



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on August 20, 2021

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## When Children Cancel Parents

“You’re a thought criminal!” said the boy to protagonist Winston Smith in George Orwell’s *1984*. This comes to mind when pondering stories of parents who get “canceled” by their own children. Oh, they’re not called thought criminals. They’re just not called — for Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, or any other time because they dared be awakened to Truth in a “woke” time.

We’ve heard about this for a while. “You are no longer my mother, because you are voting for Trump,” Reuters related lifelong Democrat Mayra Gomez, 41, as having been told by her 21-year-old son last year. The news organ also relates that “Jacquelyn Hammond, 47, a bartender in Asheville, North Carolina, no longer speaks to her Trump-supporting mother Carol.” Now Meadowlark Press writer Caryn Boddie relates her own experiences being canceled by her kids, along with those of other people she knows of enduring the same fate.

Writing at American Thinker July 19, Boddie cites the final chapter of socialist author Saul “the Red” Alinsky’s book *Rules for Radicals* (1971). Titled “The Way Forward,” it states, “Organization for action will now and in the decade ahead center upon America’s white middle class. That is where the power is.... Large parts of the middle class, the ‘silent majority,’ must be activated.”

So it has come to pass, too. Middle-class herself and stating that her “cancelation is the fruit of the left’s strategy to remake America,” Boddie writes:

It was shocking to us that our children canceled us for being who and what we are; we have tried to be good and true parents, faithful and patriotic. We are heartbroken, blame ourselves, blame our children, reach out and plead and cajole, pray and pray and pray and ask others to pray, too.

... This is happening to many middle-class families. For example, I met a friend the other day, and she told me she has several friends whose children are canceling them. One of them is a mother with whom my friend was close as their kids grew up. She said this person was an excellent mother, but now her son will have nothing to do with her and is calling her an abusive mother.

My friend’s own son canceled her and her husband, too. The son told his mother that everything they taught him was a lie. Before he canceled them, he forbade his mother to



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talk to him about God anymore.

Years ago, my children also told me I was not allowed to talk to them about God anymore.

Both of us told our children that we would not proselytize, but we could not promise never to mention God because we are people of faith; it is who we are.

When my husband posted on Facebook about our plight, more than a few friends responded that they were going through the same things. One mother said her *three children* will have nothing to do with her anymore and had recently left her out of a family wedding. She said she is also a person of faith.

Providing more detail, Boddie points out that her kids hated President Trump with almost demonic passion. She mentions that it upset their daughter when she and her husband expressed concern to their governor, Jared Polis (D-Colo.), about lockdowns (they then apologized to her). But the January 6 trespassing incident was the final straw; even though the Boddies weren't even in Washington, D.C., that day, their children disowned them. All communication ceased.

These incidents bring to mind Antifa, says Boddie, whose members fit the profile here: They tend to be spoiled, middle- or upper-middle-class, white young adults. And she and many others want to know how this intergenerational chasm was created.

Of course, the saying "An idle mind is the Devil's playground" suggests itself, and this surely is a factor. People toiling away in fields under a hot sun 12 hours a day earning a subsistence living don't generally give expositions upon white privilege. But there's more to it.

The African saying "It takes a village to raise a child" was coopted and corrupted by Hillary Clinton. Yet there'll always be a village — and sometimes it can raze a child (or at least his soul).

This is the case today with our now- toxic culture (the "village"). Anti-Christian, anti-white, anti-American, anti-Western, pro-socialist, relativistic, sexualized, and perverse — though I repeat myself — ideas abound, and your children *will* generally be infected with them commensurate with their exposure to our government (and even private) schools, popular entertainment, and mass media. But what are the implications of this? Must we insulate kids from the outside world and become our own "village"? "Until when?" some may ask, following up with the rhetorical-question criticism, "Can you raise a child in a 'bubble'?" Well, frankly, yes.

## **Building a Beautiful Bubble**

First realize that everyone raises his children in a bubble of sorts. Virtually every parent (if not all) protects his children from perceived bad influences, even if they're only obvious ones such as snuff films, porn, and the worst of peers. Moreover, the same moderns who'll scoff at shielding kids from popular culture shield their own young from "unpopular" culture. Just consider how, speaking for many, the aforementioned mom-canceling Jacquelyn Hammond emphasized that she didn't want her son talking politics with his grandma, saying, "I'm not letting her influence him politically." Or ponder the avowedly "non-religious" mother who, writing to [Slate.com](#)'s advice columnist Doyin Richards in April and also speaking for many, complained that her seven-year-old son's Mormon best friend wouldn't stop proselytizing and talking to her boy about Bible stories and Jesus. "I don't really want my son to learn these things," said she. "I don't want him to be religious, honestly." So everyone sets limits; it's only a



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matter of what the bubble's boundaries will be.

