

Meeting Report

Fuchs' "The Childhood Origins of Political Violence and Extremism"

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Having organized psychohistorical presentation meetings since 1975, I was struck by the extraordinary value and different approach of our November 20, 2021, Work-in-Progress Psychohistory Forum seminar. Sven Fuchs' revealing focus on the violent impact of child abuse brought together a vast amount of information regarding 25 Nazi leaders, the Left-wing terrorist Baader-Meinhof of the Red Army Faction that disrupted German society for a decade, the Norwegian Anders Brevik who murdered 77 people, Neo-Nazis, Afghans, extremists of all sorts, and much else. Not since the early days of Lloyd deMause's Institute for Psychohistory has there been such a refreshing focus on the destructive emphasis on the familial, personal, and societal impact of the abuse of children!

While Fuchs' biographical text on the child abuse of leaders was in truncated form, he provided seven pages of bibliography with about 120 citations. Sven, who is the father of two children and from a family that served the Third Reich, is passionate in his commitment to pointing out the consequences of child abuse for society as a whole. Although Fuchs speaks English well and traveled extensively around the U.S. as a young man, he feared that his English wasn't adequate enough for a professional presentation and occasionally called on Peter Petschauer to translate, mostly during the extensive question and answer session of this well-attended seminar, which the presenter welcomed. His talk illustrated that Sven is constantly searching for data from around the globe.

Sven Fuchs is an independent scholar and German businessman without a PhD or academic position, but he has done a great service for scholarship and society by highlighting the cost of hurt children growing up seeing violent abuse as a normal part of life. Although most people expect scholarship to come from those with doctoral degrees, there is a long tradition of independent scholars furthering knowledge. The German businessman Heinrich Schliemann advanced archeology by finding Troy, Lloyd deMause created numerous psychohistorical institutions, and the psychoanalytic

anthropologist Eli Sagan was so erudite that with only a bachelor's degree he taught at a variety of colleges and universities when he retired from business. Independent scholars have played a most important role in our field. Sven Fuchs fits into this tradition with having published together with Peter Petschauer "The Abusive and Troubled Childhood of Donald Trump" in *Clio's Psyche* (Fall 2020). In 2019, Fuchs published in German *Childhood Is Political! Wars, Terror, Extremism, Dictatorships and Violence as a Result of Destructive Childhood*. Fortunately, it is now being translated into English.

Another interesting aspect of our meeting was that, for the first time ever, it was based on a PowerPoint rather than a printed essay. Fuchs gave great insight into how childhood physical or mental abuse can impact the subsequent political identifications of individuals. His PowerPoint started with 20 detailed charts, maps, and pictures demonstrating the global child treatment. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) exposure was found to increase suicide rates and exposure to it further increased suicide rates. In 2019, his statistics showed that childhood adversity led to over 430,000 deaths in the U.S. He found spanking more common in younger children two to four years of age.

Lloyd deMause was the psychohistorical pioneer in showing the impact of improved childrearing on society in his chapter "Evolution of Childhood" (1973). With all of its flaws, he presented monumental evidence regarding the mistreatment of children historically and its improvement over time. Regrettably, I have not seen a great deal of work since those early days of the organized psychohistory movement on childhood in the psychohistorical community. Michael A. Milburn and Sheree D. Conrad wrote some very valuable articles and a book, *The Politics of Denial* (1996), relating child abuse to political conservatism. I initially found it informative but not fully condensing. Millburn and Conrad have also been writing articles about the rightward shift in American politics as emotion played a greater role in them, which is part of what made Trump's 2016 election possible. Like Fuchs, they argue that this is a threat to democracy, such as in their *Raised to Rage: The Politics of Anger and the Roots of Authoritarianism* (2016). As a result of Fuchs' scholarship, I have become more accepting of their work. Germany's rightward shift was related to their defeat in WWI, the humiliating aspects of the Treaty of Versailles settlement, and the devastation of the Great Depression, which made Hit-

ler possible.

As we write this, Putin's Russia is turning much of Ukraine into rubble, with all the death, destruction, and trauma that immediately reverberate into future generations of its survivors. The children of war are seriously impacted. For example, my father, as a preteen and 13-year-old, kept his Hassidic grandfather, mother, and two siblings fed by trading between enemy lines during the Russian Civil War in Poland and by pulling off to sell the boots of dead soldiers to put food on the table. This admirable man's education was seriously disrupted, and he was left with fearfulness that inhibited him in the public arena. What parental loss, separation from fathers, and war fantasies will result in for the children of Ukraine, as well as for Russian soldiers and their families, remains to be seen.

Despite some overgeneralizations, Sven Fuchs' bringing together the evidence of abusive childhood with anti-democratic political violence is invaluable. This is a small price to pay for the yeoman work he's doing.

For the actual PowerPoint, use the following link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LIpBzjJSTTFV1VZaul-LQ9hSApEI_XFc/view?usp=sharing.

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Book Reviews

Beisel and Javors' New Visions of Psychohistory

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Review of David Beisel and Irene Javors' Genres of the Imagination (West Nyack, NY: Amazon Books, Circumstantial Productions, 2021), ISBN 978-0-578-24876-9, 52 pages, paperback, \$11.95, Amazon Books Kindle version, \$5.95.

This small book is a model for new ways to think about and write psychohistory. It is divided into three parts: an exploration of film noir, an examination of aspects of jazz, and a section called