

# Review of: "Support for Campus Censorship"

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Before I begin the review, I need to state that I am totally unable to make any comment on the analysis and statistics used. This is not my area of expertise. Thus, my comments have taken these as read. Perhaps someone much more qualified than I can address the analyses used.

This is an interesting paper, and it brings into question the moral issues associated with censorship. These issues are, I think, very important, particularly so in the context of higher education. On one hand is the concept of freedom of speech, which many of our nations hold as central to our very being. Accompanying this is a growing understanding that, particularly in the fast-paced world of the internet, putting ideas out into the world and capturing them on various online platforms somehow validates those ideas. Certainly, there is research suggesting that the capacity to link with others online holding similar ideologies enhances extremist views (for recent work, see, for example, Herath & Whittaker, 2023; Mølmen & Ravndal, 2023). Davidson (2024) suggests that online engagement with material leads to long-term shifts in radicalisation, with a feedback loop of ongoing engagement and increasing radicalisation, presumably through a process of echoing, as identified by Mølmen and Ravndal (2023). It seems to me we face a dilemma: Does our right to free speech and the concerns around censorship mean that we should support the public airing of ALL ideas, or should the evidence supporting increasing radicalisation when exposed to certain ideas encourage us to censor what is publicly available?

I don't know the answer, but this paper does provide something to help us think through this big question. If those with a strong commitment to social justice (presumed through their identification as liberal thinkers) are more likely to support censorship of ideas that run counter to their liberal tenets, is this creating a new form of censorship that could have negative long-term consequences? Is that desirable? After all, it is not so long ago that liberal ideas were censored and people proposing them found it hard to be heard. I currently have colleagues who are finding it impossible to get a paper published that reports a case study of a particular issue running counter to mainstream liberal thinking, showing that censorship is alive and well and presumably only perceived negatively if it counters what we, as individual academics, want to share. In our attempts to focus on social justice, and not reinforce existing inequalities, are we actually creating new inequalities, or are we simply trying to limit people's exposure to information that supports existing inequality? What path should we take? As academics, we live by an ethos that suggests more information, more research, and better understanding of the complexity of the issues facing us will help us craft a path into the future. I applaud this paper as a small step along the way.

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