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McAleer, Tony. (2019). The Cure for Hate: A Former White Supremacist's Journey from Violent Extremism to Radical Compassion. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.

Reviewed by: Keeyn Emmett, MacEwan University

Tony McAleer's book, "The Cure for Hate," is a memoir that dives into the candid life of reformed white supremacists. McAleer's writing showcases the varied emotions he experienced, such as guilt, shame, yearning to be accepted, control, power, and finally, forgiveness and love. McAleer explains throughout the book how he has searched for love and acceptance his whole life but never received it growing up and searched in all the wrong places. He describes in detail how your childhood traumas can affect the rest of your life. McAleer gives multiple examples of this in his writing by showing his childhood trauma that was indirectly caused by his father's generational trauma later in the book. This trauma carried with him throughout his young adult life and into various relationships he engaged in, whether it was platonic or romantic. Therefore, growing up, he never felt love or acceptance, only shame and no control. Hence, when he found the white supremacist group, he found the acceptance and power he craved, in the white supremacist group.

One of the first themes seen is the recurring idea of loss of control and power throughout the book's first half from the author's point of view. McAleer puts into words the experience of having your world shattered from being a happy, innocent child to the loss of control from his father's betrayal. After his father's affair, he went from having excellent marks in school to having

all failing marks. Due to his steep drop in marks, the school called his parents to discuss punishment, to which his father permitted the Christian Brothers to beat him. The betrayal McAleer describes in the book how he was powerless to change his circumstances (p. 31) because the people that he trusted most caused him to spiral more and felt the control slipping from his grasp because these were the people who were supposed to love and protect him and in turn, they did the opposite. Therefore, this loss of control in his youth caused him to act out and put others down to regain control over his life.

As McAleer transitions into the middle of the book, he explains the draw of being a part of such an extremist group. “In a world where young men are looking to find their place and sense of who they were, this heady combination laid out a simple yet brutal blueprint of what a man should look like and be rewarded for” (p. 93). Therefore, McAleer found he did not need to go out into the world to find a socially accepted outlet to gain control in his life again because the white supremacist group had an outlet for his anger and need for control readily. He just needed to follow the ideology.

Another theme that is regularly displayed throughout the entire book is the idea of shame and guilt. At the beginning of the book, McAleer feels intense guilt and shame. The idea of shame and guilt is an enormous guiding factor for driving someone onto a darker path. Therefore, this connects to McAleer because he has experienced large amounts of shame and guilt growing up from primary school to young adulthood. Extremist groups use this vulnerability and turn it into an outlet for violence. “… shame create an environment in which such as weaponization of ideas can thrive” (p. 11).

McAleer also experiences intense shame and guilt towards the end of the book when he

tries to make amends for his past behaviour. There are various examples where he experiences these intense emotions, such as when he is in his therapy session with Dõv Barron, where he realizes he is projecting his shame onto the communities he has targeted (p. 161). For McAleer, shame was "… the alienation of the self and is often accompanied by self-loathing at a deep level, which can be projected onto others" (p. 161). This is considered a significant idea because, throughout the years, McAleer antagonized gay men, targeting Jewish people for the holocaust and anybody who was not Caucasian.

A big step for him was exclaiming his shame to Rita Hofrichter saying "… I expressed my regret and shame at my actions while sharing my journey" (p. 190), this was a difficult task for McAleer because those extreme emotions of shame and guilt were eating at him the entire time, when he tried to explain to Rita why he was involved in holocaust denial and the self-hatred for engaging in this ideology.

Lastly, McAleer recounted that he had difficulty coming to terms with the idea of love and acceptance throughout his writing. McAleer was angry and power-hungry because he had no sense of belonging, only isolation, which began to affect those relationships. "Instead, the anger and resentment I felt towards the outside world started to pervade my personal relationships and my interior life" (p. 129). McAleer acknowledges in this passage that he let those negative emotions build up and fester, which helped him ignore and mistreat those people, such as his girlfriend at the time, and put the ideology ahead of them.

We progressively see from the middle of the book to the end when McAleer slowly starts to feel total acceptance, and the first time it is seen is at the birth of his daughter. "I only knew one thing: that moment had changed me. I didn't know how or in what way, but I left that delivery

room a different person that I'd entered it" (p. 103). This new feeling and total acceptance he felt from his children kick started his journey to leave the ideology. As the story continues, we see how McAleer progressively continues to slowly leave behind the movement and put his children first and become the father he always wanted to be. "For the first time, I made a decision that put the interests of somebody else- my children- before my own" (p. 133).

Towards the end of the book, McAleer meets Dõv Baron, whom he had started one-on-one counselling with. Dõv disclosed in a therapy session that he was born Jewish; earlier in the book, we see McAleer engage in holocaust denial, which brings up the same embarrassment and shameful memories again. Instead of looking at McAleer with disgust and hate, Dõv did the complete opposite; he gave McAleer the acceptance he did not know he needed. "This is what you did. It is not who you are. I see you. I see the little boy inside of you. I see little Tony" (p. 150). This is a pivotal moment for McAleer because he made him acknowledge humanity that he did not know was within himself and showed him that if someone can forgive your past transgressions, you can learn to forgive and love yourself. He learnt the meaning of radical compassion that starts with having compassion for yourself, which in turn amplifies our capacity to serve others (p. 151).

With Dõv Barren's help, he could forgive himself and the people who took away his power and control over himself. Dõv helped McAleer come to terms with his father and look at the situation from his father's perspective. This is important because it taught him to understand other people's perspectives through the idea of compassion. McAleer learned that his father treated him that way because that is how he was raised, and he did not know any different. "Thus, my father's relationship with his father was with a provider who was never really there" (p. 175). Therefore,

his father learned to be a father from an emotionally absent parent and used this framework to raise McAleer. McAleer explained that with this understanding, he would learn and be better for his children and not continue the generational trauma onto the next generation.

McAleer, in this memoir, aims to explain the dangers of letting yourself become so plagued with negative emotions that you are vulnerable to extremist groups. The author also goes into extreme detail about the negative side of joining extremist groups and how complex the process of rehabilitation truly is. I believe this was a truly insightful book showing how emotions can fester into something ugly, and we see a perspective we would not usually see. We can get an understanding of why people engage in this ideology that we cannot entirely rationally understand. Disciplines that may benefit from reading this book are sociologists, psychologists, people who study extremist/terrorist groups, education, and social work. I recommend this read to anyone interested in childhood behaviour and those studying extremist groups' formations.