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Politics and Academic Values in Higher Education:

Just How Much Does Political Orientation Drive the Values of the Ivory Tower?

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Abstract

This research examined academic values among a broad sample of academics throughout the United States. The primary purpose of this research was to see if academic values are significantly related to field of expertise, political orientation, gender, and personality.

Participants, who included 177 academics, were asked to indicate how much they prioritize five academic values, including *academic rigor*, *academic freedom*, *student emotional well-being*, *social justice*, and the *advancement of knowledge*. Political orientation was related to each of these values, except for academic freedom, with political liberalism corresponding to a focus on student emotional well-being and social justice with a concomitant de-emphasis on academic rigor and knowledge advancement. Area of expertise demonstrated a similar effect, with scholars from the field of education showing a pattern similar to those who have a strong liberal political orientation and scholars in the field of business showing the converse trend. Gender had independent effects, with females having stronger emphases on student emotional well-being and social justice compared with males. Finally, in terms of personality correlates, those who scored relatively high on a measure of agreeableness demonstrated more emphasis on student emotional well-being and social justice with a de-emphasis on academic rigor and knowledge advancement. Taken together, these findings indicate that academic values are strongly related to a variety of socially and psychologically relevant variables. Further, these data provide strong evidence that values among academics vary wildly as a function of such variables as political orientation, area of expertise, gender, and personality.

Keywords: Academic Values, Social Justice, Politics, Academic Freedom, Free Speech

Academic Values in Higher Education:

The Roles of Field of Study, Personality, Gender, and Politics

In a provocative recent lecture on the campus at the State University of New York at New Paltz, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2016a) presented an argument regarding a shift in values with the academy. According to Haidt, the shift is broadly understood as a shift toward valuing *Social Justice* (or a focus on making the world a more equitable place for all) over *Truth* (or the advancement of knowledge). Haidt's thesis (articulated well in Haidt 2012), rests partly on the idea that ideologies, regardless of content, often mirror the nature of religious thinking, with a basic set of ideas that are considered sacrosanct within a particular social group.

Academia is famously liberal in terms of political ideology (see Rothman et al. 2005; Cardiff & Klein 2005), which can have cascading effects on an academic institution's infrastructure ranging from academic morality (Blunden, 2006) to whom to hire as a faculty or staff member. As such, we might expect that within an academic community, extremely left-leaning beliefs would be held as sacrosanct and that, concomitantly, alternative beliefs would be seen, in Haidt's (2016a) terminology, as *blasphemous*. For instance, a belief that taxes should be used to work toward socioeconomic equality would be seen, from this Haidt-ian vantage point, as a sacrosanct *truth* with any alternative perspectives being seen as unacceptable - or, more dramatically, as *blasphemous*.

As ideologies become relatively polarized, perspectives that deviate from the core beliefs connected with said ideologies become less and less acceptable despite the efforts to reconsider and refine university values and institutional infrastructures (in Blackley, Luzeckyj, & King, 2020). Haidt's (2012) thesis largely sees all modern human ideological systems as having substantial parallels with systems of religious beliefs. Further, this thesis conceptualizes such

social psychological processes as rooted in ancestral tribalistic psychology, which, from the evolutionary perspective (see Geher 2014), is typified by strong pressures for individuals within clans to identify strongly with in-group norms and to treat out-group norms and individuals with skepticism. These basic human social psychological processes, from this perspective, characterize our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to this day.

Academic Values and Haidt-ian Psychology

Applied to modern academia, Haidt's (2016a) thesis essentially argues that the predominant norm within the academy is one that is essentially extremely left-leaning - perhaps beyond what most would consider as *politically liberal*, in fact. In such a world, then, the basic values held by the extreme left can be expected to serve as sacrosanct values among many academics - and as the predominant values that are held on campuses across the nation.

One core ideological element of the far left is an emphasis on social justice - making the world an equal and just place for people of all kinds of backgrounds. In fact, Haidt argues that a social-justice orientation in the academy has become so dominant, that many universities now see social justice as *the* primary value of their mission statements (Preston, 2006). Such an outcome mismatches, as Haidt (2016a) points out, with the traditional basic value of academia which is essentially uncovering the true nature of phenomena in the universe - or, perhaps put more simply, the advancement of knowledge.

