

Klein on Groupthink

Dan Klein provides a powerful synthesis of research on what's wrong with left-wing domination of the humanities and social sciences. Even if you don't want to watch the full video, read the slides!

My own thoughts: I don't regard left-wing domination of the humanities and social sciences as the world's most-pressing problem, or even the world's tenth most-pressing problem. As I explained in *The Case Against Education*, educators simply aren't very persuasive, so they do far less intellectual damage than you'd think. Indeed, despite their teachers' biases, well-educated Americans tend to be social liberal but economically conservative. How is this possible?

If educators are as left-wing as they seem, why would education have such contradictory effects on students' stances? The charitable story is that educators keep their politics out of the classroom. The more plausible story, though, is that educators are unpersuasive. The Jesuits say, "Give me the child until he is seven and I'll give you the man." Society gives liberal educators the child until he's fifteen, eighteen, twenty two, or thirty. But issue-by-issue, teachers are about as likely to repel their students as attract them. Educators could protest, "The problem isn't that we're unpersuasive, but that students are stubborn," but students revise their opinions all the time. The longer they stay in school, the more they revise. They just don't revise in a reliably liberal direction.

That said, left-wing domination of the humanities and social sciences *bothers* me more than many more serious ills. Why? Well, I *am* a professor, so...

1. Idealistically, I want the humanities and social sciences to flourish, not fester.
2. Selfishly, I'd like the world of ideas to be an exciting, friendly marketplace, not a boring, neurotic church.
3. Paternally, at least two of my kids want to be professors. I've managed to create a Beautiful Bubble for myself, but I can tell they'll have a tougher time than I did.