

Red Skull or Intellectual Guru: Who Exactly Is Dr. Jordan Peterson

Love him or hate him, Dr. Jordan B. Peterson has taken social media by storm and sells out arenas around the world. He has been heralded as a great philosopher on par with Socrates and Plato. He has also been portrayed as Red Skull, a magical Nazi supervillain in the new Captain America film. That is a serious portrayal to put on a man who has never killed someone let alone 6 million people (about twice the population of Arkansas). How does one man elicit such drastic responses from opposite sides of the coin? Moreover, how does a simple psychology professor who sounds like Kermit the Frog become one of the internet's biggest sensations? There are over 500 hours of his collective lectures to university students spanning decades plus thousands of hours of interviews, podcasts, speeches and the like posted on YouTube. Surely the answer to who is Dr. Jordan Peterson must be found there. Peterson is far different from the monster that his opponents portray him as.

Let us start with the basics, who is Dr. Peterson? According to Peterson's website, some of his credentials are the following.

Dr. Jordan B. Peterson is a clinical psychologist and professor emeritus at the University of Toronto. From 1993 to 1998 he served as Assistant and then [as] associate professor of psychology at Harvard. He spent fifteen years writing *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief* (1999; released in June 2018 as a now bestselling author-read audiobook).

The website goes on to say that Dr. Peterson grew up in Northern Alberta, Canada, and spent many years in tough jobs and a tough land. The list of jobs, awards, and accomplishments is quite impressive and interesting. It also lists among his many awards the writing of 3 *New York Times* bestselling books. Peterson has also published over 100 peer-reviewed papers in

scientific journals around the world that have advanced “the modern understanding of alcoholism, antisocial behavior, play, emotion, creativity, competence and personality” (Peterson). How can a Dr. of Psychology be portrayed so heinously? What has he said that has garnered such a reaction?

Peterson is notoriously famous for his opposition to Canadian bill C-16 in which the Canadian Parliament made it illegal to, backed by the full force of the Canadian judicial system, “misgender” someone and likens it to actual violence punishable by fines and or jail time. Peterson’s opponents on social media such as Twitter and Reddit and the mainstream media such as the *New York Times* have called him homophobic, transphobic, and xenophobic for his opposition to this law. In reality, what he is opposed to is coercion and compulsion of speech. He makes the valid argument that compelling speech backed by the force of the federal government breaks long-standing legal precedents and customs dating back to English Common law, which dates back hundreds of years. He even said when asked if someone asked to be referred to as a preferred pronoun that “I would accommodate them if I viewed their request and intention as in effect genuine” (Peterson). Is everything he says and does controversial, or does he hold any beliefs worth listening to?

For one to understand the reaction to Dr. Peterson one must first examine the beliefs held by Dr. Peterson. What does he believe? Is he instructing young men to commit violence against the transgender community, as claimed by Twitter when they suspended Dr. Peterson’s account for that very reason, simply because he referred to an actor/actress by a name that was deemed offensive? It was not deemed offensive by the supposed “Offended” party. No, it was deemed offensive by Twitter and then CEO Parag Agarwal.

From the vast research collected for this paper, Peterson's beliefs can be summarized as classical Judeo-Christian despite his scientific occupation. For most of his life, Peterson was an atheist and scientist. After conversing with and learning from theologians Peterson gained a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and has even come to know and love the Christian God. His moral views are pro-family, pro-responsibility for one's actions, and pro-growth of the human soul within a person. After all rule number 2 in his book *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* is "Treat Yourself like Someone You are Responsible for Helping." This is his interpretation of "The Golden Rule" but in this case goes far deeper than "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." His message is one of logos and ethos. His pathos is evident in interviews where he gets quite emotional about being portrayed as a Nazi or conversely hearing tales of those he has helped escape the darkness of their insurmountable suffering. A Reddit page [r/JordanPetersonLetters](#) (various) is filled with over 290 thousand letters to Dr. Peterson about the effect he has had on their lives. The letters are too numerous to list, and all contain a similar message. The authors of the given letters are in a far better position in the world due to the changes they made in their lives based on lectures from Dr. Peterson. The letters are as touching and tragic as they are uplifting and human. A lot of the letters come from young men who were on the verge of suicide before encountering Dr. Peterson.

