

# NYU Prof Laments Lack of Ideological Diversity on College Campuses

Jonathan Haidt is a social psychologist who is Professor of Ethical Leadership at NYU's Stern School of Business. I follow him with interest because he makes substantive, empirically sound claims that nearly everybody appreciates but that grind no ideological axe. He used to vote exclusively Democrat, and is "absolutely horrified by today's Republican party," but now describes himself as "non-partisan."

&lt;p&gt;Now, he's turning his attention toward the "craziness" on college campuses. In this interview with John Leo of &lt;a data-cke-saved-href="http://www.mindingthecampus.org/about/" href="https://www.intellectuالتakeout.org/%3Ca%20href%3D" http://www.mindingthecampus.org/about/"&gt;http://www.mindingthecampus.org/about/"&gt;&lt;em&gt;Minding the Campus&lt;/em&gt;&lt;/a&gt;&lt;em&gt;, &lt;/em&gt; Haidt laments the lack of ideological diversity among his social psychology colleagues, and sees it as indicative of a problem among college professors in general:&lt;/p&gt;&lt;blockquote&gt; &lt;p&gt;"I was invited by the president of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology to give a talk on the future of Social Psychology... I wanted to know if there was any political diversity in social psychology. So I asked for a show of hands. I knew it would be very lopsided. But I had no idea how much so. Roughly 80% of the thousand or so in the room self-identified as "liberal or left of center," 2% (I counted exactly 20 hands) identified as "centrist or moderate," 1% (12 hands) identified as libertarian, and, rounding to the nearest integer, zero percent (3 hands) identified as "conservative.&lt;br /&gt; &lt;br /&gt; There have been a few studies since my talk to measure the degree of

ideological diversity. My request for a show of hands was partly a rhetorical trick. We know that there were people in the audience who didn't dare or didn't want to raise their hands. Two social psychologists –&nbsp;&lt;a data-cke-saved-href="http://pps.sagepub.com/content/7/5/496" href="https://www.intellectualltakeout.org/%3Ca%20href%3D" http://pps.sagepub.com/content/7/5/496">http://pps.sagepub.com/content/7/5/496"&gt;Yoel Inbar and Joris Lammers&lt;/a&gt;&nbsp;&lt;/p>
 <em>economic&lt;/em>&nbsp;&lt;/p>
 </blockquote> <p>By "social" issues he means what Catholics sometimes call the "life" issues: those pertaining to sex, marriage, family, and death. Nobody in secular academe is "persecuted" for being <em>laissez-faire&lt;/em> about economics, but Haidt knows if anybody does how some are persecuted for having traditional views on social issues.<br /> <br /> And he gets right into the reasons why:</p>
 <blockquote> <p>"...the biggest single reason is probably self-selection. We know that liberals and conservatives have slightly different personalities on average. We know that people with a left-leaning brain are attracted to the arts, to foreign travel, to variety and diversity. So we acknowledge that if there was no discrimination at all, the field would still lean left. And that's perfectly fine with us.&nbsp;&lt;/p>
 &nbsp;&lt;/p>
 We don't give a damn about exact proportional representation. What we care about is institutionalized disconfirmation – that is, when someone says something, other people should be out there saying, 'Is that really true? Let me try to disprove it.' That is now much less likely to happen if the thing said is politically pleasing to the left."</p>
 </blockquote> <p>In the short term, there probably isn't much to be done about this

“monoculture,” for reasons Haidt explains. But its main effect has been to turn many if not most secular campuses into bastions of PC orthodoxy. That’s not “diversity.” And it can’t be good for the intellectual health of our best young people.<br /> <br /> &nbsp;</p><p>&nbsp;</p>

Now, he’s turning his attention toward the “craziness” on college campuses. In [this interview](#) with John Leo of [Minding the Campus](#), Haidt laments the lack of ideological diversity among his social psychology colleagues, and sees it as indicative of a problem among college professors in general:

*“I was invited by the president of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology to give a talk on the future of Social Psychology... I wanted to know if there was any political diversity in social psychology. So I asked for a show of hands. I knew it would be very lopsided. But I had no idea how much so. Roughly 80% of the thousand or so in the room self-identified as ‘liberal or left of center,’ 2% (I counted exactly 20 hands) identified as ‘centrist or moderate,’ 1% (12 hands) identified as libertarian, and, rounding to the nearest integer, zero percent (3 hands) identified as ‘conservative.’*

*There have been a few studies since my talk to measure the degree of ideological diversity. My request for a show of hands was partly a rhetorical trick. We know that there were people in the audience who didn’t dare or didn’t want to raise their hands. Two social psychologists – [Yoel Inbar and Joris Lammers](#) – did a more formal survey. And they found that while there is some diversity if you look at economic conservatism, there’s none if you look at views on social issues. But all that matters is the social. That’s where all the persecution happens. They found just 3-5 percent said they were right of center on social issues.”*

By “social” issues he means what Catholics sometimes call the “life” issues: those pertaining to sex, marriage, family, and death. Nobody in secular academe is “persecuted” for being *laissez-faire* about economics, but Haidt knows if anybody does how some are persecuted for having traditional views on social issues.

And he gets right into the reasons why:

*“...the biggest single reason is probably self-selection. We know that liberals and conservatives have slightly different personalities on average. We know that people with a left-leaning brain are attracted to the arts, to foreign travel, to variety and diversity. So we acknowledge that if there was no discrimination at all, the field would still lean left. And that’s perfectly fine with us. We don’t give a damn about exact proportional representation. What we care about is institutionalized disconfirmation – that is, when someone says something, other people should be out there saying, ‘Is that really true? Let me try to disprove it.’ That is now much less likely to happen if the thing said is politically pleasing to the left.”*

In the short term, there probably isn’t much to be done about this “monoculture,” for reasons Haidt explains. But its main effect has been to turn many if not most secular campuses into bastions of PC orthodoxy. That’s not “diversity.” And it can’t be good for the intellectual health of our best young people.

*Image: Mark Schierbecker/YouTube*