As Haidt's argument advances, he identifies that the goals of a social-justice orientation are often inconsistent with the goals of a knowledge-advancement orientation. In other words, if the objective is to work toward social-justice achievement, then any knowledge obtained in the scholarship that does not necessarily contribute to effect social justice is scholarship that will more likely be viewed as inadequate within the academy.

With this set up, we sought to examine the degree to which academics value social justice versus knowledge advancement as core academic values. Further, our research sought to uncover correlates of the differential focus of each of these (and some related) academic values.

Political Orientation and Academic Values

The ethos of modern academia is undoubtedly shaped by the predominant values held by the academics currently at universities. The increasing predominance of liberal and left-leaning faculty on American college campuses exists across universities of varying caliber, as well as across disciplines (Rothman et al. 2005). The idea that the academy is politically divided to a degree and is shifting away from the traditional goal of simply advancing knowledge is not unfounded or entirely unexplored. Yet, empirical investigations into this issue have oftentimes carried an inimical tone, primarily aiming to find evidence against the existence of liberal bias in academia (La Falce and Gomez 2007). This dialogue has thus manifested into somewhat of an ideological debate between conservative critics and liberal defenders of academia attempting to elucidate the true validity (or lack thereof) of the intellectual diversity movement.

Diversity has long been a highly valued component of academia. However, particularly in recent years, higher education has been suffering an increasing loss of political diversity as academia becomes more aligned with a liberal social agenda and progressive ideals (Duarte et al. 2015; Haidt 2016b). Thus, the problem that has arisen is that although diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation is valued within higher education, diversity in thought and ideas is often not (Klein et al. 2005; Maranto et al. 2005). Moreover, this lack of viewpoint diversity is inherently biased and may carry adverse consequences to the validity of research as a whole (Duarte et al., 2016).

Previous work has indeed found differences in educational values based on the political orientation of university faculty (Zipp and Fenwick 2006). Namely, conservative academics were more concerned with ensuring students are prepared for careers, and were less likely to value academic freedom, creative thinking, an appreciation of literature and the arts compared to liberal faculty. From this, the researchers concluded that the values of liberal faculty are more aligned with *traditional* goals of higher education. To a degree, this conclusion holds truth in that conservatives value career preparation, which is not a traditional value in academia; however, the values included in the study were not truly encompassing of more rudimentary values of academia.

As Haidt (2016a) argued, the primary emphasis of the ideological elements of social justice versus truth may be central to understanding the underlying differences in academic values across academics and universities. Politically left academics, perhaps being more likely to endorse social justice opposed to the objective advancement of knowledge, may also have a starkly different conceptualization of what should be valued in academia compared to more conservative academics. Little research has empirically assessed the relation between core academic values, political orientation, and additional factors (e.g., field of study, individual personality) with an entirely objective lens. Additionally, in light the current national political climate characterized by increasing political polarization and cross-party hostility, these disparate values may be amplified to an even greater degree.

Field of Study and Academic Values

Historically, academics in certain fields of study (e.g., humanities and social sciences; see Geher and Gambacorta 2010) are more likely to hold core left-leaning ideological beliefs than are academics in the natural sciences, business, and engineering (Ladd and Lipset 1975, as cited

in Rothman et al. 2005). Sociology and psychology in particular are overwhelmingly uniform in the political orientations held by academics, as the nature of these fields often align with principles of social justice (Duarte et al. 2016; Haidt 2016a; Klein and Stern 2006; McClintock et al. 1965). The identity and epistemology of these disciplines seem to fundamentally conflict with classic liberal and modern conservative ideology (see Adam 2012).

Past research has consistently demonstrated that academic disciplines are dominated by a liberal majority, albeit to varying degrees based on field of study (Maranto et al 2005a). Based on a voter registration study, the ratio of democrats to republicans across departments is estimated to be 5 to 1, whereas business schools is estimated to have a much smaller 1.3 to 5 ratio and the sociology department is estimated at a staggering 44 to 1 ratio (Cardiff and Klein 2005). Additionally, ideological diversity in both political orientation and policy views is greater in republican than democratic academics, with economics having by far the greatest variation in policy views (Klein and Stern 2005). Viewpoint diversity is an important asset to the advancement of knowledge in the academy, and, as demonstrated, it is largely shaped by political forces.