The New York Times said in an editorial that Peterson is "The custodian of the Patriarchy." This argument stems from the fact that Dr. Peterson's audience is comprised of younger white men. Their claim and the claim of all who regurgitate this fallacy is predicated on Dr. Peterson's talks of hierarchies, which Peterson claims are the results of millions of years of neurobiological evolution descending from the humble lobster. He describes the hierarchy of the

lobster and its complexities based on competence rather than arbitrary gender-based conditions that make up the “Patriarchy.”

This accusation is not a one-off incident. In an interview with Cathy Newman titled *Jordan Peterson debate on the gender pay gap, campus protests, and postmodernism* Newman constantly tries to twist Dr. Peterson’s words into beliefs that are shockingly wrong. He plays along with this charade for quite a while until Cathy Newman slips up and runs out of linguistic Twister skills and Peterson catches her in one of the best “gotcha” moments found on YouTube. She spends about 15 minutes badgering Peterson about his offensiveness, while he calmly corrects the mischaracterization before turning the tables on her asking her why it is okay for her to use her 1st amendment right to risk offending him (if he is not allowed to be offensive regarding the rights of transgendered individuals). Her response or lack thereof is quite telling as she is rendered speechless. This interaction became so famous that it was soon the subject of numerous memes lambasting the journalist. Does that make Dr. Peterson the bad guy for defending himself? He himself stated in a later interview that he would like to discuss the incident with Newman in person to assure her that there are no hard feelings and to further discuss the matter with her. He even directed his supporters to back off from the vitriol towards her as it was unbecoming of his teachings.

The video that first brought Dr. Peterson into public view can still be viewed on YouTube. It is titled exactly that, “The Video That Made Jordan Peterson Famous” (Ariel). In it, Peterson is shown outside of a speaking engagement conversing with fans and students as that part is not made entirely clear. Seconds into the video you can hear a screeching voice accosting Peterson about his alleged support for Nazis attending his lectures. He immediately responds by disavowing the entire Nazi ideology and calls them reprehensible and regrettable that they attend

his lectures, pointing out he does not have control over who buys tickets to his lectures. This unhinged diatribe from the unseen woman lasts a good few minutes. Peterson does not do what most celebrities do when faced with such vile and vitriol and apologize. Instead, Peterson goes on the journey of calmly dismantling her argument by repeatedly denouncing the Nazis that had attended one of his public lectures. Strike one against his critics that liken him to Hitler.

Part of the reason Dr. Peterson's supporters are mostly white males can be pinned at least in part to the format he chooses for his lectures. Peterson has always filmed his lectures for his students. Once YouTube came along, it provided a place for him to upload and self-publish his lectures for later use by his students. According to an article titled "YouTube Demographics & Data to Know in 2022 [+ Generational Patterns]", the demographic of the typical YouTube viewer is male between 18-44. The number is staggering, something like 80% of YouTube viewers falls in this category. The issue of the racial breakdown of Peterson's and by extension YouTube's viewership is not immediately clear, but shows no indication of an overt racial bias in favor of Caucasians either by choice or by circumstance. A poll was conducted as research for this paper, and it showed the following breakdowns.

Table 1

Gender Vs Age

Age	Male	Female	Total
Under 18	3	10	13
19-24	1	1	2
25-34	0	0	0

Age	Male	Female	Total
35-44	2	6	8
45-54	0	1	1
55+	3	3	6
Totals	9	21	30

Source: Survey conducted randomly with a sample size of 31 by: Joseph Stem

a. This table shows the age groups and gender of the sample. Sample was pulled from a survey of random people across various platforms

