DISCUSSION OF THE GOOGLE GOOLAG

endorphone 3 hours ago

The firing has been a PR disaster, and amplified and exaggerated the effect of this issue (not to mention that it drew attention to other factors, like Google's institutional ageism). And while I don't want to diagnose over the internet, it seems like it's attacking someone on the spectrum for traits of being on the spectrum.

By firing him they made him a hero to enormous groups, and doubled down on this discussion. By doing it in an anti-science, anti-evidence way they legitimized almost everything he said, and it makes them look reactionary.

They could have simply said that they were taking punitive actions and kept him in the fold.

reply

agentultra 3 hours ago

> By firing him they made him a hero to enormous groups,

To a small, vocal group.

> By doing it in an anti-science, anti-evidence way

There were good reasons for doing it that had nothing to do with science or evidence.

There *are* women working at Google who do not need to be reminded of the genetic and biologic differences they have from their cishet male counterparts.

If Damon had issues with the policies at Google there were many other channels open to him that didn't involve circulating a

manifesto. He brought it upon himself. Once word of that memo leaked there was nothing for Google to do but fire him.

reply

endorphone 2 hours ago

There are women working at Google who do not need to be reminded of the genetic and biologic differences they have from their cishet male counterparts.

I'm a white male. I *know* that the average Asian has a higher IQ than the average white man. This means positively nothing when comparing me with a given Asian, however.

That is the root of this discussion that so many so profoundly miss. The average Google male is not the average male. The average Google female is not the average female. He was *not* saying that women who work at Google are at a biological disadvantage, in any way, and that is a perverse misreading. He was saying that on the whole there's a biological reason when you roll the dice enough that more males are suitable for that work. In the scientific community this is utterly indisputable, in the same way that there are far more exceptional males (and autistic males), just as there are far more mentally handicapped males. That doesn't preclude handicapped or exceptional females, it's just less common.

reply

KirinDave 2 hours ago

> He was not saying that women who work at Google are at a biological disadvantage, in any way, and that is a perverse misreading.

Quite frankly: many people do. Some of them are at Google. James chose to run headlong into this discussion

without any practical knowledge of the discourse. His point was poorly delivered precisely because it leaves open such radical room for misrepresenting it.

Discussions of social issues MUST be informed by the social discourse they enter, even if armed with science and evidence. To suggest otherwise is obviously wrong.

No one owes James a charitable reading. And if you think the "mobs" of liberals are misrepresenting his point, you should see where MRA/goreans are going with it.

reply

imh 2 hours ago

>No one owes James a charitable reading.

A charitable reading isn't something that's *owed*. It's something that almost universally helps discourse. Communication is hard.

We're always willing to give Us a charitable reading, and it's a damned shame people are so unwilling to afford that to Them, regardless which side of anything you're on.

reply

KirinDave 1 hour ago

Right, but anyone familiar with this larger discussion read James's memo and knew, immediately, that he simply failed to do any research or contribute anything meaningful.

I certainly did my best to ignore it. It was poorly informed, poorly considered. His firing

was inevitable and possibly even what he wanted. Certainly I can't imagine a more effective way to get fired at Google.

Since James didn't do the courtesy of being informed, it seems odd to demand that everyone offer him the courtesy of finishing his argument for him

reply

stagbeetle 1 hour ago

To be frank, it's called being the better man.

Progress isn't made when both parties refuse to cooperate. And one side isn't absolved of responsibility just because they believe the other side to be not worth their effort. This is petty.

reply

KirinDave 24 minutes ago

What do you think I am doing engaging this topic even though it's obviously time consuming and costly to me?

I'm not here dropping links about stereotypes and pointing out trivial logical errors in the discourse because it's good for my heart or my psyche.

I'm on Twitter hiatus, but I still end up wrapped in these fruitless conflicts. But please, continue arguing that what I'm doing is deleterious. I'm not friendly on this subject, but you can hardly accuse me of not engaging openly and being responsive to the dialogue.

reply

pharrington 2 hours ago

Yes, James isn't owed a charitable reading. He is owed a *rational* reading.

addendum: *Irrational* people *misinterpreting* a text is precisely that. Surely you can't be saying that a text having a fairly high bar for intelligent interpretation and discussion is reason for that text to not exist?

reply

KirinDave 1 hour ago

It is not irrational to misinterpret poorly written, poorly worded, and inconclusive text.

Reading a text is a dialogue. If the writer did not appropriately express the intent, then they invite the reader to finish the thought. And this even rational people can arrive at different conclusions.

To suggest every reading you don't approve of as "irrational" is a predictable, even classical

tactic. Many words exist for it, but in the end the notion of blaming the reader for finishing an incomplete thought is an exercise in futility. The reader has no choice.

reply

pharrington 1 hour ago

You said "his point was poorly delivered precisely because it leaves open such radical room *for misrepresenting* it," and then contrasted how "mobs of liberals" are reading it with "MRA/goreans." Maybe I'm misinterpreting you, but your original post was explicitly about irrational misinterpretations.

If you want to talk about how the memo was poorly written, *talk about how the memo was poorly written.* The readings of others certainly can supplement your analysis, but you haven't provided that analysis.

The memo begins with it's intent, and even has a TLDR after the opening three paragraphs.

Also, while the memo was mostly trying to assess the current state and factors of the gender imbalance in tech and Google particularly, it does provide several, literal, conclusions. Here are just a few:

>We can make software engineering more people-oriented with pair programming and more collaboration.

>Women on average are more cooperative [...] Allow those exhibiting cooperative behavior to thrive. Recent

updates to Perf may be doing this to an extent, but maybe there's more we can do.

>Make tech and leadership less stressful. Google already partly does this with its many stress reduction courses and benefits.

If you actually read the memo, and have actual problems with what was actually written, then talk about that. There's certainly plenty to discuss and to rationally disagree about, but you have yet to say anything substantial about the thing you're criticizing.

reply

KirinDave 19 minutes ago

> The memo begins with it's intent, and even has a TLDR after the opening three paragraphs.

Which does little to excuse the subsequent content. Why would it? Impact matters far more than intent. Asking for someone to read a paragraph in a light quite opposed to it's content in this era of Poe Principle Supremacy is essentially asking for an act of faith.

I possess no such faith. And why should I? The implicit suggestion here is that James's memo had value or novel input. Even if I fastidiously follow his intent statement, it appears misinformed and to misinterpret some findings, offering a solution I have

discussed as inadequate and insulting many times on this website.

> If you actually read the memo, and have actual problems with what was actually written, then talk about that.

I have at length. I am now talking about the discourse at hand. Please find someone else to make demands of. I'm not your conversational sparring partner and even this reply is only a courtesy. Please do not exhaust my good will.

reply

dahart 2 hours ago

> He was not saying that women who work at Google are at a biological disadvantage, in any way, and that is a perverse misreading. He was saying that on the whole there's a biological reason when you roll the dice enough that more males are suitable for that work.

I don't understand what you said there, can you elaborate? What is the difference between males being more biologically suitable and females being at a disadvantage? From my perspective, you just contradicted yourself, can you help me understand why it's not a contradiction?

What the memo proposed is that it's "possible" there are fewer women in tech right now because of the biological differences. He may not have claimed it as fact, but he implied it. The problem I have with the implication is that it's *obvious* that evolutionary forces are not the primary causes of the current distribution, because the distribution of women in tech has changed drastically in the last 50 years faster than evolution's say in the matter. It's not

possible that the current distribution is primarily caused by biological differences, and it's exceedingly likely that it is caused by social issues. But he suggested it is possible, and followed that by suggesting we should stop treating it like a social issue because it's possible.

And all of this so far is ignoring that the memo unironically takes the opposite stance on the minority group of conservatives.

So what is the root part that I'm missing?

reply

endorphone 1 hour ago

From my perspective, you just contradicted yourself, can you help me understand why it's not a contradiction?

The IQ distribution of men and women is slightly different, and this is essentially settled science (it really is, however much we might pontificate -- our genetic past rolls the dice more with males). The male curve is slightly fatter, yielding larger numbers of exceptionally high *and* exceptionally low members. This means absolutely nothing if you have a male with an IQ of 140 and a female with an IQ of 140, however. Nor does it mean a 100 IQ male should be working at Google because there are slightly more high IQ males born.

We are smart enough to understand the difference between set probabilities and individual traits. Right?

because the distribution of women in tech has changed drastically in the last 50 years faster than evolution's say in the matter

Obviously there are social factors. That is indisputable. But at a point the gains in leveling the sexes for some domains become harder to get because there are confounding factors. Women in

engineering has stayed virtually constant for several decades now.

reply

dahart 52 minutes ago

> The IQ distribution of men and women is slightly different, and this is essentially settled science

How different? Can you source this claim? Are the means & medians at different places? How far apart are they? Are they far enough part to justify a male/female ratio in the tech workforce of 4x? I'm not arguing with you, but you are contradicting the article at hand.

"the mainstream view is that male and female abilities are the same across the vast majority of domains — I.Q., the ability to do math, etc."

> Women in engineering has stayed virtually constant for several decades now.

Which decades are you talking about? Which countries are you talking about? Please source this wildly inaccurate claim.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_women_in_engineerin...

"According to studies by the National Science Foundation, the percentage of BA/BS degrees in engineering awarded to women in the U.S. increased steadily from 0.4 percent in 1966 to a peak of 20.9 percent in 2002"

That's a factor of 40x in 40 years. That doesn't sound super constant to me. How fast does evolution work again?

"Only 9.6% of engineers in Australia are women"

Interesting. Does that mean it's likely that Australian women are biologically only half as engineering capable as American women?

reply

endorphone 44 minutes ago

The difference between male and female IQ curves is easily found, and is scientifically settled. I don't particularly care if I'm contradicting the article at hand -- I'm not trying to vouch for it, but am saying that it's a rational discussion.

>Please source this wildly inaccurate claim.

I said for several decades. You cite the change for over five decades.

From 1990 to today -- closing on three decades -- women in engineering has stayed virtually unchanged in the US.

You seem to be taking the shotgun approach, and seem wholly ingenuine in discussing this rationally, so I would say this discussion is done.

reply

dahart 26 minutes ago

> The difference between male and female IQ curves is easily found, and is scientifically settled.

Can you either source this or summarize, assuming that I genuinely want to know? How big is the difference in mean & median? Do you believe the

difference is primarily responsible for the difference in distribution?

> I said for several decades. You cite the change for over five decades.

You're going to nitpick over 3 vs 5? Are you saying that the distribution of women wasn't in a steady state in the 1970's but it reached steady state in the 1990's, and that now the distributions are primarily reflective of innate biology and not social causes?

The distribution of women in computer science is quite different than the distribution of women in engineering - very roughly 2x as I understand. Do you think that computer science is significantly and measurably more prone to being affected by our biological differences than engineering?

I'm think I'm bringing up reasonable points, is it really a stretch to ask about different countries and different disciplines? The memo's reasoning should reasonably apply to all women in all businesses in all countries, not just engineering or tech. He even cited gender discrepancies that are cross-cultural, this is absolutely fair game.

> You seem to be taking the shotgun approach, and seem wholly ingenuine in discussing this rationally

I'm sorry that it's getting tough for you. I'm very genuine and very serious. I disagree that I'm being irrational, but you are entitled to your opinion.

I'm just hearing defensiveness about the claims stated as fact being true. I willingly accept that there are biological differences between men and women. What I don't see clearly is a rational justification for ignoring cultural sexism.

reply

humanrebar 8 minutes ago

Here's a starting point:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_differences_in_intelligenc...

yorwba 2 minutes ago

Specifically, for basically the only significant difference ir distribution:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_differences_in_intellige

endorphone 11 minutes ago

"I'm just hearing defensiveness"

Claiming defensiveness when you are being intentionally dense in the

discussion is a transparent, tired tactic.

"What I don't see clearly is a rational justification for ignoring cultural sexism."

