

Analyzing Kevin MacDonald's 'Culture of Critique' and the alt-right's embrace of anti-Jewish ideology

The biblical commentator Rashi observes that in order for a falsehood to be successful, it has to contain at least some element of truth. According to one falsehood—the mother of all conspiracy theories—Jews have gained control over gentile civilization, and use their power to promote chaos and degeneracy in order to advance their own ethnic interests. This theory is a central component of the worldview of the alt-right. Andrew Anglin, who runs the most popular alt-right/neo-Nazi website, explains:

The core concept of the movement, upon which all else is based, is that Whites are undergoing an extermination, via mass immigration into White countries which was enabled by a corrosive liberal ideology of White self-hatred, and that the Jews are at the center of this agenda.

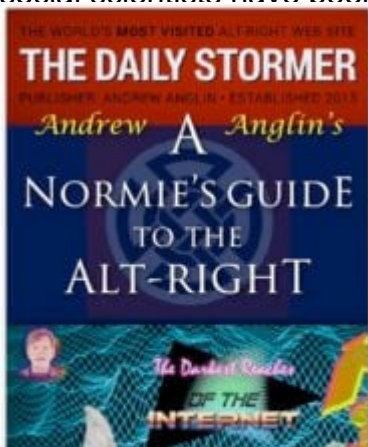
This is what white nationalists at the rally in Charlottesville last summer were alluding to when they [chanted](#), “Jews will not replace us.” The idea that history should be interpreted in light of Jewish subversion has been around for a while, but it has gained supporters in recent years as part of a backlash against the establishment liberal ideology.

Editor's note: Read Kevin MacDonald's response: [Kevin MacDonald responds to criticism of his theory of Jewish ethnocentrism and influence](#)

What 'evidence' is provided to support this theory?

The kernel of truth behind the Jewish conspiracy theory is that Jews *are* vastly overrepresented in positions of influence. If Jews had never existed, the world really would be radically different in many ways. It's safe to say that, in the twentieth century, Jews exerted more influence person-for-person on politics and culture than any other group. Although the Jewish conspiracy theory is false, it is worthwhile to understand the cause of its enduring—and now resurging—popularity.

In some circles it is considered politically incorrect to even acknowledge Jewish influence. [The Anti-Defamation League \(ADL\) declares](#) the idea that Jews “control” Hollywood or the film industry to be a “classic anti-Semitic canard.” Regarding the fact that the heads of all eight major film studios are Jews, former ADL director [Abraham Foxman says](#) that many executives “happen to be Jewish.” An astonishingly disproportionate number of leading political donors, business leaders, and radical activists of every stripe also happen to be Jewish. Since merely observing these facts can trigger accusations of anti-Semitism, social scientists have been reluctant to take the issue of Jewish influence head on. The result is that not provided an adequate explanation for the phenomenon, and this created a void for cranks to fill.



certainly not new. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first published in 1903, purports to be the minutes of a meeting of Jewish leaders planning to destroy and take over gentile societies for the benefit of Jews. Despite being a preposterous forgery—much of it plagiarized from an anti-Napoleon III novel from 1864—the *Protocols* was widely taken as authentic for decades, and even now it remains influential in some parts of the world. While only the most unsophisticated anti-Semites take the *Protocols* seriously today, a new version of the same theory has emerged, this time with the trappings of legitimate scholarship, in the work of Kevin MacDonald.

Jewish ‘group evolutionary strategy’

Kevin MacDonald is a now-retired professor of psychology at California State University, Long Beach. His research focused on developmental and evolutionary psychology, and he published in respectable academic journals. In 1995 he was elected to serve a six-year term as Secretary-Archivist and as a member of the Executive Council of the Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES), the primary organization representing evolutionary psychology.

Between 1994 and 1998, he published three books arguing that Judaism is a “group evolutionary strategy.” According to MacDonald, Jews evolved both genetic and cultural adaptations to preserve their own ethnic interests at the expense of gentiles. The most important genetic adaptations are high intelligence and ethnocentrism. The cultural adaptations include those aspects of Judaism that allow for a high degree of communal control and promote in-group altruism. In the most influential book in his trilogy, *The Culture of Critique*, MacDonald argues that in order to pursue their group evolutionary strategy, intelligent and ethnocentric Jews designed some of the most influential twentieth-century political and scientific movements in order to undermine gentile society and strengthen the position of Jews. MacDonald specifically blames Jews for the rise of leftism:

Individuals who strongly identified as Jews have been the main motivating force behind several highly influential intellectual movements that have simultaneously subjected gentile culture to radical criticism and allowed for the continuity of Jewish identification. Together these movements comprise the intellectual and political left in this century, and they are the direct intellectual ancestors of current leftist intellectual and political movements, particularly postmodernism and multiculturalism.

