

## ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

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September 2, 2017

### ***Google, Corporate Diversity and Gender Difference Confusion in 2017***

In early August, James Damore, a software engineer at the Silicon Valley giant Google, was fired by Google chief executive, Sundar Pichai, for violating Google's code of conduct, specifically his perpetuation of "harmful gender stereotypes" in the workplace. Although 80% of Google's tech employees are male, Google prides itself in its commitment to diversity, inclusion and openness, yet demands ideological conformity within its company. The irony of the Damore case is therefore striking.

What exactly did James Damore argue in his 10-page internal memo that went viral over the Internet? He made several key points and observations in what he characterizes as a "reasoned, well-researched, good-faith argument, but as I wrote, the viewpoint I was putting forward is generally suppressed at Google because of the company's 'ideological echo chamber'":

- His main point is that "not all disparities between men and women that we see in the world are the result of discriminatory treatment." Several times in his paper, he acknowledged that "bias against women was a factor" but that the "male-female disparity in tech can be attributed to biological differences . . ."
- "Philosophically, I don't think we should do arbitrary social engineering of tech just to make it appealing to equal portions of men and women. For each of these changes, we need principled reasons why it helps Google." He argued that all workplace differences are not necessarily the product of "oppression" and "sexism."
- He maintained in his essay that women are generally more interested in "people rather than things, relative to men," which in part explains "why women relatively prefer jobs in social or artistic areas. More men may like coding." He added that women were also more "cooperative" than men, hurting their ability to negotiate, and that they are more "prone to anxiety and seek more work-life balance, leading to fewer women in high-stress, high-paying jobs."
- Overall, his primary contention is that Google's policies have created a "conformist culture," "an ideological echo chamber where some ideas are too sacred to be honestly discussed." To which he concluded that "discrimination to reach equal representation is unfair, divisive and bad for business."

Damore's paper and the subsequent firestorm it created point to the long and contentious debate within social science about the differences between the male and female populations. Columnist David Brooks provides a helpful summary: "On the one side are those who believe

that humans come out as blank slates and are formed by social structures. On the other are the evolutionary psychologists who argue that genes interact with environment and play a large role in shaping who we are. In general the evolutionary psychologists have been winning this debate.” Brooks also summarizes the research on differences between male and female populations where “there seems to be more connectivity between the hemispheres, on average, in female brains. Prenatal exposure to different levels of androgen does seem to produce different effects throughout the life span.” Several scientists in the field have backed up the basic summary Damore presented in his paper because Damore was citing research that applies to populations not individuals: “Many of these differences are small and there’s significant overlap between men and women, so you can’t say anything about an individual given these population-level distributions.” In a corporate culture like Google’s that champions gender equality, Damore will not be affirmed for championing scientist research.

What is social science telling us about gender differences? In a 2008 study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, a group of international researchers compared data on gender and personality across 55 nations. Their findings: “Throughout the world, women tend to be more nurturing, risk averse and emotionally expressive, while men are usually more competitive, risk taking and emotionally flat. But the most fascinating finding is this: Personality differences between men and women are the largest and most robust in the more prosperous, egalitarian and educated societies. . . Higher levels of human development—including long and healthy life, equal access to knowledge and education, and economic wealth—were the main nation-level predictors of sex difference variation across cultures.” Christian Hoff Sommers summarizes the conclusions of this important study: “The authors of the study hypothesize that prosperity and equality bring greater opportunities for self-actualization. Wealth, freedom, and education empower men and women to be who they are. . . What if gender difference turns out to be a phenomenon not of oppression, but rather of social well-being?” Sommers cites the disparity between men and women in engineering as an example. Perhaps American women earn fewer degrees in engineering because they do not have to do so. They have more opportunities to pursue careers that really interest them. Women now earn a majority of Ph.D.’s in the humanities, biology, social sciences and health sciences. As Sommers shows, “Despite 40 years of consciousness-raising and gender-neutral pronouns, most men and women still gravitate to different fields and organize their lives in different ways.” In a 2013 national poll on modern parenthood, the Pew Research Center asked mothers and fathers to identify their “ideal” working arrangement. Amazingly, 50% of mothers said they would prefer to work part-time and 11% said they would prefer not to work at all. Of the fathers, 75% said they preferred fulltime work.