Fig. 1. Information from Table 1 in bar graph

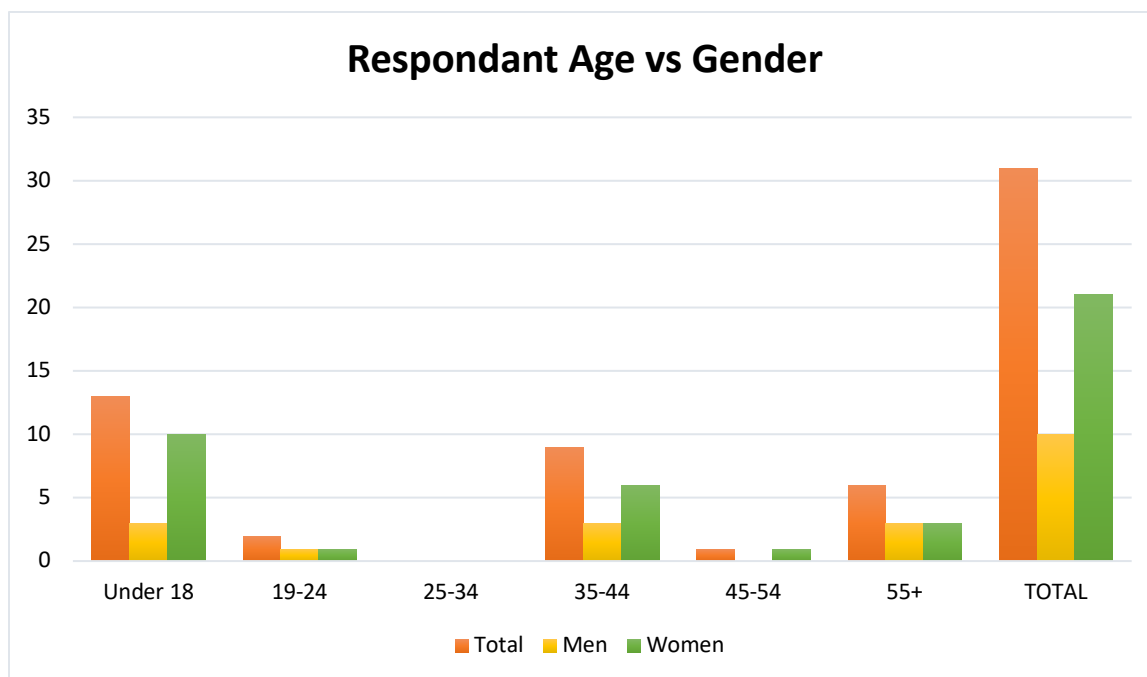