On campuses, perceived hostility against conservatives appears to perpetuate this polarization in viewpoint, as both ends of the political spectrum largely possess an “in-group/out-group” attitude (Honeycutt and Freberg 2017). Regardless of the underlying mechanisms, academics are differentially attracted to fields of study based on their political orientation. As a result, the various fields of study are likely to have different core beliefs pertaining to what *should* be valued in academia.

Personality, Gender, and Academic Values

Given the ubiquitous role of basic personality traits (Feingold 1994) and gender (Hyde 1990) on behaviors that cut across domains, these variables may also significantly relate to academic values in meaningful ways. Thus, we may expect effects of gender and personality on indices of academic values.

There is a gender gap in the moral motivation for civil engagement in adolescents, with girls driven to take action by their desire to help and give back and boys driven by the desire to act out their beliefs and values (Malin et al. 2015). Differences in moral motivation between girls and boys may provide clues as to why there is a gender gap in political ideology in adulthood. In particular, female faculty members are typically more left leaning than their male counterparts, and have been shown to become increasingly more liberal in recent years, which may have an effect on political leaning in academia since the number of female faculty members has been increasing (Zipp and Fenwick 2006). Additionally, gender differences in political orientation among academics may have an effect on academic values because of gender differences in personality traits as a result of the differing traits influencing behaviors of the individuals.

Regarding personality traits, males typically score higher than females on scales of assertiveness, and in contrast, females score higher than males on anxiety, trust and tender mindedness or nurturance (Feingold 1994). These differences in personality traits suggest possible gender differences in academic values, particularly regarding social justice and the emotional well-being of students because of gender differences in helping behaviors (Hyde 1990).

Aside from gender-by-personality interactions, it may be the case that basic personality traits, such as the Big Five dimensions (of extraversion, emotional stability, openness,

agreeableness, and conscientiousness; see Gosling et al. 2003) correlate with academic values. In particular, we predict that openness would be positively correlated with a focus on academic freedom. Given the powerful predictive nature of the Big Five regarding a host of psychological outcomes, we include a brief measure of the Big Five in this study to explore dispositional correlates of academic values.

The Current Study

To address the phenomenology of core academic values among academics, we created measures regarding how much people endorse five basic academic values (academic freedom, knowledge advancement, academic rigor, student emotional well-being, and social justice). Vis a vis the reasoning mentioned to this point, participants (who were all academics) also completed measures of political orientation, field of academic inquiry, gender, and basic personality traits (the Big Five). Our basic hypotheses were as follows:

With regard to political orientation and academic values, political liberalism will correspond to holding values of student well-being and social justice, whereas political conservatism will correspond to valuing academic freedom. We also expect field of study to predict these values, with those in Business being less likely to value social justice and student emotional well-being - and the converse being predicted for faculty in schools of education or social sciences. Of the Big Five personality traits, we predict openness to experience to be positively correlated with the value of academic freedom. Finally, we predict some gender effects, such as women being more focused on social justice and student emotional well-being compared with men.

Method

Participants

Participants were at least 18 years of age and were a current academic faculty member of any university or college within the United States took an online survey created via Qualtrics. Of the 177 participants who started this survey, about 140 completed the survey in its entirety. Thus, approximately 140 participants were analyzed for most measures. For our analyses, the N ranged from 120 to 147 and included 67 males and 68 females.

Measures and Procedure

The researchers distributed the Qualtrics survey link in various online venues. Public groups and pages that were in any way affiliated with academic faculty from a university or college within the United States were reached out to on Facebook. Additionally, the researchers disseminated the Qualtrics link to academic faculty members from various universities and colleges throughout the United States. Faculty members' email addresses were randomly selected from open faculty directories.

The first of the three measures of interest presented to the participants was the *Budget Allocation Task* (Li 2008). This method was employed to capture how each participant rated the following five academic values: academic rigor, academic freedom, social justice, emotional well-being of students, and advancing knowledge. Participants were instructed to allocate exactly 100 points across the five values. For instance, if a participant valued only emotional well-being, then the participant would allocate 100 points for that category and 0 for all the others.