Absolutely no one is promoting "cultural sexism", so you're now contriving canards.

dropstickle 1 hour ago

Let's say you are an american. 60% of americans are overweight. Does that mean you are overweight?

reply

manigandham 1 hour ago

Also Americans *on average* are more overweight than Japanese. Does not mean there are not overweight Japanese or thin Americans or that either are less capable of a specific sport.

reply

dahart 1 hour ago

Clearly not.

Does 60% of Americans being overweight today mean that it's likely that 60% of people are naturally and biologically incapable of maintaining a healthy weight?

There are genetic differences among underweight and overweight populations, so it is "possible" that the distribution of healthy weights to overweight people is natural a result of those genetic traits, and not the result of advertising and availability of high calorie foods.

We should stop treating obesity as though it's a problem, right?

reply

dropstickle 33 minutes ago

I think you misunderstood me. I was not making a biological correlation, but a statistical one; namely that group averages doesn't say anything about an individual. The nature/nurture debate of overweight people is besides the point.

reply

dahart 18 minutes ago

Then I think you misunderstood the memo. The memo *is* making a biological correlation. It suggests that the current distributions might

accurately reflect differences in biology.

Nature vs nurture is *completely* the point here, Damore argued that nature is the primary force, not nurture, and therefore we should stop nurturing women in tech.

reply

dropstickle 2 minutes ago

Maybe I should have been clearer, you stated to the parent reply that:

>> I don't understand what you said there, can you elaborate? What is the difference between males being more biologically suitable and females being at a disadvantage? From my perspective, you just contradicted yourself, can you help me understand why it's not a contradiction?

This was in response to the parent that said Damore had not singled out any female google employes. The overweight example was an attempt to clarify that even though statistical averages say something about a group, it does not say something about the individual, i.e the google females should not feel singled out by statistical averages.

As for the nature/nuture point in the memo: yes the memo is making a biological claim backed by sources. It does not suggest that current distributions are correct. No, the memo is not saying that nature is the primary force, only that it might play a part [1]:

"Differences in distributions of traits between men and women may in part explain why we don’t have 50% representation of women in tech and leadership."

[1] https://diversitymemo.com/

tomp 2 hours ago

> I know that the average Asian has a higher IQ than the average white man.

How can you be sure that it's the average *Asia*, as opposed to the average Asian *in the US*? IMO a better example would be to use Ashkenazi Jews... or are they too white to count?

reply

unityByFreedom 2 hours ago

Yeah, he slipped in a huge assumption there as if it's established fact.

Of course Asians in the US are smart. There is a high bar for foreigners entering the US.

This is the genius behind "Give me your tired, your poor". We actually end up taking the hard working, wealthy ones who've gotten into college by passing tests in their second language at the same age as we go to school.

reply

thegayngler 1 hour ago

There was an article awhile back in the NYT stating that in many cases asians people can be found cheating on those tests or lying about their educational background.

Lets face it. They have resources to both cheat and get tutoring on the ways to pass an exam. Lets see how everyone does cold turkey when all of the outside factors like money and resources other than race and gender are held constant.

What are the results of a study like that? That would be a more interesting test than saying X or Y is genetically more suited to this field.

Most if not all of that line of reasoning is based on 1000 year old social constructs...and the mountains of "research" that was later made up to give it credibility when people started to question these social constructs.

reply

unityByFreedom 32 minutes ago

> Lets see how everyone does cold turkey when all of the outside factors like money and resources other than race and gender are held constant.

It's impossible to completely separate biological from environmental factors. They're interdependent.

I agree that better research would be the proper way to attack this problem. It seems we will be stuck perpetually debating nature vs. nurture [1] for as long as we exist.

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature_versus_nurture

reply

harichinnan 2 hours ago

Please visit "Asia". Don't go to Japan or South Korea or one of the city states. Go to India or China or somewhere in middle east. I don't think there are biological differences that would make people of the largest continent more smarter than another group.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

There are selection effects in place when immigration enters the picture.

reply

SamReidHughes 1 hour ago

You just need different relative reproduction rates or different levels of assortative mating. For example, the Khmer Rouge may have affected Cambodia's IQ distribution (negatively) but Cambodians don't now have "biological differences" per se.

reply

stagbeetle 57 minutes ago

The colloquial "Asian" means East Asian/Far Eastern.

This includes Japanese, Chinese, both Koreans, Taiwanese, and Mongolians. Commonly, anyone with epicanthic folds.

In this case, I don't think the OP was talking about biological differences. It's widely known that the aforementioned cultures (especially Japan and China) are very big on having their careers and studies at the center of their lives.

In this case, it would be nurture giving these groups an advantage over their Western counterparts. Who, ignoring the top-tiers, on average are not known for their industry.

reply

WalterSear 3 hours ago

He didn't circulate one. He sent it to a mailing list which purported to be a safe place for open, honest sharing of opinions regarding diversity and hiring.

reply

ghaff 2 hours ago

Anyone who is willing to bet their job on a controversial posting about company policy to a broad company mailing list staying internal either doesn't mind being fired or is an idiot.

reply

serf 2 hours ago

>Anyone who is willing to bet their job on a controversial posting

That's part of the problem.

Lots of people associate Google with research and discourse akin to a college campus without realizing that, unlike a college campus, they and their free discourse are not protected in any meaningful way.

"Let's be open and transparent and have an open and transparent culture... but don't say things that might hurt our shareholders."

Google is beginning to remind me a bit too much of the 'Bright & Shinys" from the movie 'Bubble Boy'[0]. Happy go lucky do-gooder cult that holds that image until you cross them. Things get darker after that point. That initial positive image is all that matters.

[0]: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIYRfNjHSzA

reply

ghaff 1 hour ago

> Unfortunately college campuses don't protect free discourse for certain stripes of political opinion very well these days either.
>
> I agree with your broader point though. Different companies are more or less tolerant of free-wheeling discussion that may not reflect an official company position. But, at the end of the day, if you cause embarrassment (especially as a non-exec, non-critical employee) at most companies, you're expendable.

reply

peoplewindow 26 minutes ago

Google always used to make a big song and dance about how scientific and data driven it is. They even wrote about how data driven their hiring processes and HR operations are.

This article from 2013 is an example

http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/01/...

"*What we try to do is bring the same level of rigor to people decisions that we do to engineering decisions. Our mission is to have all people decisions be informed by data.*"

Damore's memo may look idiotic to people who work in "normal" workplaces, but it is consistent with Google's previous

rhetoric on what sort of company it wants to be: namely, one that isn't normal.

reply

WalterSear 2 hours ago

No question about that. But he's being internet lynched for 'circulating a manifesto'.

reply

ebola1717 2 hours ago

There are no safe spaces in the real world

reply

WalterSear 2 hours ago

If you are informed that you are safe to openly express your opinion, you should have a reasonable expectation that you do.

reply

mathattack 2 hours ago

Unfortunately I don't think it's that small. It's similar to saying "The Trump base is a small vocal group" - perhaps it's really larger than we care to admit?

reply

mc32 2 hours ago

One could say the people wanting the ex a employee fired were also a small vocal group. I really doubt more than 10% of Googlers felt personally threatened affronted by someone having a different view on advancing women in tech.

reply

citrusx 2 hours ago

So, only about 7800 people is all?

reply

mc32 2 hours ago

Kind of like if we extrapolate the 10% of the population who are vocally upset at google because of the dismissal we only have 30+ million upset with google the co.

reply

ocdtrekkie 3 hours ago

I would argue that if a 'small, vocal group' likely had a significant hand in electing Donald Trump, we should stop trying to minimize it by suggesting it is 'small'. Either because it's larger than you think, or because it has influence that outscales it's membership severalfold.

reply

taysic 2 hours ago

By not firing him, the same thing would have happened. Except now that vocal group would be Google employees too who feel uncomfortable at their workplace.

Anti-science way? Do you realize how subjective this is and how impossible it is to prove that today there are no other influences at play than biology? And that we've maxed on the number of woman in this field and we're now at an equilibrium determined by biology?

I would have been far more convinced if he noted a dwindling amount of harassment and reported bias using studies.

reply

where_do_i_live 2 hours ago

You overgeneralize and mischaracterize the memo with your claims, which leads me to suspect you never read it.

>Do you realize how subjective this is and how impossible it is to prove that today there are no other influences at play than biology

He never claims there are no other influences at play -

From the memo; note the works "in part" and "may explain" - Note, I’m not saying that all men differ from all women in the following ways or that these differences are “just.” I’m simply stating that the distribution of preferences and abilities of men and women differ in part due to biological causes and that these differences may explain why we don’t see equal representation of women in tech and leadership.

> And that we've maxed on the number of woman in this field and we're now at an equilibrium determined by biology?

There is no such claim of this whatsoever. Your comment is a great example of the problems with this debate.

reply

taysic 2 hours ago

One of his main points in the memo is at the top:"Differences in distributions of traits between men and women may in part explain why we don’t have 50% representation of women in tech and leadership. "

What am I missing? This is the topic he explores the most in his memo and I don't see anything analyzing social effects.

While his paper is nuanced, he basically only focuses on the biological argument and seeks to change company policy as a result of this.

One of these being... to end the diversity goals. Yes I did read the memo.

reply

where_do_i_live 2 hours ago

I'm not sure what your counter argument is exactly.

He argued to change their diversity goals and implementation, with an intention to do a better job of getting a _more_ not less diverse company, including more woman and minorities. He did not argue to end all diversity goals outright, again that appears to be a mischaracterization.

reply

taysic 2 hours ago

I suppose you can say his argument was implied then in my eyes since he spent the first large part of the memo reviewing the biology of women and then stopped short there.

No time was spent exploring inherent biases in history or how they may affecting things today. This is why those policies were put into place so why not make it the meat of the discussion.

Though the implication may be that his approach will create a setup in which there will be more diversity that is highly debatable... again the reason why these policies are there in the first place. I don't feel the argument was so strong.

Does he have other examples in history when a minority group allowed the free market to dictate things after a long period of bias and things quickly adjusted overnight?

reply

where_do_i_live 1 hour ago

He concedes the very point you mention here. That there are _real_ historical biases that should be corrected and removed.

From the memo: I hope it’s clear that I'm not saying that diversity is bad, that Google or society is 100% fair, that we shouldn't try to correct for existing biases, or that minorities have the same experience of those in the majority.

He's saying that the inability to get to a 50/50% split on gender lines may be unrealistic. He makes no comment on if the 20/80 split that currently exists is fair or not. Just because he doesn't go into the history of all bias that did exist in the past, doesn't mean he discounts it and unworthy to be addressed. Further, at what point does a society atone for past biases? If you are even trying to correct the injustice in the past, should you not have an idea on what normalization might be like? Perhaps and this is his question, an exact 50/50 is not what a idealistic lack of bias would create in the first place. And the thesis is that it would not be created in that fashion because women self-select to enter different professions for biologically based reasons. Now all those items might be false - its a hypothesis, not a universal truth - but it appears the research from social psychologists backs up his claims as valid. Now perhaps they still want to argue between themselves, and fine I'm ok with that go for it - but it appears he's done with with good faith.

And even if you think his arguments are poor, or he's naive, or anything else, that's fine too. The problem is - and this is where my main issue and the root of all of this - is that he should not have been fired for this. This appears to be a betrayal of liberal free speech values that many people claim to support.

reply

taysic 1 hour ago [dupe]

"He's saying that the inability to get to a 50/50% split on gender lines may be unrealistic"

Sure that's fair. I say that as a woman - I have no expectation to reach 50/50. However it's debatable if these policies are not useful yet. My mothers generation had some crazy stories to tell and that wasn't that long ago.

"And the thesis is that it would not be created in that fashion because women self-select to enter different professions for biologically based reasons."

This may be partly true but I disagree that it forms a substantial influence given my personal experience. I would give it a 1% weight anecdotally but much more if you count that many women want to be full time mothers.

The much bigger picture in my personal experience is a slew of other things including poor information, societal and parental

expectations and visions for their daughters, engrained belief systems, intimidation due to biases, sticking to comfort zones or what is more familiar and so on.

