

8-20-1999

Are There Differences Between Open and Closed Minds?

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (1999) "Are There Differences Between Open and Closed Minds?," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 7 : Iss. 7 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol7/iss7/1>

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Title: Are There Differences Between Open and Closed Minds?

Author: Editor

Volume: 7

Issue: 7

Date: 1999-08-20

Keywords: Closed Mind, Ideology, Open Mind, Political Conflict, Political Violence

Abstract. This article outlines the case for significant congruence between open and closed minds as hypothetical constructs applied to ideological conflict in a political environment.

Ideological conflict is frequently a hypothesized causal factor in political conflict and resulting political violence. Political activists seeking to minimize such conflict and violence would then logically attend to minimize ideological conflict.

Political psychologists might posit that the hypothetical constructs of open and closed minds have a significant bearing on ideological conflict. For example, whether the bearer of mind is open or closed to beliefs at least initially different from what is believed--or to situations at least initially different from those already encountered--may affect whether ideological conflict occurs and/or what kind of conflict occurs. However, there may be less difference than meets the eye when the open and closed mind constructs are analyzed and compared.

The Closed Mind. An individual characterized with a closed mind might maintain a body of knowledge containing beliefs about principles and their exemplification in abstract thoughts and concrete acts. The essence of this body of knowledge is that change is unnecessary or very unlikely. Yet as new beliefs and new situations are confronted, existing beliefs may or may not be affected in some significant way--knowingly or unknowingly. Even if there is significant effect, the individual is then predisposed to maintain this new body of knowledge until the next change. The closed mind is still an open one.

The Open Mind. An individual characterized with an open mind might maintain--as well--a body of knowledge containing beliefs and their exemplification in abstract thoughts and concrete acts. The essence of this body of knowledge, however, is that change is necessary or very likely. Yet as new beliefs and new situations are confronted, existing beliefs may or may not be affected in some significant way--knowingly or unknowingly. Whether or not there is a significant effect, the individual is still predisposed to further change. The open mind is still a closed one.

Open and closed minds are both resistant to change. They are both conservative. They are both grounds over which individuals fight. Thus--in matters of war and peace--to value one over the other is tantamount to favoring both sides engaged in an inseparable mimesis. (See Igra, L. (1997). Myth or delusion? An exploration of open and closed states of mind. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 6, 25-31; Kohnstamm, G. A. (1996). Is a closed mind better for students? *European Journal of Personality*, 10, 441-446; Lear, D. (1998). *Open minded: Working out the logic of the soul*. Harvard University Press; Rokeach, M. (1960). *The open and closed mind*. NY: Basic Books; Zanna, M. P. (1993). Message receptivity: A new look at the old problem of open- versus closed-mindedness. In A. A. Mitchell, et al (Eds.). *Advertising exposure, memory, and choice* (pp. 141-162). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.) (Keywords: Closed Mind, Ideology, Open Mind, Political Conflict, Political Violence.)