The second measure presented to the participants was the *Social and Economic Conservatism Scale* (SECS; Everett 2013). This scale included 12 items for the participants to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed towards a statement of a political issue by entering

in a number ranging from 0 to 100 (0, 50, and 100, respectively, indicating Strong Disagreement, Neutral Agreement, and Strong Agreement). Examples of political statements include: *Women should have the right to have an abortion; Gun ownership should not be restricted; and Patriotism is an important value.*

The *Ten Item Personality Scale* was the final measure of interest presented to the participants (Gosling et al. 2003). The scale included 10 items that assessed the Big Five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism). On a 1 to 7 likert scale, participants indicated how much they agreed or disagreed with statements that that described them (1 indicating Disagree Strongly and 7 indicating Agree Strongly).

Results

Academic Value Allocations: Descriptive Statistics

Our initial analyses included descriptive statistics speaking to how much participants valued each of the five academic values included in this study. As found in Table 1, data are presented across all participants as well as divided by gender.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for Academic Values as a Function of Gender

		M	SD
Academic Rigor	Total:	26.02	15.47
	Males:	27.79	13.48
	Females:	24.97	13.09
Academic Freedom	Total:	19.24	12.38
	Males:	20.19	10.91
	Females:	18.68	9.16
Social Justice	Total:	12.97	10.85
	Males:	11.43*	11.77
	Females:	15.88*	9.38
Emotional Well-Being	Total:	12.48	7.85
	Males:	10.61*	7.24
	Females:	15.13*	7.38
Advancing Knowledge	Total:	25.76	12.87
	Males:	28.33	13.67
	Females:	25.19	9.81

N for Males = 67; N for Females = 68

* $p < .05$ (significant sex difference in means based on between-groups t-test)

Overall, regardless of any gender differences, academic rigor and advancing knowledge were the most highly endorsed of the core values. To address possible gender differences for each value, we conducted a between-groups t-test. There was a significant gender difference for social justice with females ($M = 15.88$, $SD = 9.38$) valuing social justice more than males ($M = 11.43$, $SD = 11.77$; $t(133) = -2.43$; , $p = .02$, $d = .97$). Similarly, females ($M = 15.13$, $SD = 7.38$) valued student emotional well-being ($t(133) = -3.59$, $p = .00$, $d = 1.47$) more than did males ($M = 10.61$, $SD = 7.24$).

Zero-Order Correlations between Political Orientation and Academic Value Allocations

This research is premised partly on the idea that academic values are correlated with political orientation. To examine this question, zero-order correlations were computed between scores on the Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS) and scores on each of the academic values.

Emphasis on academic rigor and advancing knowledge were each correlated significantly and positively with political conservatism ($r = .30, p \approx .00$; $r = .22, p \approx .00$, respectively). On the other hand, political conservatism was negatively correlated with emphasis on both social justice and the emotional well-being of students ($r = -.34, p \approx .00$; $r = -.16, p = .03$, respectively). Emphasis on Academic freedom was not correlated significantly with political conservatism.

Table 2: Correlations between Scores of Political Conservatism and Academic Values (r with p in parentheses)

	Academic Rigor	Academic Freedom	Social Justice	Well-Being	Advancing Knowledge
SECS Score (conserv.)	.30** ($p \approx .00$)	.01 ($p = .44$)	-.34** ($p \approx .00$)	-.16* ($p \approx .03$)	.22** ($p \approx .00$)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Effects of Field of Study on Academic Value Allocations

For each of the five academic values that we studied, we conducted a one-way ANCOVA with field of study as the independent variable and political orientation as a covariate. These five analyses are presented in turn.

