gender neutral pronouns matches the mood of millions of people unhappy with much of the socio-economic agenda currently favoured by the so-called political and intellectual “elites” in Western society. 2016 has been a banner year for this discontent. The United Kingdom’s vote to leave the European Union this spring, the rise of anti-establishment political parties in virtually every European country, and the election of Donald Trump as the next President of the United States: all these seemingly represent a backlash against the march of progressivism, feminism, environmentalism, and globalism, which for so long seemed inevitable and unstoppable. In the midst of the British Brexit debate this spring, Michael Gove, one of the leaders of the campaign to leave the European Union, famously said that “people in this country have had enough of experts.” This is happening around the world: a rejection of experts and their opinions on topics as diverse as trade, immigration, and climate change. The ivory towers are out; the common sense of the people is in.

Until Peterson, Canada has seemed largely immune to these reactionary populist forces. They briefly erupted in Toronto during the chaotic reign of former mayor Rob Ford, but seemed discredited by his drug-addled fall from grace. Over the last year, even as Donald Trump was gaining steam in the Republican primaries, Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was consolidating power in an avowedly progressive government that explicitly put feminism, environmentalism, and aboriginal rights at the top of its agenda. As Britain prepares to leave the EU and as President-elect Trump gives notice of his intention to remove the United States from international trade agreements and withdraw from the Paris climate accord, the government of Canada is welcoming refugees, liberalizing international trade, and introducing a national carbon tax.

So far, Canada’s Conservative opposition party has shown little interest in Peterson, or anything related to the new culture war. Interim leader Rona Ambrose called Trump’s ideas “off the spectrum” a year ago and said they would not be welcome in her party. She and over half of her caucus voted in favour of Bill C-16. They remain ardent cheerleaders for globalized trade, and at least outwardly believers in anthropogenic climate change. Small wonder then that this fall the Economist magazine called Canada a “beacon of liberalism” in a world turning quickly towards reactionary populism.
It may be, however, that Canadian conservatives are simply slow to recover their confidence following their emphatic defeat in the 2015 federal and Alberta elections. Events like the success of Trump, the Brexit vote, the lurch to the political right in France and elsewhere in Europe, and the lightning rod that is Jordan Peterson here in Canada, will eventually likely embolden some imitation among conservative politicians.

Indeed, there are already signs of it in the federal Conservative leadership race. Two of the nine MPs seeking to lead the party (Andrew Scheer and Brad Trost) voted against Bill C-16. Kellie Leitch, the Tory MP and leadership candidate best known for proposing that the federal government create a tip line to report barbaric cultural practices (and then tearfully apologizing for that proposal after the Tories lost the election), has become a contender by arguing that immigrants need to be screened to ensure they possess “Canadian values”.

Potential evidence of a rebellion against progressive dogma has also surfaced in provincial politics. Following years of debate over the Ontario Liberal government’s contentious sex-ed program, among other controversial initiatives related to gender and sexuality, this fall provincial Tories in the Niagara region selected 19-year-old home-schooled social conservative Sam Oosterhoff over their party’s president to represent them in a by-election – which he went on to win with over 50 percent of the vote.

In Alberta, former federal Conservative MP Jason Kenney, a devout Catholic with strong ties to the pro-life movement, is being vilified by progressives in his campaign for the leadership of the provincial PC party. Yet he is still winning most of the delegate selection votes leading up to a convention in Calgary next March. Against a backdrop of controversy over a proposed new transgender teaching unit for public schools that mandates replacing the word parent with “caretaker” and boys and girls with “comrades”, so far Kenney has scrupulously avoided being baited into responding to allegations of misogyny and homophobia.
That sets him distinctly apart from Jordan Peterson, who welcomes and encourages any and all debate over his refusal to speak the language of gender neutrality. Peterson says he is merely expressing a widespread resistance to political correctness that people have up till now been afraid to voice. As he puts it, “The political correctness police are already in your heads,” and he’s taken it upon himself to get them out by loudly defending “freedom of speech and classical enlightenment values.”