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MacDonald’s books went virtually unnoticed by the evolutionary psychology community until the year 2000. In 2000, he testified on behalf of holocaust-denier David Irving to support Irving’s libel lawsuit against some of his critics, and this attracted some media attention. Most evolutionary psychologists (with a few notable exceptions) rejected MacDonald’s work as not meeting the minimum standards to warrant a scholarly response. Shunned by mainstream academia, MacDonald took his work directly to the public, giving interviews and writing popular articles in outlets such as *The Occidental Quarterly* and *The Occidental Observer*

. (He is currently the editor of both those magazines.) His followers saw him as a brave truth teller who was persecuted by academia for being politically incorrect. They interpreted the absence of a scholarly rebuttal as evidence that his work was unassailable.

It seemed to me that, after all these years, it was time to give MacDonald a fair hearing. Whether or not he met the threshold to merit scholarly attention was a moot issue. Unofficial leader of the alt-right Richard Spencer says that MacDonald “may be the most essential man in our movement in terms of thought leader[ship].” As the alt-right has grown, so has MacDonald’s influence. If his work was directly or indirectly influencing possibly millions of people, that was a good enough reason to take it seriously. And it’s theoretically possible that he could have some legitimate but politically incorrect ideas that had been overlooked by mainstream academics.



Kevin MacDonald

Analyzing MacDonald’s claims

I proposed the “default hypothesis” to explain Jewish overrepresentation. The fact that Ashkenazi Jews have a mean IQ of around 110 is well established. ([Gregory Cochran, Jason Hardy, and Henry Harpending make a strong case](#) that this is due to selection on Jews during the Middle Ages for the ability to make a living in white-collar occupations.) According to the default hypothesis, *Jews tend to be overrepresented in all intellectual, political, and scientific movements that are not overtly anti-Semitic* primarily because of their high IQ, secondarily because they are located in major urban centers where all the action happens. Being the leader of an intellectual movement is cognitively demanding, so Jews, as a relatively intelligent, urban-based population, will produce more leaders. Because many right-wing movements in the twentieth century have been overtly anti-Semitic, Jewish political involvement has skewed left, but Jews are still overrepresented among the leaders of all sorts of *non-overtly anti-Semitic* right-wing movements.

The default hypothesis and MacDonald's Judaism-as-a-group-evolutionary-strategy theory make very different predictions. If the former is correct, Jews should also be overrepresented in the leadership of *opposing* movements. If the latter is correct, Jews should tend to cluster around those movements that actually support Jewish ethnic interests. I carefully examined *The Culture of Critique* to see whether MacDonald's evidence is more consistent with his or with the default hypothesis.

As I studied *The Culture of Critique*, it became clear that there were serious problems with MacDonald's scholarship. When I checked his references, I often found that there was nothing in the original source to support his claims. When he identified movements as being controlled by Jews, there were often plenty of gentiles in leadership positions as well, and sometimes they seemed even more influential than the Jews. MacDonald explained this by saying that the gentiles had been recruited in order to conceal the fact that the movement itself was dominated by Jews. But with the exception of Carl Jung and psychoanalysis, there was virtually never any evidence for this. When I looked at MacDonald's examples of leaders of Jewish intellectual movements, I found that the *majority* of them did not come close to conforming to his paradigm of a Jewish activist who promotes chaos and multiculturalism for gentiles while promoting the opposite for Jews. Almost all the Jews MacDonald says advocated multiculturalism in order to subvert gentiles advocated multiculturalism for Jews and Israel, too—there was no evidence that they were anything more than consistent leftists.

I found that MacDonald's portrayal of intellectual history was grossly tendentious. He made almost no mention of [radical, gentile-led movements that had all the properties he associated with Jewish movements](#), and which were the real "intellectual ancestors of current leftist intellectual and political movements." Rousseau, the intellectual leaders of the French Revolution, the French existentialists, the Italian anarchists—these gentiles are all ignored in *The Culture of Critique*, and the reader gets the absurd impression that Europeans lived in happy "hierarchic harmony" for thousands of years until the Jews came along.

Most significantly, I found that Jews were clearly overrepresented in the leadership of violently opposing political movements—a fact that favors the default hypothesis. Although Jews have been overrepresented among prominent blank-slatists and anti-hereditarians (e.g., Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Lewontin, Ashley Montagu), they have also been some of the most prominent defenders of the concept of human nature and hereditarianism (e.g., Steven Pinker, Jonathan Haidt, Hans Eysenck, Richard Herrnstein). Many of the most important supporters of Israel are obviously Jewish, but some of the biggest critics of Israel are also Jewish (e.g., Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, Judith Butler). Many Jews have promoted the "words are violence" argument to restrict free speech. But the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)—the most influential organization that defends free speech—was founded by two Jews (Alan Charles Kors and Harvey A. Silverglate).

