



Study: Students protesting privilege can do so because of their own privilege

Jacob Grandstaff

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A recent study by two university professors suggests that frequent left-wing campus protests are fueled largely by the "privilege" that many students claim to oppose.

The study, led by Dominique J. Baker of Southern Methodist University and Richard S.L. Blissett of Seton Hall University, analyzed 1,845 institutions and looked into how the "I, Too, Am Harvard" movement of 2014 spread across the nation's campuses to protest microaggressions.

The study, "Beyond the Incident: Institutional Predictors of Student Collective Action," found that roughly 40 colleges where the "I, Too, Am" campaigns spread had more selective admissions policies.

The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that the study found those colleges had an average acceptance rate of 45 percent, compared with an acceptance rate of 66 percent in colleges where the campaign did not take place. Furthermore, the colleges where the protests spread also had fewer Pell Grants recipients and fewer low-income students.

In addition to presenting statistics, Blissett and Baker go further, offering a cause for the protests — something lacking in a previous study by the Brookings Institution, which also found that "more-affluent colleges are likelier venues for protests against controversial speakers."

"Certain people have the time and resources to be able to protest in certain ways," said Baker, noting that students who commute to college likely don't have the time for protesting.

Tom Lindsay made the same argument last year in Forbes, speculating that the growing prevalence of leftist protests is due to students today having too much time on their hands. He referenced "Leisure College, USA," by Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks, which explained that "in 1961, the average full-time student at a four-year college in the United States studied about twenty-four hours per week, while his modern counterpart puts in only fourteen hours per week."

Although their study focused on protests demanding greater racial diversity, Blissett and Baker found racial diversity alone does not decrease the chances of protests. Instead, they found that the universities give the students “a language to be able to talk about certain issues and ... the space” to do so, suggesting that universities are driving an awareness of racial disparities — even when no real disparities exist.

Speaking recently at a Cato Institute policy forum, American Enterprise Institute scholar Christina Hoff Sommers blamed university indoctrination for campus unrest.

“When future historians look back and try to understand what the hell happened to American campuses in the second decade of the 21st century, they are going to find the real culprit to be a theory; and it’s called intersectionality,” she said — referring to the belief that “different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect.” This theory ensures that most people can find personal cause for grievance somewhere in the pecking order of victimhood.

Baker denied authoring the study to attack protesters, but rather to encourage universities to think more “holistically about challenges that students face.”

The study was published in the Journal of Higher Education.