A story I read recently well illustrated what people perceive the problem to be when children are lost to what we call leftism, which is more accurately understood as movement toward moral decay. A father wrote that he and his wife raised their son in a strongly conservative Catholic home; the boy was an altar server for many years, attended pro-life events with them, and was by their side as they listened to conservative talk radio. Then he attended college — and within a year became a full-throated social-justice warrior who can't even stand his parents' presence.

Some readers may now roll their eyes, having heard this story before. Academia today is generally toxic, and it's ironic that so many good Americans send their children to left-wing propaganda mills. After all, people may vote for "conservative" candidates and sometimes even devote time and treasure to corresponding causes, but then send their kids to the very places authoring the demise of what they hold dear. Remember that most of our corruptive ideas germinate and are cultivated on college campuses before being disseminated by media, entertainment, and Big Tech. So giving such places tuition money is to quite literally fund America's destruction. It's done, of course, because the college is dad's alma mater or because the kid wants to attend ("Hey, it's a party school!") or because it's "prestigious" ("It's Hahvahd!"). The good news is that there are viable, traditionalist alternatives, such as Franciscan University of Steubenville, Hillsdale College, Thomas Aquinas College in California, and Liberty University in Virginia. But then there's the bad news, which I'll present as a question: When a child exhibits a social-justice warrior transition at college, is his matriculation first cause?

Or is it a catalyst?

## Early Formation

"Give me a child until he is seven, and I will show you the man," goes the saying often attributed to Greek philosopher Aristotle. This was and is hardly an outlier idea. In fact, the "age of seven has been considered the age where common sense and maturity start to kick in, for centuries," wrote *Scholastic* magazine in 2019. "In Medieval times, court apprenticeships began at age seven. Under English Common Law, children under seven weren't considered responsible for their crimes. Turning seven can even be symbolic within a child's religious upbringing, as it's the age around when the Catholic Church offers first Communion."

Why is this a seminal point? "Around the age of seven, give or take a year, children enter a developmental phase known as the age of reason," *Scholastic* also informed. "'The age of reason refers to the developmental cognitive, emotional, and moral stage in which children become more capable of rational thought, have internalized a conscience, and have better capacity to control impulses (than in previous stages),' explains Dana Dorfman, PhD, psychotherapist, and co-host of the podcast *2 Moms on the Couch*." And this "internalized conscience" is quite set in stone apparently, for good or for ill, by age seven, according to Danish psychologist Nicolai Sennels. Sennels spent time working with criminal youth (mostly Muslim) in a Copenhagen juvenile detention center, and his experiences caused him to echo Aristotle and lament that once a child is seven, his basic foundation is almost impossible to change.

Of course, it won't shock anyone to hear that "early years socialization," to use psychological terminology (which I dislike), is significant. But to define this precisely, if a rather ingrained conscience



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is in place at seven, something quite significant that creates it occurs before that age. Yet if that “something” isn’t rational — remember, again, this is before the age of *reason* — it’s clearly something else: *emotional*. So perhaps the ages between zero and seven could be called the Period of Emotional Formation.

Emotion is hard to buck because reason is the cold Mr. Spock (of *Star Trek* fame) appealing to the head with dispassionate logic; emotion is the oh-so seductive siren stoking our urges. Christian apologist C.S. Lewis addressed this in his 1947 book *The Abolition of Man*. He wrote, as presented in 2012 by the C.S. Lewis Institute, that

no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism. I had sooner play cards against a man who was quite sceptical about ethics, but bred to believe that “a gentleman does not cheat,” than against an irreproachable moral philosopher who had been brought up among sharpers. In battle it is not syllogisms (logical arguments) that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism ... about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use. We were told it all long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the ‘spirited element’. The head rules the belly through the chest — the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organ-ized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The Chest-Magnanimity-Sentiment — these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.

We’ve all experienced, seen, or heard about how the heart so readily trumps the head. Consider St. Augustine’s prayer through which he tacitly confessed his inability to relinquish carnal pleasures: “Lord, make me chaste — but not yet!” Or ponder how ancient Chinese sage Confucius lamented, “It is not that I do not know what to do; it is that I do not do what I know.” These were brilliant men, but even their intellects were “powerless against the animal organism” (at least, that is, without God’s intervention — i.e., grace). Of course, this phenomenon has been experienced by billions since those figures lived, by the man who knows he should stop drinking or taking drugs, but “can’t”; by the woman who knows forgiveness is demanded but finds it beyond her; by the older child who knows he should stop mistreating a sibling, but keeps slipping back into old habits; etc. As poetess Edna St. Vincent Millay put it, “Pity me that the heart is slow to learn what the swift mind beholds at every turn.”

Perhaps worse still, however — and certainly more applicable to the prodigal social-justice-warrior son phenomenon — are those very common emotion-driven, dark habits that those displaying them *don’t* know are wrong. Regardless, how are emotions “trained,” and how can proper ones be inculcated?