Whether or not Bill C-16, the primary target of Peterson’s hostility, proves as dire a threat to democratic freedom of speech as he says it is matters less to his supporters than the fact that he is willing to voice opposition to it in the first place. It’s not about what Bill C-16 says; it’s about what it represents.

In the recent debate at U of T, University of British Columbia education professor Mary Bryson accused Peterson of using the populist conservative rhetoric of the American Breitbart News Network, rather than the reasoned language and logic of an academic. Peterson, who forcefully denied the charge, insists he is a reasonable man and a careful researcher who cares deeply for people and fears that his country and his culture are at risk of succumbing to a malevolent authoritarian ideology disguised as minority rights. But his raised voice and palpable anger at what he identifies as political correctness is a hallmark of his YouTube videos, his debate performances, and his exclusive interview with C2C Journal. Media and communications professionals would describe his unpolished and often unconstrained delivery as too hot for the video medium he uses, but his authentic anger and frustration with a society moving ever more swiftly away from its traditions and roots is what makes his voice resonate.

As the drama at the University of Toronto continues to unfold in the coming weeks and months, the balance of human rights and free speech in Canada will be tested. Peterson – who fears losing both his license to practice clinical psychology and his clearance to teach classes at the university – may become a martyr for his cause. If that happens, the backlash against transgender rights and the related tenets of progressivism will only be further inflamed. “Canada’s back,” proclaims the most progressive prime minister the country has ever had. So too, apparently, are the culture wars.

*For more on this subject, see Jason VandenBeukel and Jason Tucker’s interview with Jordan Peterson, which is also in this edition of C2C Journal: ‘We’re teaching university students lies’ – An interview with Dr Jordan Peterson*
Jordan Peterson

Born: June 12, 1962 (age 54)  
Fairview, Alberta, Canada

Residence: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Nationality: Canadian

Fields: Psychology

Institutions:
- University of Toronto 1998–
- Harvard University 1993–98

Alma mater:
- McGill University (Ph.D)
- University of Alberta (B.A.)

Known for:
- Personality
- Mythology and Religion
- Freedom of speech
- Opposition to non-binary pronouns

Influences:
- Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- Sigmund Freud
- Mircea Eliade
- Carl Jung
- Carl Rogers
- Jean Piaget
- George Orwell
- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Website: jordanbpeterson.com

Jordan B. Peterson (born 1962) is a Canadian clinical psychologist, tenured professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, and political activist. His research interests include self-deception, mythology, religion, narrative, neuroscience, personality, deception, creativity, intelligence, and motivation.
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Biography

"The connection between psychology, mythology and literature is as important as the connection between psychology and biology and the hard sciences."

— Jordan Peterson[2]

Peterson was raised as a Christian conservative. Peterson stated that he rejected religion early in his early teens,[3] and criticizes the New Atheists (specifically Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris) for oversimplifying the philosophy of Christianity when making their critiques. Peterson often points to the symbolic underlying meaning of the archetypical ideas in religious mythology when explaining his understanding of religion, and considers this his "reconciliation" between religion and the empirical sciences.

He grew up in Fairview, Alberta, Canada, a small town of 3,000 people 580 km (360 mi) northwest of Edmonton, Alberta. He resided in Montreal from 1985 to 1993, where he studied under the supervision of Robert O. Pihl and Maurice Dongier. From 1993 to 1998 he lived in Arlington, Massachusetts, while teaching and conducting research at Harvard. He has resided in Toronto since 1998.

At the age of 13, Peterson had joined the New Democratic Party (NDP). He remained continually active with party until the age of 18.[2]
He has two bachelor degrees from the University of Alberta. His first was in political science. After visiting Europe, Peterson became extremely interested in the psychological unpinning that created the circumstances of the Cold War and its origins within the Second World War. After this experience, he returned to the university to complete another bachelor in psychology.