Academic Rigor. To see if field of study affected scores on how much individuals value academic rigor (controlling for political orientation), an ANCOVA was conducted. Five levels of

field of study were included, as follows: Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Business, Education. The ANCOVA revealed no significant effect for field of study ($F(4, 120) = 1.76, p = .14; \eta_p^2 = .06$), while a significant effect of the covariate (political orientation) was obtained ($F(1, 120) = 6.91, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .06$). The means and standard deviations for this variable across levels of field of study are found in Table 3.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Academic Rigor as a Function of Field of Study

Field of Study	N	M	SD
Humanities	11	27.73	9.56
Social Sciences	54	24.70	12.16
Sciences	31	27.94	16.31
Business	13	33.85	15.57
Education	11	17.73	7.86

Interestingly, field of study was not, in and of itself, significantly related to political orientation ($F(4, 119) = 2.10, p = .09$).

Academic Freedom. To see if field of study affected scores on how much individuals value academic freedom (controlling for political orientation), an ANCOVA was conducted. Five levels of field were included, as follows: Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Business, Education. The ANCOVA revealed no significant effect for field of study ($F(4, 120) = 1.03, p = .39; \eta_p^2 = .04$). No significant effect of the covariate (political orientation) was found ($F(1, 120) = .91, p = .34; \eta_p^2 = .008$). The means and standard deviations for this variable across levels of field of study are found in Table 4.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for Academic Freedom as a Function of Field of Study

Field of Study	N	M	SD
Humanities	11	23.18	13.47
Social Sciences	54	20.09	8.93
Sciences	31	17.90	11.72
Business	13	16.54	8.75
Education	11	17.55	7.37

Social Justice. To see if field of study affected scores on how much individuals value social justice (controlling for political orientation), an ANCOVA was conducted. Five levels of field were included, as follows: Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Business, Education. The ANCOVA revealed a significant effect for field of study ($F(4, 120) = 3.79, p < .01; \eta_p^2 = .12$). A significant effect of the covariate (political orientation) was found ($F(1, 120) = 16.00, p < .01; \eta_p^2 = .12$). The means and standard deviations for this variable across levels of field of study are found in Table 5.

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations for Social Justice as a Function of Field of Study

Field of Study	N	M	SD
Humanities	11	11.36	8.67
Social Sciences	54	14.30	10.37
Sciences	31	12.23	10.81
Business	13	6.920	8.05
Education	11	25.45	14.22

Emotional Well-Being. To see if field of study affected scores on how much individuals value emotional well-being (controlling for political orientation), an ANCOVA was conducted. Five levels of field were included, as follows: Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Business, Education. The ANCOVA revealed a significant effect for field of study ($F(4, 120) = 3.01, p = .02; \eta_p^2 = .10$). A significant effect of the covariate (political orientation) was found ($F(1, 120) =$

3.01, $p = .03$; $\eta_p^2 = .04$). The means and standard deviations for this variable across levels of field of study are found in Table 6.

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for Emotional Well-Being as a Function of Field of Study

Field of Study	N	M	SD
Humanities	11	13.18	6.80
Social Sciences	54	12.54	6.90
Sciences	31	12.77	7.46
Business	13	8.85	9.82
Education	11	20.64	7.10

Advancing Knowledge. To see if field of study affected scores on how much individuals value advancing knowledge (controlling for political orientation), an ANCOVA was conducted. Five levels of field were included, as follows: Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Business, Education. The ANCOVA revealed no significant effect for field of study ($F(4, 120) = 2.39$, $p = .06$; $\eta_p^2 = .08$). No significant effect of the covariate (political orientation) was found ($F(1, 120) = 2.94$, $p = .09$; $\eta_p^2 = .025$). The means and standard deviations for this variable across levels of field of study are found in Table 7.

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviations for Advancing Knowledge as a Function of Field of Study

Field of Study	N	M	SD
Humanities	11	24.55	9.07
Social Sciences	54	26.15	9.95
Sciences	31	29.16	13.22
Business	13	33.85	16.35
Education	11	18.64	8.69

Personality Traits and Academic Values

This section is designed to examine how the Big Five personality traits relate to the five academic values examined in this research. Zero-order correlations were computed between

participants scores on the major personality traits (extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism) and each of the five academic values included in this study.