I totally agree this is a discussion worth having and at some point this policies will need to be phased out. I think here the channel in which it was broadcast to the entire company was pretty uncomfortable given its such a touchy and controversial topic.

Thanks for the discussion

reply

Hikikomori 2 hours ago

My main take-away reading it was that he argued for diversity in thought instead of mandated diversity that looks good in a picture or in statistics.

reply

taysic 1 hour ago

The point of these policies isn't to make things look good in a picture but to reduce the effect of existing biases in hiring woman. And to give people a chance after some questionable history. Diversity of thought is an admirable thing and can often be amplified when people from different backgrounds and perspectives gather.

reply

Ajedi32 2 hours ago

> Anti-science way? Do you realize how subjective this is and how impossible it is to prove that today there are no other influences at play than biology?

First of all, the original memo said nothing of the sort.

Secondly, I'm pretty sure GP is not saying the reaction to this memo is anti-science merely because it opposes the position taken in the memo. Rather, it's anti-science because they threw all rational debate out the window and fired the guy without even trying to address the points he made.

reply

taysic 2 hours ago

Why even bother mentioning biology then if there are other influences more important and relevant? It seemed very emphasized.

They did not fire him because they didn't believe in the studies he linked. Obviously that's very much mischaracterizing things. This is a complicated issue with ample studies to link to from both sides. And anyway, I truly question studies on such broad topics.

reply

Ajedi32 2 hours ago

> Why even bother mentioning biology then if there are other influences more important and relevant? It seemed very emphasized.

Because that portion of the essay was meant to counter what the author perceived to be Google's current position on the matter: that societal factors are the _only_ factor resulting in a lower percentage of women in tech.

From the memo:

> For the rest of this document, I'll concentrate on the extreme stance that all differences in outcome are due to differential treatment and the authoritarian element that's required to actually discriminate to create equal representation.

Followed by a section titled:

> Possible non-bias causes of the gender gap in tech

The author isn't saying that biological differences are the _only_ factor; only that that they are _a_ factor, and that Google has been completely neglecting that factor with the current implementation of their efforts to improve diversity within the company.

reply

nobodyman 54 minutes ago

> The author isn't saying that biological differences are the _only_ factor; only that that they are _a_ factor...

This is true, but as /u/taysic pointed out elsewhere, Damore dedicates the majority of his memo on this this one factor and wishes to change corporate policy because of it.

> ... and that Google has been completely neglecting that factor with the current implementation of their efforts to improve diversity within the company

Perhaps Google is evaluating more factors than Damore? Perhaps Google concluded that social issues and gender bias play a larger role in workforce disparity than biological issues, and therefore decided to prioritize attacking the larger problem over the smaller problem?

reply

Ajedi32 43 minutes ago

> Damore dedicates the majority of his memo on this this one factor and wishes to change corporate policy because of it.

Right. I explained why that was in the previous part of my comment.

> Perhaps Google is evaluating more factors than Damore? [...]

Perhaps so. They made no such claim in their response to Damore's essay though. In fact, they didn't address any of his points at all; they just fired him, thus proving the main point of his essay:

> People generally have good intentions, but we all have biases which are invisible to us. Thankfully, open and honest discussion with those who disagree can highlight our blind spots and help us grow, which is why I wrote this document. Google has several biases and honest discussion about these biases is being silenced by the dominant ideology. [...]

> Only facts and reason can shed light on these biases, but when it comes to diversity and inclusion, Google’s left bias has created a politically correct monoculture that maintains its hold by shaming dissenters into silence.

reply

yorwba 22 minutes ago

> Perhaps Google is evaluating more factors than Damore? Perhaps Google concluded that social issues and gender bias play a larger role in workforce disparity than biological issues, and therefore decided to prioritize attacking the larger problem over the smaller problem?

If Google has done the research on it, I'd really like to see because it is likely to be much more extensive than what this one guy has collected in his free time. That said, I suspect bias was simply assumed as the major factor by default, since that has historically been true in lots of professions (some of which are now dominated by women).

reply

ebola1717 3 hours ago

Only on the internet. I really don't think anyone in the real world is paying that much attention, and besides Brooks, I haven't seen many mainstream writers come out against the firing.

reply

Bahamut 2 hours ago

I can't say I agree about that not paying much attention - I pretty much see/hear discussion about this incident daily since Saturday. It probably doesn't help that I am in the Valley, but I have a lot of friends not in tech across the world also discussing this as well.

Almost everyone I know/interacted with believes that Damore is wrong though, if not for the viewpoint, then for his approach to trying to create a dialogue in a suboptimal fashion & its negative effects on his former colleagues.

reply

nunobrito 2 hours ago

Seems to be same group of mainstream writers who also dished out Trump as a joke candidate and hailed Clinton as winner.

Very few had the courage to talk against that trend, one of them was Michael Moore and check how accurate he was when compared to "mainstream":
https://michaelmoore.com/trumpwillwin/

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

What do you mean by mainstream?

reply

Yetanfou 3 hours ago

Even 'punitive actions' would have been wrong as their is no punishable offence. Google supposedly wants to have an open culture so they should just have accepted the 'manifesto' as part of this open culture, something to use in discussions on the subject matter. Any other reaction - and certainly the current reaction - only goes to show the truth of the accusations about Google not having an open culture.

reply

> urahara 2 hours ago
>
> Open culture does not mean that actions that make environment more hostile to some group inside the company should not be punished. The 'memo' definitely did that to his female coworkers. That's why the story is not about open culture or freedom of speech, but in the first place about creating unhealthy environment for a particular group inside the company and setting a really bad precedent. Maybe the guy meant well, but the fact is his actions ended up harming both a particular group and the company.
>
> reply

whorleater 3 hours ago

> The firing has been a PR disaster

In the sense that it's an argument both sides want to have. The left want to argue for better workplace treatment of women, while the right want to argue for speech without social repercussions.

reply

ghaff 2 hours ago

It ends the news cycle. Most people outside the bubble haven't even heard of this and those who have will forget about it by next week. Right or wrong, it was the path of least resistance for Google going forward.

reply

> emerged 2 hours ago
>
> I disagree -- IMO, the only hope in this case to "end the news cycle" would've been to walk a very delicate line where Google's position in the debate was made known, but nobody was dramatically fired in the process.
>
> Instead, Google's leadership decided to take an ideological stance with relatively little regard to immediate PR. The result is further churning and an intensified reaction of the public and media.
>
> This is either a good or a bad thing, depending on a person's perspective. But surely it's a reaction which will perpetuate the intensity of drama.
>
> reply

tdb7893 2 hours ago

The firing has only been a pr disaster in small groups. Even for me personally even though I think that he probably shouldn't have been fired I'm not super mad at Google because having him there was a liability to the company. I think it's mainly more libertarian circles that are mad but those people already generally don't like Google

reply

demonshalo 3 hours ago

Extreme beliefs manifest themselves in extreme behavior.

If you so blindly believe in the diversity of skin color or gender while neglecting the diversity of ideas, I am rather sure that says a whole lot about you as a person and as a company. That, in my opinion, is the only PR they deserve.

reply

vkou 3 hours ago

The firing was necessary, because not firing someone who creates a hostile working environment opens you to lawsuits from every single other person employed in your company. [1] Anyone who's taken training on sexual harassment would understand this.

His essay is not scientific, or evidence-based. It's ten pages of micro-facts, followed by his biases or misunderstands, followed by enormous leaps of logic to macro-conclusions. It wouldn't pass as a bloody undergrad essay. [2]

(It is a poster child of a techie looking at a complicated problem that they don't understand, and saying 'I'm smart! This is easy! You guys are all wrong!')

[1] https://twitter.com/mcclure111/status/895071933666017280

[2] https://www.quora.com/What-do-scientists-think-about-the-bio...

reply

Ajedi32 2 hours ago

> It wouldn't pass as a bloody undergrad essay.

At least a few psychology professors [seem to disagree with that assessment][1]:

> Graded fairly, his memo would get at least an A- in any masters' level psychology course. It is consistent with the scientific state of the art on sex differences.

I'm sure you can probably find lot of opinions on both sides of the debate though, and that's fine. As the memo stated:

> Of course, I may be biased and only see evidence that supports my viewpoint. In terms of political biases, I consider myself a classical liberal and strongly value individualism and reason. I'd be very happy to discuss any of the document further and provide more citations

Instead of "discussing the document further" though, they fired him.

[1]: http://quillette.com/2017/08/07/google-memo-four-scientists-...

reply

GreaterFool 2 hours ago

From the Quora post you've linked:

> argues that cognitive sex differences influence performance in software engineering, but presents no supporting evidence

This is completely made up

reply

renaudg 2 hours ago

And in more than one way too : 1) he didn't discuss "performance" but "affinity" 2) there was supporting evidence linked, before Gizmodo conveniently stripped it away.

reply

aaron-lebo 3 hours ago

By and large the people outraged about this are the crazy men's rights, reactionary, Trumpist, Alex Jones mob that have been looking for things like this to be outraged for the past 30 years.

Everyone wants to be a victim. Damore isn't a victim of anything but bad judgment. If he's hero of the mob, so what.

reply

ubertaco 3 hours ago

Paraphrased:

By and large the people outraged about this are...people we don't like, whose opinions don't matter, and who I think should be marginalized anyways.

If he's the hero of people we don't like, so what.

reply

aaron-lebo 3 hours ago

As a Southern white male from a conservative background, I don't want to be marginalized.

But when I see the rabid way people are defending the guy like he wrote the Federalist Papers, who at best is guilty of being unaware that what he was saying is controversial, I don't feel outraged if he got fired in a massive company known for its liberal views. What did he expect?

He's not helping it by making himself a darling of the right wing media. That and lowball jabs at political correctness and Marxism make it a little too obvious where his sympathies lie and if he really wanted an objective debate picking sides doesn't help.

reply

richardknop 2 hours ago

Some people who are outraged by this are people who are afraid to live in a society where you can be fired and your career ruined for having a political opinion (not even controversial one).

reply

taysic 2 hours ago

I really don't care what political opinion my coworkers have. But if they feel called to publish a memo about company policy that affects me due to this political opinion - it better be a very open discussion in such a way that they can't get the last word. I also question if a drawn out debate (which it should be) would be a waste of company time. Also this one was very controversial.

reply

peoplewindow 20 minutes ago

Anything you don't like will seem to be controversial. To other people - like me - the idea that males and females like different things is so obvious it is insane this debate is even being had at all. Even 10 year olds will tell you that girls like dollhouses and boys like trucks and toy guns and things. It's only *after* people fall into the grip of bizarre extreme feminist ideology that they start to believe that pointing out differences between men and women is offensive and controversial.

The memo in question would not have affected you, would it? Unless you're saying you were hired to fit a diversity quota and shouldn't be there at all. Even if management had agreed 100% it could only have led to changes in hiring processes, and maybe men turning up to classes and events where they were previously banned. I assume you're OK with that.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

> I really don't care what political opinion my coworkers have.

Except when you do care?

reply

s73ver 3 hours ago

"By doing it in an anti-science, anti-evidence way"

But they didn't. That man's argument was not science. It wasn't. There was absolutely no scientific evidence behind his argument. He misrepresented studied, and he cherry picked what he wanted. For more on that, check here: http://blog.goldieblox.com/2017/08/open-letter-james-damore-... It's an article from a female engineer who read the manifesto, and takes issue with the conclusions drawn from the studies.

The ones claiming that his manifesto was "scientifically sound" are those who are anti-science and anti-evidence.

"They could have simply said that they were taking punitive actions and kept him in the fold."

No, they couldn't. By keeping him, they would be legitimizing his views. And by doing that, they would be further alienating all of their female employees, and a lot of others, both current and future. Just about no woman would want to work there, knowing that they endorse those viewpoints.

reply

daenz 2 hours ago

>That man's argument was not science. It wasn't. There was absolutely no scientific evidence behind his argument. He misrepresented studied, and he cherry picked what he wanted.

