

Are Intellectual Communities Harmful?

I believe most “communities” of professionals are harmful. Even when it isn’t an actual organized community, but rather a sense of loose affiliation and camaraderie with others within a field. This includes social sciences like economists, psychologists, teachers, professors, and historians but to a lesser extent we see it in the hard sciences with the medical field. I would even include parenting in this.

While these communities have the ability to share information and provide support for the people who are a part of them, I believe there is a stronger counterbalancing negative force of group think and an infrastructure for individual interests to poison a whole field of study. This is why the term “scientific consensus” is so dangerous. In effect, it is merely pushing for group think. Even the support a person gets from a community in itself is poisonous in that it reduces modesty within the individual involved since they seemingly have a whole network of support for the ideas they hold.

Usually these communities directly or indirectly control the flow of jobs and money within the field and the poor ideas these communities hold become further cemented within the field.

I’ve noticed that most parenting groups tend to be similar in effect as the intellectual communities. They support one another and the ideas they share tend to be strategies in gaining compliance within children. These reduce parental modesty in the face of uncertainty in favor of rigid ideas supported within the group. In reality, most of these parenting groups are just reinforcing the desires and self-interest of the parents. They often become a union against children. No individual is exactly controlling the prevalent forces involved, it is merely individual actors relatively unconsciously falling into the problems of centralized control, group think, and individual interests.

Most of these groups would be better off disbanding and people within those fields merely very loosely affiliating with one another. For the fields where this could be more problematic ... have much smaller competing groups of scientific schools.

A rebirth in modesty and curiosity with a decline in group think, search for consensus, and definitive answers would be to the benefit of everyone.