

Is Social Psychology Biased Against Republicans?

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The New Yorker:

On January 27, 2011, from a stage in the middle of the San Antonio Convention Center, Jonathan Haidt addressed the participants of the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. The topic was an ambitious one: a vision for social psychology in the year 2020. Haidt began by reviewing the field that he is best known for, moral psychology. Then he threw a curveball. He would, he told the gathering of about a thousand social-psychology professors, students, and post-docs, like some audience participation. By a show of hands, how would those present describe their political orientation? First came the liberals: a “sea of hands,” comprising about eighty per cent of the room, Haidt later recalled. Next, the centrists or moderates. Twenty hands. Next, the libertarians. Twelve hands. And last, the conservatives. Three hands.

Social psychology, Haidt went on, had an obvious problem: a lack of political diversity that was every bit as dangerous as a lack of, say, racial or religious or gender diversity. It discouraged conservative students from joining the field, and it discouraged conservative members from pursuing certain lines of argument. It also introduced bias into research questions, methodology, and, ultimately, publications. The topics that social psychologists chose to study and how they chose to study them, he argued, suffered from homogeneity. The effect was limited, Haidt was quick to point out, to areas that concerned political ideology and politicized notions, like race, gender, stereotyping, and power and inequality. “It’s not like the whole field is undercut, but when it comes to research on controversial topics, the effect is most pronounced,” he later told me. (Haidt has now put his remarks in more formal terms, complete with data, in a paper forthcoming this winter in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.)

Read the whole story: [*The New Yorker*](#)