I want to follow up on this, can you give an example? From what little I know, it's essentially settled science that men and women have statistically different interests, and those interests exist across *all* cultures (implying a biological cause).

reply

lucozade 1 hour ago

The problem isn't with the science, it's with the misuse of the science to add apparent credence to flawed logic.

So yes, across humanity there are statistical gender differences to the choices people make. The flaw in the logic is that that doesn't means Google shouldn't act on bias in its selection and retention policies. What it may well mean is that Google may need to mitigate the cultural biases both internally and externally if they are going to make more than a small dent in the imbalance.

Similarly, it doesn't follow from the argument that humanity is what it is to a position that Google shouldn't attempt gender equality. It does mean that it'll be tricky for a company their size. But whether they should or not should be a question about what's in the best interest of the company as a whole.

BTW there is often the assumption that something like gender equality is purely a political goal. And quite often it is. However, there is a very good argument that the tech pool for high potential people is quite shallow given the current and expected demand.

In my org we are taking steps to try to widen the pool of intellectually able people we can select from. One area that we are targeting is women. Another is geographical areas where we don't have traction (mainly eastern Europe and Africa). This isn't political per se. This is so

we have a wider talent pool to choose from. I would be genuinely stunned if this type of thinking wasn't in part what Google senior management are also looking at.

reply

yorwba 15 minutes ago

> But whether they should or not should be a question about what's in the best interest of the company as a whole.

That reminds me of something I read recently:

For each of these changes, we need principled reasons for why it helps Google; that is, we should be optimizing for Google—with Google's diversity being a component of that.

Can you guess where I read that? (Hint: It was written by James Damore).

Now it just so happens that I disagree with that opinion, because it appears to remove the corporation's decision making from any moral considerations, leaving only profit. But it appears to be a point where you agree with the memo author.

reply

charrondev 2 hours ago

You won’t get one. I’ve yet to see anyone serious even attempting to debunk that claim, and I doubt it will happen here.

reply

devnonymous 2 hours ago

I'm not sure why more people aren't pointing this out but I couldn't take his arguments seriously when he weaseled in *racial* diversity after the evidenc about gender differences were presented. It is pretty clear from that alone that the intent was not to have a scientific discourse, it was to dress up bias as science.

reply

s73ver 7 minutes ago

Here's an article from someone who would have a much better grasp on the subject than you or I: http://blog.goldieblox.com/2017/08/open-letter-james-damore-...

Here's another breakdown: https://www.quora.com/What-do-scientists-think-about-the-bio...

Basically, all of them say that, while men and women are not purely identical, the differences between them are nowhere near as great as the manifesto makes them out to be. The purely biological differences have little to no bearing on coding ability, and the bigger issues are societal. Like the effect of having something like this coming out on young women who hear it as being told that they're not welcome in tech.

reply

the_common_man 3 hours ago

> Honestly, I think he made the right move just from a PR perspective

The person who posted their thoughts did so in a _closed_ mailing list that was intentionally setup to discuss all this. The document was leaked. At best, he deserved a reprimand. Firing him makes it clear that there is no room for alternate thoughts in Google other than the ultra-progressive view point.

reply

skybrian 2 hours ago

It was in Google Docs. When the internal storm started, he could have easily shut down permissions, buying time to figure out what to do. (It's happened before when a doc becomes controversial.)

Whether you think it should have been controversial doesn't change what you do when something goes viral; the first thing is to stop the damage.

But since then, there's some evidence that he wanted the controversy - look where he's giving interviews now.

reply

yoz-y 3 hours ago

One thing I do not get is why was the (original) memo written in "Google's voice" rather than stated as a personal point of view. Who, except maybe Sundar Pichai and the head of HR, has a right to talk for the company as a whole?

reply

vanattab 2 hours ago

I don't think it was written in Google's voice. It was written in the voice of a young likely somewhat autistic engineer talking to his colleagues on an message board designed for discussing the topic of his memo. Then the media/Pichai sacrificed him on the alter of political correctness/profit.

reply

peoplewindow 2 hours ago

What makes you think it was?

reply

AnimalMuppet 2 hours ago

For an *internal* discussion? Someone who sees a pattern and can put a summary on it. It's just saying "This is how things seem to me to go here".

reply

humanrebar 3 hours ago

> His firing makes sense: the CEO and HR are both acting to protect the company.

No. His firing confirmed part of Demore's thesis; that Google has monoculture issues and sits in some sort of bubble.

> This is the reality of business.

Is it? If that's true, we need to be *much* more aggressive about corporate consolidation because the only way to make room for diversity of opinion is to make sure that there's diversity of opinion at the corporate level.

If you quit Google because it's too (insert culture war concern here), which big tech employer is substantially different?

reply

taysic 2 hours ago

There's plenty of diversity of opinion within a workplace. No one is obligated to listen to it. If it's made this public so as to embarrass their own company, well what can you do. People get fired for dumber reasons.

reply

humanrebar 1 hour ago

> There's plenty of diversity of opinion within a workplace.

Then why didn't Pichai predict the blowback from firing Damore?

> People get fired for dumber reasons.

Is that a defense of Pichai and tech monoculture? People get fired for dumber reasons?

reply

frgtpsswrdlame 3 hours ago

Just to clarify, you're saying this incident is illustrating that corporations have too much power?

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

> ...is illustrating that corporations have too much power?

Compared to employees and consumers? Yes. There aren't enough options out there to let competition correct for these kinds of cultural problems.

Of course, this might be a problem that solves itself. As expectations for fair compensation trickles through the rest of the job market, maybe transferring to an equivalent job in a medium sized company in Denver would generally be a lateral move.

reply

cookiecaper 2 hours ago

>No. His firing confirmed part of Demore's thesis; that Google has monoculture issues and sits in some sort of bubble.

We're missing a large component of the discussion when we pretend that the content of the letter is the principal issue here. The thing the C-levels are thinking about is liability, because that represents the most direct threat to the company.

Allowing Damore to remain on payroll could be interpreted as a tacit endorsement of his letter, which means in a lawsuit, a complainant can claim that Google has already proven itself to accept illegal anti-woman hiring practices by allowing an employee who espouses these things on company time and with company resources to stick around.

It can further be argued that their failure to address this bias constitutes a hostile workplace, and will greatly strengthen any potential argument that a female Googler was intentionally and/or actively discriminated against either now or in the past.

On the other hand, the consequences of terminating Damore are, essentially, limited to bad press, which is not really a large cost in itself. Google can counteract Damore's complaints with the relevant labor boards by pointing out that they are merely attempting to comply with the law that compels them to create a non-hostile work environment for women.

So why are so many CEOs so quick to jump on these diversity/inclusion bandwagons? Because a lawsuit will cost the company millions of dollars in lawyer time alone, and if they lose, potentially many millions of dollars in damages, especially if it's class action.

The factual validity of Damore's memo is immaterial. All that matters is that Google risks much more money, more aggressive regulatory oversight, and puts itself in peril of other onerous legal sanctions by keeping Damore on board, and by terminating him, they don't.

Anyone who is upset about this should look at the root cause, which is not only the set of laws that may compel such specific behaviors, but also the arcane configuration of the legal system as a whole. It is frequently wielded as a weapon, and that should not be a thing.

IANAL

reply

ebola1717 2 hours ago

So... you don't like equal protection laws? I'm like really struggling to figure out the alternative interpretation here.

reply

gusmd 2 hours ago

Nope. He doesn't like how the US legal system creates incentives to avoid litigation at all costs because it would be ridiculously onerous to prove you were right, even if you were. Which is of course wrong, since you should have the right to prove yourself innocent without going bankrupt. That's why Google took the "easy way out" of firing him.

reply

s73ver 3 hours ago

"No. His firing confirmed part of Demore's thesis; that Google has monoculture issues and sits in some sort of bubble."

Google had to decide which they value more: Demore's manifesto, or the contributions of a third of their workforce.

reply

Caveman_Coder 2 hours ago

> "Google had to decide which they value more: Demore's manifesto, or the contributions of a third of their workforce."

False dichotomy...

reply

cookiecaper 2 hours ago

Let me fix that for you:

Google had to decide which they value more: Damore's memo, or their legal defense against inevitable discrimination suits.

---

nb. Large companies are a *constant* target for litigants of all stripes. There are suits of all types filed against them regularly. They must be careful or, under current law, a bitter employee who was not in actuality discriminated against can successfully claim discrimination and pilfer millions of dollars from the company, inviting follow-on after follow-on. Because the current law is based upon reading in/assuming specific motives to otherwise-valid actions, companies are forced to assume a defensive legal position, such that the other side's lawyer will have a large amount of difficulty convincing a judge and/or jury that such motives were allowed or tolerated.

reply

gonzofish 3 hours ago

So why wasn't the person who released the internal memo fired? I don't agree with the memo's author, but it was an internal memo, not something released to the wild

reply

skybrian 2 hours ago

Apparently the leakers haven't been found yet.

reply

luckydude 2 hours ago

No, the right move would have been to take Damore aside, say "dude, you stirred up a mess. You aren't wrong but the mess is a PR disaster. How about we hand you a big pile of money, you go find your next job elsewhere, and we agree not to throw mud at each other?"

I can see not doing that when you are cash poor but Google is paying engineers as much as $600K/year in total comp, they could have landed $10M on Damore and never noticed it.

My personal opinion is much like Brook's - Pichai was pandering to the mob. That's not true leadership in my opinion.

Edit: don't understand the downvote, this is HR 101. Companies don't want this sort of attention and they'll pay to avoid it. I'm very surprised that a cash rich company like google didn't take that route. Are you suggesting with your down vote that it is better for google to be in the news cycle for months/years while this works its way through the courts?

reply

wonderwonder 49 minutes ago

I'm pretty amazed how badly google dropped the ball on this. They could have easily made the problem go away, likely with a few conversations where they agree to sit down and listen to his concerns upon his first submission of them to the diversity team or as you suggested a check and NDA.

Whoever runs the diversity team should absolutely lose their job for letting this get to this point. Following that whoever decided that

flying the CEO back to publicly fire someone and denigrate them was a good idea and the best way to proceed. A CEO of one of the worlds most powerful companies publicly firing and shaming an employee who simply presented an opinion through proper channels is just not a well thought out move.

Staggering amount of poor judgement all around.

reply

pgeorgi 2 hours ago

> they could have landed $10M on Damore and never noticed it.

Word would get around. Followed by many manifestos worth $10M.

reply

luckydude 2 hours ago

Companies have been doing this for decades. They usually include an NDA in attempt to not let the word get around.

So far as I know, the NDA's mostly work.

If what I'm suggesting seems weird I'd encourage conversations with HR people at large companies. This is part of what a good HR person does, sadly.

reply

wonderwonder 2 hours ago

I would argue that the author did not cause the PR disaster, Google did. They author submitted the memo directly to the diversity team months ago and they ignored it. It was posted and updated on Google provided employment forums for months and Google ignored it.

They are now publicly vilifying him for expressing opinions that are now being publicly supported by scientists. They have essentially publicly attempted to silence him because they don't like his opinion, validating his initial complaints.

I don't know if Pichai should be fired but a lot of people dropped the ball on this and they have escalated a story that could have been quietly handled in house via a few conversations months ago.

I have no idea if Damore's arguments for biological differences are valid or not, some scientists have stated they are (mileage may vary) but I don't feel that anything he said was stated with malice of with the intent to denigrate anyone. He may not have had the best communication skills but he was trying to start a conversation not a war. Google for some reason responded to his inquiry with the equivalent of scorched earth and are now realizing that perhaps they overreacted.

reply

gamblor956 1 hour ago

I know that this is an unpopular opinion on this thread, but Pinchar also made the right move from a legal perspective.

James' memo created a hostile work environment. And legally, that's all it takes to support terminating his employment *for cause*.