Fig. 2 Depicts those who have heard of Dr. Peterson vs those who have not

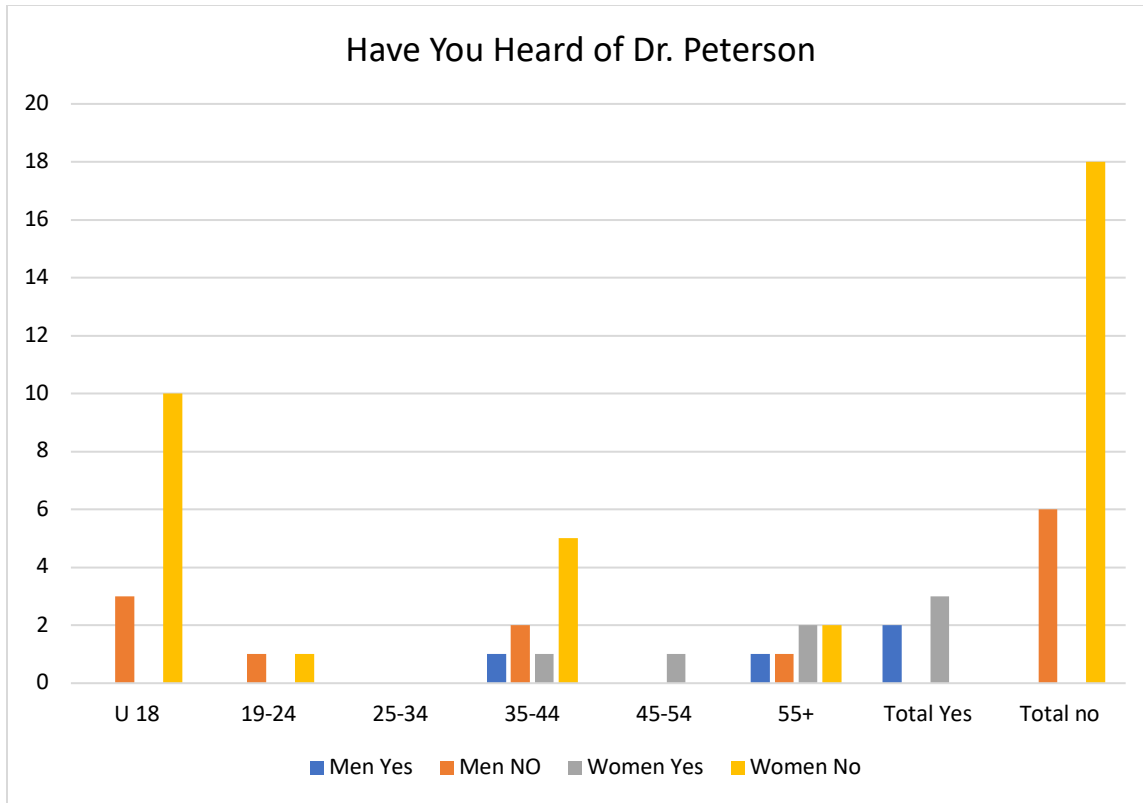