## Virtue Training

“Training” really is the word. The Bible states, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” For those skeptical, realize that “training” isn’t synonymous with “telling”; it isn’t effected merely by reading a book. A highly trained athlete might have been told much and have read more than one relevant book, but his proficiency is attributable to numerous things:



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observing those modeling the correct actions, proper and consistent teaching, and countless hours of disciplined practice, that repetition that makes actions and their associated thoughts “second nature.” It’s a matter of creating the correct *habits*. In the moral sphere things also become habitual, unavoidably. Good moral habits are called *virtues*; bad ones, *vices*. But how are these habits created?

*When* they’re created should already be clear: Well before college. In fact, this process begins before schooling, period. Moreover, while formal education is emphasized by those trying to explain evil’s seduction of the young, generally overlooked is a realm likely far more significant: the arts (entertainment). Remember that a major goal (if not the main one) of entertainment is to affect people *emotionally*. If you just want “facts,” you can read an academic paper. People typically watch films and shows for *pleasure*, and producers only make money (and effect whatever social change may be an accompanying aim) by moving people, grabbing their hearts, or by titillating them.



**Indoctrination centers:** Today’s government schools tag-team with the popular culture to indoctrinate kids with corruption masquerading as enlightenment. What’s more, they’re also places where children are exposed to persuasive, vice-transmitting peers. *(Photo credit: AP Images)*

Greek philosopher Plato knew well that the arts shape our sense of virtue. Why, he even expressed the idea (I’m paraphrasing) that musical “innovation is full of danger to the State, for when modes of music change, the laws of the State always change with them.” Addressing the arts-crafting-kids phenomenon in his book *Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong*, Boston College Professor Emeritus William K. Kilpatrick wrote that children “ought to be brought up in an atmosphere that provides them examples of nobility and grace. This imaginative education is not a substitute for a reasoned morality, but it paves the way for it, making it more likely that the grown child will happily accept the dictates of reason.” Remember, again, that a small child does *not yet speak the language of reason; everything* is about emotion. And Kilpatrick explained, echoing Plato, that just as the senses “can be enlisted on the side of virtue,” so can they “be enlisted on the side of vice” — and far more easily, too. For all this requires is obeying our animal nature; training in virtue involves rising above it.

Now how do you suppose our popular culture trains children’s emotions today? There’s no point devoting ink to illustrating how sexualized, vulgar, and gratuitously violent entertainment long ago became; this is obvious to all with eyes to see and would be a bit like taking pains to prove pigsties are dirty. Rather, let’s explore the more subtle corruptive effects of entertainment, which can be just as



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serious.

As already stated, virtue is certainly a harder sell than vice; to quote Confucius again, “I never knew anyone who loved virtue as much as sex.” Of course, people can fight their animal nature and with God’s grace, perhaps conquer it. But what if you could convince them there could be no such fight — by convincing them the opposing sides, virtue and vice, don’t even exist? Enter moral relativism.

This pseudo-philosophy permeates our entire society today, enables so-called leftism, and is continually transmitted, implicitly or explicitly, via our entertainment. An obvious example is *Star Wars* character Obi-Wan Kenobi’s utterance in *Return of the Jedi* (1983), “Luke, you’re going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view.” Now, Anglo-Irish philosopher Edmund Burke warned that evil would triumph if good men did nothing. But why would we do anything (positive, anyway) if we consider good and evil mere social constructs, changing with “point of view”? And even if we had some vague sense that “ungood” exists, how could we know what to fight for and fight against, with good and evil having been so conflated? Why, had Luke Skywalker truly taken Obi-Wan’s relativistic counsel to heart, he might have killed Han Solo and then become Emperor Palpatine’s PR man.

Not surprisingly, Obi-Wan (and the Hollywood writers providing his words) reflected all relativists in that he contradicted himself. When in *Star Wars: Episode IV — A New Hope* (1977) he was confronted with the claim by arch-villain Darth Vader that he, Vader, was now the “master,” Obi-Wan replied, “Only a master of evil, Darth” (as opposed to, perhaps, a master of “an alternative perspective”). Of course, Kenobi’s emotions had changed being face-to-face with his nemesis. And in this moment the writers wanted him to seem resolute; when counseling Luke Skywalker, however, they wanted him to seem “wise.” They certainly succeeded, too, in making him seem as wise (and wobbly) as they are.

The point is that, with the above being just one obvious example of entertainment’s peddling of relativism to kids — and with schools, media, Big Tech, and even often parents transmitting the same message — is it surprising that a 2002 Barna Group study found that only *six percent* of American teenagers “said moral truth is absolute”? Note, too, Barna also reported that by “far the most common basis for moral decision-making was doing whatever feels right [translation: emotion *über alles*] or comfortable in a situation.”

