

The Bates Motel World We Are Living In

The Interpersonal Affective Dysregulation of Contemporary Woke Progressive Activists

J.D. Haltigan

Date: May 23, 2023

URL: <https://www.jdhaltigan.com/p/the-bates-motel-world-we-are-living>



For those not familiar with the series, Bates Motel was a 5-season series that aired on the A&E network from 2013-2017. You can Google it and read about the creative plot and cast—I won't take time for that here. What I want to communicate is how well the series, and more specifically the relationship between Norma and Norman Bates, characterizes the interpersonal dynamics of Wokeists and radical progressivists alike. I have written about this in a [prior essay](#), but I think one thing that the Bates Motel analog does is highlight the particular emotionally dysregulated, borderline aspect of how these individuals relate to and attempt to control others through guilt, emotional blackmail, and threats of abandonment—either real or perceived (e.g., suicide).

We see this behavioral strategy deployed most conspicuously by gender-activist ideologues who claim that withholding of ‘gender affirming’ care will result in increased suicides among gender-confused youth or that such legislation represents a ‘genocide’ against trans youth. Similar tactics are deployed by radical environmentalists who make exaggerated and emotionally wrought claims of mass extinction or nebulous physical harms if climate and environmental concerns are not immediately addressed. ‘Climate catastrophization’ is used as the tactic to motivate individual and societal action. Their thetic-performative, hyperbolic, and grandiose displays of activism reflect a cataclysmic emotional state, untethered from rationality or equipoise.





At this point, it is worth pointing out how this behavioral strategy of affective and emotional manipulation resembles what is referred to as 'preoccupied' or 'angry' discourse as reflected during the recounting of early experiences with caregiving figures by individuals judged as "Preoccupied" on the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). The AAI is a gold-standard interview assessment used in developmental psychology research to assess individuals' current state of mind with respect to attachment. For more on the AAI—and importantly *how it is different from more commonly known self-report measures of adult romantic attachment*—you can check out the [Wikipedia page](#) on attachment measures as a starting point. There are also some publicly available sources of information from [Stony Brook University](#) on the AAI coding protocol if you are interested in further research on this measure.

In describing AAI interview transcripts judged preoccupied, the training manual (Version 7.1) notes:

Texts are placed in this category when the speaker appears preoccupied with early attachments or attachment-related experiences in a way which ultimately interferes with the maintenance of collaborative conversation—specifically via confusing, irrelevant, and/or excessive lengthy discussions. Some preoccupied texts (those sub-classified as E1 [Passive]) feature chiefly 'passive' speech, while the speaker may also seem to endorse or accept early parenting experiences which the reader, in contrast, sees as negative. In texts sub-classed as E2 [Angry/conflicted], on the other hand, speakers usually appear to the reader to be internally consistent regarding the qualities of their parenting (i.e., the reader may 'agree' with the presentation of

negative aspects of the speaker's early experiences). However, the discussion of feelings, experiences, and relationships in E2 texts is at times confusing, irrelevant, and/or overly extensive. *In addition, while seeming angry and unconvincingly authoritative, speakers in this latter sub-category sometimes seem simultaneously to be subtly seeking the interviewer's agreement [italics added by myself here].* In both E1 and E2 texts, the sense of personal identity appears to remain, for differing reasons, closely associated with the relationship with one or both parents. In a third (E3 [Fearfully preoccupied by traumatic events] sub-category, (rare in low-risk samples) the speaker appears preoccupied by frightening experiences which 'invade' the text. That is, frightening experiences are described or referenced in contexts irrelevant to the question at hand.

In all three sub-categorizations, then, we see combinations of passive or angry discourse recounting early experiences with caregivers, inchoate personal identities, and in some cases fearful or frightening experiences which overwhelmingly characterize discourse surrounding early caregiving figures. Such discourse is highly reminiscent of the various affective configurations that individuals with elevated borderline personality psychopathology display in their interpersonal relations with significant others, especially caregiving figures or romantic partners.

Scaling this individual phenomenon to the level of society, we are able to more clearly understand the macrosocial psychopathology of Woke progressive activism and why its implementation is pernicious and destabilizing for healthy societal functioning. Setting aside the relative contributions of biology or environmental influences on this individual disturbance in behavior and interpersonal affect, the importance of correctly and accurately associating this macrosocial psychopathology to its individual origins is of critical importance. In so doing, politicians, mental health professionals, and private citizens are better armed with the ability to protect and preserve healthy civic life and functioning for everyone.