1) He claimed that biological differences were responsible for the behavior of his female co-workers. Yes, he actually says that in the section "non-bias causes of gender gap in tech." If you can't see why that's offensive, try replacing that sentence with "Biological differences are responsible for the behavior of blacks. Or latinos." Legally, this single section, by itself, disseminated on an internal company board, was enough to create a hostile work environment for his female co-workers.

2) Then he goes on to say that "diversity" candidates get special treatment. They get a lowered bar. His words, not mine. So now he's implying that

many of the "diversity" candidates only work at Google because they weren't held to the same standards. And unlike his earlier statements about biological differences not applying to any specific individual women, he doesn't qualify this statement--so he's lumping all of his female and non-white co-workers together. This section, on its own, would also be enough to create a hostile work environment for all of his female *and non-white* co-workers.

3) Then he goes and says the Left denies science on IQ and sex. And that their behavior has created a "psychologically unsafe environment." This, by itself, would also be enough to create a hostile work environment for all of his co-workers that would define themselves as liberals. (Note: there's a reason that most companies don't allow overtly political activities or expression like this in the workolace--it's to prevent political hostilities from dividing the workplace.)

That's 3 things he said that legally would have justified firing him. It doesn't matter whether science supports the broad statements or not. It doesn't matter whether his suggestions at the end or good or not. It doesn't matter whether Google leans left or oppresses conservative expression. What matters is that he created a hostile work environment for large swaths of his co-workers with these 3 statements.

reply

endtime 3 hours ago

The leakers caused the bad press, not Damore. (Unless he was the leaker, of course...)

reply

> thomasahle 3 hours ago
>
> It was all over the media before the leak. Before it was just based on rumors of "some internal viral memo". Leaking it might even have helped calm the waters.

reply

otterley 3 hours ago

It's my experience that time calms waters far more effectively than adding more ships.

reply

votepaunchy 3 hours ago

Those "rumors" are still a leak.

reply

malandrew 3 hours ago

No, those that were most outraged about the leak internally and turned to public shaming outside Google's walls are the actual problem. Why has the CEO not publicly reprimanded these individuals as well? I'm sure many in the company see the leakers as heroes. This attitude sets your company up for a culture of leaking. You have to reprimand both leftist and rightist leaker and try to get the conversation back to being civil.

Furthermore, his memo canceling the town hall made things worse when he declared the majority agreed and that some wish he had done more. He didn't acknowledge any of the people internally that disagreed with the firing. He's probably not even aware that he's set himself up to only hear opinions

that agree with the firing because others will be too afraid to question it.

Honestly, I want Google to have a third-party set up a truly anonymous poll of all employees and measure how people really feel instead of speculate on how many agree or disagree with the firing. This is a company with expertise in analytics after all.

reply

yters 3 hours ago

Blaming someone for reactions to their carefully written opinion piece seems the wrong way to go. The people causing the PR meltdown are to blame.

reply

naturalgradient 3 hours ago

> The shareholders are probably really happy that their CEO removed a person who managed to get Google so much bad press in so little time.

Debatable, the shareholders might not be happy that Google might now become a political target for oppressing views.

However, I agree that given potential liability issues from hostile workplace lawsuits almost forced his hand, which is very unfortunate.

reply

lotsoflumens 1 hour ago

In most large companies today, the shareholders outside of the top 3 management levels are irrelevant and usually just a tedious burden.

reply

malandrew 3 hours ago

The leakers of the memo caused the bad press. It was an internal affair until that happened.

reply

Alex3917 3 hours ago

> I think he made the right move just from a PR perspective.

By firing an employee just for reiterating the stuff that every undergrad is taught in CogDev 101 and wildly misrepresenting his position?

reply

daxorid 47 minutes ago

> One does not simply create a PR disaster for the company

The memo wasn't a PR disaster; the firing was.

Data point of one: Google has lost, just from my personal accounts alone, $40/mo in G Suite/YouTube Red revenue, and $620/mo in GCE Compute instance revenue.

Not because of the memo; because of the firing. Absolutely disgusting and unconscionable.

reply

boobsbr 3 hours ago

Agreeing with the memo or not, the author posted it in an internal forum.

The person who leaked the internal memo to the public caused the PR disaster.

reply

badloginagain 1 hour ago

Travis Kalanick should have resigned as a CEO, and there is a collection of reasons why. The bar is quite high in terms of how bad things have to be for how long before pressuring a CEO out makes sense.

Google does not come close to that level. If someone needs to be sacked for the diversity memo, it needs to be the author in question. At maximum, you could argue that a VP of HR could be sacked, as to 'shake up' the hiring processes and address any issues in it.

This does not go to the CEO. More damage would be done by his leaving than him staying. He reports to the shareholders, not to the moralists.

reply

j45 1 hour ago

I can't locate any opinion articles in the NY Times calling for the resignation of Uber's CEO. I agree the bar was much higher in his case too.

reply

mc32 2 hours ago

It's been in the news not because someone had a different, opposing view (many people have views others not us, see as deplorable)

The backlash is mostly about the firing decision itself rather than the person having been fired.

They washed their hands of the uncouth worker. They should be in the clear if that was the source of the outrage.

The disbelief is not that people have strange anti social views (we all have them to one degree or other) it's that a company feels so threatened by dissent that they swiftly want to leave themselves and absolve themselves to present themselves as pristine, unspoiled humanity.

reply

danarmak 2 hours ago

Sundar could have fired Damore without making an official statement. Or he could have made a statement that doesn't elaborate on the reasons for the firing, or that says what you did - that he's being fired for causing bad PR.

Instead, Sundar found it necessary to lie in his official statement about what Damore had said. He defamed him by saying that his memo contained things that are contrary to what the memo actually says and that Damore himself would certainly denounce if asked. Because, presumably, Sundar felt it was preferable to appease a mob by acquiescing in their villification of a Google employee.

That is what is this particular post claims makes Sundar a bad CEO. I don't know if that's true - that is, whether it makes him an ineffective CEO, whether his actions were good for Google in the long run; that remains to be seen. But the author of this piece feels that it was a morally wrong action (and I agree).

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

> Sundar found it necessary to lie in his official statement about what Damore had said

It could be a lie? It seems more logical that it's a misunderstanding. Neither make Pichai look good, especially since he had no discussions with Damore (according to Damore) to clear up any misunderstandings.

reply

danarmak 2 hours ago

It's like the article says: either Sundar didn't take the time to read the memo himself (which would be stupid and dangerous), or he didn't understand it (which is another way of calling him stupid), or - as seems most likely - he knowingly misrepresented it.

reply

humanrebar 1 hour ago

It may be a knowing representation, though Hanlon's Razor would indicate some lack of rigor instead.

reply

danarmak 1 hour ago

I find it unlikely that Hanlon's Razor should apply to a case of reading comprehension by a CEO of Google. But if it does, that's a different reason to want him to resign.

reply

nemonemo 3 hours ago

Agreed. Science matters little for a business if it offends people who pay for the business or the people within the business. Even scientists themselves have issues with such results -- a part of the file drawer problem.

I guess a NYT columnist can say this because click-bait-y titles always help for revenue and Google does not stop giving the ad revenue when news articles are critical of its CEO. This looks like both parties doing their roles well enough.

reply

wmil 2 hours ago

At the same time, Google should also pull in and disciple their employees that were rabble-rousing about the memo on social media.

They aren't doing that and it's creating a perception of unfairness.

reply

Caveman_Coder 2 hours ago

> "They aren't doing that and it's creating a perception of unfairness."

They have already been doing this...after the election a lot of my conservative co-workers at Google admitted to feeling "harassed" and "targeted." The memes posted on Memegen, the discussions on eng-misc, as well as the terrible TGIF (where the message VPs sent was basically that "Google" supported Hillary and "We" lost and it was going to be "Okay"). The unfairness is already there, this just highlights it even more.

TLDR:

1. Guy has conservative opinion against the current norms = Fired.

2. Numerous posts on Memegen/eng-misc/internal message boards hostile towards conservatives (including posts made by managers) = no action

reply

Amezarak 3 hours ago

Incidentally, what Damore did is probably a 'concerted protected activity' (his stated goal is to take actions that improve working conditions by making the job less stressful, increase diversity, etc) covered by the NLRB, and thus Google quite possibly broke the law in firing him for the memo.

That's not protecting the company.

EDIT: I forgot to add that from the coverage I've seen, there are also claims that Google management is illegally sharing hiring blacklists

(based on a person's perceived political views) with other companies. That would also be very serious.

reply

ballenf 3 hours ago

Unless the fine/settlement is cheaper than keeping him, which it likely will be unless it results in some larger investigation or monitoring program.

reply

Tasboo 3 hours ago

Damore can claim he was protecting the company, but if the effect of what he said in his memo is causing the opposite of that, then it can be a fire-able offense, regardless of what he said he was trying to do.

reply

Amezarak 2 hours ago

It's not about whether *Damore* was trying to protect the company, it's about whether Damore was communicating with his coworkers about ways to improve working conditions. It is illegal to fire someone for doing so. Damore presents several ideas about improving working conditions, claiming this would also increase diversity. If I was paranoid I'd say he wrote the memo with the possibility of being illegally fired in mind,

because it appears to have been written carefully with that angle in mind.

reply

vkou 3 hours ago

If you are trying to improve working conditions, and in doing so creating a hostile working environment, your employer is obligated to fire you. If they don't, they can be sued by other employees.

And let me tell you, while you may not feel that this memo has created a hostile working environment, a lot of other people do. Google would drown in lawsuits if they let him stay on.

reply

peoplewindow 3 hours ago

But would such lawsuits succeed?

I don't see how you can argue that a single guy who isn't in management writing a memo creates a "hostile work environment". Most of the people complaining wouldn't even be working with him at all. They can file lawsuits but would they hold water? After all, management could just tell the lawsuit filers to be more tolerant of others: it's not like Damore was attacking individuals.

So I don't see where Google's obligation to fire him comes from. Unpopularity with other employees does not make a legal obligation.

On the other hand, firing someone who is trying to raise possibly illegal conduct with management does have legal implications.

reply

vkou 2 hours ago

> I don't see how you can argue that a single guy who isn't in management writing a memo creates a "hostile work environment".

Employment law makes it very clear that person creating a hostile work environment doesn't have to be a manager. They can be a co-worker, a client, or a contractor.

reply

peoplewindow 2 hours ago

If you are correct, and I am not saying you're wrong, the term is so vague that more or less any disagreement that gets a bit personal could be considered creating a hostile work environment. No company would be able to operate in a situation where any disagreement could be leveraged to get the other person instantly fired, regardless of level or what the comments were about.

reply

Amezarak 3 hours ago

The legal definitions of a hostile work environment is not simply based on how something makes you feel. It is very unlikely a hostile work environment suit for not firing Damore

based on this memo would win, though of course Google might choose to settle.

reply

vkou 3 hours ago

> The legal definitions of a hostile work environment is not simply based on how something makes you feel.

No, but the the entire point of that essay was to advance the idea that women are less successful because of their biology. [1]

> It is very unlikely a hostile work environment for not firing him based on this memo would win, though of course Google might choose to settle.

Any employment lawyers want to chime in on this?

[1] "For the rest of this document, I'll concentrate on the extreme stance that all differences in outcome are due to differential treatment and the authoritarian element that's required to actually discriminate to create equal representation."

reply

godd2 2 hours ago

> No, but the the entire point of that essay was to advance the idea that women are less successful because of their biology

He never claimed that the women in tech are worse at tech than the men in tech. He just claimed that there would be fewer of them.

reply

malandrew 2 hours ago

> No, but the the entire point of that essay was to advance the idea that women are less common in tech because of their biology

FTFY to better reflect the fact that the memo was about distribution, not success.

Are men less successful in nursing or just less common?

reply

Amezarak 2 hours ago

I am not a lawyer. I'm just a guy who takes my employment rights seriously and has always tried to be up-to-date and understand them.