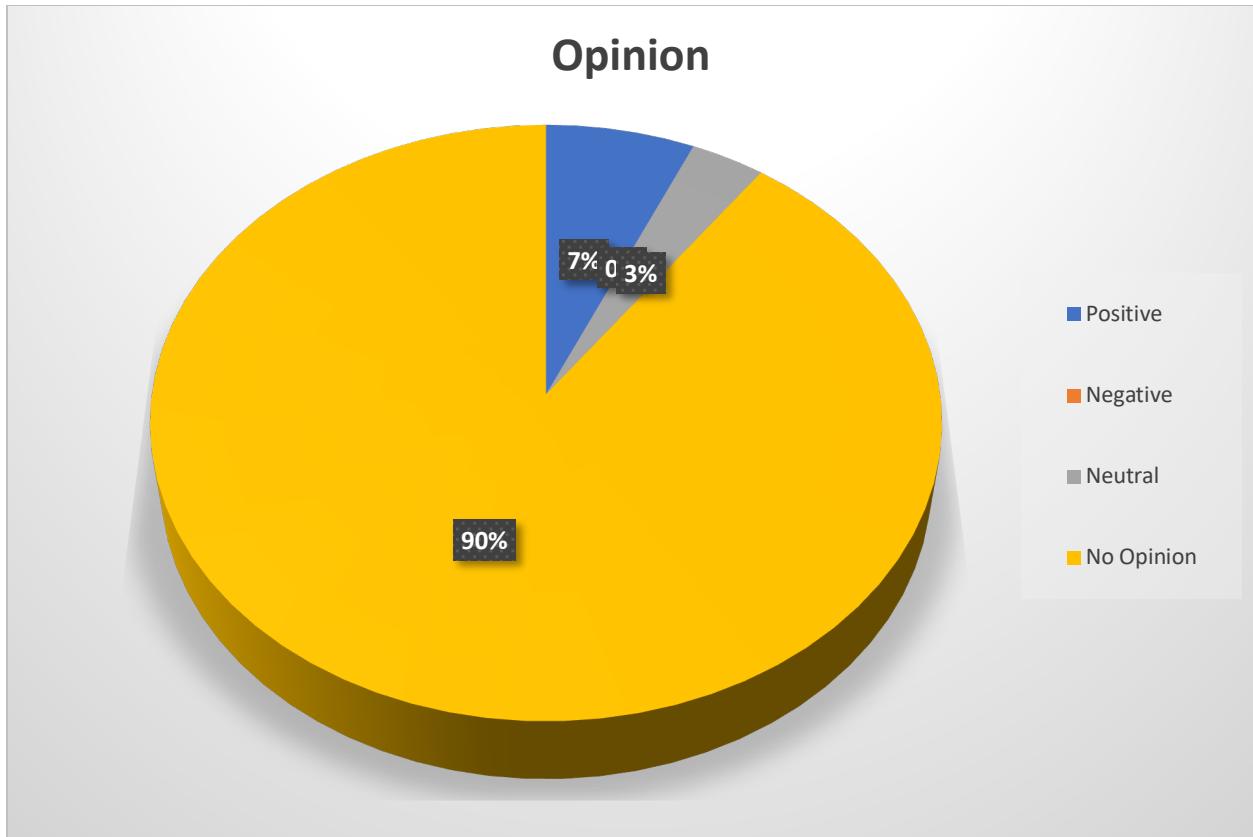
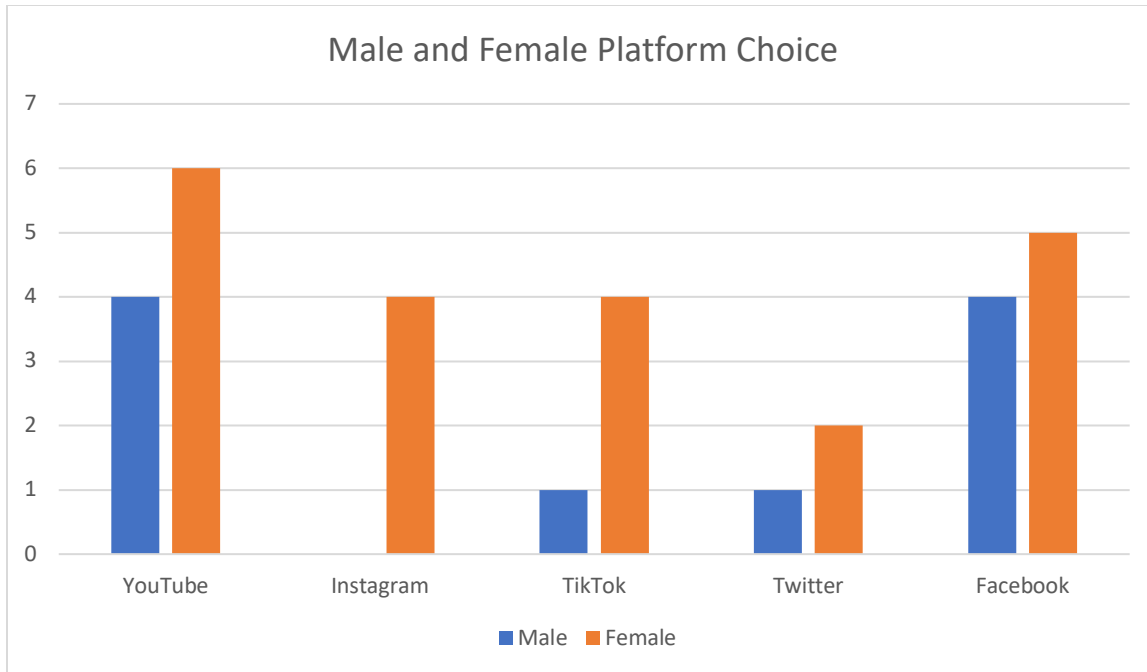


