

Is Viewpoint Diversity Inherently Good for Psychological Science?

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The Presidential Column by **Jonathan Haidt** and **Lee Jussim**, “Psychological Science and Viewpoint Diversity,” (*Observer*, February 2016) was meant to be controversial, but I question whether it was controversial in the manner intended by the authors. Haidt and Jussim showed data indicating that most psychologists have a left-leaning political orientation, and they argued that “viewpoint diversity” (which they use as a euphemism for political diversity) would be good for psychology. If they meant that having more right-leaning psychologists might provide additional opportunities for funding psychological research in conservative states, they might have had a valid argument. But they seemed to mean it in the sense that psychology, as a scientific enterprise, would benefit from having more conservative scientists. I note that “innovative,” not “conservative,” is a word usually associated with science, but this is clearly an empirical question. Is there reliable evidence that increasing the representation of political conservatism among psychologists can help scientific advancement in psychological research? Unless the authors provide substantial evidence in support of this claim, all that readers can conclude is that the authors have a personal preference for political conservatism and are trying to promote their political views under the guise of ideological diversity. It is difficult not to see the similarity with the arguments of creationists defending the teaching of Intelligent Design. I am unaware of strong evidence that political conservatism favors scientific progress, but I would certainly take Haidt and Jussim’s proposition seriously if they could provide the evidence.

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Reference

Haidt, J., & Jussim, L. (2016, February). Psychological Science and Viewpoint Diversity. *Observer*, 29, 5–7.