Agreeableness significantly correlated with four of the five academic values. Significant (or near-significant) positive correlations were observed between agreeableness and both social justice, ($r(135) = .17, p = .05$), and student emotional well-being, ($r(135) = .27, p \approx .00$). These findings suggest that academics who highly valued social justice and student emotional well-being were also highly agreeable. Significant (or near-significant) negative correlations emerged between agreeableness and both academic rigor, ($r(135) = -.24, p = .01$), and advancing knowledge, ($r(135) = -.17, p = .05$), suggesting academics who highly valued academic rigor and advancing knowledge were less agreeable. An additional significant negative correlation was observed between conscientiousness and social justice, ($r(136) = -.22, p = .01$), suggesting that academics who highly value social justice are less conscientious. Extraversion, openness to experiences, and neuroticism did not significantly correlate with any of the five academic values (Table 8).

Table 8: Correlations between Big Five Personality Traits and Academic Values

	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism
Values					
Academic Rigor	-.11 (136) [.20]	.10 (136) [.27]	-.24** (135) [.01]	.11 (136) [.23]	-.17 (136) [.06]
Academic Freedom	-.05 (136) [.57]	.09 (136) [.32]	.16 (135) [.07]	.05 (136) [.57]	.09 (136) [.32]
Social Justice	-.02 (136) [.82]	-.04 (136) [.66]	.17* (135) [.05]	-.22** (136) [.01]	.03 (136) [.73]
Student					
Emotional Well-Being	.05 (136) [.60]	-.03 (136) [.69]	.27** (135) [~.00]	-.15 (136) [.09]	.09 (136) [.29]
Advancing Knowledge	.10 (136) [.25]	.03 (136) [.75]	-.17* (135) [.05]	.16 (136) [.06]	.00 (136) [~1.00]

Note. * indicates $p < .05$; ** indicates $p < .01$; N is in parentheses; actual p value is in brackets.

As agreeableness was clearly related to four of the five academic values in this study, we thought it might be useful to see if this dimension was also significantly related to gender and political orientation, as these two variables also related to these values in interesting ways. A zero-order correlation between agreeableness and political orientation was not significant ($r(135) = -.08$, $p = .39$). Further, a between-groups t -test found no association between agreeableness and gender ($t(132) = 1.76$, $p = .09$; M , SD (Males) = 8.76, 1.91; M , SD (Females) = 9.29, 1.70;

Cohen's $d = .29$). Thus, agreeableness seems to be an independent factor that bears on basic academic values among academics.

Discussion

The focus of the current study was to test Haidt's (2016a) model of the relationship between political liberalism in academia and a differentiated emphasis on various academic values. Previous research has suggested that professionals in academia tend to fall further on the left side of the political spectrum (Pothman et al. 2005; Cardiff and Klein 2005), which could impact the values endorsed by universities. Our hypotheses reflect different questions related to understanding whether this differentiation in academic values truly exists at universities, and if it is associated with a liberal bias.

Our initial hypothesis stating that political liberalism would correspond to a focus on social justice and student well-being was supported. Additionally, those who were more politically right-leaning placed more of a priority on advancing knowledge and higher degrees of academic rigor. Since those who are more politically left-minded historically favor policies that are focused on ideas like equality and ending discrimination, it is possible that those ideas are reflected in the values of social justice and student well-being.

What is less easily explained, is that conservative people were more likely to favor academic ideals like advancing knowledge and academic rigor. However, one might think that all academics, regardless of political ideology, would be supportive of academic rigor and advancing knowledge, since, hypothetically, those are some of the general goals of higher education. What this points to, in a way, is less that political conservatives value these educational goals *more*, but that political liberals seem to value social justice and student well-being, potentially at the cost of putting emphasis on rigor and advancing knowledge.

In terms of area of study, we found that academic field was significantly related to a focus on social justice and a focus on student emotional well-being. More specifically, we found that those who were in the school of education were most focused on both social justice and student emotional well-being (while those in business were least likely to prioritize these values).

Our last hypothesis stated that openness to experience would be positively correlated with academic freedom. To our surprise, openness to experience was not significantly correlated with any of the academic values. However, interestingly, agreeableness was correlated with four of our five academic values. Specifically, agreeableness was positively and significantly correlated with social justice and student emotional well-being; it was negatively correlated with academic rigor and advancing knowledge. Additionally, conscientiousness was negatively correlated with social justice. The last two correlations make intuitive sense, since those who are dedicated to social justice or social well-being may be more agreeable overall. Those who are considered highly agreeable may be better or more inclined to help students with issues that are not strictly academic (such as stress or adjustment issues). These individuals may also be focused on social justice because they may believe in ideas like equality and benefitting as many people as possible.