What does Scripture say about this contentious issue? Quoting the Creation Ordinance of Genesis 1-2, Jesus declared, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female. . .” (Matthew 19:4). Jesus made this declaration to a culture with no gender identity or gender difference issues. Instead, He was affirming a basic proposition of the human race: God made the human race in two grand streams—male and female—and they are totally different. No matter what humans try to do, they can never erase this fundamental characteristic of the human race. Perhaps that is the basic reason why, in the pursuit of

happiness and in the pursuit of life-fulfilling goals, men and women often take different paths and make different choices. That is not evil and perhaps that is the way God intended it to be. Perhaps the choices women make merely reflect the gender differences in all their complexity and diversity; profound differences rooted deeply in God's Creation Ordinance.

What then should we do? At bottom, we must acknowledge what God declared from the beginning—men and women are different! In much of the federal government and certainly in much of public education, it is nearly impossible to discuss the topic of gender differences. Sommers writes “Many gender scholars insist that the sexes are cognitively interchangeable and argue that any talk of difference only encourages sexism and stereotyping. In the current environment, to speak of difference invites opprobrium, and to advocate for male-specific interventions invites passionate and organized opposition. Meanwhile, one gender difference refuses to go away: Boys are languishing academically, while girls are soaring.” While the US remains at best indifferent to the academic plight of boys, Great Britain, Australia and Canada have not: They see this disparity as a national threat. A nation with too many languishing males risks losing its economic edge. Hence, these nations have established dozens of boy-focused commissions, task forces, and working groups. “Using evidence and not ideology as their guide, officials in these countries don't hesitate to recommend sex-specific solutions.” To illustrate the absurdity of ideology trumping evidence, recent research demonstrates that enrollment in high school vocational programs has dramatic effects on students' likelihood of graduating from high school—especially boys. But the effort to engage more boys in career and technical programs faces a formidable challenge. In a series of scathing reports, the National Council of Women and Girls Education (NCWGE—a 38-year old consortium that today includes the AAUW, the National Women's Law Center, the ACLU, NOW, the Ms. Foundation and the NEA) has condemned high school vocational training schools as hotbeds of “sex segregation.” The reality today is that due to successful lobbying by NCWGE groups, high school and college career technical training programs face government sanctions and loss of funds if they fail to recruit and graduate sufficient numbers of female students into “non-traditional” fields. Sommers writes, that “over the years, untold millions of state and federal dollars have been devoted to recruiting and retaining young women into fields like pipefitting, automotive repair, construction, drywall installing, manufacturing, and refrigeration mechanics. But according to *Statchat*, a University of Virginia workforce blog, these efforts at vocational equity ‘haven't had much of an impact.’ Despite an unfathomable number of girl-focused programs and interventions, ‘technical and manual occupations tend to be dominated by men, patterns that have held steady for many years.’” In March 2013, NCWGE continued this absurdity by releasing a report urging Congress and other political agencies to provide more funding and challenge grants to help states close “the gender gaps in career and technical education (CTE); mandate that every state install a CTE gender equity coordinator; and impose harsher punishments on states that fail to meet ‘performance measures’—i.e., gender quotas.”

As I have reflected on the Google corporate culture and the case of James Damore, the more convinced I am of the truthfulness of the bedrock propositions of genuine, biblical Christianity: God has revealed quite clearly His actions as the Creator, His values and morals as

a holy, righteous God, and His ethical standards by which we are to live. As humans, we have the freedom to ignore or even flaunt those propositions, but then we must accept the consequences. God created the human race male and female; and men and women are completely different, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. That is why imaginative play among little boys and girls is so radically different. That is why boys enjoy rough sports and girls do not. That is why women excel in some fields and men in others. But American culture is now driven by an ideology that seemingly ignores, indeed even mocks, gender differences. The result today is that boys and men are suffering the consequences of this ideology. Nations such as Great Britain, Canada and Australia, to some extent even more secular than America, are waking up to how serious this gender inequity really is—and are doing something about it. America is caught in the ideological morass of NCWGE and Google—and our nation is hurting because of it. We remain blinded to the obvious, believing a lie and calling it wise!

See David Brooks in the *New York Times* (11 August 2017); *Wall Street Journal* editorial (9 August 2017); Holman W. Jenkins in the *Wall Street Journal* (9 August 2017); James Damore, “Why I Was Fired By Google,” in *Wall Street Journal* (12-13 August 2017); Christina Hoff Sommers, “What ‘Lean In’ Misunderstands about Gender Differences,” [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com) (20 March 2013) and *The Economist* (16 March 2013), pp. 82-83; Christina Hoff Sommers: “How to Make School Better for Boys” in [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com) (16 September 2013) and “School Has Become Too Hostile to Boys” in [www.time.com](http://www.time.com) (20 August 2013).