From my understanding, a hostile work environment is created when a reasonable person would interpret actions or speech as hostile, offensive, or intimidating, and such actions are not a one-time event, but frequent, severe, and pervasive, and they must be so serious as to change the conditions of your employment. Keeping in mind that terms like "reasonable person" are legal terms and we're not dealing in colloquialisms, it's hard to see how this memo could be interpreted by a judge as creating a hostile work environment.

Again, that's not to say people can't try to sue anyway, but in that case, there are plenty of people on the other side of the story Google should be worried about suing as well, since there appears to

be some minority of (white, male) Google employees who believe (rightly or wrongly) that they are persecuted due to their gender and race, and they also claim there are written communications at Google they interpret as denigrating them. I don't think they have much of a chance either.

reply

lisper 3 hours ago

The primary thesis of Damore's memo [1] was *not* that women are biologically unsuited to STEM careers. The primary thesis was that, at Google, *you cannot even advance the hypothesis* that biology *might* be a factor without putting your career at risk. Ironically, by firing Damore, Pichai proved him correct.

EDIT: if you doubt this, just look at the document's title and TL;DR section.

[1] https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3914586/Googles-I...

reply

greendesk 3 hours ago

I read James' document. I did not have the impression that this is his thesis.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

Thesis or not, this is right at the beginning:

"Google’s political bias has equated the freedom from offense with psychological safety, but shaming into silence is the antithesis of psychological safety. This silencing has created an ideological echo chamber where some ideas are too sacred to be honestly discussed."

...firing him, at least the way they did it, confirmed that position.

reply

bduerst 2 hours ago

There's nothing revelationary about that statement.

Anyone could read Google's code of conduct and know that Google would fire/reprimand someone for being toxic to their coworkers. Employees are free to debate and cherry pick evidence about their opinions on the world being flat, 9/11 being an inside job, even a fake moon landing.

James decided he wanted to debate about his opinion on his workers being biologically inferior (among other opinions). He had a chance to receive feedback on this from coworkers and change his position, the problem was he didn't and continued to broadcast his opinion which was toxic to his coworkers.

It's a strange hill to pick to die on because nothing is surprising about how this played out, other than how the media is *still* talking about it.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

If he has the opinion that his coworkers are biologically inferior, I didn't see that in the memo.

Can you explain how you came to that conclusion?

reply

bduerst 1 hour ago

That's a loaded question. I didn't come to the conclusion, many others have based on his premise of using personality constructs as being caused by evolutionary psychology.

You can see it in the paper how he starts with the obvious, "Men and Women are biologically different" and then jumps into observable personality differences, which are not proven to be biologically driven. It wouldn't be so bad if he didn't attribute these "biologically-caused" personality differences (neuroticism, agreeableness, less ambition, etc.) to women being the ones to blame for their problems in tech.

This opinion is toxic to his coworkers, which is a violation of the Google Code of Conduct.

reply

humanrebar 1 hour ago

Saying someone has racist ideas is a loaded accusation. I think it's fair to ask for elaboration.

> ...jumps into observable personality differences, which are not proven to be biologically driven.

Some personality differences *in populations* are supported by some studies. He cites studies about personal interests, for example. It's possible that he goes too far (scientifically speaking) with some conjecture, but he was careful to say that properties of large populations don't apply on the level of an individual or selected group.

reply

thegayngler 50 minutes ago

> ...but he was careful to say that properties of large populations don't apply on the level of an individual or selected group.

Then why bring it up if what he says doesn't matter within the context in which they are hiring people. Google isn't hiring people on a population basis. They are hiring people on an individual basis.

reply

humanrebar 21 minutes ago

They are drawing candidates from populations. He's arguing the problem could be upstream from Google HR practices. As in, there aren't enough women applying (I don't think that's controversial). He elaborating on his answer to "Why not?"

reply

thegayngler 5 minutes ago

I'm sure that is part of the hiring disparity among females and underrepresented minorities. As a black guy myself, I know the same is true among black people who simply aren't interested in engineering but Damon makes weird ability judgements based on the population.

This makes no sense as people with different interests would never bother in the first place no matter how much time and money you threw at them. So again I say why bring up the upstream problem to begin with as it being related to their abilities for engineering?

IMO, the only way his text makes sense is if you are someone looking to back up potentially racist and sexist biases by misusing science. It makes me question their ability to work with people different than themselves.

bduerst 1 hour ago

>Saying someone has racist ideas is a loaded accusation. I think it's fair to ask for elaboration.

Except I didn't accuse James of having *racist ideas*, I pointed out that his opinions are toxic to his coworkers. I'm not sure what you're getting at.

It's true that he attempts to check himself throughout the paper, but it's contradictory because he then proceeds to take it too far. It's the equivalent of saying, "I'm for diversity, *but*...." and then demonstrating he's not for diversity by arguing against it.

Which is why this paper is a rambling rant from someone who chose to commit career suicide for his opinion, and it's surprising that the media is still focused on it.

reply

humanrebar 23 minutes ago

"Racist ideas" was the wrong term to use. That was a typo. Apologies.

Is "sexist ideas" fair? "Bigoted ideas"? That seems to be the implication when labeling ideas about gender "toxic". The colloquial language around this sort of thing is imprecise. That brings me to my next point:

> ...and then demonstrating he's not for diversity by arguing against it.

The paper *seems* contradictory because people have definitions in mind for words like "diversity". But not everyone has the same definitions in mind. He can be for diversity of thought and want to encourage that with discussion of structural changes while still preferring a world with more women in tech. This position is not the Google HR definition of "diversity", but it's clearly part of his idea of diversity.

reply

lisper 2 hours ago

Then you should read it again. Focus on the title and the bullet points in the TL;DR section.

reply

s73ver 2 hours ago

This idea that one can only disagree with it because they haven't read it is extremely uncivil, and does nothing but attempt to shut down the discussion here.

reply

rednerrus 3 hours ago

What was your impression?

reply

greendesk 2 hours ago

I was left with the impression he wants the introduction of a quota for sympathizers for a political organization. My takeaway was that he wants to work with people who are officially representing political parties.

Maybe it is that I have lived in a country where carrying party cards to work was a step in professional life. But the point that stuck to me was painting the situation along political spectrum.

reply

bhouston 3 hours ago

Documents filled with political hot buttons screw up people's emotions and they can not process such documents rationally or in a balanced fashion, many people see only what offends them or what they want to defend. It is just screwed up...

reply

bduerst 2 hours ago

Yep, it even rambles about the failure of Marxist communism at one point. It's a rant with cherry picked evidence, but people find something it in to confirm their beliefs and try to defend/attack it.

reply

greendesk 2 hours ago

A country I used to live in had political steps as a prerequisite for professional life. To me, it does seem like an important point...

reply

Tasboo 2 hours ago

By advancing the hypothesis that it might be a factor, without a need to do so, it's always going to be seen as advocating for it, even if he says he's not.

For example, a host on certain news channel might say, "Is Obama secretly a Muslim? I'm not saying that he is, but why can't we ask the question?"

It's easy to see why people would get upset by that comment (for multiple reasons). The fact that he says he isn't saying that doesn't matter, because he effectively just did.

If he had just limited the paper to inclusiveness as a conservative in a left leaning culture, without dragging the whole women inequality thing into the matter, it probably wouldn't have been meet with such a backlash.

reply

jressey 2 hours ago

No matter what he intended the thesis to be, that thing was just a bunch of dog whistles that sounded an awful lot like ignorant alt-right bullshit to me.

reply

frgtpsswrdlame 2 hours ago

And he basically confirmed it by doing his first interview with Stefan Molyneux.

reply

where_do_i_live 2 hours ago

The memo appears to be based on actual real science that seems to be the consensus.

However, the author appears to be completely tone deaf and extremely socially awkward - he has very poor communication skills. And lacking the understanding that there is a current culture war going on - to allow himself to be taken as a champion of some of those groups seems to show he is oblivious to the greater social/political discussion out there.

It does not help his argument to be the white knight for the _actual_ misogynists and racists.

reply

frgtpsswrdlame 2 hours ago

>The memo appears to be based on actual real science that seems to be the consensus.

No. See this wired article, his view is not consensus. I do agree that it was pretty poorly made though!

Professor Gina Rippon, Emeritus Professor of Cognitive Neuroimaging at Aston University in Birmingham, said it was surprising how much of the research Damore misinterpreted or got wrong. She added that sex differences backed-up by proper research scrutiny were so tiny they couldn't explain the kind of gender imbalance at Google.

"They're assuming a divide that doesn't really exist," Rippon said. "Either its biological or its social and if its biological you can't change it so Google shouldn't be wasting its time with all these high minded equal opportunity initiatives.

"But the key thing is it can be changed – we know that if women have poor spatial skills, which has been demonstrated in the past, then its easy enough to change that by appropriate training – very often its associated with video game experience for example. He seems to be saying there are fixed differences and we're wasting our time trying to gain equality," Rippon said.

http://www.wired.co.uk/article/google-fires-engineer-over-an...

reply

> where_do_i_live 1 hour ago
>
> I've read that critique, but I've found numerous more critiques that have supported his position. Do I have a monopoly on saying what percentage support him - No, but it appears so far, and this may

turn out to be wrong, that more academics appear to support his claims than those that deny them.

They can be left to argue among themselves however just like any other scientific debate. Social sciences are further complicated due to the nature of how difficult their studies are to perform and analyze.

reply

frgtpsswrdlame 1 hour ago

Perhaps some quality over quantity is needed, this answer on quora is the most in depth critique of the bad science in his paper I've been able to find so far:

https://www.quora.com/What-do-scientists-think-about-the-bio...

Besides it's hardly fair for us to expect academics who are critical of the memo to speak publically about the issue when the alt-right is currently doxxing people for doing just that.

reply

where_do_i_live 49 minutes ago

I don't find her critiques convincing in all respects. A couple of her answers seem to be strawmen. For example:

The passing mention of IQ is interesting, since it has nothing to do with gender, which is the focus

everywhere else. He’s presumably talking about race, but he doesn’t want to be branded a racist, so he keeps the reference subtle. So why risk doing it at all? It’s a dog-whistle to the alt-right.

She admits she is _assuming_ his intentions - sets up the strawman, and counters it. BOOM - the guy is now racist.

As for Milo and his ilk - yeah they can go to hell - but what? This guy gets fired for speaking publicly? That seems a double standard.

reply

frgtpsswrdlame 46 minutes ago

Maybe what would advance this conversation is if you could tell me which of her critiques you did find convincing.

reply

bassman9000 1 hour ago

And HR, instead of addressing those points, refuting what would be wrong, and leading him to apologize if so, thus sending a powerful message about the existence of debate and rationale, recommended his firing, making him a martyr, and validating the part about the lack of dissent.

reply

heurist 45 minutes ago

Do we know the full series of events leading to the firing?

reply

s73ver 2 hours ago

Both of those theses are quite sexist, and no, neither one is appropriate for discussion in the workplace. Especially a workplace that wishes to appear as welcoming for all, not just conservative white men.

reply

vkou 3 hours ago

No, his thesis was that the gender gap can be explained by biology.

Verbatim, from the manifesto:

"For the rest of this document, I'll concentrate on the extreme stance that all differences in outcome are due to differential treatment and the authoritarian element that's required to actually discriminate to create equal representation."

The way he explains it with biology is that he rattles off a bunch of micro-facts, and then uses 'logic' with a big sprinkling of bias, to reach amazing macro-conclusions.

reply

lisper 3 hours ago

> Verbatim, from the manifesto:

That's not his thesis; that's an example he's chosen to support his thesis.

reply

AnimalMuppet 2 hours ago

The line you quote is *not* saying that *all* of the gender gap can be explained by biology. It's saying that it is an extreme position to say that *all* of it can be explained by "differential treatment" (sexism in one form or another).

reply

GreaterFool 3 hours ago

This is *the first* fair and balanced article on this topic I've seen.

> In his memo, Damore cites a series of studies, making the case, for example, that men tend to be more interested in things and women more interested in people. (Interest is not the same as ability.)

I've been trying to hammer this point to all my colleagues (in private of course, I wouldn't dare to post it on public channel due to high probability of getting decapitated!): interests/preferences not abilities.