Fig. 3 Pie chart depicting overall opinion of Dr. Peterson



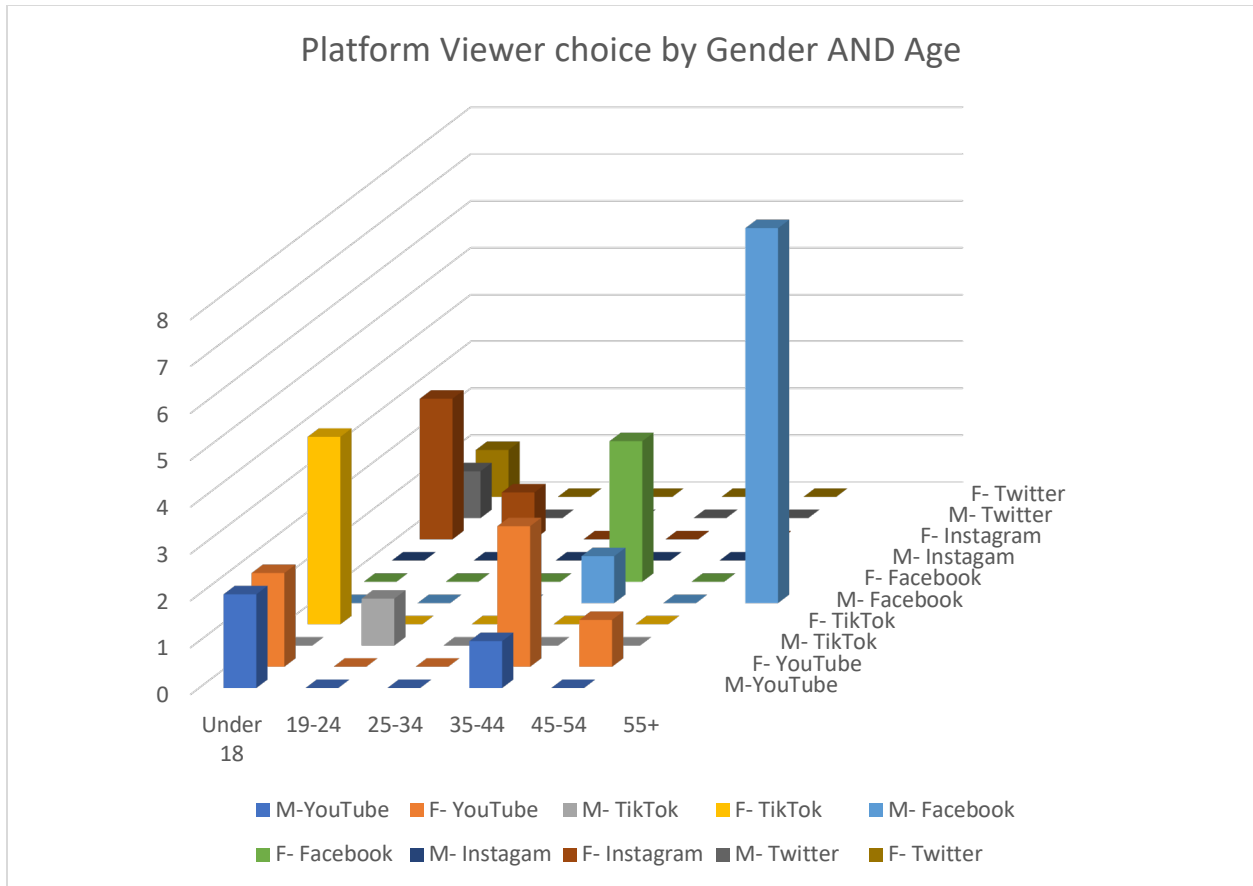
- a. Given the substantial portion of the sample who have never heard of Dr. Peterson 90% have no opinion of him.

Fig 4. Respondent's choice of video platform YouTube vs Others

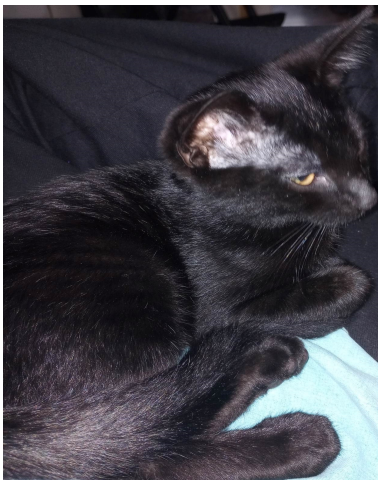


a. Shows preference by gender of platform choice.

Fig. 5. Platform Viewer by Gender and Age



- a. This chart suggests a wide range of platform choices. Overwhelmingly the 55+ age group Fig. 6. Shows a cat named Dr. Peterson. Shocking that someone would name a pet after a clinical psychologist



What should a person know about Dr. Peterson that might change their hateful mental image of a man who claims to care deeply about individuals and society as a whole? Luckily, a YouTube channel called Elite Psychology published a video on just such a subject. Titled *If You Hate Jordan Peterson Watch This Video: It Will Change Your Mind*. In this emotional video, Peterson is brought to tears numerous times due to questions posed by his audience about suicide, addiction, and depression. It is evident that Peterson is deeply affected by his connection to his audience. This video is pieced together from various clips of lectures and interviews. One interviewer asks Dr. Peterson “What is your endgame? To which he replies, “I want to help as many individuals as possible, become more courageous, more truthful, and more engaged in the pursuit of individual, familial, and social harmony” (Peterson). This does not sound like the ethos of a xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic misogynist. It sounds more like a wise, mature, scholar who wants the best for people whether they are his friends and family or his opposition. There is more to Peterson than his emotional connection to clients and fans. Dr. Peterson is a brilliant intellect as well.