The other two academic values, academic rigor and advancing knowledge, were negatively correlated with agreeableness, suggesting that instructors who value these two ideals may be more concerned with making sure their students are learning what they need to know, at the cost of being considered “friendly.” That being said, this correlation does not tell us anything about how much students of these professors learn, if these professors are liked or not, and how strict they are. It simply illustrates a pattern that could indicate personality differences between different kinds of professors.

Limitations

While the data that were collected went through a rigorous analysis, no study is without various limitations. Using a survey that collects self-report data frequently has the potential to produce biased or problematic data. If demand characteristics came into play, it is possible that participants produced biased responses.

It is not likely that a particular university or academic institution practically define each of the five academic values (academic rigor, academic freedom, social justice, emotional well-being of students, and advancing knowledge) used in this survey in the same contexts as other universities. Academic freedom, for example, may be constituted differently across universities or colleges (Marginson, 2006; Kerlind & Kayrooz, 2010), and across disciplines (see Moses & Ramsden, 2006).

There is also the question of whether the SECS scale truly captures what was intended as political conservatism. Political ideologies traverse a variety of beliefs, both social and economic, realistically there is no way that a survey with twelve questions could accurately reach every idea about what it means to be politically conservative or liberal. That being said, the researchers felt that this scale assessed enough of the political spectrum to be applicable to the current study, and the relationship between political ideology and academic values.

The survey was disseminated using faculty directories at a variety of universities all over the country. Researchers chose to contact numerous faculty members within a wide variety of academic disciplines. With the goal of receiving the largest amount of responses possible, as well as the broadest range of disciplines as possible, the researchers may not have been truly random in their sampling which could limit the generalizability of the research.

Future Research

Our findings are provocative, to be sure. If academics who are more liberal-minded less emphasize academic rigor and advancing knowledge than they emphasize student well-being and social justice, then academics need to be cautious about how political orientation may be shaping all facets of an academic experience, as well as the impact of that university value shifts can on faculty systems (Wheaton, 2020). If the trend in higher education is leaning toward more universally liberal campuses, at the expense of valuable educational opportunities in the form of alternate opinions and challenging courses, then universities and colleges may be faltering in their duty to students.

This study represents a slice of the political ideas that academics around the country may have. To our minds, this fact implies that the best option going forward is to collect more data to better understand if this shift in ideology at universities is fully reflective of Haidt's (2016a) theory on the distinction between "truth" and "social justice" universities. His theory suggests two basic points. The first is that university professors and academics may be more liberally-leaning in general. Second is that these liberal-minded academics are putting more emphasis on the social and emotional aspects of university life, and less emphasis on academic values that may lead to a more nuanced or valuable education.

Taken together, these points imply that this liberal trend in academia is shepherding universities as a whole towards a less challenging and less comprehensive education. When a space for the discussion of diverse ideas and opinions is abandoned in favor of a "safe space" where all people's opinions are assumed to be the same and kept hegemonic, no one is challenged in any way which may be considered mentally stressful. Despite the fact that mental exertion is part of getting an education, this shift towards decreasing political diversity is coming dangerously close to creating a large-scale context where conservative ideas are not only rejected

but are fully demonized, with the result being that conservative students do not attend universities or do not feel comfortable therein because they refuse to volunteer to be part of an environment that is so hostile towards them.

With regard to the other end of the political spectrum, liberal students may not learn as productively because they are not being challenged at the universities that only preach similar ideas as the ones they already have.

Without question, political issues affect all facets of the academy. The current research strongly supports the idea that a trend toward the political left among university faculty is shaping the nature of what it means to obtain a college education in multiple ways. Future research that follows our path can help shed light on these issues, hopefully helping pave the way for universities to be safe havens of intellectual heterogeneity while, concurrently, being safe havens for the students who enter our halls.

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