He received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from McGill University. He taught at Harvard University as an assistant and an associate professor. There he studied aggression arising from drug and alcohol abuse. During his time at Harvard, the university psychology department would frequently send any student with a strange or unusual thesis to him, as he would be willing to entertain and supervise uncommon thesis proposals.

After Harvard, he returned to Canada and took a position at the University of Toronto.

Political correctness

On 27 September 2016, Peterson released the first part of a three-part lecture video series on political correctness. In the video, he objects to the Canadian government's Bill C-16, which proposes to outlaw harassment and discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression under the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code. His objection to the bill did not concern the LGBT discrimination legal debate, but rather the freedom of speech implications of C-16's other amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, regarding their accommodation language. Furthermore, he argued that the new amendments paired with section 46.3 of the Ontario Human Rights Code would make it possible for "employers and organizations to be subject to punishment under the code if any employee or associate says anything that can be construed as 'directly or indirectly' offensive." Peterson further argues that it is necessary for people to recognize the importance of free speech and particularly free speech on college campuses.

Peterson has publicly stated that he will not use non-binary pronouns such as "zhe" in reference to others and further addressed the differences between free speech and compelled speech in a December 2016 interview. In an interview about his stance on pronouns, Peterson stated that he would consider complying with a request from a non-binary person if he were asked in the right way.

Works

Peterson published Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief in 1999. The book describes a comprehensive rational theory for how we construct meaning, represented by the mythical process of the exploratory hero, and also provides a way of interpreting religious and mythical models of reality presented in a way that fits in with modern scientific understanding of how the brain works. It synthesizes ideas drawn from narratives in mythology, religion, literature and philosophy, as well as research from modern neuropsychology.

Peterson’s primary goal was to figure out the reasons why individuals, not simply groups, engage in social conflict, and try to model the path individuals take that results in atrocities like the Holocaust or the Soviet Gulag. Peterson considers himself a pragmatist, and uses science and neuropsychology to examine and learn from the belief systems of the past and vice versa, but his theory is primarily phenomenological. Peterson explores the origins of evil,
and also posits that an analysis of the world’s religious ideas might allow us to describe our essential morality and eventually develop a universal system of morality.

Harvey Shepard, writing in the Religion column in the *Montreal Gazette* in 2003, states "To me, the book reflects its author's profound moral sense and vast erudition in areas ranging from clinical psychology to scripture and a good deal of personal soul searching..." He goes on to note that "Peterson's vision is both fully informed by current scientific and pragmatic methods, and in important ways deeply conservative and traditional."[10]

**Online projects**

Peterson has produced a series of online writing exercises including: the Past Authoring Program, a guided autobiography; two Present Authoring Programs, which allow the user to analyze his or her personality faults and virtues in accordance with the Big Five personality model; and the Future Authoring program, which steps users through the process of envisioning and then planning their desired futures, three to five years down the road. The latter program was used with McGill University undergraduates on academic probation to improve their grades.[11]

The Self Authoring programs were developed in partial consequence of research conducted by James Pennebaker at the University of Texas and Gary Latham at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. Pennebaker demonstrated that writing about traumatic or uncertain events and situations improved mental and physical health, while Latham has demonstrated that planning exercises that are personal help make people more productive.[11]

Peterson records his lectures and uploads them to YouTube.[12]

Peterson has also recently started recording a podcast: The Jordan B Peterson Podcast which has 8 episodes as of February 20, 2017.

**Media appearances**

Peterson has appeared on TVO on shows such as *Big Ideas*, and has been a frequent guest and essayist on TVO's *The Agenda with Steve Paikin* since 2008. He has also appeared on the *The Joe Rogan Experience*,[13] *The Gavin McInnes Show*,[14] Sam Harris's *Waking Up* podcast, and Stefan Molyneux's *Freedomain Radio*.[3]

**Selected publications**

- Peterson, Jordan. "The Pragmatics of Meaning"
References


**External links**

- Official website
- Peterson quotations on Good Reads
- Jordan Peterson on Quora
- Jordon Peterson official Youtube page
- Jordan Peterson on Twitter