Every time someone says the memo is denigrating women by telling them they are unfit or incapable of working in tech it makes me want to scream! It is not about any individual's ability but about preferences of a group. It might as well be that the arguments don't support the

conclusion. But I haven't seen anyone offering a reasonable rebuttal that doesn't involve name-calling and blanket statements like "the author *clearly* doesn't understand gender".

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

> Interest is not the same as ability.

I'll make a subtle point in a discussion that clearly can't handle the subtleties it already has.

Interest is not the same thing as ability, but interest is a great indicator of ability in technology, especially fast moving technology. In fact, I know *plenty* of people who are underemployed or underpaid that I say, "You, know, with your skills, you'd be great at writing software. Maybe you should develop an interest in coding." Similarly, people ask me, "How do I get a job in software?" and I suggest something very basic (tryruby.org, say) as a way for them to quickly figure out if they are interested. If they *don't* like problem solving and coding, they might be able to force themselves into qualifying for a job, but I'm not sure that's a good career strategy.

Point being, to some degree, interest is one key component of ability in software and some other kinds of technology work.

reply

evolve2017 2 hours ago

I'm finding this to be a fascinating look at how people, as a group, do literary criticism.

I think, if we step back from the actual words on the paper and examine the author's intent, his choice of evidence, and the mere fact that he chose to write this, we can learn just as much as from trying to decide whether or

not he was talking about a population effect when talked about women before mentioning Google employees.

This is totally different from wondering about the biology. As a biologist, I think it's preposterous to start to infer biological bases to the types of psychology experiments cited. I do, however, think this could be open to debate. I feel that the undertone to the author's message is likely less unclear.

reply

clavalle 2 hours ago

First, the author of this article is David Brooks -- a well known, very conservative, commentator. So, it might be fair and balanced in a Fox News sense of the phrase but not fair and balanced as most people would understand the phrase.

And for the general population skew in interests/preferences to make any difference whatsoever to the makeup of Google's technical and leadership staff the argument would have to be that the population that makes up the part of the interest curve on the 'high interest' part of the graph for the underrepresented groups is completely exhausted or would be completely exhausted before parity is reached.

I'd bet big that Google could completely fill their entire company with underrepresented people that rank very high on the interest/preference curve and never make a dent in that population. There are over 7 billion people in the world. That's a big pool. Even the thinner parts of the graph represent huge numbers of people. And Google completely controls their hiring so they can pick and choose -- they are not pulling people at random from that general population. They can easily pick people that compare very favorably with any other colleague on the interest/preference scale.

reply

ameister14 2 hours ago

I take issue with your first point but not your second.

I don't believe that the fact that a commentator is conservative means they are spewing propaganda as Fox News is. Fox News is conservative, and Fox News is unfair and unbalanced. The conservative nature of Fox News is not why it is unfair and unbalanced.

Totally agree on the second part, though. Huge pool of candidates, honestly ridiculous to think that this would explain the imbalance at Google.

reply

GreaterFool 2 hours ago

The author of the memo didn't argue that the male-female ratio is where it should be. It is almost certainly skewed due to gender biases. However, eliminating gender biases from recruitment is not necessarily the same as forced diversity (forced due to ideology that dictates that anything different than 50-50 is immoral).

If Google were to announce that they will hire 50% women wouldn't that be illegal under Title VII? That would amount to affirmative action which is only allowed in certain limited situations (race can be taken into consideration for university admissions).

reply

> clavalle 30 minutes ago
>
> I don't think anyone is saying anything different from 50-50 is immoral but that anything different (in this case vastly different) than 50-50 deserves some attention.
>
> I don't think announcing a policy of hiring 50% women is necessary. Like you said, it is 'almost certainly skewed due to

gender biases' so the obvious way forward is to try to track down those biases and remove them from the process.

There is also some questions about how to make the workplace more attractive to certain employees and applicants. Putting policies and services in place to cater to those employees goes a bit beyond mere removal of bias but could help as well.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

So "conservative" is the same as "unfair and/or unbalanced"? The New York Times (not exactly conservative) has considered him worth printing for quite some time now.

Isn't this attitude more or less what Damore was concerned about in his memo?

reply

clavalle 41 minutes ago

No, but he has an agenda that he's promoting with this opinion piece, which, as someone who disagrees with him, has some pretty obvious holes which I point out.

reply

GreaterFool 2 hours ago

Meanwhile there's been an ongoing campaign to discredit Stephen Miller *based on his looks*.

I found this portrayal shocking: https://youtu.be/ej_5vyDkZgU?t=280

He's been labeled "a creep" for no reason by those who claim to be righteous and politically correct and fighting for the marginalized.

reply

where_do_i_live 2 hours ago

There are plenty of reasons to discredit Stephen Miller on the things he says.

That other people make fun of him for his looks is pretty boring and I'll leave them to their antics - hardly like this type of behavior doesn't happen with _any_ large group.

reply

akhilcacharya 2 hours ago

He's already a creep for his views (Muslim ban, opposition to Hart-Cellar).

His looks (and prior statements) just don't help.

reply

peoplewindow 3 hours ago

I am minded to agree. And that's a shame, because Pichai has done good things for Chrome and Android when he was leading those.

The article doesn't really touch on Pichai's biggest mistakes here.

Mistake one: Damore's memo alleged discrimination, both against men and conservatives. Gender and political affiliation are both protected classes in California and they just fired him for whistleblowing. He has now filed a complaint with the NLRB. This seems like a legal headache that a better CEO could have avoided by not firing the guy. Put him on the roof or something, wait for things to blow over, find some other solution but the moment they fired him, they set themselves up for this.

Mistake two: Google shareholders asked at the last shareholder meeting if it was true that Google was a hostile work environment for conservatives (or words to that effect). They assured shareholders that this wasn't true. Clearly that answer has problems. Employees are leaking like crazy to Breitbart of all places that Google is extremely hostile to conservatives. I don't know what happens if leadership misleads shareholders in these sorts of questions, maybe nothing. But it can't be good.

Mistake three: Google managers have been publicly announcing within the firm that they are blacklisting employees for not being sufficiently pro-feminist or even for just questioning the policies or the mob reaction to it. There are screenshots of this along with interviews, again, on Breitbart. This seems like a fantastically unhealthy culture that Pichai has allowed to grow on his watch. I have heard from other Googlers that in one incident, a manager claimed he'd blacklist anyone who was subscribed to an internal mailing list for discussion of conservative viewpoints, and then when people objected, that he'd blacklist them too (so they couldn't transfer to his team). Again this seems like a cut/dried case of discrimination against people of certain political affiliations.

Mistake four: this debate is happening because Googlers are furiously attacking each other through leaks to the press. This is happening in both directions: the original leak was clearly intended to get Damore fired and publicly shamed, now others are leaking screenshots of internal communications and Pichai's emails. Pichai has quite clearly lost control of his own workforce to a staggering degree.

How much more of Google's guts spilling out onto the street will shareholders tolerate?

reply

Overtonwindow 2 hours ago

This. An excellent deconstruction of the issue. A culture of silencing views a minority does not agree with for the sake of avoiding a mob has created a mob of its own against all reason.

reply

trhway 1 hour ago

>discrimination, both against men and conservatives.

while men is [at least nominally] protected class, being a conservative isn't.

>Google is extremely hostile to conservatives.

can't applaud enough to Google here. According to the well known court decisions, a corporation is, like a person, entitled to have its own political opinion and actions, and it is the time somebody would answer to conservatives in kind. Conservatives whine so much every time they get a taste of their own medicine.

Shareholders who don't like Google's opinion can just sell their stock, as nobody forces them to own it.

reply

peoplewindow 1 hour ago

Can you point to examples of large conservative corporations firing people for expressing liberal viewpoints? I feel we do not read about cases like Google's very often, so I'm not sure what you mean by "taste of their own medicine".

reply

malandrew 2 hours ago

Do you have a reference for the shareholder's question? I had not heard that before and would like to read more.

reply

peoplewindow 2 hours ago

I was repeating a claim I saw on HN earlier and went looking for references. It turns out the person who asked the question wrote a whole article about it:

http://www.investors.com/politics/commentary/i-confronted-go...

At the meeting, I asked Alphabet Chairman Eric Schmidt about the company's actual commitment to diversity and inclusion in light of the company's public policy positions, not to mention the views of top management, that all skew to the extreme political left. I noted conservatives may not feel welcome in such an environment, let alone feel free to express their beliefs. Schmidt and other company executives dismissed my entire question by claiming everyone at the company — and in the tech industry as a whole — was in agreement with them.

After that confrontation, a strange thing happened. I started receiving messages from Google employees thanking me for challenging Alphabet's leadership. Without realizing it, I was apparently speaking for a closeted segment of Google employees with conservative beliefs.

One email read, "I'm working with a few other Googlers to fix the company's political discrimination problem. Really appreciate you shining a light on the matter."

> *Another said she was working closely with a group of conservatives at Google, and noted, "(t)hey're all very appreciative that you were standing up for their interests at the shareholder's (sic) meeting. The shareholder resolution your organization filed also made a lot of people happy."*

reply

KirinDave 2 hours ago

And once again, the characterization of "allowing the debate" means one thing for James (why, he "cited studies") and another for everyone else (they are an angry mob). The most telling bias in this piece is that characterization.

Perhaps is James had not hamfistedly "cited" population research (as Brooks suggests) but then given very specific personal-level fixes (e.g., pair programming , suggestions of "pipeline" fixes, etc) he would not have cast quite so much doubt over his intent.

What's also lost in this summary is one of the most important points: long term exposure to stereotypes has a powerful influence on people (many references of varying quality here: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/women-m...). By embracing them, we actually create self-fulfilling prophecies.

These prophecies may be based on a statistical mean, but what's lost in that simple numerical distillation is what harm befalls even modest outliers to the distribution. Stereotypes which may seem obvious and unimportant to 3/4 of a population may be a crushing burden and source of relentless stress to the remaining quarter.

It's interesting how many of my peers fought to liberate themselves from stereotypes of "weakness" and "inferiority" that were tied around them as smart teenagers. But when it comes time to recognize the harm in these stereotypes to outliers in a other group, they appeal to the same logic that oppressed them. One might argue that these traits are adopted defense mechanisms well-impressed by abuse. I'm not sure that justifies them, though.

reply

avs733 2 hours ago

While I agree, I think brook's argument is even more easily dismissable as the BS it is. One of several reasons for citing material on which an argument is based is to trace the flow of knowledge and tie statements to the prior research they interpret.

James fundamentally misinterpreted much of the research he cited in ways that are overly summative to make a point he wanted to make. He sought research to give his biases the veneer of science without understanding what the authors of the underlying research meant.

This whole incident, from the very beginning, represents one of the major problems with public understanding of science. There are basic ontological misconceptions about the relationship of researchers and research, about the generalizability of most scientific research, AND about how scientists within a field interpret and infer from results...and how future scientists build on that work. Because so much of that thinking work is invisible to the naked eye or is lost in media depictions, people think they have a greater understanding of how science constructs knowledge and they feel excessively qualified to infer and extrapolate research beyond what original authors had intended.

As you note, when science is discussed through means, when people attempt to decontextualize science, and try and simply apply science as a post-hoc rationalization for their fears and biases they are the problem not the science and not those who call BS on bad uses of science.

reply

Danihan 2 hours ago

>Stereotypes which may seem obvious and unimportant to 3/4 of a population may be a crushing burden and source of relentless stress to the remaining quarter.

What an excellent quote. As a politically right-leaning gay person, I feel this way basically all the time, except I'm more like the 5% or 10%. Being a minority of a minority sucks, you don't fit in anywhere.

reply

KirinDave 28 minutes ago

Try being non-binary. The men who've tried to wake my gay post my public coming out are still talking shit about me.