Tragically, what feels right often won’t be virtue, especially since those who’d be more likely to represent it in fact are mocked in fiction. As American Thinker’s Barry Rubin put it while commenting on contemporary entertainment in his 2008 piece “Detecting Real Heroes,” today, someone “who appears moral is, of course, instantly identifiable as corrupt. In a television show, film, or whatever, if a sincere religious believer (except for a Muslim) or a clergyman appears, you know he is stealing from the poor box. That stereotype holds and you can tell from the start who the villains are.” In keeping with this, virtue is cast as vice. If someone appears chaste, he just must have a sexual problem. Honesty is devalued, with our film “heroes” being masters of Machiavellian deceit. Kindness has given way to coolness, selflessness to selfishness, and forgiveness to a fearsome vindictiveness.

So what are we left with? As Rubin put it, “A pirate fighting demons; a nicer gangster battling a less charming one[;] that’s enough to give you something to cheer for in this type of [relativistic] drama.” Oh, and the kids won’t know what “virtue” means, but they’ll have an instinctive antipathy toward it (or at least skepticism of it).



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## Protect Your Children!

Now we get back to the child, raised in a “good Christian home,” who disowns his parents in deference to leftist ideology. He might have regularly gone to church and even attended faith-oriented events with his parents. But what does this amount to on average, one, perhaps one-and-a-half hours a week? Against this might have been an average of 91 hours weekly exposed to entertainment, media, schooling, and peers corrupted by the same inculcation. So which experiences will be most likely to have shaped the young person’s heart? Sure, he might have been an altar boy, but all the while darker forces were making him an altered boy.

So when the boy then goes off to college and “changes,” does the change really have to be very deep? Perhaps, yes — in *certain* cases. But in many, college is just activating, or catalyzing, a wrongly formed emotional foundation and providing an ideology *that aligns with it*, one that *feels* right.

Some will now say it’s the parents’ “values” that really matter. Famous last words. For this is a bit like saying we shouldn’t worry about what children may ingest outside the home because it’s the nutrition they get within it that really matters. Of course, if the imbibed poison is toxic enough, no amount of good nutrition will save them. So it often is with moral and spiritual poison.

Moreover, as a great friend once pointed out, outsiders’ influence can often exceed that of the parents. Why? Because the children know that since their parents’ love is unconditional, they don’t have to toe dad’s and mom’s line to receive it. Yet acceptance by peers and teachers very well will be contingent upon embracing their “culture.”

Staggering to many are this reality’s implications: Parents must insulate their children from the culture and, yes, become their own “village” until the youngsters’ moral compasses and emotional foundations are fully formed. There are plenty of groups doing this, mind you, from Amish to Hasidim to certain Mormons, and they often manage to raise children radically different from wider-society kids (for good or for ill, though usually for the better, depending on the given sub-culture). The point is that it’s absolutely possible to forge youngsters who reject the age’s subversive spirit. But you can’t be what the aforementioned Boddie said she and her husband are: meek people.

This isn’t to demean them; I’ve no doubt they’re wonderful. But the civilization- and soul-destroyers aren’t meek about indoctrinating your kids — you must be equally aggressive about protecting them. To this end, you can homeschool, a practice that has been growing rapidly during the COVID-19 era. There are many organizations that help such parents, too, such as FreedomProject Academy, which offers a fully accredited, classical education for kindergarten through high school. You also can and must isolate kids from modern culture and media propaganda. You can keep them away from bad-influence peers, too. This is done all the time; there are parents deciding to do it even as I write this.

Either you’ll mold your children or modern culture will. That’s the choice. And if the prescribed course here seems radical, just ask yourself what sounds more so: Raising children in a smaller but purer world, or allowing kids to be indoctrinated with extreme, hateful ideas by a society that has become radically wrong.

*Selwyn Duke has written for The New American for more than a decade. He has also written for The Hill, Observer, The American Conservative, WorldNetDaily, American Thinker, and many other print and online publications.*



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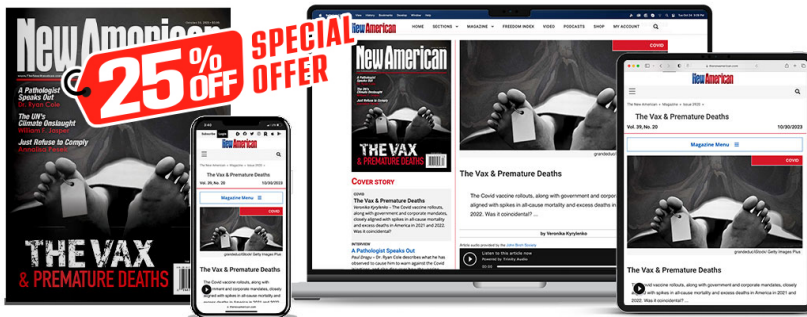
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