In September of 2022, Dr. Peterson authored a paper called *Jordan Peterson’s Vision for Conservatives: Part 1*”. In the first opening statement, Peterson states “It is an attempt to ... outline a positive vision for the future” (Peterson) He also goes on to say that “I have to read this, as it is pushing the limits of my cognitive ability.” (Peterson). It truly is on another academic level than that of the average academic-minded person. While researching this paper multiple attempts were made to comprehend the profundity of Peterson’s words. Among the various points of the paper, the standout sections are humility, liberty, responsibility, and merit. There are many more topics covered as it is a very lengthy paper and an extremely heavy lift academically. Peterson goes on to explain the canonical values common to western society. If

one can parse the academic jargon, one would find a meaningful conversation about western culture and the links and causality that binds it together. Peterson truly shows the depth and breadth of his knowledge of humanity and society at large. Nowhere in this paper does Peterson remotely resemble the caricature that his opponents paint of him.

After all this, who is Dr. Peterson? Is he an unhinged racist or is he a thoughtful academic? Peterson is so much more than an academic professor. Dr. Peterson is a brilliant psychologist, clinician, professor, orator, businessman, and family man. His wisdom and profundity deserve to be shared the world over and is a great benefit to society. Dr. Peterson does not deserve the hate and vitriol he receives from his opponents. The whole of humanity should listen to his words.

Works Cited

Beckner, Stephen. "Thought Crimes: Jordan Peterson and the Meaning of Life." *Skeptic Magazine*. Skeptics Society 2018 Vol. 23 Number 3. pp. 26-34 EBSCO database

<https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&sid=525b3cab-ceed-49bd-943d-5852b311057a%40redis>

Accessed 11 Nov. 2022

"If You Hate Jordan Peterson Watch This Video: It Will Change Your Mind." YouTube.com

Uploaded By: *Elite Psychology*. 2018 https://www.youtube.co/watch?v=eMo_20J1J1Y

"Jordan Peterson debate on the gender pay gap, campus protests, and postmodernism"

YouTube.com, uploaded by: Channel 4 News 16 Jan. 2018,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMcjxSThD54with Dr. Peterson>

"Jordan Peterson's Vision for Conservatives: Part 1." YouTube.com, Uploaded By: Jordan B.

Peterson, 17 Sep 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2yHGcmhbEk&t=398s>

Matthew, Elizabeth Grace. "Jordan Peterson Wants You to Grow Up." *America Magazine*,

America Press Inc. July 2021 Vol. 225 no. 1. pp.46.49 EBSCO,

<https://web.s.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=10e0101a-77ff-4d5d-a265-24765d37458c%40redis>

Accessed 11 Nov 2022.

Needle, Flori, YouTube Demographics & Data to Know in 2022 [+ Generational

Patterns]. Blog.Hubspot. Hubspot Inc. 5 Aug2022

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/youtube-demographics#age-demographics>

Peterson, Dr. Jordan B, Owner. *Jordan Peterson*. Dr. Jordan B. Peterson 2022.

<https://www.jordanbpeterson.com/>

“The Simple Reason 90% of Men Are Lost in Life: Jordan Peterson” *YouTube.com*, Uploaded

By: The Motive, 19 Oct 2019 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iI_r2U8jX0

“The Video That Made Jordan Peterson Famous.” *YouTube*, Uploaded by: Ariel View 16 Aug

2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM7jpTJWPkg>

Various. “*Letters.*” *Reddit.com*, Reddit Inc. 113 Jul 2014

https://new.reddit.com/r/JordanPeterson/search?sort=new&restrict_sr=on&q=flair

[%3ALetter](#)