Which is to say: I appreciate your status and it's difficulty even if I don't agree with your politics.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

> Perhaps is James had not hamfistedly "cited" population research (as Brooks suggests) but then given very specific personal-level fixes (e.g., pair programming , suggestions of "pipeline" fixes, etc) he would not have cast quite so much doubt over his intent.

I haven't heard this point before and I'd like to understand it. What's the problem here?

reply

KirinDave 29 minutes ago

James essentially keeps tackling what he views as the central issue, a "pipeline" problem.

The larger body of feminist and even more centrist discourse has concluded that problem is not, in principle, what Google needs to address (other than at the very outermost edge of it's recruiting

funnel, ensuring that recruiting engaged with organizations that support specific demographics). The internal problems with unfair treatment, unfair pay, and unequal opportunity need to be addressed first. James conveniently pretends these don't exist and suggests women aren't entering the field.

We can tackle the problems there in other ways, but young women are not uninformed by their predecessors or the news. They see a constant drumbeat of credible stories about how the boys world of tech both abuses women and does not reward them equally.

James's suggestion that it's merely a lack of social elements to keep women out of tech is somewhat offensive in this light, pushing the decision way from "self-defense and self-interest" to "biological predilection.'

reply

EduardoBautista 3 hours ago

Convincing women to focus on a career in STEM is telling them that their choices for careers in nursing, teaching, and any other career dominated by women are wrong choices. I don't believe that, they are essential to our society and are arguably more important than helping create better ads at Google and Facebook.

reply

eganist 3 hours ago

That's not the argument being made by advocates for women in STEM. The mission (I among one of many adherents to it) is to open pathways in STEM up to women who are choosing not to pursue it *because* of socioeconomic blockers.

Blockers such as this guy.

Anyway, the real position being pushed by Women in Tech/STEM movements is that anyone can/should be free to work in any career and not expect e.g. pay differences and biases against them solely because of gender. Male nurses are an example in the reverse direction.

reply

UK-AL 3 hours ago

The more free the genders are, the more they tend to polarise on certain careers.

Since they tend to pursue what they prefer.

I'm all for having no blockers for people choosing what careers they want. However people will move towards there preferences, and there preferences will be set either by nature or culture.

reply

anonymouskimmer 2 hours ago

"The more free the genders are, the more they tend to polarise on certain careers."

Yeah, just calling a Scandinavian nation "free" says absolutely nothing about its particular societal pressures. Societal pressures which effect everyone whether they are egosyntonic or distonic to the individuals caught up in the society.

More evidence is needed to support this hypothesis.

reply

UK-AL 2 hours ago

I'm not sure biasing interviews towards certain genders is the way to fix that though.

Get more people apply, educate women about those options etc etc

reply

thatfrenchguy 2 hours ago

The thing being that people are everything but free and equal in our societies today.

reply

peeters 3 hours ago

What evidence do we have of that?

reply

whowouldathunk 3 hours ago

> there preferences will be set either by nature or culture.

Culture is something that hiring practices can change.

reply

humanrebar 2 hours ago

> Blockers such as this guy.

Please elaborate on this. How is he blocking anyone?

reply

leroy_masochist 3 hours ago

If you think that any given woman would be dissuaded from pursuing a career in STEM by an essay that, *using peer-reviewed scientific studies as supporting evidence*, suggests that differences in interest levels across populations may *partially but not totally* explain why women *as a population, not as individuals* tend to choose STEM at a rate lower than men, aren't you helping advance the stereotype that women are delicate shrinking violets whose easily-hurt feelings keep getting in the way of their life goals?

reply

hrktb 3 hours ago

Objectively these careers are less well paid.

We all have our opinions, but money is society’s way of prioritizing activities. And these jobs as essential as they should be, also get shittier shittier in average , as time goes on, which doesn’t help.

reply

godd2 2 hours ago

The median income for a pediatrician is ~170k vs the median income of software engineer at ~80k, but 75% of pediatricians are women.

So no, it's not only the "less well-paid" jobs. And even if it were, a lot of the lowest paid jobs are almost entirely men, like garbage collectors and construction workers.

reply

> ebola1717 2 hours ago
>
> This is a ridiculously cherry-picked statistic. Pediatricians are the worst paid doctors. In fact, most of the specialties in which women are more common are lower paid:
>
> https://wire.ama-assn.org/education/how-medical-specialties-...
>
> https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/07/20/the-b...
>
> reply

> hrktb 2 hours ago
>
> I’m not familiar enough with the field, but from what I get scanning payscale.com:
>
> - general physician: 60% women, 137k in average
>
> - pediatricians: 80% women, 144k in average
>
> - obstetricians/gynecologists: 70% women, 205k in average

- radiologist: 20% women, 300k in average

Basically, in the doctors field pediatrician or gynecologist are middle range salary. Nothing to sneeze at, but the more lucrative areas pay way more and are dominated by men. And honestly I don't think the requirements for radiologist is so much harder than gynecologists, or is it ? (I am no radiologist, that's just my impression)

reply

ebola1717 3 hours ago

The fact that those fields are undervalued (and often underpaid) is a huge part of this discussion that anyone who fights for diversity in tech is well aware of and has been saying long before this memo was released.

reply

whowouldathunk 3 hours ago

There is a lot of technology involved in healthcare and teaching.

reply

FLUX-YOU 3 hours ago

In fact, healthcare technology, specifically user interfaces, needs all of the brilliant people it can get.

reply

olewhalehunter 3 hours ago

As a former medical tech developer, the problems in healthcare are almost entirely social/political and the healthcare tech business is making things worse in most respects.

reply

whowouldathunk 3 hours ago

New drugs are making things worse? Tell that to my oncologist friends.

STEM is more than CRUD apps.

reply

olewhalehunter 3 hours ago

Fetanyl was a new drug at some point. Pharmaceuticals are over prescribed, healthcare businesses are a leech on the infrastructure, American lifestyles are inherently unhealthy, and no amount of new drug patents are going to fix those problems. Your oncologist friends might have new drugs to prescribe but that doesn't change the core problem of soaring cancer rates due to lifestyle and environmental issues.

reply

EduardoBautista 3 hours ago

That doesn't make school teachers or nurses any less important or necessary.

reply

whowouldathunk 3 hours ago

If a nursing school made a push for recruiting more male nurses I wouldn't feel like my software engineering career was a wrong choice.

reply

wan23 3 hours ago

Meanwhile, nursing as a profession is seeking more men to increase diversity as well.

reply

dogecoinbase 3 hours ago

they are essential to our society and are arguably more important than helping create better ads

Then they should be more respected and be paid more. Until they are, asking people to go into them when better, easier jobs exist is patronizing.

reply

rednerrus 3 hours ago

Is your assertion that being a teacher or a nurse is easier than SWE?

reply

avs733 2 hours ago

read it again...the argument is the opposite.

And speaking for the OP, I would imagine 'easy' in this context likely includes many elements but is strongly influenced by physical demand of these activities.

reply

samstave 3 hours ago

+1

Look at the output of ones work. If the output of ones work is positive, then it doesn't really matter how they got there or what they do.

The elephant wrt to "women are under-represented in stem careers" is that education is not universally applied/available.

Gender should not matter.

Provide universal education from birth to all minds and let those minds "mind their own business" as it were...

If people land in places due to their own thought, that is a true democracy of thought and freedom - but poor choices only ever occur based on poor information.

reply

pinaceae 3 hours ago

So why not encourage men to pursue careers in nursing and teaching?

reply

Overtonwindow 3 hours ago

There's a lot of effort going into this, actually. My father was a nurse for 30 years and in his nursing school graduation photo, and his retirement photo with his colleagues, he was still the only male. It's possible men view these fields as female dominated and resist applying. It also raises the awkward question of how men are treated in female dominated fields. Would a man be treated better in a female dominated field, than a female in a male dominated field, or the same? I've not seen research on this, unless someone knows of any?

reply

EduardoBautista 3 hours ago

I would go ahead and say because men are just not interested in those careers as much as women. That's the whole point. And that is fine.

reply

lobotryas 2 hours ago

Exactly. No one's worried that we have too few female coal miners or garbage collectors. These are physically demanding, not prestigious and often low-paying jobs.

Hell, no one's worried that we have too few female oil rig workers and these ARE (in my understanding) high paying jobs.

But STEM? That's somehow different.

reply

DanBC 2 hours ago

> Exactly. No one's worried that we have too few female coal miners

> Hell, no one's worried that we have too few female oil rig workers

There are programmes to increase the numbers of women in both those industries.

There's news media coverage of it: https://www.forbes.com/sites/ellevate/2016/12/07/the-energy-...

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-business/11620315/Bu...

There's research on it: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4279861/

reply

hrktb 3 hours ago

There were more men in these roles when it was more respected and well paid. As the relative wages and notarity declined, men started targetting ‘higher jobs’

For instance these are the numbers for teachers for the last decades:
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_209.10.a...

reply

busterarm 2 hours ago

If you talk to men who worked as primary school teachers (within the last 20 years) and then changed careers, you'll hear a lot of interesting stories of discrimination.

reply

whowouldathunk 3 hours ago

The point is disputed: to what extent are the differences biological vs. environmental? Hiring practices could influence preferences.

reply

thegayngler 15 minutes ago

Note to engineers. If you put your employer in a damned if you do damned if you don't legal situation, you will be fired and should be fired. Why is that so hard for everyone to understand? David Brooks should know this as he has worked at a big company for awhile now. No matter what Google did there would be people who were angry.

reply

dahart 2 hours ago

> When it comes to the genetic differences between male and female brains, I'd say the mainstream view is that male and female abilities are the same across the vast majority of domains — I.Q., the ability to do math, etc.

It's weird that Brooks paints the memo as largely factually correct, but clearly doesn't believe what is the main thrust of the memo.

The problem with the memo is not with any claims that are stated as fact, the problem is the FUD he's spreading by suggesting that the small and likely irrelevant biological differences we do know about *might* be responsible for the large differences in today's gender distribution in tech.

There is plenty of evidence that there are much, much larger factors in the distribution discrepancy today than any possible difference of ability, but Damore is casting doubt on that and suggesting that the current distribution might be the natural fixed point, that it *could* be at steady state already due to the biological differences.

Okay sure, he doesn't propose that as fact, he uses weasel words and doubt-casting to say it might be true, and that's the most damaging part. Getting people to believe it's possible is worse than any easily provable lie.

People like Brooks defending the memo's factual accuracy are hiding behind this idea that only things claimed as fact might be damaging. Not true, the things claimed as possibility are more damaging.

> The obvious problem with suggesting that the current distribution might have settled to it's natural steady state is that it encourages turning a blind eye to the cultural sexism that we already know exists. It perpetuates sexism if we don't fix it first.

reply

humanrebar 1 hour ago

> ...the problem is the FUD he's spreading...

He seems earnest to me. If he's earnestly voicing ideas that result in fear, uncertainty, or doubt, is it his fault? What is the appropriate way to broach the subject publicly? Or are certain thoughts inherently unspeakable?

If Damore bears significant blame, what is an appropriate response for a boss to have to that situation? Why is Damore the only person in trouble if controversial discussions themselves are against the rules?

reply

> dahart 41 minutes ago

> I believe he's earnest, that makes his being wrong all the worse, he doesn't know he's wrong and he's not trying to be wrong. It's more convincing, and thus more damaging, that he sounds earnest.
>
> I don't think it makes sense to assign blame, I don't care who's fault it is, and I believe he's free to share his thoughts. I hope you're not suggesting that being fired from a company is somehow censorship.
>
> What I care about is that his ideas are regressive and unintentionally sexist. He is using specious scientific sounding arguments to say we should turn a blind eye to cultural sexism. By ignoring it, we perpetuate cultural sexism.

reply

humanrebar 36 minutes ago

> I hope you're not suggesting that being fired from a company is somehow censorship.

It is censorship. Read the first sentence:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship

The defense of the firing is that the censorship is justified, not that it isn't censorship.

> What I care about is that his ideas are regressive and unintentionally sexist.

It's not his fault, but he's fired anyway? That doesn't seem fair.

reply