Psychoanalysis was led by Jews, but its most important opponents were Jews (e.g., Karl Popper, Hans Eysenck, Aaron Beck). Many leading opponents of white nationalism are Jewish. But at the first conference of the one major *non*-anti-Semitic white nationalist organization—American Renaissance—in 1994, four-out-of-ten of the invited speakers were Jews (including an orthodox rabbi). Jews are leading socialists, but also leading libertarians (Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, Robert Nozick, Ayn Rand,

etc.). And so it is with just about every movement discussed in *The Culture of Critique*.

MacDonald responds

[I published these observations in the journal *Human Nature*.](#) MacDonald released a response to me, in which—although he won't admit it—he changed his theory. He now says that it doesn't matter if Jews are on the opposite side of every issue, it only matters which side has more influence. He writes: "the important question...is not counting heads...but in determining where the influence lies." Therefore, even though some of the most important leaders of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement are Jews, it doesn't matter because the BDS movement hasn't been successful. But whether a political movement is ultimately successful is to a large extent a matter of luck. If, as far as we can tell, Jews are just about equally likely to be leaders in all non-overtly anti-Semitic movements, this obviously favors the default hypothesis.

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MacDonald also now says that if Jews support opposing

movements, it is because the Jewish community has “important diversity of viewpoint” concerning what is in the best interests of Jews. But he never explains why Jews do not tend to disproportionately back those movements that really do support Jewish interests. In *The Culture of Critique* he repeatedly indicates that Israel is of central importance to Jewish ethnic interests. He now says that the fact that many Jews viciously oppose Israel presents no challenge for his theory because anti-Israel Jews are acting on what they *perceive* to be their ethnic interests. He has very little evidence to support this claim besides his unsupported assumption that everything Jews do must be motivated by their drive to promote Jewish interests.

There are many other facts that seem to clearly contradict the predictions of MacDonald’s theory, though he attempts to [spin them as actually supporting evidence](#). For example, [I pointed out](#) that the Jews who participated in liberal movements—namely, the secular ones—have an intermarriage rate upwards of seventy percent. This would seem to cast doubt on the claim that they are engaged in a “group evolutionary strategy.” MacDonald responded that the high intermarriage rate *is* part of the strategy because

intermarriage and conversion have benefits for the Jewish community..., including the advantages of marrying into prominent non-Jewish familiars, such as the families of presidents Trump and Clinton....Some authors have suggested that relatively high rates of intermarriage, low fertility, and the various levels of Jewish identification in the modern Western societies are highly functional for Judaism because they serve as a bridge to the surrounding culture

because of family ties with non-Jews.

This is, as philosophers of science say, not exactly an “inference to the best explanation.” Rather, as Imre Lakatos said, weakening one’s theory in the face of difficulties but without making new risky predictions is a sign of “methodological degeneration.”

Understanding the attractiveness of anti-Jewish intellectualism

Now the question is why MacDonald’s ideas are attractive to so many people, including some academics and scientifically literate laypeople. One reason why his work has been successful is the same reason the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was successful. It’s appealing to pin the blame for one’s problems on an outgroup, and particularly easy when the outgroup is a conspicuously successful minority. Ethnic Chinese and Indians have elicited similar negative reactions in Southeast Asia and Africa, respectively. Since Jews in the West have been influential not only in business but also in politics, art, and science, it is not surprising that this would sometimes elicit an especially intense reaction.

[Screen Shot at PM](#)

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The other reason why MacDonald has been successful in appealing to laypeople is that the intellectual establishment has lost all credibility when it comes to judging controversial issues. As noted, it is often considered politically incorrect even to acknowledge the reality of Jewish influence. It is even more politically incorrect to acknowledge that groups can differ from each other. In a book published last month, [Harvard geneticist David Reich writes](#):

When asked about the possibility of biological differences among human populations, we [mainstream scientists] have tended to obfuscate, making mathematical statements in the spirit of Richard Lewontin about the average difference between individuals from within any one population being around six times greater than the average difference between populations....But this carefully worded formulation is deliberately masking the possibility of substantial average differences in biological traits across populations.

This is old news to MacDonald’s followers. Many people—including everyone on the alt-right—know that establishment scientists have “deliberately mask[ed]” the possibility of group differences between both races and the sexes [for moral/political reasons](#). When the same establishment figures say that

MacDonald is discredited, a large number of people may assume that this is just another noble lie. As long as mainstream scientists and intellectuals continue to flagrantly misrepresent the facts about group differences, and the possibility of group differences, there will be a place for pseudoscience to flourish under the guise of dangerous truth.

Nathan Cofnas is a graduate student in the philosophy of biology at the University of Oxford.
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